



At a Glance: Develop emotional intelligence, interact well with others, and build collaborative relationships for effective teamwork. Define roles and responsibilities of team members. Give and receive feedback and critical appraisals from team members.

Understanding Teamwork & Interpersonal Skills

A team is defined as a group of individuals possessing the complementary skills required to perform a job towards a common goal and shared reward. Team members exchange constructive feedback.¹ Teamwork results in a greater outcome than the sum of performances of each team member alone.²

Why does it matter?

The outcome of teamwork is shaped by the pool of skills and expertise of all members.³ The collective effort of a group enhances productivity and ensures the delivery of higher quality work.⁴ In addition, having a diversity in backgrounds, opinions, and attitudes adds various perspectives, originality, and overall richness to the project at hand.⁵ In fact, enhanced creativity in problem solving and decision-making has been observed in teams with divergent opinions or intellectual conflicts.^{6 7}

Cultivating Teamwork

While it may come naturally to some, others need to put in extra efforts to build interpersonal relationships, including one-on-one or group collaborations. If that is the case for you, consider participating in non-professional groups such as student associations, event planning committees, or sports teams. A less stressful and more entertaining context allows you to experience teamwork dynamics while sharpening your interpersonal skills, alleviating your concerns, and building your confidence as a teamplayer.

Developing Interpersonal Skills

Are you able to recognize and manage your own emotions and those of others? If so, you possess emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence is the ability to monitor and regulate feelings and use them to guide your actions.⁸ You can imagine the importance of [self-awareness](#), self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills - abilities grounded in emotional intelligence - when working with others. In fact, a growing body of research supports a strong relationship between successful teamwork and emotional intelligence.⁹ To develop interpersonal skills, focus on the five above-mentioned components of emotional intelligence: self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills.

Consider the following to enhance your interpersonal skills:

1. Observe how you react to what others say or do and try to put yourself in their place before passing judgment.
2. Practice the behaviour that you expect from others. For example, many people value humility. Be humble by giving others the chance to show their accomplishments. Also, try to identify your weaknesses. You will soon realize that you are not perfect, so don't expect others to be.
3. Do a self-evaluation and check-in with yourself. What are the qualities you bring to your team? What can you improve on to enhance teamwork?
4. Examine your own reaction to stressful events and that of others. You will learn how to manage your professional conduct while maintaining positive relationships with your team.
5. Gauge your decisions taking into account their impact on others and their feelings, and be accountable for your actions. Apologizing or admitting a mistake may not be easy, but it will go a long way when building strong and genuine relationships with others (modified from [MindTools](#))

Quick Guide to Being a Team Player

- Be assertive and develop your [public speaking](#) skills in order to express your ideas during group discussions
- Learn about who your team members are: their expertise, working styles, and preferences. This information is valuable in setting expectations and distributing tasks.
- Work with a high level of interdependence. Be reliable and accountable for the performance of the team.¹⁰
- Understand your role and that of other team members, and give credit to others for their contributions.¹¹
¹²
- Respect confidentiality of any shared information and agreements between all parties.
- Maintain transparency of operations and continuously share reports on progress whether negative or positive.
- [Be aware](#) of your strengths and weaknesses, and recognize and accept them in others.
- Respect the diversity on your team and [be inclusive](#) in your actions.
- Maintain a degree of separation between professional and personal aspects. Avoid turning professional conflicts into personal ones.¹³
- Solicit feedback from colleagues at all levels while respecting their needs and intentions.¹⁴
- Collaborate with others outside of your organization with the awareness of existing cultural [differences](#) between individuals and organizations.¹⁵ Establish cross-disciplinary partnerships to attain goals while acknowledging the mutual benefits for all parties (e.g., profits, exchanging expertise or resources).¹⁶

Taking Action

Professional Development & Training

- Workshop - [School of Continuing Studies - Interpersonal Skills for Professionals](#): A series of workshops designed for participants to acquire effective interpersonal skills including how to better work in a team.
- Course - [McGill Executive Institute - Essential Management Skills Course](#): An intensive short- training course designed to develop managerial skills including effective collaboration and teamwork.
- Courses - [McGill Executive Institute - Emotional Intelligence for Workplace Success](#): This program helps participants build interpersonal skill through self-awareness and EI skills.
- Check [myInvolvement](#) for upcoming workshops and programs under “Work with others: Teamwork & Collaboration”
- [McGill Supervision](#): This site offers guidelines and practical advice to supervisors and graduate student supervisees

Gaining Experience

- Engage in [university and student-led groups](#) at McGill
- Play a peer support role as part of a [McGill Peer Program](#).
- [Volunteer](#) on-campus or in the community.

Resources

Books, Articles & Reports

- Making the team : a guide for managers
- [Collaboration : how leaders avoid the traps, create unity, and reap big results](#)
- *HBR's 10 must reads on collaboration.* (2013). Boston, Mass: Harvard Business Review Press.
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References

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- ² [Teamwork Behaviors: A Review and an Integration of Frameworks. Rousseau, V. \(2006\).](#)
- ³ [Enhancing the Effectiveness of Work Groups and Teams. Kozlowski, S.W.J. \(2006\).](#)
- ⁴ [Work Groups and Teams in Organizations. Kozlowski, S.W.J. \(2003\).](#)
- ⁵ [What Differences Make a Difference? Mannix, E. \(2005\).](#)
- ⁶ [Perspectives on socially shared cognition. Resnick, L.B. \(1991\).](#)
- ⁷ [What Differences Make a Difference? Mannix, E. \(2005\).](#)
- ⁸ [Emotional intelligence. Goleman, D. \(1997\).](#)
- ⁹ [Does emotional intelligence affect successful teamwork? Luca, J. \(2011\).](#)
- ¹⁰ [Business Dictionary](#)
- ¹¹ [Defining Twenty-First Century Skills. Binkley, M. \(2012\).](#)
- ¹² [Defining Twenty-First Century Skills. Binkley, M. \(2012\).](#)
- ¹³ [Defining Twenty-First Century Skills. Binkley, M. \(2012\).](#)
- ¹⁴ [Vitae Researcher Development Framework \(RDF\) 2011.](#)
- ¹⁵ [Defining Twenty-First Century Skills. Binkley, M. \(2012\).](#)
- ¹⁶ [Vitae Researcher Development Framework \(RDF\) 2011.](#)