

CAMPUS LIFE

The five stages of grief in a group assignment

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As a student, there will come a time where you will be forced to participate in group assignments. If you are unlucky enough, you will have to do it quite a few times. If you are God's favourite soldier, maybe you will get to do it with your friends or people who actually take their studies seriously. But few of us are rarely that fortunate.

A group assignment will test your limits like no other, make you question how some people got enrolled in your educational institution and transform the concept of teamwork into a myth. It doesn't matter if you are an introvert or an extrovert, if you're a topper or not, a group assignment will lead to undue character development.

However, in the end, you somehow come out alive, barely unscathed. Working in a group assignment presents a front-row seat to the five stages of grief.

Denial

It's a normal day in class for you. You range between zoning out, paying attention and trying not to fall asleep. All of a sudden, the world stops as your teacher utters the two dreaded words which makes your heart rate splutter. "Group work".

While the teacher goes on and on about the wonders of collaboration, new perspectives and shared workloads, you hear war noises.

Empty Google meet calls where all the screen reflected was your miserable face and nothing else, being consistently left on "delivered" or worse, "seen", begging people to write a sole paragraph, late nights screaming and crying as time refused to slow down.

As you ground yourself back to reality, you console yourself. Maybe it won't be that bad this time. Maybe this time you'll actually have competent groupmates. Maybe this time you won't have an internal breakdown every other second. Maybe this time you won't feel alone and frustrated. You go home and open a group chat. Not a

single person replies. It's okay. People can be busy. This hope will be your folly.

Anger

The deadline is two days away. You had the doc file shared, divided which parts needed to be covered. And nothing. While you do your part, you check up on what your dedicated group mates are doing. Two of them haven't even seen your last text, let alone start their work. You hate the feeling of *déjà vu* that has begun to creep in. You decide to give it a few more hours. Perhaps it's too

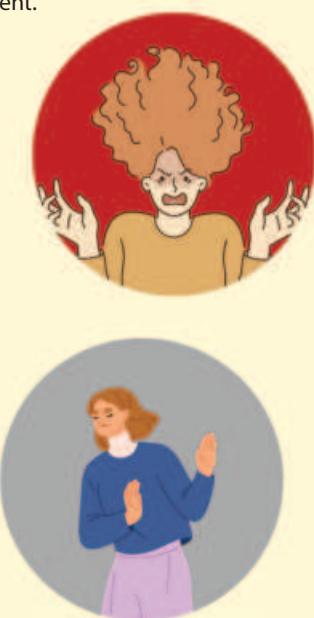


ILLUSTRATION: SYEDA AFRIN TARANNUM

soon to get angry.

A few more hours go by and things remain unchanged. Your patience is fraying. You type out a bunch of angry texts and hit send. Your only other companion, who did their work, can only react to your texts. As for the others, one keeps chiming in "I'll get started right away", never to be found again. One seenzones you. One still hasn't opened the group chat. You look up the meaning of free rider and vehemently nod your head. You are reminded of the layers anger can have.

Bargaining

Your anger has morphed into sheer desperation by now. You're giving reminders of the group marks at stake, making deals that would put a diplomat to shame. "I did your part, can you at least write the citations?" Some take pity. Some are unmoved. You wish you could be carefree like that.

By this point, you no longer dream of an A+. You have bid a strong farewell to the denial phase. As of now, a passing mark will do, and a few hours of sleep.

Depression

Eventually, you find yourself in the company of misery. Your group project is about 50% done and the deadline is a handful of hours away. You visualise the tragic outcome of your grades and your CGPA plummeting to depths unseen. You don't know if you should cry, panic or scream. You stare longingly at the screen and then take a painful glance at the clock.

The inevitable is almost here. You can feel it. You take a few minutes to mourn over having your expectations met.

Acceptance

In the end, you abandon all hope. You open the laptop, yet again, and cover up for your teammates. Will you get any recognition for it? A smidge of gratitude? Absolutely not. But it doesn't matter. You are simply doing what's necessary, simply being the only one who cares.

You prepare the 7th cup of coffee, take one last look at the clock and start typing, while your groupmates lounge in peaceful slumber. When you finally hit the "submit" button, right at the brink of 11:59 pm, you are not even proud. There is a mild sense of relief, dulled by numbness.

Until the next time.

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