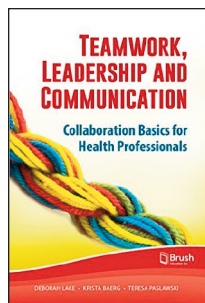


Book Review

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Teamwork, Leadership and Communication: Collaboration Basics for Health Professionals. By Deborah Lake, Krista Baerg, and Teresa Paslawski. Edmonton, AB: Brush Education Inc., 2015. 128 pp. ISBN 9781550596403.

In *Teamwork, Leadership and Communication: Collaboration Basics for Health Professionals*, everything important comes in threes: written by three expert authors, the book focuses on three competency domains with three levels of organization where these competencies can be applied; it also has three chapters, one for each competency, with three case vignettes included in each chapter. As the rule of three states “*omne trium perfectum*”: everything that comes in threes is perfect.

Teamwork, Leadership and Communication: Collaboration Basics for Health Professionals is a practical book for students of healthcare, practicing professionals, and senior leaders and administrators who support collaborative environments. With three solid chapters focused on three core competency domains, the true value of the book is that on top of providing a thorough introduction to what collaboration means in the real world of healthcare, why and when we need it, it also offers practical guidance on how to think about, design, and assess collaborative activities.

The introduction sets the stage for the most practical aspect of the book: a framework with three competency domains on one side and three levels where those competencies can be applied on the other. The three competency domains make up the title of the book: teamwork, leadership, and communication. Note, the initials of these words also make up the abbreviation TLC—tender loving care—which, as the authors point out, is just as needed among group members as it is among family members. The authors invite us to consider these competencies (TLC) at three levels: interpersonal, organizational, and systemic. The result is a practical matrix that can be valuable in different contexts.

The chapter on teamwork sheds light on what makes the combined action of a group of people most effective: mastering the right attitude toward group work, addressing issues of liability, establishing rapport and building trust, and harnessing the most empowering features of group dynamics (size, composition, structure, context, development).

The chapter on leadership drives the focus to shared leadership. The authors underline what they call a paradox: leadership in a collaborative setting is a shared skill. While it may not constitute a paradox, shared leadership (as opposed to traditional hierarchy) makes much more sense in a truly collaborative setting—one that

calls for the enactment of shared purposes, participatory decision-making, and the management of conflicts within a shared code of ethics.

The chapter on communication is a sophisticated discussion about what communication entails in a group setting and how it can shape the patterns of association and productive work. Here the authors expand on the contrast between dyadic and small group interactions, the importance of the non-verbal, active listening, asynchronous and informal communication, the role of self-awareness, and an edifying array of communication tools that groups can use depending on their needs.

The final chapter closes with how to weave a tapestry of collaboration. The visible threads in such a fabric, the authors remind us, are what groups of professionals do every day and the outcomes they achieve. The hidden or guiding threads with which the fabric is woven are the competencies of the participants.

There are additional positive features in this book. One is that each chapter begins by asking the reader to imagine an ideal setting for collaboration. These starting images prime the reader's mind with a high standard, while the rest of the chapter shows how to work toward that standard. Each chapter encourages readers to engage, reflect, and think about what they have just read through vignettes, questions, and exercises. Another useful feature is the storm cloud graphics highlighting various comments about collaboration. Mostly negative, these comments reflect the cloudy days of collaborative work and the negative feelings and resistance that can be part of group work. The image is appropriate, for what comes after the clouds? A blue sky as beautiful as ever. Not only can students of collaborative care acquire positive ground for group work, they can also master how to steer their work toward clearer skies.

To close with the rule of three: this book is insightful; practical in its content and design; and extremely easy to read and navigate. The book goes far toward showing that collaboration is an acquired skill and offers real help to all students of group work who wish to develop the critically considered concepts of teamwork, leadership, and communication.

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