Effective Learning Groups  
Don’t Just Happen  

Mike Duttwieler  
Assistant Director  
Cornell Cooperative Extension  
mwd1@cornell.edu
Typical Group Stages

• **Forming** – discovering roles and expected behaviors
• **Storming** – intra-group differences emerge
• **Norming** – members accept the group and norms of behavior
• **Performing** – effective group functions and learning
Group Stages

Form

Perform

Storm

Norm
The Facilitator’s Role

• **During Forming** – provide clarity and structure, help members get to know each other

• **During Storming** – coach through conflict, validate the struggle

• **During Norming** – reinforce growth, encourage group to manage itself

• **During Performing** – provide feedback
Effective Learning Environments

You **Should** Sweat the Small Stuff

- The Physical Environment – setting and logistics
- The Psychological Environment – feeling safe and supported
- The Social Environment – comfort with group and interactions
- The Cultural Environment – respecting differences
Effective Learning Environments

• Clear purposes linked to needs and interests of participants
• Variety of methods/experiences
• Tap participant expertise
• Multiple ways to participate
• Examples/illustrations
• Opportunity for reflection
• Flexible/adaptable
Seven Key Factors for Adult Development (D.D.Billington)

• Safe and supportive environment
• Experimentation and creativity
• Respect – opinions are listened to, honored, appreciated
• Self-directed learning
• Pacing and challenge
• Active involvement in learning
• Regular feedback