Collaboration Strategies

1. **Gain new perspectives.** People often associate problems or situations to their experience and knowledge. These associations can influence our perspective, our understanding, and how we solve problems. By working with other individuals, you can view a situation or problem with a new perspective, which can increase your understanding and change how you view problems/situations.

   For example, assume you’re working on an assignment to compare two different stores’ prices for the same product and give a presentation to the class. Part of your assignment is to work with two classmates. You and another student in the group have chosen Macy’s and Crate & Barrel. The third person in your group seems distant and doesn’t seem like they’re contributing. You make conversation with the third student to include him in the process, but to your surprise he’s never shopped at either store. He comes from a rural area where the only stores within a 45-mile radius are Walmart and Farm King. This starts a conversation about where everyone in the group is from, and the differences/similarities in your shopping experiences. You explain Macy’s and Crate & Barrel to the third student, which helps him learn more about the stores your group has chosen. This also allows you to work on your teaching skills. His questions help prepare your group for the assigned presentation, and your group decides to include a segment focused on the descriptions of the stores to ensure your audience understands your presentation.

2. **Collaborating can increase creativity.** By gaining new perspectives, you learn new associations. Work with a group to state the assumptions you have about a problem, and then discuss the reverse of those assumptions. Identify solutions that can be created from looking at the assumptions and reverse assumptions.

3. **Increase your ability to work with different personalities.** In the above example, you were in a group with someone from a different background. People are often a combination of their experiences in life, and surrounding yourself with people from similar backgrounds can limit these experiences. As a result, you may find it difficult to transition to a new environment (e.g., graduate school, work) because the new people you are around may come from different experiences/backgrounds. You may find it hard to collaborate or communicate with these people. By surrounding yourself with people who come from different backgrounds, you develop effective communication skills.

4. **Networking.** Being in a group allows you to meet new people and develop relationships. This can mean new friendships or coworkers with whom you will remain in contact years from now. Your reputation can also be built from encounters with others, so while you may not work with someone directly, s/he may have heard of you from others. You never know who you will run into or be working with years from now. It might be that the person assigned to your group works at a company that interests you—now you can call them and ask for advice before you interview for a job at that company.