



ODeL & THE POWER OF ONLINE STUDY GROUPS

KZN COUNSELLING AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

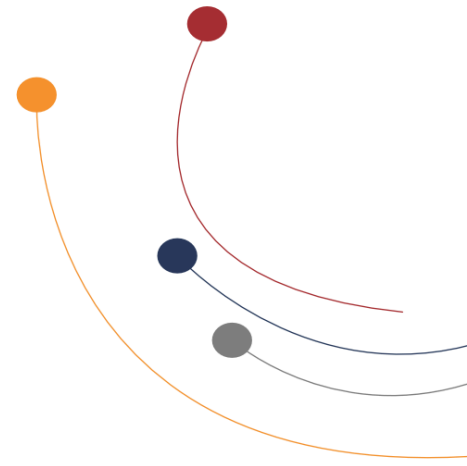
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Define tomorrow.

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OBJECTIVES

1. Why study in groups?
2. What makes study groups powerful?
3. Benefits of a study group
4. How to start a study group



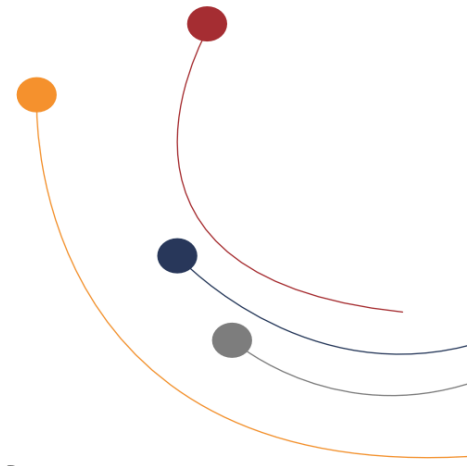
Studying with others in a small group is helpful to everyone because:

- It increases your awareness of what areas need more review and practice
- When you explain something you've learned in class or studied in your textbook to others, you begin to think more deeply about what you have learned
- It allows for the development of deeper rather than surface-level knowledge
- Discussions with others about the content, help to improve the retention and recall of information
- It helps you to interrogate information, and develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

- You will notice that by thinking more deeply about what you've learned and then explaining it to someone else, you begin to understand it better yourself!
- Everyone shares and discusses different ideas and perceptions, which deepens critical thinking and understanding

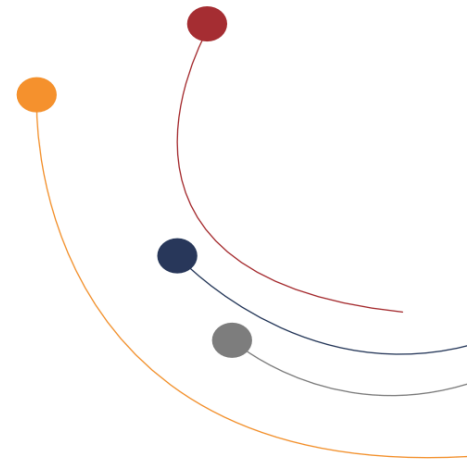
This happens because when you explain or teach an idea to someone else, you have to **ACTIVELY think it through.**

What makes study groups so powerful?



- Exposes you to different ways of thinking and learning.
- Provides a safe place to develop and discuss your ideas.
- Provides support and motivation for learning.
- Brilliant tool to help you develop metacognitive strategies.
- Increases your self-confidence and eases exam anxiety.
- Helps you learn to work as part of a team—which can be advantageous down the road.
- Provides awareness of different perspectives and promotes diversity.

What makes study groups so powerful?



- Being part of a study group helps to avoid procrastination.
- Study groups can help you develop as a student, person, and professional.
- Encourages members to think creatively and build strong communication skills which also helps in refining understanding of the study material.
- Helps you know whether you are on the right track.
- Builds comprehensive understanding of module content.

Why use study groups in distance learning?

- Due to the sense of isolation students feel in an ODeL context - may find it difficult to understand the work and have many unanswered questions - you will find it easier to do so in a small study group.
- It helps you go through volumes of information and break it into understandable chunks.
- Since the COVID-19 pandemic there is a disconnection between students and campus: use of mainly online teaching & learning. Helps reduce disconnection!
- Break in contact, studying remotely – is a huge challenge
- As a result, students feel isolated and demotivated, unsure of how to study
- A study group can "pick you up" when you find that your motivation to study is slipping.
- The other group members can be a source of encouragement.

BENEFITS OF STUDY GROUPS

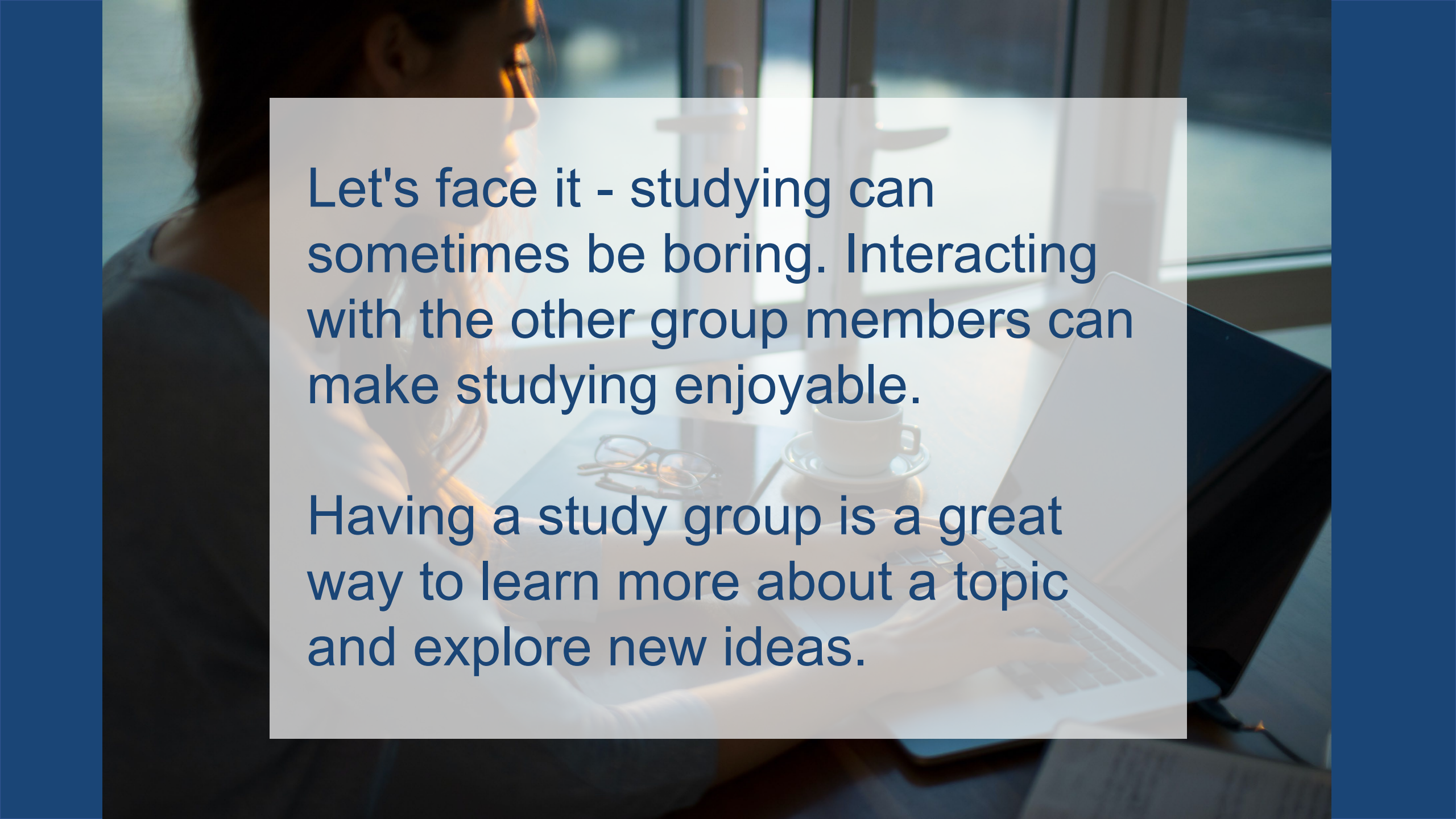


- You may become more committed to study because the group members are depending on your presentation and participation.
- You will not want to let them down.
- One or more group members are likely to understand something you do not.
- They may bring up ideas you never considered.

- You can compare your notes with those of the other group members to clarify your notes and fill in any gaps.
- You can share summaries of large chapters.
- You can learn valuable new study habits from the other group members.



- Study Groups help divide the work among 2- 4 other students.
- Teaching/ explaining information and concepts to the other group members will help you reinforce your mastery of the information and concepts: teaching others helps to develop and strengthen your own understanding.

A person is shown in profile, sitting at a desk and working on a laptop. The desk is cluttered with a pair of glasses, a white coffee cup on a saucer, and some papers. The background is a window with a view of a city skyline. The text is overlaid on a semi-transparent white box in the center of the image.

Let's face it - studying can sometimes be boring. Interacting with the other group members can make studying enjoyable.

Having a study group is a great way to learn more about a topic and explore new ideas.

HOW TO START A STUDY GROUP



Form your group: Invite 3-7 students to participate



Pick a time: Establish a meeting time that will work for everyone in the group. Aim for a manageable amount of time for each meeting – about two hours will yield the most productivity



Choose a location. There are several locations on campus for groups of students to work together



Set a goal for each study session. A goal means determining SPECIFIC content to be reviewed or concepts to be discussed.



At the end of each study session, an agenda including specific group member responsibilities is prepared for the next session.



Teach the concepts: Each group member is assigned responsibilities & must participate for an equal amount of time.



Everyone must complete the assigned reading, take and review notes, and come to the session ready to explain concepts to other group members.



EVERY MEMBER should be fully prepared and committed for the study session.

1

Choosing your study group members

- Find a study group – start advertising on social media/ on campus.
- Select 3-7 students doing the same course as you.

ASK:

- Is this student motivated to do well?
- Does this student understand the subject matter?
- Is this student dependable?
- Would this student be tolerant of the ideas of others?
- Would you like to work with this student?

1

Choosing your study group members

Develop a list of all selected group members that includes:

- names
- telephone numbers,
- email addresses.

Make sure each group member has this list and update the list as needed.



Characteristics of an effective study group

- Each group member contributes to discussions.
- Group members actively listen to each other without interrupting.
- Only one group member speaks at a time.
- Group members to ensure respect for one another.
- Engage in critical discussions but do not criticise each other.
- Quieter members are more likely to more open to revealing their areas of development.
- Group members feel free to ask each other questions.

2

Choose your location



- How are you planning to connect?
- There are plenty of online platforms you can use to collaborate with your study group.
- Select a meeting place that is available and is free from distractions – physical/ digital.
- If online, select an appropriate social media platform everyone has access to (e.g. WhatsApp/ Teams/ Zoom).
- Opt to turn cameras off to save data.
- Moderator should send the meeting link to all members.
- If on-site, an empty classroom or a group study room in the library are possibilities.

3

Choose a moderator for your 1st session

- Decide who will be the moderator for the first study session.
- Moderator ensures the session starts on time and is recorded.
- Decide whether it will be the same person each session or whether there will be a rotating moderator.
- Moderator helps to direct the flow of the discussion.
- Draws in quieter members, keeps everyone in check, everyone's opinions are given an opportunity to be heard
- Very easy to talk over someone in online sessions – moderator keeps track of raised emoji hands, the online chat, questions from the other group members, etc.
- The moderator of a study session should be responsible for ensuring that the group meets the goals of that study session.

4

Set an agenda and goals for each session

- Decide on the goals of the study group.
- A goal means determining SPECIFIC content to be reviewed or concepts to be discussed. Setting a goal together ahead of time can help prepare everyone for the group study session.
- Goals can include comparing and updating notes, discussing readings, and preparing for exams (using past exam papers).
- Before the session compile a list (agenda) of the sections you want to cover. Share the agenda with everyone in the group a few days before the session to give everyone the chance to get prepared.
- An agenda helps keep your discussions on track.
- Take turns to put together an agenda.
- For example: listing what readings you're going to cover, assessments to discuss and how much time you'll spend on each.

5

Responsibilities of group members

- Come prepared for the session to explain concepts to other group members.
- Complete tasks assigned to you and actively participate in each session.
- If you are given the task to do a summary, ensure that you know the content so you can teach or explain it to others.
- Ensure you complete assigned readings so you can contribute to the discussions.
- **EVERY MEMBER** should be committed to the study session for it to succeed.

Things to avoid when starting a group...

Do not:

- let the study group get distracted from its agenda and goals.
- let the study group become a social group. You can always socialise at other times.
- allow group members to attend unprepared. To stay in the group, members should be required to do their fair share.
- let the session become a negative forum for complaining about lecturers and modules.
- allow one or two group members to dominate the group. It is important that all members have an equal opportunity to participate.



For the study group to succeed – be open to other people’s opinions.

The most important part of a study group is listening to other people’s ideas, opinions and concepts.

The purpose is to expose yourself to new opinions and deepen your understanding of a topic.

You can disagree but do so in a respectful way.

Study groups don't just happen...

- Keep the group small. Invite about 3-7 students to be part of the group. Avoid studying with friends as it can, at times, be more of a distraction.
- Start as early in the semester as possible. Group study is most productive when it is ongoing, not just the week of an exam.
- Each week make it a regular part of your academic routine
- Establish and stick to a meeting time that will work for everyone in the group, at least for most weeks.
- Aim for a manageable amount of time for each meeting; members will be more productive if you keep the time to two hours.
- Learning how to work with your study group online will help you develop valuable skills for future workplaces and other aspects of your life.

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