Behavior Code

TOPIC:
Team-building, Mission-building, Action-planning

OBJECTIVES:
- Students will develop codes to guide individual actions and responsibilities as members of the team.

LENGTH:
30 minutes to 1 hour

ENVIRONMENT:
Indoors in a classroom.

MATERIALS:
- A chalkboard or other large display and chalk or markers for recording group answers.

Background:
Team- and mission-building activities are essential to developing efficient group operation. At some point, however, lessons learned in these activities must be translated into a code of behavior that group members agree to follow. This set of ethics provides easy access to responsibilities and expectations of individuals to the team and mission. In this activity, students explore memories, journal entries, etc. to recall lessons learned about teamwork. Through prompting questions, they translate these into a draft behavior code for the team.

Activity Outline:
Beforehand:
Prior to tackling a draft of the Behavior Code, it is assumed that team members have 1) completed a number of team-building activities and 2) drafted their mission statement. Students should be working together fairly efficiently at this point.

Leaders should also take time prior to the activity to become familiar with discussion prompts listed below. It may be useful to note lessons cited by students in team- and mission-building activities that apply to each prompt. These may be used to spark discussion.

Code Creation:
Students gather for instructions. Take a moment to introduce the objective of the activity. Remind them of the mission drafted for the group. Then provide participants a few minutes to reflect on their team experiences, peruse journal entries, re-visit old photos to recall lessons learned about group-work and ethics. Stress that students should focus on lessons important to achieving their mission. Suggest they write these down for easy reference in group discussion. Sometimes lessons are hard to translate into words.

Once participants have collected their thoughts, re-gather for group discussion. Explain that the code of behavior will translate lessons learned in previous activities into a set of standards to guide future work on the service project. For instance, a lesson learned may be *good solutions usually result from cooperation of more than one group member*. A resulting standard might be *any problems facing the group will be open to input from all members.* The standards should ensure that lessons learned are heeded in group process, that individuals are treated fairly as members of the group, and responsibilities are shared equally and taken seriously. Stress that everyone must agree to and believe in the code for it to work.

Begin by listing lessons learned on the board. Ask students to group any related lessons. Then, split students into small groups. Depending on the number of lessons learned, these may contain 2-5 students. Assign each small group with 1-2 lessons or groups of lessons. Provide them time to translate these lessons into standards for the code of behavior.

Once small groups have completed their standards, gather again as a team. Repeat the process of listing and grouping. Ask participants to identify and fill any gaps in the standards—ensuring that all lessons learned are reflected in the code. Likewise, they should point out and fix any unrealistic standards. Some leaders may challenge students to clarify obscure language or amend wordiness. Then, team members can determine the order in which standards should appear in the code.

As a last, but important measure, the team should vote to accept or deny the code. A code of conduct will only work when all agree to abide. If there is disagreement, the "nay-sayers" should suggest amendments that will secure their vote. Other group members can accept, decline or bargain with the amendment before another vote. Continue the process until reaching agreement of the entire team.

Living by the Code:
A code of conduct is powerless without explicit consequences for misbehavior. Once the team has agreed on their code, ask members to brainstorm appropriate consequences. It may help them to discuss and compare consequences for misbehavior in other parts of their lives, such as school, sports, home…. What happens when they breech the code of conduct in these spheres? How will the group assess misbehavior and assign consequences?

Repeat again the process of listing and grouping the consequences. Team members should also debate and vote to accept these as binding. Then, the consequences can be added to the bottom of the code of conduct.

Reminders:
Draft a master copy of the complete code of conduct with space signatures of all team members. Students may sign the contract in ceremonious fashion. Provide each with a copy of the original for their journals. Place the master copy in a prominent location. Return briefly to the code with the team before outings, speakers, discussions and decisions.