

## Teamwork: A caring community of professionals

“Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.” – Helen Keller

*Do you and your co-workers work together as a team, or are you simply a group of people who work in the same building? Is your team a caring community of professionals who support and appreciate each other, or is it a dysfunctional family that is filled with gossip, tension, suspicion, and resentment?*

*When a child care team is weak, it is the children who suffer most. Children are aware of the tension that exists when staff do not work well together and children need good role models to learn social skills. The best way for children to learn to share and cooperate is to be surrounded by adults who use these skills every day in their work with children and each other.*



### What are the qualities of good teams?

#### Value each member's strengths and weaknesses.

Good teams are able to identify their strengths and weaknesses and figure out how they can complement each other. Maya may love science, but feel uncomfortable with art. She should be overjoyed, not threatened, to be on a team with Carmen who loves art. Each member of a team should be viewed as a unique individual with important qualities to share.

#### Work together toward a common goal.

Good teams share a common goal and work together to reach that goal. Without a common goal, there is nothing to work toward. Every team needs a purpose.

#### Keep communication open.

Good teams communicate well, meaning they listen first to others' ideas, share their own ideas, and raise questions without debate and arguments. Team players are willing to share important day-to-day information to keep everyone in the loop and prevent surprises. Sharing ideas with team members does not include sharing the latest gossip. Gossip is a choice to spread personal or private rumors or facts. Gossip always involves a person who is not present and can be spread verbally or in writing. In the workplace gossip breaks down trust and working relationships, creates stress, and ruins professional reputations.

#### Respect and trust each other.

Good team members respect and trust each other. They support each other and are willing to pitch in and help to get a job done. What is needed for you to trust and respect others? Think about your answers to the following sentences:

*I feel respected when a person . . .*

*I give respect to a person when . . .*

*I feel trusted by someone when . . .*

*I trust someone when . . .*

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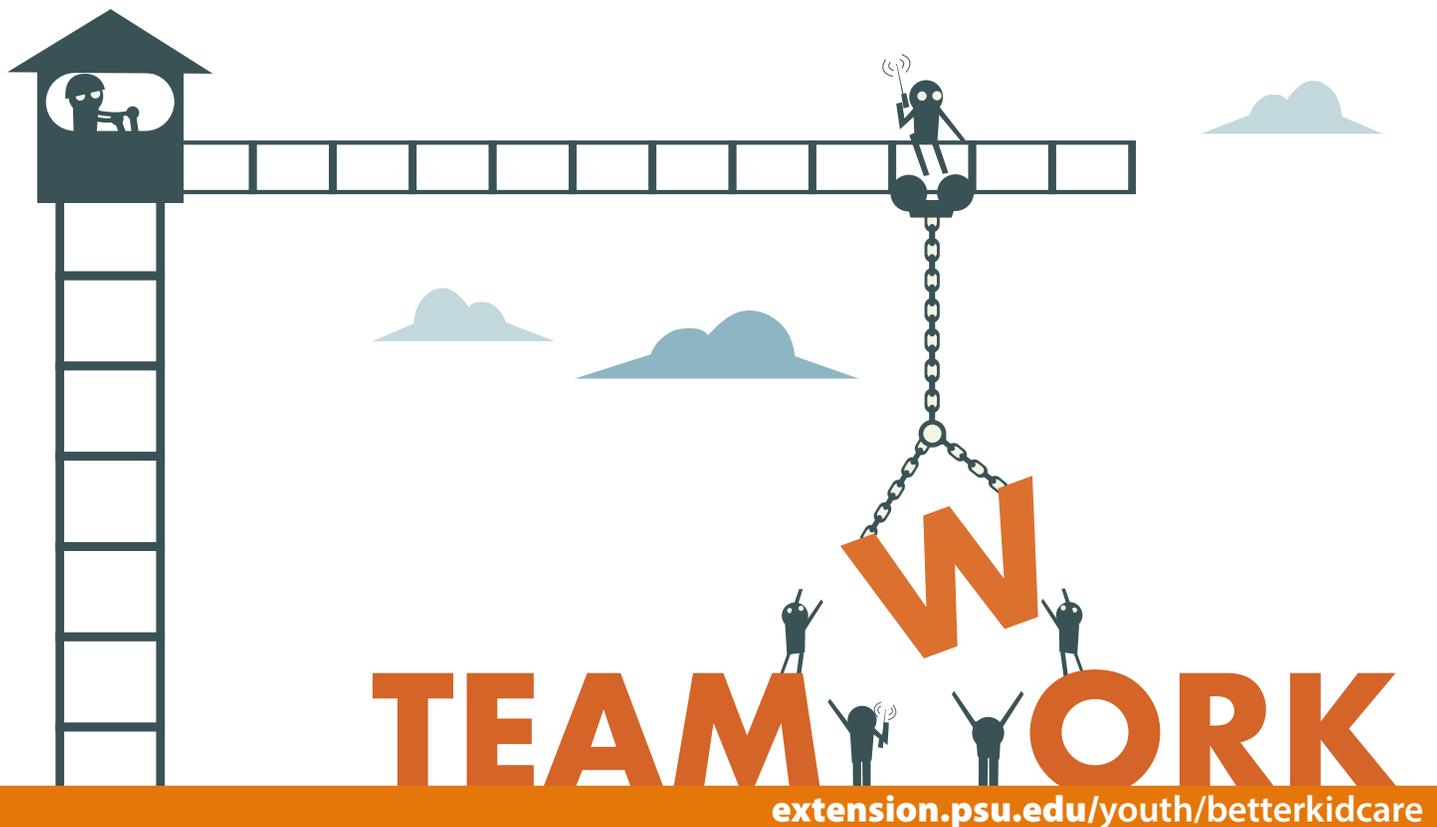
To be a team player means that you make an effort to be pleasant and treat others in the same way that you want to be treated. This does not mean that you need to be best friends with your co-workers. Team players understand they may have differences with others on the team, but they figure out ways to work together. They do their fair share of the work without complaints. Team players are able to learn from their mistakes and change their behavior when needed to keep the team strong.

## Celebrate together.

What happens when a batter makes a home run? The team celebrates! Celebrations are powerful ways for team members to support each other. When one member of the team succeeds, the whole team succeeds. Praise each other when you succeed and encourage each other when you fail.

Quality child care programs need the foundation of a good team. When staff care for each other, they are better able to care for children.

“Coming together is a beginning. Keeping together is progress. Working together is success.” – Henry Ford



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