

## **Eight Main Symptoms of Group Think**

*Janis, I. L. & Mann, L. (1977). Decision making: A psychological analysis of conflict, choice, and commitment. New York: Free Press.)*

1. **Illusion of Invulnerability**: Members ignore obvious danger, take extreme risk, and are overly optimistic.
2. **Collective Rationalization**: Members discredit and explain away warning contrary to group thinking.
3. **Illusion of Morality**: Members believe their decisions are morally correct, ignoring the ethical consequences of their decisions.
4. **Excessive Stereotyping**: The group constructs negative stereotypes of rivals outside the group.
5. **Pressure for Conformity**: Members pressure any in the group who express arguments against the group's stereotypes, illusions, or commitments, viewing such opposition as disloyalty.
6. **Self-Censorship**: Members withhold their dissenting views and counter-arguments.
7. **Illusion of Unanimity**: Members perceive falsely that everyone agrees with the group's decision; silence is seen as consent.
8. **Mindguards**: Some members appoint themselves to the role of protecting the group from adverse information that might threaten group complacency.

## **Avoiding Group Think**

1. The group should be made aware of the causes and consequences of group think.
2. The leader should be neutral when assigning a decision-making task to a group, initially withholding all preferences and expectations. This practice will be especially effective if the leaders consistently encourages an atmosphere of open inquiry.
3. The leader should give high priority to airing objections and doubts, and be accepting of criticism.
4. Groups should always consider unpopular alternatives, assigning the role of devil's advocate to several strong members of the group.
5. Sometimes it is useful to divide the group into two separate deliberative bodies as feasibilities are evaluated.

6. Spend a sizable amount of time surveying all warning signals from rival group and organizations.
7. After reaching a preliminary consensus on a decision, all residual doubts should be expressed and the matter reconsidered.
8. Outside experts should be included in vital decision making.
9. Tentative decisions should be discussed with trusted colleagues not in the decision-making group.
10. The organization should routinely follow the administrative practice of establishing several independent decision-making groups to work on the same critical issue or policy.