

Guidelines for Dialogue



Dialogue compared with Debate

- ***Dialogue is collaborative: two or more sides work together toward common understanding.*** Debate is oppositional: two sides oppose each other and attempt to prove each other wrong
- ***In dialogue, finding common ground is the goal.*** In debate, winning is the goal.
- ***In dialogue, one listens to the other side(s) in order to understand and find agreement.*** In debate, one listens to the other side in order to find flaws and to counter its arguments.
- ***Dialogue enlarges and possibly changes one's point of view.*** Debate confirms one's point of view.
- ***Dialogue causes introspection of one's own position.*** Debate causes critique of the other position.
- ***Dialogue creates an open-minded attitude.*** Debate creates a closed-minded attitude.
- ***In dialogue, one searches for basic agreements.*** In debate, one searches for glaring differences.
- ***In dialogue, one searches for strengths in the other positions.*** In debate, one searches for flaws and weaknesses in the other positions.
- ***Dialogue involves a real concern for the other person's feelings and seeks to not alienate or offend.*** Debate involves a countering of the other position without focusing on feelings and often deprecates the other person.

Listening

- Listen with compassion. Avoid judgment or blame.
- Listen with equal respect to everyone, regardless of status or roles.
- Listen from a place of learning rather than confirmation of current thinking.

Speaking

- Ask questions from a place of genuine curiosity, rather than to make a point.
- Use considerate language. Avoid using labels whenever possible.
- Feel free to express your feelings when you have been offended or hurt.

Discovering

- Focus on learning rather than being right.
- Pay attention to your judgments, assumptions, and certainties.
- Be open to outcomes but not attached to specific outcomes.
- Look for deeper levels of understanding. What is the "meaning" of something to the other person?
- Respect confidentiality. If you talk about your dialogue experience to people outside of the group, refrain from using people's names or sharing their personal experiences.