

Exploring Reflective Practice Through Dialogue

Adapted from Allyn Bradford and Peter Taylor

In this process, we'll use a **check-in**, then move into the **dialogue** through structured turn-taking, and then have a **check-out**.

Topic of Dialogue: Exploring Reflective Practice

Overview: Dialogue is a form of conversation that emphasizes listening, suspension of judgment, and making one's thought process visible. Instead of imposing our views on others, we invite others to add new dimensions to what we are thinking. The purpose of Dialogue is neither to agree nor to determine who is right. None of us has the whole truth. Rather, the purpose is to discover the richness of diverse perceptions and how these create a shared meaning that emerges from a group through inquiry and reflection. If others contradict, the challenge is to learn from what they have said.

Dialogue Process Guidelines

1. The Dialogue Process is an opportunity to listen—not only to the thinking of others, but also to our own thoughts and feelings that had been below the surface of our attention.
2. When a group does this together over a period of time, *meaning* emerges and evolves collectively through mutual understanding and acceptance of diverse points of view. In this short session, however, we cannot expect this to be the dominant experience.
3. The Dialogue Process works well when participants permit paradox and opposing views, suspend judgment, and listen empathetically, and try to make their entire thought process visible, including tacit assumptions. Instead of imposing our views on others, we invite others to add new dimensions to what we are thinking, and strive to find ways to make unexpressed or under-expressed voices articulate.
4. In this spirit, balance advocacy—making a statement—with inquiry—seeking clarifications and understanding. In advocating do not impose your opinion, rather simply offer it as such. In inquiry seek clarification and a deeper level of understanding, not the exposure of weakness.

5. The Dialogue Process requires structured turn-taking. The overriding idea is to keep focused on listening well. You won't listen well if you are thinking about whether you will get to talk next or are holding on tight to what you want to say.
6. Take a numbered card when you feel that you would like a turn, but keep listening. When your turn comes, show your card, and pause. See if you have something to follow what is being said, even if it is not the thought you had wanted to say. You can pass. If you are participating at a distance (through Skype), use the chat feature to send a message containing your name. The facilitator will take a card for you and confirm out loud when it is your turn to speak.
7. There is no need for questions to be answered right away. If the question relates directly to someone, they can pick it up when they next take a turn. This differs from usual conversations, but think of questions as inquiries that you are putting into a shared space.
8. Try to make turn-taking administer itself so the facilitator can listen well and participate without distraction. When you finish speaking (or if you decide to pass), put your card on the stack of used cards so the person with the next card knows that they can begin. If participating from a distance, you may simply state that you are finished with your comment. The facilitator's role becomes simply to gently remind people to follow the guidelines.