

Exploring the Differences Between Dialogue, Discussion, and Debate

In DISCUSSION we try to...	In DEBATE we try to...	In DIALOGUE we try to...
Present ideas	Succeed or win	Broaden our own perspective
Seek answers and solutions	Look for weakness	Look for shared meaning
Persuade others	Stress disagreement	Find places of agreement
Enlist others	Defend our opinion	Express paradox and ambiguity
Share information	Focus on 'right' and 'wrong'	Bring out areas of ambivalence
Solve our own and others' problems	Advocate one perspective or opinion	Allow for and invite differences of opinion and experience
Give answers	Search for flaws in logic	Ask Questions and Invite Inquiry
Achieve preset goals	Search for flaws in logic	Discover collective meaning
Acknowledge feelings, then discount them as inappropriate	Judge other viewpoints as inferior, invalid or distorted	Challenge ourselves and other's preconceived notions
Listen for places of disagreement	Deny other's feelings	Explore thoughts and feelings
Avoid feelings	Listen with a view of countering	Listen without judgment and with a view to understand
Avoid areas of strong conflict and difference	Discount the validity of feelings	Validate other's experiences and feelings
Retain relationships	Focus on conflict and difference as advantage	Articulate areas of conflict and difference
Avoid silence	Disregard relationships	Build relationships
	Use silence to gain advantage	Honor silence

Adapted by Tanya Kachwaha 2002 from Huang-Nissan (1999) and Consultant/Trainers Southwest (1992)

Some questions to ask myself if I am having trouble staying with dialogue:

Am I honoring my own experience as valid...

OR am I feeling defensive about it?

Can I trust others to respect differences...

OR do I suspect others are trying to force me to change?

Can I trust myself to be permeable and still maintain integrity...

OR do I fear that really hearing a different perspective will weaken my position?

Am I willing to open myself to the pain of others (and my own pain)...

OR am I resisting pain that I really do have the strength to face?