

Bridging the Community Divide Through Dialogue



SUSTAINED DIALOGUE
— INSTITUTE —

Understanding the role of
communication in community
building

Sustained Dialogue @UCD

- Sustained Dialogue is a registered student organization that brings together people of *all* perspectives on a variety of topics in order to share personal experiences, practice deep listening, transform conflictual relationships, and design change processes.

Sustained Dialogue Institute

- Goal is to help people transform conflictual relationships and design change processes around the world
- Dialogue defined as “listening deeply enough to be changed by what you learn”

We want to get to know you!



Goals and Plan for today

- Understanding the differences between debate, discussion, and dialogue
- Understanding what issues dialogue can explore
- Understanding how to use dialogue to bridge divides and make change

Debate, Discussion, and Dialogue

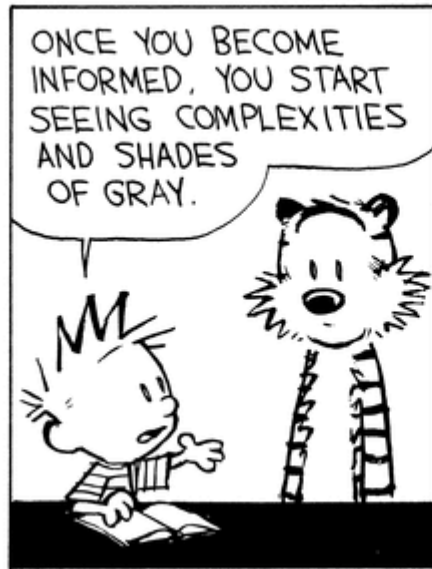


Dialogue


- “Dialogue is a process of genuine interaction through which human beings listen to each other deeply enough to be changed by what they learn. Each makes a serious effort to take other’s concerns into her or his own picture, even when disagreement persists. No participant gives up her or his identity, but each recognized enough of the other’s valid human claims that he or she will act differently toward the other” -Harold Saunders

Conceptual and/or conversational	Competitive	Collaborative, towards a sense of community understanding
Presents ideas, often in a “clean” or “sophisticated” way	Succeed or win, often by proving others’ logic to be ‘wrong’	Re-evaluate and acknowledge assumptions and biases
Share information, seek ‘neutral’ conclusions	Focus on ‘right’ and ‘wrong’ through evidence	Bring out areas of ambivalence
Seek answers and solutions	Look for weakness	Look for shared meanings
Give answers, often those in accordance with academic standards	Search for flaws in others’ logic; critique their position	Discover collective meaning; reexamine and destabilize long held ideas
Listen to find places of disagreement or to gather rational pieces of an argument	Listen to form counterarguments	Listen without judgment and with a view to understand
Avoid areas of strong conflict and difference	Focus on conflict and difference as an advantage	Articulate areas of conflict and difference
Retain relationships	Disregard relationships	Build relationships
Avoid silence	Use silence to gain advantage	Honor silence
The Dialogue vs. Discussion table was adapted from: <i>Differentiating Dialogue From Discussion: A Working Model</i> (Kardin and Sevig, 1997) and <i>Exploring the Differences Between Dialogue, Discussion, and Debate</i> (Tanya Kachwaha, 2002, adapted from Huang Nissan, 1999).		

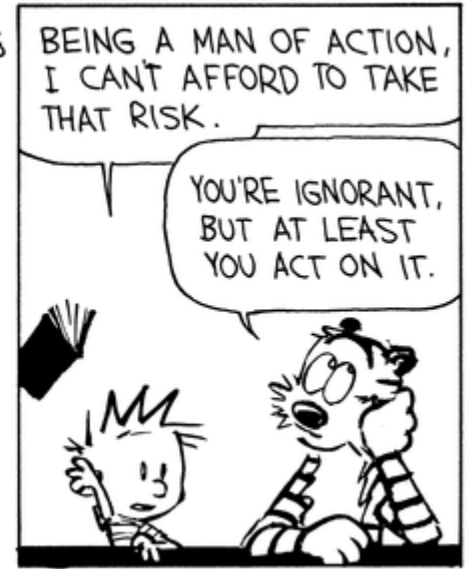
Working in the grey- No right or wrong perspective



YOU REALIZE THAT NOTHING IS AS CLEAR AND SIMPLE AS IT FIRST APPEARS. ULTIMATELY, KNOWLEDGE IS PARALYZING.



A black and white illustration of Calvin with his arms outstretched, looking thoughtful.



- We love different opinions and perspectives!
This is what we want to share in a dialogue!
- We can also share facts, but always include how you feel or what you think and why when using a fact
- Activity: Sorting PO's, F's and CU's

Building Blocks of a Good Dialogue

- Group Norms
- Listen Actively
- Share Personal Experiences
- Try to suspend your judgement
- Keep in mind both intent and impact

Group Agreements

- Treat each other with respect
- Try to Use I statements/share personal experiences
- Cell phones off
- Take care of yourself
- Step forward, step back
- Personal experiences shared in here stay in here

GAME TIME!!



Digging Deeper...What makes Dialogue Important in Communication?

- “Sustained dialogue differs from other changemaking processes through its focus on understanding the nature of community relationships...Individuals carry culture and stories that ultimately shape national behavior or institutional culture” (SDI website)
- Looks at identity, interests, power, perceptions, and patterns of interaction

Starting points to dialogue about

- Socioeconomic Status/Class
- Race and Color
- Ethnicity
- Sex and Gender
- Sexual Orientation
- Disability and Mental Health
- Age
- Religion

Worksheet: Socioeconomic Status!

Many of these identities Intersect

- Activity!
- Each corner of the room marked “Gender identity/expression, race/ethnicity, religion, and socio economic status”
- Think of your most outwardly noticeable social identity or one you identify most strongly with



How Dialogue can Change Community

- Let's look at some examples of issues that Dialogue could help explore, understand, and with action, change
- Issue Sheets on: Educational Elitism, and Israel and Palestine

How to Use Dialogue-The 5 Stages

How can each step contribute to bridging divides?

- Deciding to Engage
- Experience Exchange
- Defining the Problem
- Brainstorming Action and Solution
- Individual and Collective Action

Stage 1: Deciding to Engage-the Who

- Everything that is done up until the actual dialogue meetings begin
- Examples are gaining administrative support, identifying the leadership and participants, forming diverse groups of committed individuals, and setting up the space to meet

Stage 2: Experience Exchange-the What

- Time to analyze the surrounding issues
- Ask: What are the main issues of concern on our campus or in our immediate society?
What experiences have participants had with these issues?
- Decide what issue the group wants to focus on

Stage 3: Defining the Problem-the Why

- Shifts from telling stories and describing the issues to analyzing why the issues exist, how various groups are experiencing the issues, and what improving those issues might look like

Stage 4: Brainstorming Actions and Solutions- the How

- Think about the possible ways for doing something about the issues
- Brainstorm: What are some possible solutions or ways of positively impacting this problem? What would a better future look like?

Stage 5: Individual and Collective Action-the Now

- Carry out the action plan developed in Stage 4
- Afterwards, evaluate the plan and ask “How effective was it?”
- The group may have to return to Stage for to carry out another plan or Stage 2 to identify another problem
- Other big actions could be the dialogue itself, like spending a year in dialogue among members that wouldn't ordinarily meet

Reflection, Last Questions, and Ways to get involved with SD @ UCD