

Successful Team Dialogue

What Is Dialogue?

There is probably no finer communication skill than dialogue. The aim of dialogue is to get to know and better understand one another.

Therefore, if you and your teams learn to do it, increased understanding will lead to better working conditions and higher productivity through better and better relationships.

**DIALOGUE IS MERELY ASKING QUESTIONS
OF EACH OTHER OUT OF CURIOSITY
IN ORDER TO BETTER KNOW
AND UNDERSTAND ONE ANOTHER**

Dialogue usually means just asking the questions “Why?” and “What do you mean?” over and over again. When you ask a person a “why” question, it usually opens up a bit of new information about him or her. Another “why” question yields a little more. When a “why” question seems hard to think of, then any simple, friendly, non-judgmental question motivated by curiosity is fine.

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I hope this Team-Building Dialogue Grid can be helpful for your organization. It is valuable for team meetings.

It is most fun if items talked about are chosen randomly by the roll of dice or drawing cards from a deck. But, that is not necessary.

If you need more copies, you have permission to make them, provided that both sides are printed exactly as they are on this sheet of paper. Any type of paper may be used.

If I can be of any further assistance, feel free to contact me.

Yours truly,

Dick Wulf

Guidelines for Dialogue

For good dialogue, it is important to follow these ground rules:

1. Answer what is true for you. Others will try to remember what you said so they can better understand you and treat you better.
2. The publisher cannot be responsible for the outcome of your conversations. Use good judgement. If conflict arises, stop immediately and seek the expert help of a professional counselor or psychotherapist. Healthy relationships are extremely important.
3. No arguing, criticizing or objecting. People hate to be criticized over things they say. They *know* what they think and feel, and they consider it absurd and insensitive if others think they know these things better.
4. Listen in order to understand the other person, not to change him or her.
5. Ask lots of questions (usually "Why?" or "What do you mean?") to clarify what is being communicated. Other clarifying questions can be: "What?" "What for?" "How?" "When?" "How come?" "Where?" "In what way?" "Can you explain?" "Please tell me more."
6. Refrain from giving advice or breaking in with your own contribution.
7. Let people be themselves, even if they give an answer that you do not agree with or like. Instead of objecting or offering criticism, ask the other persons "Why" questions. This will help you clarify what they are saying, what they think and feel about things, and who they are. People will appreciate your efforts to understand them.
8. Avoid conflict over answers. There are no right or wrong answers. There is just what a person says. He or she will appreciate you for asking about and learning from *his or her own words*.
9. Solve problems only after much dialogue has produced deeper understanding. Dialogue may expose some differences that might have to be solved. Make a note of those you think might need later discussion and problem-solving. It is usually best to not use "dialogue time" for solving problems, as it can destroy the safe aspect of this type of communication.

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**Team Leader Training and Coaching
Team Membership Training
Consultation regarding Team Usage**

Dick received his Masters Degree in Social Work from the Columbia University School of Social Work in New York City. Group Work was his major course of study. (B.A. from the University of California, Berkeley)

Dick has used the group work skills he learned to break ground in many areas, including group therapy, residential and foster care, small group leadership in multiple settings, program design, supervision, and project management.

Dick has trained team and group leaders in various types of organizations. He has also consulted where team dysfunction threatened either survival of a company or huge lawsuits.