

TIPS FOR PREPARING AND OPTIMIZING THE CONDITIONS FOR COLLABORATIVE-DIALOGUE

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I. Inviting and sustaining collaborative-dialogue requires a shift in orientation.

- The orientation is based in assumptions about dialogue from postmodernism and related viewpoints.
- The conditions for collaborative-dialogue and the stance of the inviter flows from these assumptions.
- The conditions are intertwined, none stand alone.
- The shift in orientation naturally guides actions that invite collaborative-dialogue.
- Dialogue does not require personal attributes or repeatable skills.

II. Dialogue requires collaborative design.

- Collaborative design is part of the process of co-generating newness in meaning, understanding and action.
- Collaborative design requires inviting, learning and respecting the other person's expertise.
- Each dialogue is unique to the participants, their situations, circumstances and agendas.

III. Dialogue is a natural, spontaneous activity that occurs moment-to-moment.

- You can prepare for dialogue but you cannot plan or pre-structure it.
- Dialogue cannot be step-ordered and its process is not sequential or repeatable.
- Dialogue cannot be implemented, orchestrated or managed.
- Dialogue is rhizomatic; there is no one entryway and no entryway is more correct than another.
- Dialogue is sporadic; it wanders and surprises and takes unexpected twists and turns.
- Dialogue is not necessarily continuous (cannot occur without interruption), but it must be continual (can happen over and over again) and sustainable.

IV. Differences are critical to dialogue.

- Differences such as tension, non-clarity, ambiguity, incoherency, uncertainty and misunderstanding necessarily inhabit dialogue, and are necessary to be productive.
- Dialogue is multi-dimensional.
- Each encounter--relationship and conversation--is part of past, present and future ones.
- Dialogue entails a multiplicity of voices, of present and not present.

- Context is the backdrop for dialogue: historical, cultural, organizational, relational, etc.

V. Dialogue requires:

- Speaking, listening, hearing and responding.
- Complete trust and openness to the other and their difference.
- Openness to being questioned, critiqued and not agreed with by the other.
- Carefulness to not assume you know what the other person means and to not fill in the blanks or details of the other person's story or what is thought to be behind the story.
- Understanding from the other's sense-making/logic map, not yours.
- Checking-out to make sure you understand the other's perspective as best you can.
- Understanding does not mean agreement.
- Time for inner and outer talk.
- Time for inner and outer reflections.
- Pauses and silences; they provide opportunity for reflection, inner talk and preparation to speak.

VI. Actions that do not invite dialogue.

- Trying to persuade the other to understand or agree with you, either explicitly or implicitly.
- Trying to get the other to understand or agree--you are not in dialogue with yourself or the other.
- Asking questions *you think* you know the answer to or to get the answer *you want* does not invite dialogue.
- Striving for consensus or synthesis.
- Trying to trace back to a starting point, a significant moment or a person--these are observer punctuations.

VIII. The intent and hope of the inviter of dialogue is:

- To Invite and engage one's self and the other in dialogue.
- To be open to where the dialogue takes you.
- The hope is to create a process of "dynamic sustainability."
- The process, however, is not duplicable but adapts to the uniqueness of each situation and persons.
- As well, the inviter must not hold onto their intent or hope but must be able to respond in the moment.