

DIALOGUE VS. DEBATE

Dialogue is a distinctive kind of communication that allows people to connect and build shared meaning. Compared with discussion – where people present ideas with the aim of putting forward the strongest or most persuasive view – dialogue fosters a collaborative exchange of ideas aimed at mutual respect and understanding. Rather than a competitive collision of opposites that fosters more disagreement, frustration and confusion, dialogue is a shared process; a collaborative exploration that seeks to understand another's opinion by first showing deep understanding of their position.

Dialogue	Debate
Collaborative: People work together to find a shared view and common understanding	Adversarial: Attempts to prove the other side wrong
About exploring: Assuming that are pieces to an answer shared by many	About winning: Assuming that there is a right answer and one has it
An open-minded attitude: Openness to change and being wrong	A closed-minded attitude: Dogmatic determination to be right
Listening to understand: Making links and revealing shared views	Listening for flaws: Making counter-arguments
Surfacing assumptions for discussion	Defending assumptions as fixed positions or 'truth'
Re-examining all positions understand values	Criticizing the other sides' position or beliefs
Accepting that others' views might improve one's own	Defending one's own views against those of others
Treats communication as a relationship	Treats communication as a transaction
Enlarges and possibly changes the views of both sides	Affirms one's own point of view

Threat is reduced so that meaning can be heard and understanding is allowed to flourish. Dialogue is a proactive process that may be difficult to understand, and even more difficult to create authentically and maintain between people. It is a structured approach that often needs guidance to initiate and practice to become a habit. Dialogue has the ability to convert detractors into supporters, conflict into consensus, and add depth to business relationships.

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