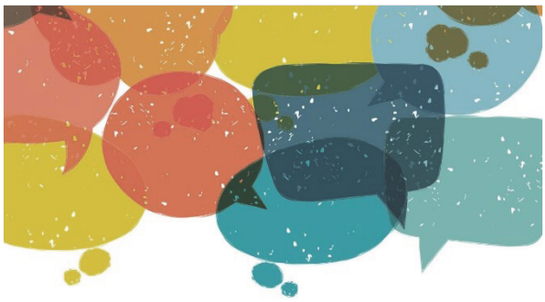

Guidelines for Effective Dialogue

Everyone wants to be heard, but a conversation cannot be had if everyone is talking over one another. Use the tips below to help navigate difficult conversations:

DIALOGUE *the mutual understanding of each other's points of view*	**DEBATE** *the argument of my position over that of another*
I listen to **learn**. I take seriously someone else's point of view.	I listen to **counter**. I am closed to someone else's ideas.
I listen for **strengths**, so that I may affirm and learn someone's point of view.	I listen for **weakness**, so that I may discount and devalue someone's point of view.
I speak for **myself**. I use my own experiences and point of view. I try to examine my own assumptions.	I speak for **others**. I assert my assumptions about others' experiences and motives in an effort to vindicate my point of view.
I ask questions to **clarify** and increase my understanding of someone else's point of view. (I try to suspend judgment and give my conversation partner a fair hearing.)	I ask questions to **control** the conversation, or to confuse my conversation partner. I look for ways to affirm my point of view. My goal is to win the debate.
I allow my conversation partner to complete a thought. I **wait** until they are finished to respond.	I **interrupt** my conversation partner or change the subject.
I concentrate on **others'** words, feelings, body language, and other modes of communication.	I concentrate on **my** response or my next point.
I **respect** others' experiences as true and valid for them. I desire to learn from these experiences to come to new understandings of my own.	I **interpret** others' experiences as naïve, incorrect, or distorted (while championing my own). I desire to bring my conversation partner to my point of view.
I **respect** others' feelings.	I **distrust** feelings as manipulative.
I **honor** silence.	I **use** silence to my advantage.
I look for ways to **extend** the conversation.	I look for ways to **end** the conversation.

Adapted from resources developed by Scarboro Missions.

Read more at icjs.org/debate-vs-dialogue

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