



The Art of Dialogue

Once a society loses this capacity [for dialogue] all that is left is a cacophony of voices battling it out to see who wins and who loses. There is no capacity to go deeper, to find a deeper meaning that transcends individual views and self-interest. It seems reasonable to ask whether many of our deeper problems in governing ourselves today, the so-called 'gridlock' and loss of mutual respect and caring ... might not stem from this lost capacity to talk with one another, to think together as part of a larger community.

Source: Peter M. Senge, "A New View of Institutional Leadership" in *Reflections on Leadership*

We rarely recognize the value of the wisdom gained by ordinary conversations. The real know-how and insight is created in the exchange of ideas with others. Conversation with others can generate commitment, new options, shift in thinking and working patterns, create focus and energy, and cement resolve.

Making this conversation happen – takes an environment of mutual respect and trust. Trust that others will hear carefully and respond authentically.

Source: Stanfield, B *The Art of Focused Conversation*, 2000

Small Group Questions:

1. What are the defining qualities of a dialogue and what can it achieve that discussion might not?
2. What shifts in values, beliefs, attitudes, and behaviors are called for when engaging in a dialogue?
3. How would you create an environment for engaging in dialogue to address challenges that you are experiencing?
4. What would be the greatest benefit from utilizing dialogue as the "way" (the status quo) in which your teams/systems communicated with each other?



What could hold you or your team back?

5. How might you overcome what can hold your team back?