DuTalk Ground Rules, Guidelines & Dialogue vs. Debate

Dialogue vs. Debate

Dialogue

- Collaborative
- Find Common Ground
- Listen to Understand
- Enlarges Point-of-view
- Reveals Assumptions
- Open-minded
- Search for Agreement
- Express Concern & Respect

Debate

- Oppositional
- Goal is winning
- Listen for Flaws
- Affirms Current Point-of-view
- Defends Assumptions as Truth
- Closed-minded
- Search for Differences
- Belittles or Deprecates the Other

Guidelines for Facilitators

Manage Discussion ;
Ensure that discourse is civil and that participants are engaging in dialogue, not debate.

Ensure Participation:
Encourage participation by all members, calling on members by name and asking their opinion if they seem reluctant.

Stay Neutral:
Do not express your opinion on the topic. You may ask clarifying questions and ask individuals to elaborate or explain statements. You may summarize points of view and the discussion, checking with the group for agreement. You may not display a preference for any specific point of view.

Ask open-ended questions:
Ask questions to help move the conversation along and to assess the positions being taking by group members. Bringing out the diversity of opinions is essential in ensuring a meaningful conversation that deals with differences. Ask questions like, “How do you feel about that?” or “What is your personal experience with this issue?”

Encourage participants to fully engage :
Participation isn’t necessarily engagement. In order to practice civil discourse, the group must be willing to be open and transparent about their differing points of view. As potentially conflicting ideas arise from discussion, participants will have a tendency to back-away from conflict. DuTalk works best when participants have a genuine opportunity to practice conflict self-management in a safe environment.

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Add facts, if available
If the facilitator has access to facts that may help the conversation move forward, these may be introduced only if there is a high level of confidence in the credibility of the information.

Don't get hung-up on unprovable assertions :
Discussions of controversial issues are often de-railed by disagreements about statements of fact. If an individual introduces a "fact" that cannot be checked, the facilitator should take it off the table and encourage the discussion to move on.

Manage Dominators:
Don't let an individual participant shout-down or dominate the conversation. Actively intervene to ensure that everyone has a chance to speak.

Use conflict:
Interpersonal conflict (expressing like or dislike of an individual) is inappropriate and should be called out and shut down by the facilitator. However, conflict about ideas should be encouraged and seen as evidence of full engagement.

Get comfortable with ambiguity:
The most controversial issues are often those that are not easily resolved. The group will not likely come to consensus in a single session. Nothing will be resolved. Remember that the goal of DuTALK is to provide participants with an opportunity to learn how to discuss these issues. Solving a problem isn't as important as learning how to discuss them and gain understanding of multiple points of view.

Ground Rules for Discussion

- Listen Actively & Carefully
- Think Together About Goals
- Be Open to Changing Your Mind
- When Disagreement Occurs, Keep Talking
- Value One Another's Experiences
- Help to Develop Ideas
- Don't Waste Time on Unprovables
- Speak Your Mind Frequently

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