

2
IN A SERIES

WHAT IS
DIALOGUE?

Dialogue is a specific form of communication that encourages people with differing ideas to build meaningful relationships across difference through building generous and empathetic listening skills. Dialogue is about adding to the common pool of knowledge. Dr. Harold Saunders of the Dialogue Institute says “Dialogue is a process of genuine interaction through which human beings listen to each other deeply enough to be changed by what they learn.”

Some
dialogue
basics:

Dialogue happens when people with different opinions converse in order to seek mutual understanding.

Dialogue is about listening to other viewpoints, gaining new insights, perspective taking – seeing the world through another’s eyes. It asks you to hold multiple and competing perspectives at the same time.

Dialogue requires learning to listen generously, asking questions of others and committing to understanding the perspectives of others, even if not agreeing. It asks participants not to try to change others, but to allow themselves to be changed by what they hear.

Dialogue is a style of interactive communication that facilitates shared understanding rather than debate.

	DIALOGUE	DEBATE	DISCUSSION
GOAL	Grow together/add to the common pool of knowledge	Win an argument/prove the other person is wrong	Have a conversation, present ideas, often in academic setting.
GOAL	A form of communication between two or more people that is directed toward common understanding	A form of communication between two or more people where an issue is discussed and opposing arguments are put forward	A form of communication where ideas are presented, often in a clear, neutral way.
GOAL	Assumes many people have the answer and that only together can people find the solution	Assumes there is one right answer and that you have it.	Seeks new information and seeks neutral conclusions
GOAL	Is collaborative. Participants work together toward a common understanding	Is about proving someone else is wrong and winning an argument.	Gives answers, often in an academic environment
GOAL	Is about learning through listening to other people and discovering new ideas	Is about listening to find flaws and weaknesses in other people’s ideas.	Uses listening to find places of disagreement but to avoid conflict. Looks for rationality



BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES

2

WHAT IS DIALOGUE?

The Tips for Building Inclusive Communities

Series was designed to address questions from faculty, staff, students, and community members about how to create inclusive spaces in classrooms, meetings, on study abroad, in community settings and beyond. Every Tip in the series is designed to share basic details about different methods for creating inclusive communities in a way that is quickly accessible to the reader.

BUILDING INCLUSIVE COMMUNITIES is a university-wide initiative that reflects Michigan State University's core value of inclusion and its rich history in supporting the efforts of every student to realize their full potential through academic pursuit. Students, alumni, faculty, and staff carry this message forward, on campus and across the globe to help build inclusive communities where diversity and differences are acknowledged as strengths.

It is the mission of the Office for Inclusive Excellence and Impact to promote Building Inclusive Communities so that our differences will be acknowledged as our strength, so that we can be different together, and that our many voices sound together to form one will. The need to embrace and share this message has never been greater.

Why Build Inclusive Communities? When we participate in the process of Building Inclusive Communities we create the opportunity to see the world differently, in our research, in the work we pursue, in the classroom, in social relationships, as consumers, voters, partners, families, travelers, and more. Building Inclusive Communities starts with a frame of mind and a deep-seated understanding that inclusion is at the core of MSU's values and the very foundation of our life-long educational journey. But results don't occur overnight. It takes time and commitment to sustain. Together we will create a supportive and welcoming environment for all Spartans.

