

# From diatribe to dialogue



*Edgar Schein described dialogue as “a discipline for collective learning”*

Dialogue is aimed at fostering mutual insight and common purpose. The process involves listening with empathy, searching for common ground, exploring new ideas and perspectives, and bringing unexamined assumptions into the open. Dialogue is an exchange in which people discover something new.

The ability to engage in dialogue with others is a key skill in building positive relationships; especially in terms of leadership

*Jim Kouzes said that leadership “is about relationships, and strong relationships are built on mutual understanding. You can get to that mutual understanding only through conversation and dialogue”*

Dialogue is much more than a simple conversation or a discussion or debate and it is certainly not diatribe; dialogue is about “seeking a greater truth”; it is about getting beyond individual perceptions, interpretations, subjectivity and judgements and coming to a kind of shared understanding and meaning.

Dialogue has its roots in ancient Greek “Dialogos” Dia (through) and logos (words); it suggests an activity aimed at

eliciting meaning

*"Dialogue is an exchange in which people discover something new"*

Dialogue is a way of thinking and reflecting together. It is not something "you do to" other people; it is something "you do with" other people

Many people have the view that dialogue is something, a bit "wishy washy", that is about being "over polite" and about "giving in easily"; in fact, maintaining dialogue demands a certain strength and courage

*"Dialogue is about raising your words, not your voice and recognising that prejudice always obscures truth"*

Do not confuse dialogue with "**diatribe**"; this is about belittling others, name calling and personal attacks and leads invariably to persecutors & victims.

Do not confuse dialogue with "**debate**"; this is about arguing for a point of view, defending a set of assumptions and criticising the positions of others and leads invariably to winners & losers.

Do not confuse dialogue with "**discussion**"; this is about listening to speak, looking for loopholes, giving in begrudgingly and leads invariably to agreeing to differ.

**Dialogue** is about listening with respect, critical questioning and exploration without judgement and leads invariably to everyone learning.

*"The road to dialogue is often an uncomfortable and rocky ride"*

If you would like to learn some the techniques and methods to maintain dialogue in the face of diatribe do not hesitate to contact me at [boblarcher@boblarcher.com](mailto:boblarcher@boblarcher.com)

