

## The Dialogue Process

Not only talking about peace but also practicing peace.

When we assume the attitude of a learner and listen deeply, we open to the worlds of others, making possible bridges of understanding. We practice peace. As we learn to suspend our certainties and inquire into our assumptions and still speak from our hearts, connection and collaboration become more possible. We practice peace. It is not about being right or prevailing but about learning how to be with.

### Core Features of the Dialogue Process

- ❖ Create a “container”
- ❖ Adopt the stance of a learner
- ❖ Radical respect
- ❖ Openness
- ❖ Speak from the heart
- ❖ Listen deeply
- ❖ Slow down
- ❖ Suspend assumptions and certainties
- ❖ Practice a spirit of inquiry
- ❖ Advocate skillfully
- ❖ Embrace the paradox of differences
- ❖ Observe the observer

## Core Features of the Dialogue Process

- Create a 'container' - a space where it is safe to reveal our deep truths and inquire with the curiosity of a learner into the truths of others. ('container' derives from the Latin *con tenere*, meaning to hold together).
- Adopt the stance of a learner - this attitude enables us to be genuinely curious and to put aside our cultural conditioning to be "knowers." The Zen master Shunryu Suzuki had the following formulation: "In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few."
- Radical respect - I acknowledge the other person in his/ her essential being as worthy of respect. Respect is more active than tolerance: to the degree I am able I attempt to see the world from the perspective of the other person.
- Openness - I bring an open receptivity for new ideas, other perspectives. I am open to questioning long held habits, assumptions and beliefs.
- Speak from the heart - I speak that which truly engages me, that which is truly important to me. I do not speak in order to shine brilliantly, to theorize, or to make a speech. I am economical with words.
- Listen deeply - I listen to the other person without reservation, with empathic openness that invites the other person to reveal in trust her/ his unique world.
- Slow down - in dialogue we have the opportunity to become aware of where our automatic, knee-jerk mental and emotional reactions come from. Without slowing down our communication process, such an awareness is scarcely possible.
- Suspend assumptions and certainties - the differences in our beliefs, assumptions and interpretations provide the fuel for endless misunderstandings and conflicts. In dialogue we practice becoming aware of our assumptions and judgments and holding them lightly in 'suspension' so that we can observe and acknowledge them.
- Practice a spirit of inquiry - I put aside my role as "knower" and develop a genuine interest in that with which I am not yet familiar. I am able to pose genuine rather than rhetorical questions. I develop an attitude of curiosity, awareness and humility: "Please share with me your world."
- Advocate skillfully - this is an invitation to reveal the roots of my thinking and feelings. I don't just state my "end products" (conclusions), but I also reveal my "process" - the observations, assumptions, values and intentions which underlie my position.
- Embrace the paradox of differences - I become increasingly able to live in the creative tension that allows that both "this" and "that" can be true. I refrain from doing violence to a situation or a person by forcing it or him/her to conform to my picture of the world.
- Observe the observer - I become a witnessing observer to my own listening and speaking, and in so doing my fixed positions soften and transform. "Observed thought changes" - David Bohm.