

# Dialog, Deliberation, and Choice-creating\*

	<b>Dialog</b>	<b>Deliberation</b>	<b>Choice-creating*</b>
<b>The conversation is:</b>	An open-minded and open-hearted exploration of topics. People grow in knowledge, transform their sense of self, and build shared meaning.	A thoughtful weighing of options, where people try to be objective in seeking to influence others. Decisions are usually made through voting.	A collaborative, creative conversation about difficult or “impossible” issues, where people seek unanimous solutions — what’s best for all.
<b>The issue is:</b>	A general topic, theme or question, like “racism” or “leadership.” Usually this topic is predetermined.	A specific question that is carefully framed ahead of time along with predetermined options.	An ill-defined, complex, or impossible-seeming issue. Key is for participants to care about solving it.
<b>To establish the conversation:</b>	Requires each person to be committed to maintaining a spirit of inquiry, avoiding teaching or advocacy. Group guidelines help. People sit in a circle.	A respected, impartial authority convenes the meeting, sets the topic, identifies the options, provides balanced expert perspectives, and acts as neutral moderator.	Dynamic Facilitation (DF) is key. This allows each person’s natural responses to contribute to the solution, sparking shifts and breakthroughs. People sit in a U-shape facing four charts.
<b>The facilitator:</b>	Plays a minimal role, helping people establish and maintain the guidelines. Sometimes a “talking stick” is used.	Is a moderator—helping people adhere to the guidelines and follow the agenda, assuring completion of each step.	Is skilled in Dynamic Facilitation. She or he takes responsibility for the quality of talking and thinking in the group.
<b>The participants:</b>	Must be capable of holding to a spirit of inquiry and avoiding advocacy. The depth of dialog is limited by the least capable participant.	Are knowledgeable and able to hold a rational conversation. They can avoid being emotional and argumentative. The moderator helps.	Can be anyone who cares about the issue. Each person should be speaking authentically for him or herself and not represent a client or constituency.
<b>The results:</b>	Personal growth, shared understandings, and a sense of connectedness to life and humanity. Group decisions and actions are not the intent of dialogue and do not usually result.	Understanding the issues, the merits of the options, and the perspectives of others. Movement toward a decision, which usually results when deliberation is paired with voting or negotiation.	Unanimous choices, which may arise from breakthroughs, shifts in understanding, or new levels of trust and community. Also resulting is an empowered spirit of “We.”
<b>Relationship among these forms of thinking:</b>	A group can explore the issue and build trust through dialog, then deliberate and vote. At times dialog may shift into choice-creating.	Deliberation is judgmental so it should be separated from both dialog and choice-creating. At times deliberation may lead to choice-creating.	Key is to distinguish choice-creating from dialog and deliberation. When they are confused it closes doors of possibility, especially in the field of citizen engagement and democracy.

For more information about Dynamic Facilitation see \*[www.DynamicFacilitation.com](http://www.DynamicFacilitation.com); For more information about how distinguishing choice-creating can yield breakthroughs in the field of democracy see <http://www.WiseDemocracy.org>