

APPENDIX A

DIALOGUE

Conversation Techniques*

Dialogue is:

- deeply reflective listening and speaking
- speaking when truly moved
- “suspending” one’s assumptions and “noble certainties” by holding them up for examination
- speaking into the group rather than to individuals, listening in the silence for the shared flow of meaning

Listening:

- Listen empathetically, from your heart, without judgment or blame.
- Listen without the urge to argue, counter, dissuade, or fix.
- Listen with equal respect to everyone, regardless of status or roles.
- Listen for each person’s special contribution to deeper understanding.
- Listen for the sake of learning rather than to confirm your current thinking.
- Listen to the quality of your own thinking.
- Listen from the collective, from the community, from the whole.

Speaking:

- Speak from your heart, from your experience, from the moment.
- Speak when you are truly “moved” rather than to fill the silence.
- Ask questions from a place of genuine curiosity, wondering, or not knowing, rather than to make a point.
- Speak into the circle, into the whole group, into the stream of shared meaning.
- Avoid cross talk – acknowledge others by speaking about their contributions. One-on-one conversations exclude others and turn the group into spectators.

Dialogue can open us to a deeper collective inquiry into our own thinking processes and the nature of thought itself. It can also open us to our own inner wisdom as we inquire together into the heart of what matters to us.

* Compiled by Rev. Randy Williams of Mineola, Texas, based on the work of David Bohm, Peter Senge, William Isaacs, and others.