

Dialogue Group Leader Resources

“Getting to know you” – get the answers and then introduce your partner to the group

Preferred name _____

Institution _____ Position _____

Professional interests _____

Distinguishing look / habit / apparel _____

BIG QUESTION for Wakonse _____

Favorite music or books _____ Hobby or diversion _____

Dialogue Group Leader Resources

Facilitating Group Discussions: Handling Challenges in Discussions

The group does not want to discuss-

- The topic for discussion may not be broad enough or engaging enough to draw in participants. Plan topics ahead of time and have several “plan b” topics in reserve so you can refocus the discussion if necessary.
- You may not have waited long enough after posing the topic. Count to 10 before jumping in to talk. Give discussants a chance to think about the topic you have posed and they will be more likely to respond.

An individual(s) is dominating the discussion-

- Turn the discussion back to the group (e.g., “That’s an interesting idea. Would others like to comment on that?”)
- Acknowledge the comment but suggest that it would be more appropriate for a lengthy discussion of this topic (e.g., “Those ideas are very interesting but deserve a lot more attention than we can give them today. Maybe we can discuss them (over dinner, after class, etc.).”)
- Talk to this person privately and let them know that while you value his/her comments you want to ask his/her help to encourage others in the group to participate
- Explicitly indicate that you want to hear from someone that has not had an opportunity to contribute to the discussion yet.

An individual(s) seldom or never talks-

- Watch for cues that an individual wants to join in the discussion (e.g., leaning forward, opening his/her mouth, making eye contact, reacting to a statement made by another) and ask for a comment (“Mike, you seemed to want to get into this discussion. What do you think?”)
- Show interest in this individual outside of the discussion to draw him/her out. This will be likely to make this individual more comfortable and may encourage discussion. You also learn about things this individual is an expert in and can ask him/her to contribute to the discussion on these topics.
- Put your group into pairs and ask them to answer a question. These smaller groups can report. Or you can have participants write a response to a question before asking them to contribute their responses. Discussants may be more willing to share an idea because writing it down makes it seem more important.
- Establish a supportive environment for discussion that will encourage participation. Participants should not feel like their comments are put down or that they are not allowed to disagree.
- Make sure that you are not dominating the discussion. Some participants withdraw from the discussion when they feel that others are controlling the floor. Encourage the group to direct comments to the group and not to you. Use your eye contact to look at other group members rather than focusing entirely on the speaker. This will cause the speaker to also direct his/her comments to the group rather than to you.

Dialogue Group Leader Resources

There is a lull in the discussion-

- It may be a good time for a summary that synthesizes what has been covered.
- Assess whether this is the end of the conversation and you need to introduce a new topic or whether this is a breather that will lead to fresh discussion of the topic.
- If there are a lot of lulls in your discussions, you need to give some thought to how you are posing your topics. A good discussion topic is one that offers an open ended problem to solve, a task to complete, a judgment to reach, a decision to make, a list to create---it is something that does not have a simple answer, asks for closure, and benefits from discussion.

There is heated disagreement over an issue-

- Keep the discussion focused on the issues. Make it clear that name-calling is not allowed under any circumstances.
- Play devil's advocate on both sides of the issue.
- If you anticipate that your group will be discussing controversial issues, set up ground rules for handling disagreements that you can refer to when you face problems.

The group is wandering from topic to topic or discussing irrelevant topics:

- Refocus the group by clarifying the task.
- It may be time to change the topic or go to a summary if the group is off topic. It is better to debrief before the group has started to meander.

Sources Consulted:

Bean, J. C. (1996). *Engaging ideas: The professor's guide to integrating writing, critical thinking, and active learning in the classroom*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

McKeachie, W. J. (1999). *McKeachie's teaching tips: Strategies, research, and theory for college and university teachers*. 10th ed. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Middendorf, J., & Kalish, A. (1994). *Discussion techniques*. (Workshop 3). Revised edition. Bloomington: IU Teaching Resources Center.

Dialogue Group Leader Resources

Dialogue Group agenda ideas

1. Getting to know you – fill out questionnaire, pair up to learn about another person, then introduce that person to the rest of the group. Hand out “first day survey” questions – can be a useful exercise with a small class.
2. *Strengths Finder* – ask people to share one or more of their strengths, try to determine what are common items in the group, ask which item was a surprise, etc. People may be surprised that they do not share more strengths.
3. Seven Deadly Sins of Teaching (see handout)
4. Reactions to large group presentations
5. Book discussion – if many group members have read the same book. Or if you can highlight some ideas from a book that can generate discussion.
6. Workshop – I have done some activities from “Beginning a Teaching Statement” if the group seems interested. They always generate discussion.
7. Dinner Sunday (with another group?) Start early on this [prepare a meal or camp can prepares burgers & dogs; see Joe]
8. Last session – goal sharing – everyone who wishes can share a goal they have written on their sheet.

Possible Discussion Topics (from Joe?)

- Class lecture and discussion techniques
- Time management
- Strategies for achieving tenure and promotion
- Handling political issues in the department
- Maintaining a balanced life as a professor
- Identifying useful resources at the University
- Dealing with ethical problems
- Handling student complaints and student dishonesty
- Planning a programmatic research strategy
- Dealing with difficult colleagues
- Implementing high-involvement classroom learning strategies
- Critical career choices in academe
- Navigating the academic publishing process
- Resolving work-family conflict
- Making effective service contributions
- How to be a “good colleague”
- Contributing to the building of community in academe

Dialogue Group Leader Resources

A light-hearted, nondenominational session, based on a 2002 Lilly Conference session by Neil Fleming of Lincoln U. (New Zealand) and Tom Angelo of the U. of Akron. Their goals were to

- Illustrate how the seven deadlies are embodied in pedagogical peccadilloes and
- Seek redemption through uplifting strategies based on the Seven Heavenly Virtues

See also this article – Eble, Kenneth. "Seven deadly sins of teaching." In *The Aims of College Teaching*, San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Inc., Publishers, 1983. (9 pages) . His seven are:

- Arrogance
- Dullness
- Rigidity
- Insensitivity
- Vanity
- Self-indulgence
- Hypocrisy

A quote from the article: "Pride is clearly operative in most of these; Sloth should probably be included, though, like Lust and Anger, I will leave it as more appropriate among humankind's general sins. I am not arguing for professorial exclusiveness here; sin is such that, however we classify it, there is plenty to go around."

There's a great illustration (below) by Roz Chast in the January 7, 2002 *New Yorker*.



Steps in the session

1. Participants, own their own, try to list as many of the seven deadly sins as they can
2. As a group, list all the sins people came up with
3. Try to get a group consensus on seven, then reveal the "correct" sins
4. On their own, participants think of teaching "sins" – possibly paralleling the deadlies
5. List a few
6. Provide a list of the heavenly virtues
7. Ask for ideas of how they translate into teaching virtues
8. Ask for other ideas of key teaching virtues

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The "real" seven deadly sins

1. Pride (also Vanity or Conceit) – excessive belief in one's abilities or high opinion of oneself
2. Envy (Jealousy) – desire for another's possessions, traits, or situation
3. Gluttony (Excess) – overindulgence in eating or drinking
4. Lust (Covetousness) – overwhelming desire or craving for the pleasures of the body
5. Anger (Wrath, Rage) – vehement exasperation; indignation
6. Greed (Avarice, Materialism) – excessive desire for more than one needs or deserves
7. Sloth (Laziness, Idleness, Apathy) – avoidance of physical or spiritual work

The seven heavenly virtues

1. Faith – belief, trust, conviction
2. Hope – reliance, expectation
3. Charity – generosity, helpfulness, mercy
4. Fortitude – strength, courage, endurance, resoluteness
5. Justice – fairness, equity, rightness
6. Temperance – moderation, restraint, self-mastery, frugality, sobriety
7. Prudence – wisdom, carefulness, thoughtfulness, discretion

The possible lists for teaching below came from a session at Wakonse.

Deadly sins of teaching

- Ignorance
- Apathy
- Arrogance
- Egotism
- Sarcasm
- Favoritism
- Rigidity
- Impatience
- Verbosity
- Condescension
- Inconsistency

Heavenly virtues of teaching

- Preparedness
- Respectfulness
- Availability
- Empathy
- Reliability
- Humility
- Fairness
- Clarity
- Tolerance

Dialogue Group Leader Resources

Teacher

***Identify a great teacher you once had in college or before.
Why does that person stand out or bring back memories?***

Student

***Describe a student (real or imaginary) who valued your class.
How would s/he describe your teaching or remember most about
it?***

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Learning

Describe a metaphor for teaching, learning, or the classroom.

Class

Describe a memorable class that really “made your day” ... in a good way.

How did you know it was a success? What keeps it in your memory?