

# COMMUNITY DIALOGUE:

Bring your community together  
with a values-based dialogue



We are inviting community groups to host values-based dialogues to  
LISTEN ---> CONNECT ---> UNDERSTAND ---> LEARN ---> GROW

# Calling all community members!

World Values Day takes place on October 18th 2018.

We are inviting community groups to host values-based dialogues  
to LISTEN ---> CONNECT ---> UNDERSTAND ---> LEARN ---> GROW

**WHAT** Meet face-to-face, in a circle to listen, talk and think together.

**HOW** Bring together members of your community for about three hours.

**WHY** As local and global communities, we are being held back by divisive, argumentative and accusatory ways of communicating. Dialogue presents another way of communicating with each other; allowing us to connect through meaning and values and to generate new ways of thinking about the people and the world around us.



**Creating**  
**Meaning**



# So you want to host a community dialogue?

## STEP 1

PREPARE YOURSELF: Read this guide for tips on how to facilitate your dialogue.

## STEP 2

PREPARE YOUR SPACE: You will need a comfortable, private room with enough space to seat everyone on chairs in a circle.

## STEP 3

GATHER YOUR PARTICIPANTS: You will need approximately 5 - 25 willing participants.

## STEP 4

HOST YOUR DIALOGUE: You will need a minimum of 2.5 hours to host your dialogue.

## STEP 5

SHARE YOUR OUTCOMES WITH US: Share your experience on social media and our blog.

"I give a meaning to the word 'dialogue' that is somewhat different from what is commonly used...a flow of meaning in the whole group, out of which will emerge some new understanding. It's something new, which may not have been in the starting point at all. It's something creative. And this shared meaning is the 'glue' or 'cement' that holds people and societies together."

-David Bohm

# Values, dialogue and community

**WORLD VALUES DAY** is an opportunity to think about our most deeply held values and to act on them. Staying true to our values and acting on them has never been more important. This year's core theme is about putting our values into action in our communities.

**VALUES** are the things that are important to us, the foundation of our lives. They are deeply held principles that guide our choices and behaviours and influence our emotions. Values are the core of who we are. They are our motivators, our drivers, the passion in our hearts and the reason why we do the things we do.

**DIALOGUE** is a way for people to come together and share meaning. Values provide the foundation for much of the meaning in our lives. By coming together to talk and think about values we can connect on a deeper level. We can recognise that sometimes there is a value-action gap; that it can be hard to live our values in an often challenging, complex world. By creating time and space to communicate with each other about our values we can begin to rediscover why they are so important to us and how we can better live and act with them to create more harmonious communities for everyone.

**COMMUNITY** can be based on geography, those that support an issue or cause, intergenerational, organisational, or shared hobbies. There is something that binds you together, through common interests, values, and a sense that it is important enough for you to care about and give your time to.

When something is important to us, very often we have different reasons for its importance. Without good communication it can be challenging to express this importance within the group, or to people outside of the group. This is why we need dialogue: in the same way that possessing a strong sense of values can strengthen community, being in dialogue together can also strengthen community.

We tend to jump to defend what is important to us. When we defend an opinion we inhibit our ability to be able to 'think together' because our energy and focus is going into defending, we become closed. In dialogue we need to be able to stay open, noticing what is occurring in us, whilst bringing attention to what is being said by others and the group. We all have things that are important to us, and these are shaped by past experiences as well as familial, cultural and social framing. Therefore, it is important to realise that very often our opinions are intrinsically tied up with our sense of self and identity. We fear that if our opinions are challenged, our very sense of being and who we are is challenged also. Through dialogue we are able to see ourselves as a unique part of a whole community, to understand that what we see in others, whether we like it or not, is also in us. We welcome all thoughts and feelings because to dismiss, ignore or exclude something or someone is to fragment the community, and deny something, if only a potentiality, that is also within us.

Think about the potential of your community and what you would like to apply it to, to improve the lives of yourself and others.





There are times when monologue can be useful, or even inspiring. However, we have all experienced having to listen to the same voice, say the same thing, over, and over again! We don't always need an 'expert' to tell us the answer. Sometimes we need to think and speak for ourselves and with each other. Not to be the passive recipients of *information*, but the active co-creators of *knowledge*.



Ahhh, debate! Perhaps historically a tool to hear two sides of an issue, conducted with respect and intelligence; these days we are much more used to a style of 'communication' that is predominately arguing, insulting and not listening to what the other person has to say. What do we actually learn from listening to two people trying to dominate and 'win' over each other? And more importantly, what are we losing?

WAYA

DIFFERENT WE

COMMUNICATE



We all enjoy a good discussion but how many times have you been stuck in a conversation that is seemingly avoiding the real issues at hand out of politeness or fear? Discussions can lack structure and facilitation, often making them feel like a waste of time.

In today's complex times we need to come together in **DIALOGUE** to...LISTEN ---> CONNECT ---> UNDERSTAND ---> LEARN ---> GROW

We can make the time and space to think together about things that are important to us. Communities share common interests, and they give us a sense of belonging and participation. We can also find this sense in dialogue together.

We often get stuck; stuck saying the same things, thinking the same thoughts or acting the same way because we can't get beyond these modes of communication to a deeper meaning and understanding.

**DIALOGUE** allows us to reach this deeper level, and create new ways of thinking by sharing meaning together.



The core values of a dialogue may also be some of the core values of your community

## RESPECT

In a dialogue we aim to listen to others with respect and the intention to understand. By listening without judgement we can empathise and connect with others.

## OPENNESS

Dialogue requires us to be open and curious. In dialogue we bring attention and awareness to our feelings and thoughts and how they influence our reactions to others.

## TRUST

We participate in dialogue with the spirit of fellowship and trust. This requires that we trust ourselves and others to speak and listen with the values of a dialogue.

## INCLUSION

In a dialogue everybody is welcome and included. It isn't necessary that people be convinced to have the same view. We don't exclude opinions, even if we don't agree.

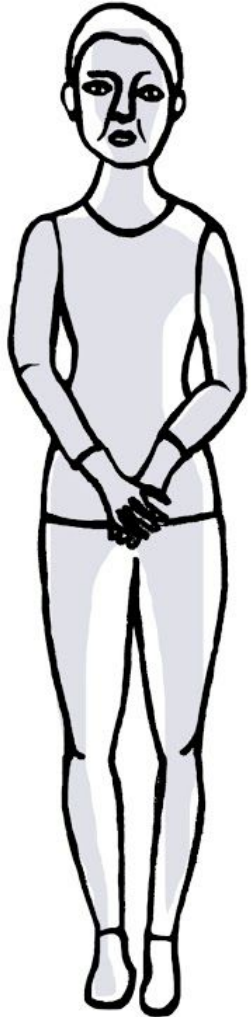
## EQUALITY

There is no hierarchy in a dialogue: each person participates. We all have a unique set of experiences to share, and these are of equal value to the meaning of the group.



# What is the benefit of dialogue?

## Individuals...



...can feel valued by participating, being listened to, seen and accepted



...can understand themselves better by reflecting upon and speaking their thoughts



...can understand others better by listening without judgement, to different points of view and other people's experiences

*"Treating the people around us with extraordinary respect means seeing them for the potential that they carry within them. I have heard another version of this story expressed as a practice: Treat the person next to you as a teacher. What is it that they have to teach you that you do not now know?" - Bill Isaacs*

## Groups...



...can move beyond conflict and challenges by uncovering assumptions and unconscious biases



...can gain insights and spark ideas that help form solutions that benefit everyone



...can improve relationships by building trust, empathy and understanding

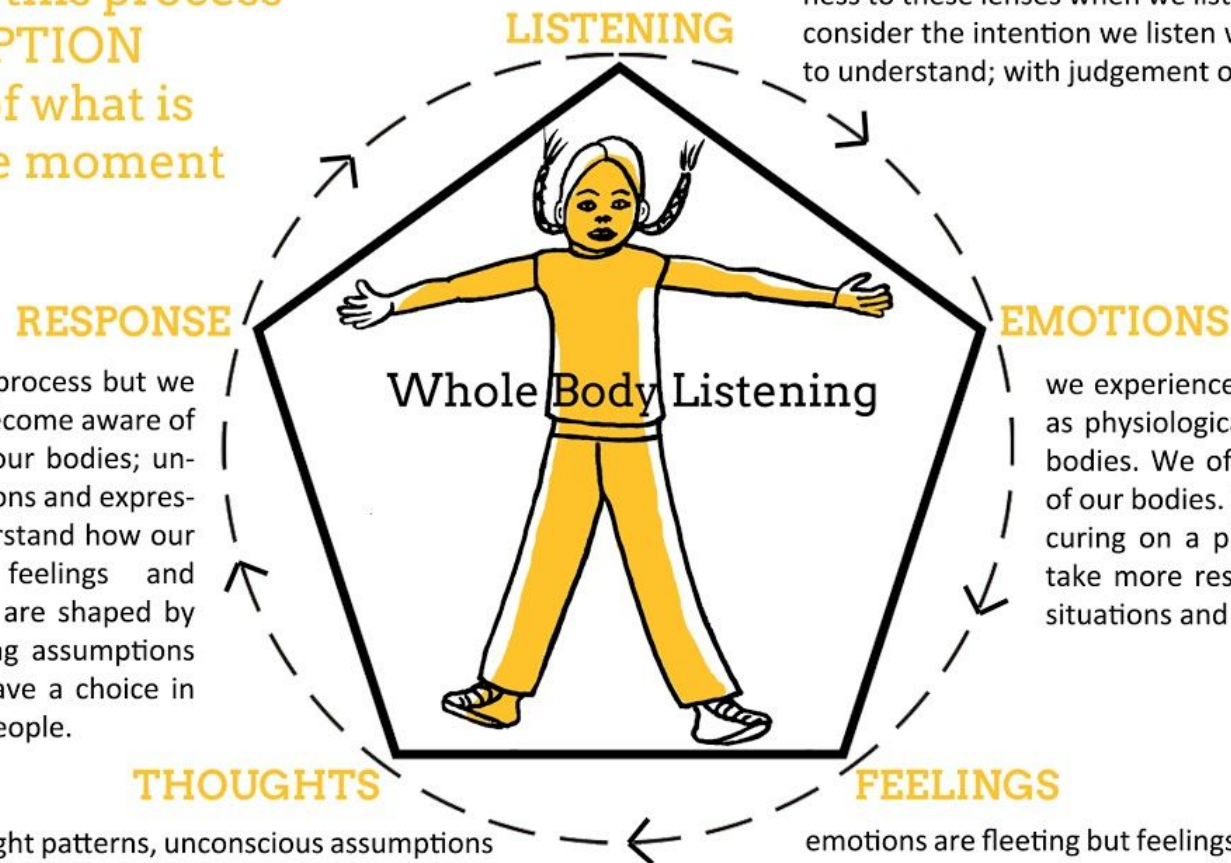




# Cultivating attention and awareness

In dialogue we call this process  
**PROPRIOCEPTION**  
an awareness of what is  
happening in the moment

very often we listen through different lenses, shaped by our cultural, educational, political etc experiences. In dialogue we bring awareness to these lenses when we listen. In dialogue we also take time to consider the intention we listen with; are we listening to respond or to understand; with judgement or with empathy.



it takes practice to slow down this process but we can learn to notice how we listen; become aware of what sensations we experience in our bodies; understand these responses are emotions and expressions of met or unmet needs; understand how our emotional experiences create feelings and thoughts; and how these thoughts are shaped by previous experiences and underlying assumptions and beliefs. In slowing down we have a choice in how we respond to situations and people.

we experience what we label as emotions, firstly as physiological sensations and responses in our bodies. We often ignore this natural intelligence of our bodies. If we take time to notice what is occurring on a physical level in our bodies we can take more responsibility for how we respond to situations and how to meet our needs

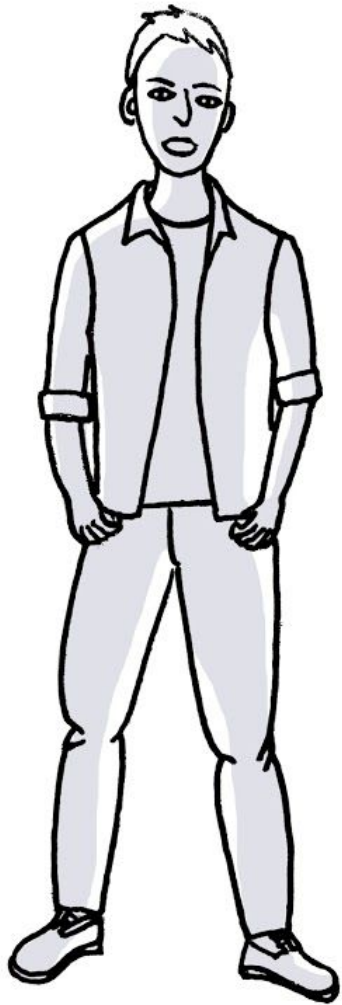
we often operate with habitual thought patterns, unconscious assumptions and biases. These can stop us from looking at each situation with a fresh perspective and thinking. In dialogue we inquire into past experiences that have shaped our thoughts and feelings, and make space for new thinking

emotions are fleeting but feelings can stay with us if we don't give adequate space to feel what it is we are feeling and understand why. When we accept our emotions and process them, we then have a choice of how we feel about the situation and how we will respond

Dialogue is not a form of therapy but it can be healing for participants due the connection it creates. It's primary purpose is to inquire into how thought contributes to the creation of the problems we face as individuals and societies. We rarely take the time and space to slow down, listen, understand and reflect. This process starts with ourselves. When we care deeply about something it can create strong emotional reactions and responses in us. By bringing attention and awareness to this process we can start to inquire into the underlying values, assumptions, past experiences and beliefs that shape our habitual thought responses, and create space for these to transform and evolve.



# Tips for facilitators



- ♥ remain neutral and calm
- ♥ be aware of any potential triggers or sensitive topics personal to you
- ♥ set yourself an intention of how you want to hold the space for others
- ♥ be clear on the process at the start to manage participant expectations
- ♥ be yourself- work with a facilitation style that feels authentic to you
- ♥ if things get heated don't be afraid to pause for a moments silent reflection
- ♥ natural pauses and silence are welcome in a dialogue, don't rush to fill them
- ♥ in well practised groups everybody is responsible for facilitation
- ♥ as facilitator you can take a 'bystander' role and offer reflection on what has been said and what themes are emerging

*"How successful am I at listening to and speaking with myself?"*  
-Bill Isaacs

# Ideas for dialogue themes

- ♥ bring together young and old members of your community for an intergenerational dialogue, sharing experiences and perspectives across generations and improving relationships and understanding
- ♥ explore your community values and reflect on them personally and as a group to share and align meaning and discuss how to live and action them as shared values
- ♥ co-inquire into a particular issue that you are facing as a community and look at the contributing factors systemically, listening to all perspectives on the issue
- ♥ co-create ideas on new community initiatives. Develop these from a foundation of shared values and how the project can benefit community members
- ♥ host a dialogue to welcome new members to your community or to understand issues affecting specific demographics, listen, understand and build trusted relationships



# Dialogue planning - a suggested framework

<b>Welcome</b>	Ensure that you prepare the room before people arrive and be present when people arrive to give them a friendly welcome. You want people to feel comfortable and included from the start to contribute to their feeling of safety throughout the event.
<b>Introduction</b> approx 5 - 10 minutes	Once everyone has arrived and is seated in the circle introduce yourself, share some information about World Values Day and a bit about the process and principles of a dialogue practice. Keep it brief as you want to maintain a consistent level of energy and awareness from your participants. However, do ask if there are any clarifying questions at this stage.
<b>Mindfulness</b> approx 5 minutes	I like to start my dialogues with a short mindfulness exercise, you may have someone in the group that is happy to lead this or you could listen to a short recorded practice. It is not essential but it helps people arrive in the space and in their bodies, preparing them to listen and focus with a different quality of attention than their everyday life.
<b>Check-in</b> approx 1 - 2 minutes per person	A 'check-in' is a quick way to ensure that everyone can offer their voice from the beginning, to hear names if the group does not know each other, and to start group connection. You are free to think of a check-in question that suits you, a simple 'how are you feeling' works well, but remember that it needs to be brief, this is not an opportunity for people to give lengthy answers at this point.
<b>Individual framing exercise</b>	To help warm up the thinking of the group and help make people feel comfortable and safe to speak it can be helpful to have two short exercises, one that participants can do alone, and one in pairs before coming back to the group to start the dialogue. See separate 'Framing Exercises Ideas'
<b>Partner framing exercise</b>	See separate 'Framing Exercises Ideas'
<b>Dialogue</b> approx 45 - 90 minutes	You are now ready to go into the dialogue itself. Invite people to share reflections from the framing exercises. You have the option of doing this in another check-in style round, or leave it open to whoever has the desire and energy to speak first. Remember that silence in a dialogue is invited and encouraged. People must not talk over each other, no matter how excited or agitated they are!
<b>Check-out</b> approx 1 - 2 minutes per person	To end a dialogue you can offer a 'check-out' which is the same process as the check-in: an opportunity for everyone to speak and share their final reflections. Again go round in a circle, perhaps starting first yourself and share briefly what your biggest takeaway or reflection has been from what you have heard and experience.
<b>End</b>	You may want to offer a symbolic gesture to everyone as a thank you for taking part. This can be a card with an inspirational and relevant quote on it, or maybe a small food offering. You may want to provide time for people to write any personal reflections. If the dialogue was challenging you may want to offer to people a stretch or shake of their bodies before they leave the room.



# Dialogue Guidelines

It can be useful to read these guidelines during your introduction to the dialogue. Go around the circle, one person reading one sentence in turn. The text is taken from David Bohm's book 'On Dialogue' and encapsulates the essence of a dialogue practice

- ♥ Be relaxed
- ♥ Be non-judgemental
- ♥ Be curious
- ♥ Listen
- ♥ A dialogue is a direct face-to-face encounter
- ♥ Dialogue is something creative
- ♥ There shall be no "speaking at each other"
- ♥ We aim to share our opinions without hostility
- ♥ Can each one of us be aware of the subtle fear and pleasure sensations that "block" his or her ability to listen freely
- ♥ In a dialogue everybody wins; there shall be no attempt to gain points or to make your particular opinion dominate
- ♥ Accept that an opinion is an assumption; it is important to see that the different opinions that you have are the result of past thought
- ♥ Can each participant try to suspend their assumptions; do not judge them as good or bad
- ♥ We will share our judgements and assumptions with the spirit of fellowship and trust
- ♥ It isn't necessary that everybody be convinced to have the same view
- ♥ Each person shall participate; partake of the whole meaning of the group and take part
- ♥ We shall test the traditions of what it means to be human
- ♥ We shall make something in common, by creating something new together



# Dialogue framing exercises

## Framing exercise 1: individual

### Survive/Thrive lists

On a piece of paper ask participants to write in two columns all the things they need to survive and all the things they need to thrive. Give them a time limit, 2 - 5 minutes.

### List the qualities

Ask participants to draw and describe the qualities of an ideal community member. Give them a time limit, 2 - 3 minutes

### Freewrite

Ask participants to write the word 'community' and then give them 5 minutes to freewrite - explain this is to write continuously without removing their pen or overthinking.

### Play-doh/drawing

Ask participants to create out of playdoh or draw a symbol that represents their community or a value that is important to them. Advise them not to overthink and give them a time limit of 2 - 3 minutes. You can also invite participants to place their object or drawing in the centre of the circle and say a few words about it.

### Choose an object/image

Take in a random selection of found objects or images, enough for one per person and ask participants to select one and spend a couple of minutes reflecting on what it symbolises to them about their community or a value that is important to them. You can also invite participants to place their object or image in the centre of the circle and explain what it symbolises to them.

## Framing exercise 2: partner

### Survive/Thrive part II

In partners or small groups ask each person to share their list of Survive and Thrive. Give them 5 - 10 minutes to discuss the similarities and differences. Ask them to identify any values that are present in the lists.

### Qualities part II

In partners or small groups ask each person to share their drawing /description. Give them 5 - 10 minutes to discuss the similarities and differences. Ask them to identify any values that are present.

### Listening

In pairs one person will speak for 5 minutes about what community means to them, without any interruption while their partner listens in silence. After 5 minutes they swap and repeat the exercise. Afterwards they can reflect on what it was like to be listened to without interruption for that length of time and what it was like to listen without responding.

### Paper tear

Provide each pair with a blank piece of A4 paper. Instruct them to take it in turns to tear a piece off the paper and place it down in front of them until the paper has been totally torn. This must be done in silence! After they have finished invite them to reflect on what the exercise was like. Then give them two minutes to write values that are important to them-one per piece of paper- and again in silence place the pieces of paper down in front of them. Provide a couple of minutes for final reflection on the values shared and the overall exercise.



# Working with challenges

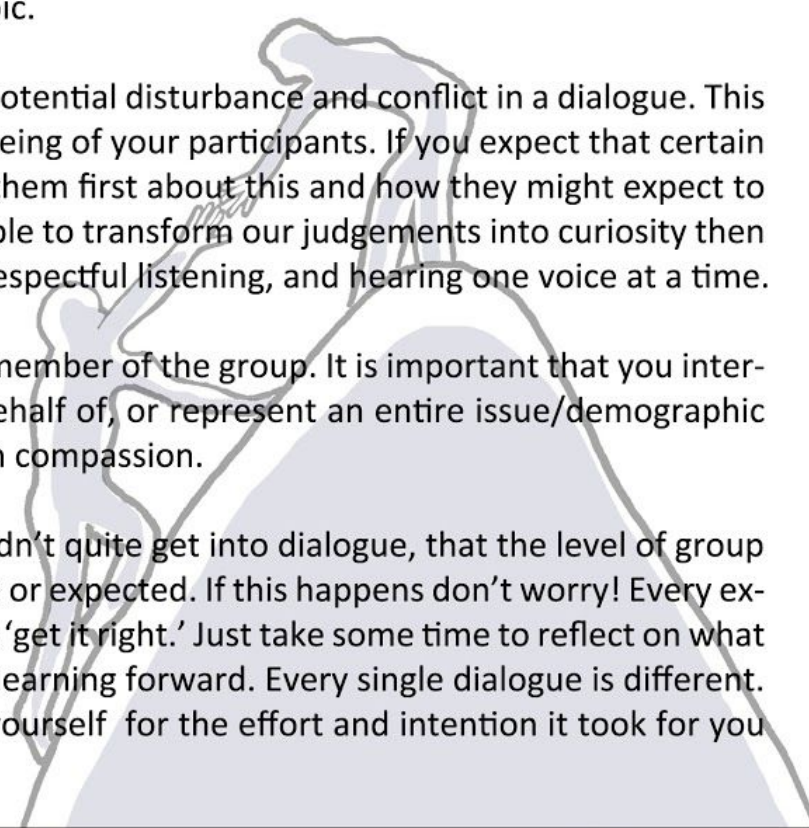
**People talking too much/Not hearing from some members/Interruption and speaking over each other-** this can happen when some people feel more used to and confident to speak, or have come with a lot of things they want to share. It is sometimes useful to state at the beginning that if people notice themselves speaking too much or too little, that they have a responsibility to listen or voice more. Alternatively, you can introduce a 'talking stick' and either do a round of check-ins at any point, to ask what people are thinking and feeling in the moment, or pass it to someone that looks like they have wanted to say something but haven't been able to get a word in!

**Stuck in discussionary mode-** this can happen if people are not connecting on what is being said at an emotional level. If people are clarifying details, asking about the process or asking individual participants direct and specific questions ask for a moment of reflection to think why this might be. Discussions can also arise when a group is stuck in 'politeness' mode, they may go back, forth and around a topic that seems a little trivial to some, because they are trying to arrive at the deeper meaning. As a facilitator you have two options, one to allow the discussion to flow and continue until either they arrive at the deeper meaning, or a disturbance has been created in another member of the group, or to intervene and inquire more directly into why the group is 'stuck' on this topic.

**Disturbance and moving through it -** it is important that participants are not afraid of potential disturbance and conflict in a dialogue. This requires a degree of psychological safety as you of course need to be aware of the wellbeing of your participants. If you expect that certain members might become triggered by issues explored in a dialogue perhaps speak with them first about this and how they might expect to react and respond. In dialogue conflict is seen as an opportunity for learning. If we are able to transform our judgements into curiosity then we can begin to understand what is to be learnt from a group in conflict. This requires respectful listening, and hearing one voice at a time.

**Personal attacks -** occasionally someone might direct a comment directly at one other member of the group. It is important that you intervene gently but firmly if this happens, pointing out that one person cannot speak on behalf of, or represent an entire issue/demographic and remind them that in dialogue we try to listen and speak without judgement and with compassion.

**'It didn't feel like a dialogue' -** sometimes it just happens that you may feel like you didn't quite get into dialogue, that the level of group listening and thinking wasn't as deep, meaningful and connected as you would have liked or expected. If this happens don't worry! Every experience is an opportunity to learn and grow, and like most things in life, we don't always 'get it right.' Just take some time to reflect on what might have stopped the group from getting into dialogue, and how you might take that learning forward. Every single dialogue is different. Also take the time to practice some compassion and kindness towards yourself: thank yourself for the effort and intention it took for you to hold the space, and thank your participants for taking part.




# Sharing your dialogue outcomes with World Values Day


Be part of a global movement!

Tell us what values were lived out in your dialogue experience or take a photo of your group after the dialogue and share it or share a video about your experience on

 Twitter @ValuesDay

 Instagram @valuesday

 Facebook ValuesDay

 YouTube World Values Day

Use the hashtag **#worldvaluesday**

Want to contribute a blog post? Send it to

[info@worldvaluesday.com](mailto:info@worldvaluesday.com)



# A note on dialogue

The practice of dialogue that we have been referring to and working with throughout this resource is Bohm Dialogue. David Bohm (1917-1992) was a theoretical physicist, most known for his theory of the implicate and explicate order. In his later life he developed a philosophy of dialogue which grew out of his observation that one of the reasons for the many crisis's we face as a global society is fragmentation. Our societies, organisations and even ourselves are fragmented; we have lost sight of the whole and that all living things are interconnected, interdependent and interrelated.

*“though all parts of mankind are fundamentally interdependent and interrelated, the primary and overriding kind of significance given to the distinctions between people, family, profession, nation, race, religion, ideology, and so on, is preventing human beings from working together for the common good, or even for survival.”*

-David Bohm

Although it is possible to be dialogic with oneself or one other, dialogue is a practice of mostly group communication. It is a way of creating new thinking by sharing meaning. Bohm was interested in the creation of meaning, believing that meaning is the ‘cement’ that holds society together.

As Bohm’s contemporary Einstein famously said, “we cannot solve our problems with the same thinking we used to create it.” This is why Bohm recognised that what we so desperately need is new thinking, and that we struggle to arrive at this new thinking because we do not create the time and space to come together and meet in a meaningful way or create the conditions in which we can allow new thinking to occur. Values are so intrinsic to a dialogue practice and combined they provide us with a potentially powerful tool for positive change. Thank you for taking the time to read this resource and hopefully create meaning in your own community through values-based dialogues.

Recommended reading if you interested in finding out more about Bohm Dialogue:

On Dialogue, David Bohm, 1996

Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together, William Isaacs, 1999

Dialogue Rediscover the Transforming Power of Conversation, Linda Ellinor and Glenna Gerard, 1998

*“It is a process which explores an unusually wide range of human experience: our closely held values; the nature and intensity of emotions; the patterns of our thought processes; the function of memory; the importance of inherited cultural myths; and the manner in which our neurophysiology structures moment-to-moment experience...Such an inquiry necessarily calls into question deeply held assumptions regarding culture, meaning and identity.”*

-David Bohm

