The Differences between Dialogue and Debate

Debate	Dialogue
assumes there is a right answer – and I have it.	assumes that many people have pieces of the answer and that together, they can craft a solution.
is combative – participants attempt to prove the other side wrong.	is collaborative – participants work together toward common understanding
is about winning.	is about exploring common good.
entails listening to find flaws and make counter arguments.	entails listening to understand and find meaning and agreement.
I defend my assumptions as truth.	I reveal my assumptions for re-evaluation.
I critique the other side's position.	I re-examine all positions.
I defend my own views against those of others.	I admit that others' thinking can improve my own.
I search for weaknesses in others' positions.	I search for strength and value in other's positions.
I seek a conclusion or vote that ratifies my position.	I discover new options.

From *The Magic of Dialogue* by Daniel Yankelovich

Listen to learn.
Speak to share from your own experience.
The goal is to learn as much as possible from others.

Behaviors That Support Dialogue

Suspension of judgment while listening and speaking.

When we listen and suspend judgment, we open the door to expanded understanding. When we speak without judgment, we open the door for others to listen to us.

Respect for differences.

Our respect is grounded in the belief that everyone has an essential contribution to make and is to be honored for the perspective which only they can bring.

Role and status suspension.

Again, in dialogue, all participants and their contributions are absolutely essential to developing an integrated whole view. No one perspective is more important than any other. Dialogue is about power with, versus power over or under.

Balancing inquiry and advocacy.

In dialogue we *inquire* to discover and understand one another's perspectives and ideas, and we *advocate* to offer our own for consideration. The intention is to bring forth and make visible assumptions and relationships, and to gain new insight and understanding.

We often tend to advocate to convince others of our positions. Therefore, a good place to start with this guideline is to practice bringing more inquiry into the conversation.

Focus on learning.

Our intention is to learn from each other, to expand our view and understanding, not to evaluate and determine who has the "best" view.

When we are focused on learning, we tend to ask more questions, try new things. We are willing to disclose our thinking so that we can see both what is working for us and what we might want to change. We want to hear from all parties so that we can *gain the advantage of differing perspectives*.

Multicultural Communications Competencies

(Dr. Mark A. Hicks; mhicks@meadville.edu)

- Can listen and behave without imposing your own values and assumptions on others.
- Can engage in self-reflection. The ability to move beyond one's own biases.
- Can communicate without being argumentative and competitive. Can reach shared outcomes without manipulating or wearing down others with compelling evidence.
- Can be curious about the other person. Seeks solutions that work across shared interests.