

Myrna Lewis, founder of the Lewis method of Deep Democracy



## Key messages

- Deep democracy is a method and a philosophy that advocates a decision-making process in which the wisdom of the minority is included in the majority decision. Therefore, its main value is that you don't get any latent resistance and/or sabotage, which is often the reason why change and innovation fails. Metaphor: the iceberg with the majority voices above the waterline and the minority voices (latent resistance) below the waterline.
  - Deep Democracy is an effective way to prevent narrow-mindedness and to secure out-of-the-box thinking and engagement.
  - Deep Democracy offers an alternative to endless meetings where people are afraid to put everything on the table, or meetings that end in authoritarian decision-making.
  - The basic principle of Deep Democracy is that dissent and differences of opinions are a source and a start of the creative process.
  - Deep Democracy strives to maximize opportunities by listening to all voices (inclusion).
  - Instead of fighting difference, Deep Democracy explores how to make use of differences in needs and values.
  - A prerequisite of Deep Democracy is to accept the idea that there is something of value to be found in all perspectives and reality can be interpreted and dealt with in different ways.
  - Inclusion connects people through compassion for the different manners and preferences of everyone in the group.
  - Deep Democracy believes that the best results are achieved by combining differences.
  - Deep Democracy has developed a complete toolbox for realizing dynamic and creative cooperation.
- For now, we want to focus on the main principles of inclusive decision-making: the core of Deep Democracy.



## The five steps of inclusive decision-making

### Step 1

Everyone has a say: collect all viewpoints, ask for proposals and list them carefully.

### Step 2

Create a safe environment and actively look for alternatives. Find the "no."  
Make sure you have collected all proposals, even the most outlandish ideas

### Step 3

Investigate the alternatives: who's recognizing at least some elements of minority ideas?  
Who disagrees or has an alternative proposal?  
Take a vote to get a sense of majority-minority thinking.

### Step 4

Include the wisdom of the minority: add the minority perspective to the majority viewpoint.  
Ask the minority: what would it take for you to go along with the majority?  
Vote again and make a decision.

### Step 5

When decision-making breaks down and you have not reached a decision after the five steps:  
go fishing!

When this happens it often means that there is something beneath the surface that is blocking a decision. It may be that there are deeper issues in the group that people don't want to confront: issues below the waterline. If you don't go fishing and time after time you force majority decisions on the minority, small fishes will eventually turn into sharks.

