

Why

To help participants work towards a dialogue that generates new perspectives and ideas, particularly when there is a need to understand each other's interests, norms, values, etc. and to look for joint knowledge (co-creation).

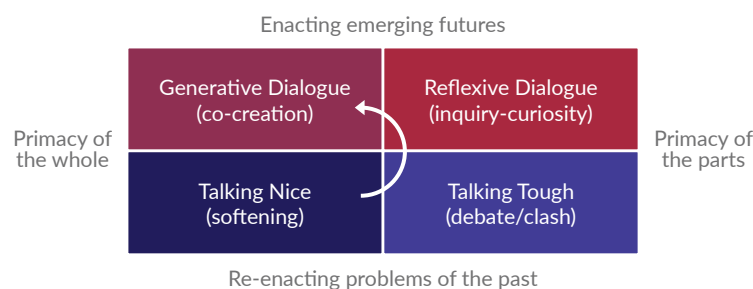
Some advantages:

- Conversations that never would have taken place are now part of organizational culture.
- You are having more open and authentic conversations with your staff and this is appreciated.
- Issues that were previously off limits are surfacing and being dealt with in a professional manner.
- You are getting better results when conducting performance reviews and communicating change.
- You are more confident about having tough conversations with less stress and more success.
- You experience improved productivity and morale.
- Professional and personal relationships are enhanced.
- Political posturing, issues and power games decrease.

What

Generative dialogue creates something new. It's a commitment to bringing out the best in others through authentic conversations.

How



In essence, there are 4 different types of conversations:

- Talking nice: in order to not create tension people don't say what they think, they say what is expected.
- Talking tough or debating: people defend their own perspectives and often black and white discussions emerge leading to conflict (however, when well-framed these conversations can sometimes be very useful for sharpening perspectives or solutions).
- Reflexive dialogue: people start to explore each other's perspectives by asking a lot of (open) questions.
- Generative dialogue: people start to focus on what could be created if the essences of different perspectives were brought together and discussion went beyond the already expressed opinions/solutions/perspectives.
- To create generative dialogue you must encourage people to focus on the following behavior and skills:
- Express/voice the core of your ideas/vision.
- Listen to others; don't interrupt; suspend your judgment.
- Ask a lot of open questions to explore the core of other opinions.
- Summarize this core to check if you have fully understood.
- Start creating: if we take the various cores of the different opinions/perspectives expressed and we combine them, what idea/concept/vision does that lead to?

When

When should a busy leader create opportunities for generative dialogue?

As often as possible. Generative dialogue is counter-intuitive because of the perception that there is a lack of time available in a busy day to talk and the impulse to revert to normal discussions because these are perceived to get results quicker.

Generative dialogue does not necessarily need to take longer, yet the rewards are tangible and impactful. The more a leader models the principles of generative dialogue, the more it will occur naturally.

Skills and necessary training

Understand the concept so that you are able to display the necessary skills.

Skills needed to move along the 4 types of conversation:

- Committed listening.
- Respecting one another.
- Suspending judgment.
- Having an authentic voice.
- Dedication to the collective search for truth.

Complete a workshop or training program in generative dialogue.

Critical success factors

Creating a psychological safe space.

Agreement to not engage in decision-making and to suspend judgment and a willingness to be honest and transparent and to build upon each other's contributions.

Possible workshop exercise

Explain and practice the method.