

The art of dialogue is one practice that trains us to listen with our hearts. *Dialogue* comes from the Greek *dia* (through) and *logos* (meaning or word.) So a dialogue is a flow of meaning through words in which new understandings emerge that might not have been present before. It is done in a spirit of inquiry—wanting to know. We look for shared meaning beyond our individual understanding.

PRINCIPLES OF DIALOGUE

1. When you are listening, suspend assumptions.
2. When you are speaking, express your personal response, informed by your tradition, beliefs, and practices. Speak for yourself. Use “I” language.
3. Listen and speak without judgment. The purpose of dialogue is to come to an understanding of the other, not to determine whether is/he is good, bad, right, or wrong.
4. Suspend status. Everyone is an equal partner in the inquiry.
5. Honor confidentiality.
6. Listen for understanding, not agreement or belief.
7. Ask clarifying or open-ended questions to assist your understanding and to explore assumptions.
8. Honor silence and time for reflection. Notice what wants to be said rather than what you want to say. Allow time to take in what has been said.
9. One person speaks at a time. Pay attention to the flow of the conversation. Notice what patterns emerge from the group. Watch that each person has an opportunity to speak, knowing that no one is required to speak.

At the close of the dialogue, each participant shares one idea or insight that he/she gained by participating in the dialogue.

Practicing the Sacred Art of Listening by Kay Lindahl.