



## DIALOGUE and NEGOTIATION

Our education system (at its best) teaches us the skills of debating, to articulate and defend a position and convince others of our point of view. It is the form of discourse with which we are most familiar. Dialogue requires the openness to listen to other points of view that might challenge our own, and the willingness to consider the truth in these perspectives. The dialogue model is not the same as conversation or discussion, nor does it negate the value of debate.

Dialogue is based on five principles:

- ❖ Listen with respect, to all equally
- ❖ Bring assumptions into the open
- ❖ Suspend judgment and reaction
- ❖ Speak for yourself truthfully
- ❖ Expand the inquiry/ Ask questions

**Negotiation** is the process used when dialogue and collaboration break down. When disputes emerge and individual rights and interests are in conflict, both sides must be able to provide information, clearly articulate proposals, and determine their own bottom lines. Negotiation skills are valuable in dealing with personal issues and cultural differences. Use of negotiation with family members, in friendships, in organizations and in the workplace, can shift the conflict from what feels like “negative intimacy” to shared problem-solving.

Many of us have been raised to believe it is selfish or impolite to ask for what we want and need. In the work environment we may recognize this reluctance should be overcome, but in our personal relationships, the skill of negotiation is rarely encouraged. As children we may feel we have little say in the decisions made by our parents. As parents we may see negotiation with children as showing weakness. Negotiations between parents and children (on both ends of the age spectrum) can be effective in diffusing tension. The responsibility of those making the decisions is not eliminated by soliciting input from all concerned parties.

Use of negotiation may in fact be a key element in preserving relationships. When communication becomes difficult, we often retreat or give up altogether. If we were aware another option existed, it could provide a way to salvage a situation or even enhance future interactions. Successful negotiators consider the others who will be affected by seeking solutions that meet the legitimate interests of each side. Establishing agreed upon criteria and avoiding hardened positions that have emotional and economic costs, can improve (or avoid further damage to) a relationship.

Strategies for conducting successful negotiations are:

- separate the people from the problem
- focus on interests not positions
- formulate proposals
- find options for mutual gain
- create solutions using criteria and standards

***ATTACK THE PROBLEM NOT EACH OTHER***

~Common Ground Negotiation Services ~

434.806-4116 ~ [cgns@susanoberman.com](mailto:cgns@susanoberman.com) ~ [www.commongroundnegotiation.com](http://www.commongroundnegotiation.com) ~

