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Description:

Conversation is designed to create new knowledge, not simply understand existing knowledge better. This is the primary difference between conversation and dialogue. Through conversation, people are able to learn about each other and through the process new knowledge emerges, knowledge that can create new opportunities unseen through normal dialogue.

Uses:

Break down barriers between people, departments, groups, or factions. If communication is an issue, start simple conversations between people. Stop telling and start asking, sharing, and listening. Open up to differing perspectives.

Materials:

None

Instructions:

These attributes are necessary for the creation of an effective conversational space:

- Creating and sustaining a safe, receptive conversational space and context.
- Listening reflectively to give voice to others, especially those who seem different.
- Recognizing differences and conflict as resources for learning.
- Recognizing and valuing both the cognitive and the emotional dimensions of learning.
- Making a concentrated effort to simultaneously attend to all of these characteristics while maintaining a moderate pace in the conversation in ways that are appropriate to the situation.

When setting up a space for conversation specifically insure that you do the following:

1. Open the space
2. Encourage partnership and imagination
3. Allow for differences
4. Take time for reflection
5. A space for humility

Safe, receptive environments do not just happen; trust is not a given. People develop trust not by forming affective attitudes or beliefs about persons, but people develop trust through interaction, conversation, in relationships with one another.

Tips:

This is not debate and this is not simply the quest to better understand existing knowledge (dialogue). Listening creates the space for conversation. Do not solve peoples problems, do not look for the right answer, open up the space for people to talk together.

References:

Baker, Ann, Jensen, Patricia, Kolb, David (2002) *Conversational learning: An experiential approach to knowledge creation*. Westport, Connecticut: Quorum Books