



# The Dialogue Kit

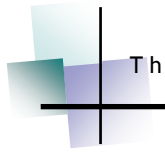
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*A starter resource for learning  
why, what, who, where, when, and how  
to practice dialogue*

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Sherryl and Patrick Stalinski





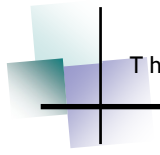
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## Introduction

The Dialogue Kit is set up to provide a structured format for groups to engage in dialogue. Booklet 1 focuses on generative dialogue, Booklet 2 (in development) focuses on strategic dialogue. Read through the kit to determine the best way to plan and organize your own dialogue efforts. For some, intensive dialogue retreats spanning several days may work, for others, scheduling continuing sessions over several days or weeks may better suit their needs. Either way, allow plenty of time. One recommended structure would be:

1. Phase 1: Orientation (2-6 hours).
  - Introduction to dialogue
  - Agreeing on purpose and outcomes
  - Establishing ground rules
  - Establishing “Guardians”
2. Phase 2: Generating a Shared Vision (3-12+ hours)
  - Preliminary Generative Dialogue: 30 minutes
  - Conduct either one of the recommended generative dialogue processes or the provided “Evolutionary Guidance System” outline. (2-3 hours minimum, 8-12 hours ideally)
3. Phase 3: Strategic dialogue and action planning (8 to 40+ hrs)
  - Suggested structures and processes for strategic dialogue are presented in Booklet 2 of the Dialogue Kit.

When you decide that you want to host a dialogue for whatever reason, plan to spend at least 1 to 2 hours orienting the group to dialogue. You may wish to ask participants to take turns reading the

introduction sections out loud. Doing this prepares the group to participate and creates an environment that encourages participation.

To create “hospitable space” consider providing healthy snacks during the meeting and consider ending sessions with a shared meal. Also consider beginning and/or ending sections with appropriate music. Music is processed by both the left and right hemispheres of the brain and can facilitate “whole brain” learning with the participants. Finally, depending on the nature of the group, provide resources and supplies for creative expression. Some of our favorites include:

- paper tablecloths for doodling and writing,
- journals
- poster board or large flip chart paper, colored markers or pens, and magazines for clipping and creating visual documentation of the dialogue.

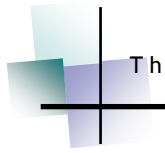
Throughout the process, trigger questions for starting focused dialogue are read, and time should be allowed for fair and equitable participation by all members of the group.

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▶ *The trigger questions are boxed, italics and noted with a ▶ symbol.*

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It is not important that every participant be given exact “equal time” to respond to the trigger questions; some people have a lot to say, others can say everything they need to in one sentence. What is important here is ensuring “equity,” not necessarily “equality.” The facilitator should encourage the quieter, more reflective members to share even brief observations or reflections, and longer-winded



members should be encouraged to practice listening as well.

Finally, this Dialogue Kit is targeted toward smaller groups (5-15 people). If you have a larger group, consider using one of the structured processes such as World Café, Open Space, Future Search or any of the dialogue methods targeting larger group participation. Links are provided throughout the booklet to these types of resources.

## Part 1: What, Why, Where and When?

### What is Dialogue?

The word communicate comes from the Latin “communis” which means to “make common.” There are many forms of communication. Two-way communication is often called discussion. A discussion may lead to a common agreement about a topic, but in discussion, the objective is to present one’s view in order to convince the other. Discussion has the same root as “percussion” and “concussion.” No wonder most discussions leave us with headaches since they really are a form of “beating!”

With some luck, this process may result in some sort of compromise, “but it does not give rise to anything creative.”<sup>1</sup> At worst, this sort of back-and-forth discourse leads to conflict or even avoidance of the issue.

Dialogue, in contrast, is rooted in the Greek word *dialogos*, literally meaning “through (*dia*) the meaning of the word (*logos*).”<sup>2</sup>

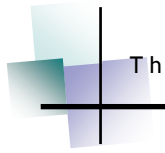
*“A conversation  
with a center  
instead of sides.”*

~ William Isaacs

William Isaacs (1999) calls dialogue “a conversation with a center instead of sides.”<sup>3</sup> The goal of dialogue is a shared creation of new meaning and ideas. This happens by including common understanding and combining it in such a way that new, richer, deeper meaning and more creative ideas are generated in a group through synergy.

When groups work together to create understanding or solutions in a more collaborative way using dialogue, new ideas, new insights and new knowledge are created. There is much written these days





about “co-intelligence” and the processes that enable groups to capitalize on their capacity to generate new learning and knowledge together.

Through dialogue, more than just new ideas can emerge. *Logos* can also carry a deeper meaning. To some, *logos* has a more spiritual connotation.<sup>4</sup> This deeper meaning in the root of dialogue could be conceptualized as “the spirit of the group” or an *esprit de corps*. The emergence of this shared spirit and identity also creates a shared intelligence or “co-intelligence.” We call this *demosphia*—literally, “wisdom of the people.”

#### **Why Dialogue?**

The idea of co-intelligence is not new in some regards. In systems research, open systems are defined as a whole that is indivisible by its parts. Systems create an emergent property that cannot be found in any of the components or even in the sum of its components. The more sound, whole and complete a system is, the more indivisible it becomes. We can apply this principle to the idea of co-intelligence of a group, and we can also apply it to the individuals within the system. The more whole, complete and intelligent the individuals, the more whole, complete and intelligent will be their group.

#### **How does it work?**

So, which comes first, the chicken or the egg? The intelligent, whole, sound, complete individual or the intelligent, whole, sound social system? Some theorists argue that this is not a simple one way, linear, causal relationship. Instead, individuals evolve, learn and grow within their social environments. Likewise, the social environments are impacted by the individuals within them.<sup>5</sup>

Picture the words ME and WE rotating, each reflecting the

other,<sup>6</sup> and affecting the other. They can affect each other in both healthy and unhealthy ways (and usually do!):



The practice of dialogue as a process or method for addressing complex problems is gaining popularity in many groups, from community groups to research institutions and even major corporations.

When groups or teams working together to address a specific challenge engage in dialogue, they generate a shared vision, define the values that guide behavior within their group culture, and create a clarified mission and purpose. These forms of dialogue practice are called *generative dialogue* because they generate a shared vision and commitment to a future state.

When a generative dialogue is followed by a strategic dialogue focusing on systems, strategies, functions and tasks to make the vision come to reality, lasting results can be created. The new design can create better systems that are capable of remaining viable even when the outside environments continue to change.

The combination of engaging in both a generative and strategic dialogue is called Design Conversation.<sup>7</sup>

**Learn more:**

<http://www.david-bohm.net/dialogue/>

<http://www.co-intelligence.org/l-collintelandCI.html>

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► *Past Dialogue Experiences [allow 10-15 minutes]*

*Do you normally engage in discussion or dialogue? What usually stops you from engaging in real dialogue?*

*Have you ever experience working with a team or group where true “demosophia” emerged and the group achieved unexpected results because of their ability to intuitively engage with each other?*

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### **Where and When to Dialogue**

Dialogue can take place anywhere! At the dinner table with your family, in the office, within civic or professional associations, in your church or community group, in your living room with friends, and even in the corporate boardroom. Wherever people usually just “talk” or have discussions, genuine dialogue can take place.

*“Who speaks,  
sows; who listens,  
reaps.”*

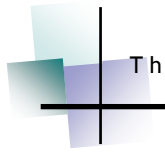
*~ Argentine Proverb*

Dialogue is a useful process to achieve many different kinds of outcomes. However, to be successful, a clear agreement on the objective of the dialogue is critical. The four main outcomes of dialogue are:

1. Understanding
2. Agreement
3. Design
4. Action <sup>8</sup>

### **1. Understanding**

Dialogue that seeks to create understanding among a group of individuals is vastly underutilized. In our experience, most groups get together to talk about action first, with no thought at all about whether the individuals understand the need or benefit of the



action, or whether they understand the motivations, values or goals of each other.

Sometimes understanding is not a means to an end, but an end or objective in itself. A group of individuals who does not understand each other often fails to create a cohesive team. Building a shared common vision and commitment often begins by acknowledging areas where individuals are different as well as the same. With understanding, community is built in a process that enables a common identity to evolve integrating, rather than eliminating or homogenizing differences.

## **2. Agreement**

Another objective of dialogue may be agreement. In these cases, understanding is achieved first, and then agreement for action is established. Agreement takes understanding a step farther and enables groups to decide on a shared commitment for some future state.

It's useful to remember that agreement doesn't eliminate differences or establish a priority of commitment by the individuals involved. While groups may come to agreement on shared values, vision or actions, they will retain other values, visions and priorities that don't apply to, or impact, the group that reaches an agreement. One example might be that a project group agrees that a core value is creativity. Within this group, individuals may focus on this core value, but continue to hold other core values within their family or social groups. Agreement focuses on the purpose of a specific group, but does not affect a participant's involvement or commitment to other groups they belong to. It is up to each individual to consider and communicate whether their engagement or participation in one group may impact their involvement in another group (either positively or negatively).



### 3. Design

Once a decision for action is made, and agreement for action is established, the development of action plans can also benefit from a dialogic approach. Design conversation bridges generative and strategic dialogue. It includes the “why” and “what” of the generative dialogue but begins to identify “who, how, when and where” within a strategic dialogue.

Depending on the simplicity or complexity of the solution design, this dialogue can be either the simplest or most challenging dialogue effort. The design outcome bridges the generative and strategic dialogues and provides a way to validate and test planned actions against the original understandings and agreements before the expense, resources and time are dedicated to implementation or action.

### 4. Action

Action seems to be the first area groups try to focus on (with the possible exception of “agreement”), and rarely do they approach action using dialogue. Action and action planning seem to be where most groups and teams fall into old habits, conflict emerges, and results are hindered because the groups are trying to operate cohesively even though they remain unaware of each other’s different worldviews or perspectives. Yet action and action planning phases of any effort can benefit significantly from the co-intelligence or *demosophia* that emerges from true dialogue.

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*►What are our objectives for this dialogue? Why? Is dialogue the best approach for us to use to address our topic? Why or Why not? [allow 15-30 minutes depending on the complexity and of the topic]*

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## Part 2: Getting Started with Dialogue

There are two important first steps to engaging in dialogue: Creating space and structure and establishing ground rules.

### Creating Space & Structure

Juanita Brown, author of *The World Café*, proposes that “creating hospitable space” is an important first step to engaging in dialogue. “When people feel comfortable to be themselves, they do their most creative thinking, speaking and listening. In particular, consider how your invitation and physical set up contribute to creating a welcoming atmosphere.”<sup>9</sup>

### Dialogue Structure

CWA Ltd is a consulting firm utilizing dialogue in strategic efforts. In 30 years of research and experience, they have found that the single most influential principle or “law” of effective dialogue is that it must be structured in order to assure that the participation of all members is optimal and to assure that objectives and outcomes can be met. Aleco Christakis, president of CWA writes:

*“Without a framework of disciplined inquiry that permits organizational learning in an explicit way, the theories-in-use by individuals engaged in dialogue are undisciplined and muddling. Lacking disciplined inquiry to prevent this situation, the authenticity of the stakeholders is compromised and their voices are silenced, and inferior designs are produced.”<sup>10</sup>*

**Learn more:**

<http://www.cwaltd.com>

Obviously, the structure or methodology of the dialogue will largely depend on the objectives or outcomes the dialogue seeks to

create. A dialogue meant to increase understanding or agreement will likely require a different process than dialogue seeking to design solutions or create action plans. The good news is that many dialogue processes have emerged in recent years. Many of those are referenced and linked within this Kit.

*“Nature gave us one tongue and two ears so we could hear twice as much as we speak..”*

*~ Epictetus*

#### **Establishing Ground Rules**

Once a group has gathered, the first collective task of any dialogue effort is to create a set of “ground rules” that everyone agrees on, whether two people or twenty... or more. Without agreement up front, explicitly

clarifying that dialogue rather than discussion is about to take place, most individuals fall into their habits of debate or lecturing. Whether a work team or a supervisor-subordinate are planning to engage in dialogue, the ground rules should be considered and agreed upon.

William Isaacs, in his book, *Dialogue and the Art of Thinking Together*, suggests four primary ground rules. Any dialogue can start with these four, with others added that meet more specific needs. For example, a supervisor and subordinate may agree that the dialogue “rules” apply in one-on-one meetings focusing on development or performance, but may not apply to production meetings. Another example might be that a family may decide their dialogue ground rules always apply at the dinner table.

## Excerpts from Isaacs: Ground Rules

*“When dealing with people, remember you are not dealing with creatures of logic, but creatures of emotion.”*

*~ Dale Carnegie*

### 1. Listening

“Listening is usually considered a singular activity. But in dialogue, one discovers a further dimension of listening: the ability not only to listen, but to listen together as part of a larger whole.”<sup>11</sup>

“The challenge is to become aware of the fact that especially when we try hard to listen, we will often still have a part of us actively failing to do so. The key is to simply become aware of this, to make conscious just what we are doing. Awareness is curative; as we stand still, our listening can open us to frontiers we did not realize were there.”<sup>12</sup>

### 2. Respecting

*A: Respecting the other.* “To be able to see a person as a whole being, we must learn another

central element in the practice of dialogue: respect. Respect is not a passive act. To respect someone is to look for the springs that feed the pool of their experience. The word comes from the Latin *respecere*, which means ‘to look again.’ Its most ancient roots mean ‘to observe.’ It involves a sense of honoring or deferring to someone. Where once we saw one aspect of a person, we look again and realize how much of them we had missed. This second look can let us take in more fully the fact that here before me is a living, breathing being. When we respect someone, we accept that they have things to teach us.”<sup>13</sup>

*B: Respecting differences.*[...] “To enable a dialogue, a group of



people must [also] learn to do something different: to respect the polarizations that arise without making any effort to ‘fix’ them.”<sup>14</sup>

In dialogue, one learns that agreement on a mission or action rarely requires total agreement of perspectives, values and worldviews.

### 3. Suspending

“When we listen to someone speak, we face a critical choice. If we begin to form an opinion we can do one of two things: we can choose to defend our view and resist theirs. First we can try to get the other person to understand and accept the “right” way to see things (ours!). We can look for evidence to support our view that they are mistaken, and discount evidence that may point to flaws in our own logic.

“Or, we can learn to suspend our opinion and the certainty that lies behind it. Suspension means that we neither suppress what we think nor advocate it with unilateral conviction. Rather, we display our thinking in a way that lets us and others see and understand it. We simply acknowledge and observe our thoughts and feelings as they arise without being compelled to act on them. This can release a tremendous amount of creative energy.”<sup>15</sup>

*“We are cups,  
constantly and  
quietly being filled.  
The trick is,  
knowing how to tip  
ourselves over and  
let the beautiful stuff  
out..”*

*~ Ray Bradbury*

### 4. Voicing

“To speak your voice is perhaps one of the most challenging aspects of genuine dialogue [...] Finding your voice in dialogue means learning to ask a simple question: What needs to be expressed now? For many of us this is no small



feat. We have been inundated with numerous messages about how we ought to behave, what we ought to say, in all the different circumstances of our lives. To discover what we think and feel, independent of these things, requires courage. This is true in part because our authentic voice is not a rehash of others' words. So we are unlikely to find someone else speaking what we ourselves need to say. [...] <sup>16</sup>

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► What's your 'listening style'? [allow 15-20 minutes]

What do you normally start thinking of when listening to other's ideas, opinions? What about when you're listening to someone sharing his or her feelings and emotions?

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► *Documenting Ground Rules.* [allow 20-30 minutes]

*What are our ground rules?*

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► *Establishing Guardians:*

Time

Participation

Process

Content focus

"Hearth" and space

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## Part 3: Generative Dialogue

Facilitator notes: This process can take from 2 hours to 20 or more depending on the size of the group and the complexity of the topic being addressed. Each of the generative dialogue processes recommended has different time requirements. If you use the provided trigger questions focusing on the “Evolutionary Guidance System,” plan on 4 to 6 hours minimum. If you use one of the structured processes, you may want to consider how to integrate the comprehensive “Evolutionary Guidance System” into the process.

### Who should participate in generative dialogue?

The International Systems Institute believes the ethics of design call for shared responsibility, ownership and participation in the creation of the design by all stakeholders—those who serve and are served by any social system.

*“The basic building block of good communication is the feeling that every human being is unique and of value”*

*~ Unknown*

We understand it is unrealistic to try to include every stakeholder in a design conversation unless the whole organization is fairly small. An organization’s success is ultimately the responsibility of its leadership. But organizations can be designed that include the input and feedback of a variety of stakeholders which accomplishes some important things: First, it enables more new, creative ideas to be considered; and second, it creates a way for everyone in the organization, regardless of their role or position, to care about, be committed to, and take personal responsibility for its success.

Learn more:  
[www.systemsinstitute.com](http://www.systemsinstitute.com)

### Structured Processes for Generative Dialogue:

There are numerous dialogue processes and methodologies that are readily available (most of them are free) for structuring your generative dialogue. Below is a list of some of our favorites along with web links to their online resources.

- Roundtables are an ideal method for opening and closing longer dialogue processes. Each roundtable can be completed in 30 to 45 minutes and are good for groups of 8-10 or more.  
[www.gemslarning.com/rtable.html](http://www.gemslarning.com/rtable.html)
- Magic Roundtables: a twist on the standard roundtable:  
<http://open-forum.de/re-invent-democracy.html>
- Bohmian Dialogue: <http://www.david-bohm.net/dialogue/>
- World Café: <http://www.theworldcafe.com>
- Future Search: [www.futuresearch.net](http://www.futuresearch.net)
- Appreciative Inquiry: <http://appreciativeinquiry.case.edu/>
- Open Space: [www.openspaceworld.org](http://www.openspaceworld.org)
- Sustained Dialogue: [www.sustaineddialogue.org](http://www.sustaineddialogue.org)
- Dynamic Facilitation: [www.WiseDemocracy.org](http://www.WiseDemocracy.org)
- Conversation Conference: [www.systemsinstitute.com](http://www.systemsinstitute.com)
- Evolutionary Learning Community [www.syntonyquest.org/elcTree/resources.html](http://www.syntonyquest.org/elcTree/resources.html)

Regardless of the process or method your group chooses to use, generative dialogue answers the “Why” and “What” questions of whatever challenge or idea your group is addressing. Here is where the group will talk about the issue or problem you want to address, or talk about what it is you want to create together.

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► *Why? [allow 30-60 minutes minimum]:*

*Why should we do something? Why is this topic important?*

*To whom is it important?*

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### Answer “What?” (Vision)

The design conversation integrates both generative and strategic dialogue. But before you talk about how to address your problem or create your new solution, you need to define those strategies based on a clear, comprehensive vision of the purpose and values of your group. In other words, the dialogue first generates a vision of what your group, team or organization could become.

The ‘vision’ is the ideal image of the group in its most successful and effective state of being. Underconceptualization of this image is a pitfall that helps contribute to the high failure rate of most change efforts in organizations.

Bela Banathy developed the processes of “idealized systems design” as a way for social and organizational systems to envision futures unencumbered by “what is.”

*“Nothing less  
than the ideal is  
worth the effort.”*

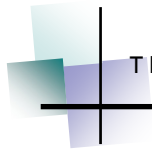
*~ Bela H. Banathy*

Envisioning the ideal requires leaping outside any preconceived limits, which may or may not be legitimate systemic constraints. This envisioning is the most fun part of the process, as everyone is encouraged to use their imaginations unbounded by “needed resources.”

The “envisioned ideal” reflects the core values, but at this point does NOT consider the constraints of time, resources, knowledge or technology. This enables the “design” not to be

limited by current reality.

By envisioning your ideal future you’ll be able to transcend your current situation unencumbered by any perceived limits.<sup>17</sup> In other words, when you can let go of any preconceived limits, you’ll be able



to imagine all sorts of possibilities and creative ideas you wouldn't have otherwise considered. Most organizations focus on fixing problems, and quickly find out that they may have patched a few holes, but the bucket is still leaking. Worse, without looking at the entire system, solutions to immediate problems often create other problems. By clarifying and creating a vision of what it is you want to ultimately become as a group or organization, you'll be more able to look at where you are now and decide whether something needs to be fixed or re-created altogether.

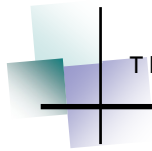
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► *Visioning the Ideal [allow 30 minutes minimum]*

*Envision the “perfect day” of this group or organization fulfilling its purpose and mission the most successful way possible.*

*What is that day like? How does it feel? What’s the “scenery”? What’s the “cast of characters”? What are people saying, doing? How are they feeling?*

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**Making the vision complete.**

Bela H. Banathy in *Designing Social Systems in a Changing World* proposes the 8-Dimensional “Evolutionary Guidance System.”<sup>18</sup> The dimensions reflect the entire ‘systems complex’ of human systems. We’ve developed trigger questions for each dimension to help ensure your design is as complete and comprehensive as it can be.

- Ethics, Morality, Higher Meaning
- Creative Expression/Aesthetics
- Economic/Financial
- Health & Well-Being
- Social & Natural Environments
- Life Long Learning
- Polity/Governance (Personal & Cultural Relationships)
- Science & Technology

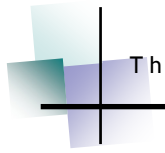
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► What else do we need to add to our ideal vision to make the vision comprehensive and complete? [Allow 15-30 minutes per dimension]

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*“The language of friendship is not words but meanings.”*

*~ Henry David Thoreau*



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### **Ethics/Morality/Higher Meaning:**

*How do we demonstrate our value for each other?*

*How will our values guide our behavior which each other, our clients, stakeholders and the community in ways that are ethical and moral?*

*How will we nurture a healthy “organizational spirit?”*

*How will we support (or not diminish) the diverse personal philosophies and faith practices of our internal and external stakeholders*

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### **Creative Expression/Aesthetics:**

*How do we demonstrate our value for creativity, expression, aesthetic surroundings and enjoyable experience?*

*What will our physical environment be like?*

*Where will it be? Consider décor, artwork, lighting, background music. (You may even want to include what it smells like and what you’re eating for lunch.)*

*What will our physical appearance (personal/organizational) express to visitors?*

*How will our environment help remind ourselves about our values, purpose & mission?*

*How do we feel? Are we having fun? Are we enjoying the process?*

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### **Economic/Financial:**

*How do we demonstrate our economic and financial values?*

*What value will our product/service have for our clients? How will we receive fair return value? (contributions, sales, fees?)*

*How will we acquire/receive the resources we need to fulfill our mission and purpose?*

*\$      Time      New Knowledge      New Skills*

*How will we provide value to our internal stakeholders (staff, volunteers)?*

*How will we measure the value we provide with the value we receive? (Equitable exchange of financial or other value given in relationship to the contribution of time, skills, knowledge, someone provides the organization)*

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### **Health & Well Being:**

*How do we demonstrate value for the health & well-being of our internal and external stakeholders?*

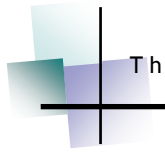
*How will we sustain and/or improve the physical and psychological well-being of ourselves, our clients, and our staff?*

*Are there functions/tasks that need to be carried out which might cause physical, emotional or psychological strain (boring, repetitive tasks, physical work, uncreative and unchallenging tasks?)*

*How can we ensure that the demands of the job do not harm ourselves or our staff?*

*How can we design our processes so that everyone feels nurtured, valued, challenged and eager to improve?*

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### **Social & Natural Environments**

*How do we demonstrate value for the social and natural environments that sustain us?*

*What is our relationship to our larger community?*

*How will we carry out our work in such a way that does not “take away” from the societal (community) and natural environments that sustain us?*

*How will we carry out our work in such a way that can add to and improve our larger social environments (community, society)?*

*The natural environment? What is our potential “ripple effect” globally?*

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### **Continual Learning & Evaluation**

*How do we demonstrate our value for ongoing learning, evaluation and improvement?*

*How will we continually learn about:*

*Our focus (industry, service, product):*

*Our stakeholders (needs and satisfaction level)*

*customers/clients or program beneficiaries*

*investors/contributors*

*staff/volunteers*

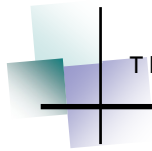
*How will we continually evaluate our effectiveness:*

*How will we evaluate whether we are moving toward/fulfilling our mission and purpose?*

*What criteria will we use to evaluate?*

*How will we make changes and adjustments?*

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## **Polity & Governance**

*What's the structure of this group or organization?*

*Who will be accountable and ultimately responsible for ensuring that the values, purpose and mission of the organization are being realized?*

*How will all internal & external stakeholders be able to contribute to the development, evaluation and improvement of the core values, purpose, mission and vision of the organization?*

*How will stakeholders be able to contribute to the development, evaluation & improvement of functions, tasks and processes?*

*Who will be ultimately accountable for the effectiveness of which functions and tasks?*

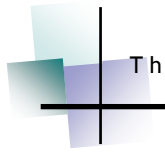
*Some key functions/tasks to consider:*

<i>Core Leadership</i>	<i>Financial Systems</i>	<i>Marketing/Sales</i>
<i>Administrative</i>	<i>Product/Service Delivery</i>	<i>Improvement (R&amp;D)</i>

*How and what will we be communicating in order to sustain and build relationship: Among each other? With our clients/ stakeholders? Community/society/world?*

*How will conflicts/disagreements be resolved?*

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**Science/Technology:**

*How do we demonstrate value for the tools and technologies that enable us to fulfill our mission?*

*What technologies and tools will we utilize?*

*How will we evaluate and upgrade our tools and equipment to best provide our products /services?*

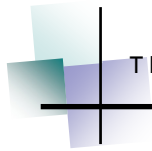
*What science or research will support our work? Our ongoing improvement and development?*

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*“The way we communicate with others and with ourselves ultimately determines the quality of our lives.”*

*~ Anthony Robbins*



### **Dinner Table Dialogue**

Below are some trigger questions for family dialogues using the same dimensions of the Evolutionary Guidance System. Be sure to establish clear ground rules before starting and be sure to clarify when the ground rules apply (“At Sunday dinner.” “During all meals.”) Post the ground rules on a family bulletin board near the dining room if possible. Pick one dimension a week and keep a poster board for family members to add pictures, magazine clippings, etc throughout the week. Encourage wild dreams and the inclusion of things that may not even yet be invented. Don’t limit your family vision by current circumstances or realities. At the end of 8 weeks, look at the big picture and ask what sort of changes the family might want to make to build toward your ideal vision.

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► *Imagine the “perfect family day” sometime (1 year, 2 years or 5 years) in the future.*

*What is that day like? How does it feel? What’s the “scenery”? What are we saying, doing? How are we feeling?*

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### **Ethics/Morality/Higher Meaning:**

*How do we, as a family, demonstrate our value for each other?*

*How do our family values guide our behavior in our community: work, school, church, social groups, etc.*

*How can we nurture a healthy “family spirit?”*

*How will we support (or not diminish) the diverse perspectives and experiences we all have?*

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### **Creative Expression/Aesthetics:**

*How do we express our creativity?*

*What will our ideal home be like?*

*Where will it be? How do we feel? Are we having fun?*

*How will our home reflect our values?*

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### **Economic/Financial:**

*How do we demonstrate our economic and financial values?*

*What do we save for? What do we do to create a financially stable home?*

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### **Health & Well Being:**

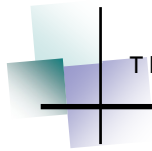
*How do we demonstrate value for the health & well-being of each other?*

*How will we sustain and/or improve the physical and psychological well-being ourselves and each other?*

*What household chores need to be carried out that might cause physical, emotional or psychological strain (boring, repetitive tasks, physical work, uncreative and unchallenging tasks?). How do we get them done in the least stressful way?*

*What do we do to make sure everyone feels nurtured, valued, challenged and eager to grow?*

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### **Social & Natural Environments:**

*How do we demonstrate value for the social and natural environments that sustain us?*

*What is our relationship to our larger community?*

*How will we maintain our family and household that does not “take away” from the societal (community) and natural environments that sustain us?*

*What do we do that contributes to our larger social environments (community, society)?*

*What is our potential “ripple effect” globally?*

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### **Continual Learning & Evaluation:**

*How do we demonstrate our value for ongoing learning and growth?*

*How will we evaluate whether we are moving toward/fulfilling our goals and ideals?*

*What criteria will we use to evaluate?*

*How will we make changes and adjustments?*

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### **Polity & Governance:**

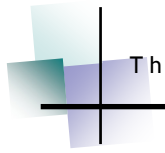
*Who will be accountable and ultimately responsible for ensuring that the values and goals of the family are being realized?*

*Who will be ultimately accountable for various household tasks?*

*How and what will we be communicating in order to sustain and build relationship: Among each other? Community/society/world?*

*How will conflicts/disagreements be resolved?*

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**Science/Technology:**

*Which tools and technologies do we value because they help us save time?*

*Which tools and technologies do we value because they help us learn and grow?*

*Which tools and technologies do we value because they are fun?*

*How will we evaluate whether our tools and equipment need to be updated?*

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