



The HOW

TYPES OF DIALOGIC PROGRAMMING



STAVROS NIARCHOS FOUNDATION
Paideia Program
UNIVERSITY of PENNSYLVANIA

A “dialogue event” can take many forms. What kind of program best serves your purpose, audience, and topic(s)?

WORKSHOP

SKILLS. Direct instruction or collaborative discussion followed by an opportunity to apply or practice a target skill or skill set.

CREATIVE. Creative practice in community (poetry, prose, art, crafts, etc). May include sharing work, discussing process, and/or giving feedback.

ACTION PLANNING. Collaborative work to identify problems & generate solutions; define group identity & goals; plan a curriculum or event; etc

EXPERT VOICES

SPEAKER, PANEL, or ROUNDTABLE. Presentation + moderated conversation + audience Q&A with 1-2 (speaker) 2-4 (panel) or 4-10 (roundtable) invited guests around a particular topic.

TEACH-IN. Scholars, leaders, or activists “occupy” a public space and lead workshops, presentations, or conversations around a particular topic.

FILM SCREENING, AUTHOR EVENT, ARTIST TALK. Moderated conversation with a creator about their work + creative process.

RESPONDING TOGETHER

BOOK, FILM, THEATER, MUSIC, or ART CLUB. Read a text, watch a film/performance, see an exhibit, etc..and discuss as a group.

“TRENDING TUESDAYS.” Regular gatherings to unpack topical news or popular culture events.

PLACE-BASED. A campus or city tour, or an immersive journey to a particular site, to connect to place through a specific lens...and discuss embodied, intellectual, and emotional responses.

STORYTELLING

OPEN MIC NIGHT. Participants are invited to share original poetry or stories in front of an audience. May or may not include discussion after.

ORAL HISTORY. Sit down with an elder, loved one, or community member to hear their story(ies). May or may not be recorded or for an audience.

STORY CIRCLE. Participants gather in a circle and take turns each sharing a short, spontaneous story of 2-3 minutes related to a particular topic.

COLLECTING FEEDBACK

FOCUS GROUP. A group interview with a small number of people to provide feedback and insights on a particular product, project, or practice.

TOWN HALL. A leader or group of leaders responds to constituents asking questions and sharing ideas related to an issue or incident.

PROJECT REVIEW. Receive and respond to structured critical feedback on a manuscript, artwork, project, project proposal, etc.

TOPICS-BASED STRUCTURED CONVERSATIONS

IDENTITY. Structured exploration of topics related to identity (race, gender, social class, dis/ability, age, etc). May be intragroup or intergroup dialogue.

ISSUE. Structured exploration, debate, or deliberation related to a social movement or political issue (contemporary or historical).

INCIDENT. Structured discussion to emotionally process, analyze, problem-solve, or seek healing following a particular event.



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FORMATS AND MODES FOR DIALOGUE



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Within the larger event, which formats and modes will you use to guide your participants through a series of purposeful actions?

CONSIDERATIONS

PURPOSE + OBJECTIVES. Select formats + modes that align with both your purpose (what you want participants to experience in a holistic sense) and your objectives (the actions that will get them there step-by-step). Different structures may be appropriate for different objectives.

YOUR STYLE + COMFORT LEVEL. Stay within or just beyond your comfort zone, especially if you are new to facilitating, the topic is particularly high-stakes, and/or the group is (potentially) challenging. Some self-consciousness is inevitable, but too much affects the dialogue process.

PARTICIPANTS' NEEDS + INTERESTS. Consider participants' identities, vocations, education levels, ideologies, as well as their familiarity with the topic, with each other, and with dialogue. Often, more structured approaches are better for higher-risk topics and/or less established groups.

EQUITY + INCLUSION + ACCESSIBILITY. Strive to include a few different formats + modes throughout your dialogue process, so that you are engaging a variety of different learning styles and folks are able to participate to their fullest ability. Do this even if you don't think your participants "need" it!

SAMPLE FORMATS ACCORDING TO MODE



ORAL FORMATS

- A facilitated circle (5-15 people)
- Small groups of 3-4 people
- Pair conversations
- Role play
- "Speed dating"
- Fishbowl (small group discussion observed by other participants)
- Socratic seminar (self-facilitated group dialogue)



VISUAL FORMATS

- Watercolor conversations in pairs ("speak" and respond to one another via abstract brushstrokes)
- Individuals each create an image or abstract painting representing their ideas/stories. Collect into a single "quilt."
- Individuals create a "brand profile" representing their views: representative fonts, colors, images, etc.
- Graphic dialogue (draw a comic strip together in pairs, or pass around a group as each person adds)
- **Hybrid:** Use a code of signs to express reactions to comments



WRITTEN FORMATS

- Note-writing back and forth (or letters, postcards)
- Collect responses to a prompt anonymously on index cards or sticky notes
- Post a prompt publicly. People write responses to prompt & one another (digitally via e.g. Mural, or on whiteboard or large paper on the wall)
- Gallery walk: Post several prompts, artworks, texts, etc. at stations around the room. People circulate and pause at each station to write responses.
- Collaborative annotation in response to a text or work of art (digitally, via e.g. Perusall, or on paper)
- Journaling (dialogue with the self)
- **Hybrid:** journal or jot thoughts down before sharing out loud



EMBODIED FORMATS

- Nonverbal role play
- Mime responses to prompt
- Move to different seats or areas to reflect responses
- Body scan (dialogue with the self)
- **Hybrid:** Use a code of signs to register reactions