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**Dialogue Vs. Debate[[1]](#footnote-1)**

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| **Dialogue** | **Debate** |
| **Goal:** To seek mutual understanding through use of carefully crafted questions. | **Goal:** To win. Attempt to prove the other side wrong. |
| Helps people to re-examine positions and assumptions. | Requires that people defend their positions and assumptions. |
| Use listening to gain insight into beliefs and concerns of others. | Use listening to find flaws and make counter arguments. |
| Pre-meeting communication essential to process. | Pre-meeting communication is minimal. |
| Participants speak as individuals with unique experiences | Participants speak as representatives of groups. |
| Assume that many people have pieces to the answer. | Assume that there is a right answer. |
| Participants express uncertainty as well as deeply held beliefs. | Participants express total commitment to their point of view. |

1. Adapted from Fostering Dialogue Across Divides, Public Conversations Project, Maggie Herzig and Laura Chasin, p. 139. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)