



**Ombuds Outlook — April 2017**  
Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty  
<http://ombudsfac.unm.edu>

**Upcoming Workshop**

**Cooperative Argument: Hearing and Being Heard**

In this workshop, we will examine communication skills that mitigate defensive communication and help us keep an open mind during arguments and conflicts.

We will also discuss and practice critical self-awareness techniques that allow us to uncover our own interests and biases.

Presented by: Lindsay Scott and Andrew West

Ph.D. Students, Communication

Graduate Assistants, Ombuds Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty

**DAY/DATE:** Thursday, April 20, 2017

**TIME:** 12:30—2:00 pm

**PLACE:** Dane Smith Hall, Room 231  
(Bldg. #48, main campus map)

**RSVP:** Jean Civikly-Powell, Ombudsperson for Faculty  
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**Thoughts on Dialogue**

“Peace does not mean an absence of conflicts; differences will always be there. Peace means solving these differences through peaceful means; through dialogue, education, knowledge; and through humane ways.” — Dalai Lama XIV



## Dialogue Matters

Campt, D., Schirch, L. (2007). *The little book of dialogue for difficult subjects:*

*A practical, hands-on guide.* Intercourse, PA: Good Books.

David Campt and Lisa Schirch provide a practical guidebook to assist in difficult conversations and conflicts. The authors define dialogue as a “communication process that aims to build relationships between people as they share experiences, ideas, and information about a common concern” (p6). They also see dialogue as a process that allows those in conflict to find new information and, more importantly, see perspectives different from their own. A significant goal of dialogue is to assist people in a conflict to gain greater insight into their own values, biases and patterns of thinking.

### *What is dialogue?*

Campt and Schirch begin by differentiating dialogue from other types of communication, particularly conversations, discussions, and persuasive interactions. We use conversations for self-expression, and discussions are effective for problem solving and completing a task. Persuasive communication is utilized when we want to change another’s mind or perspective. Dialogue borrows elements of conversations and discussions but is primarily focused on *listening to understand* another person.

### *What does dialogue do?*

Dialogue emphasizes the need and willingness to learn from others who think differently than us. This is a challenging but beneficial aspect of dialogic communication, especially during a conflict. The skills of dialogue also allow people the opportunity to understand their own interests, values and biases. Dialogue presupposes a willingness to learn and change through interactions with others and their perspectives on issues. A key component of dialogue is the equal importance this type of communication places on the sharing of “objective facts” as well as personal stories and perspectives on the issue at hand.

### *How does dialogue work?*

The authors provide steps and strategies to help design a dialogue process. Though there are no established rules for dialogue, there are effective strategies one can adopt to ensure greater understanding within a conflict:

**Establish guidelines or ground rules** to ensure an effective and safe interaction.

Good basic ground rules include respect for another’s words and avoiding name calling. More substantial ground rules that allow participants to “go deeper” include staying in tense conversations and the “ouch-educate” approach, i.e., addressing comments that hurt and explaining why they were hurtful.

**Share experiences and perceptions** to better understand perspectives/positions and to be understood.

Questions such as “What is your greatest concern about this issue?” or “How has this issue/ conflict impacted you?” encourage this personal sharing.

**Explore diversity and commonalities.**

Persons in conflict should consider the reasons why their perceptions of the issue are different or even similar. This highlights how perceptions shape our understanding of a conflict.

**Explore possibilities for action.**

Here, arguers consider the resources at their disposal to resolve the conflict effectively from their respective perspectives. This phase of the conflict emphasizes the influence arguers have in shaping their own resolution.

Though challenging, dialogue offers arguers the opportunity to develop a greater understanding of the issues and conflict at hand, and the skills and awareness necessary to potentially solve difficult problems.

Prepared by: Andrew West, Graduate Assistant, Ombuds/Dispute Resolution Services for Faculty, 2017.