

DIALOGUE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Proposal to Sustain the Practice of Dialogue

From: Irving Stubbs

TLDM Dialogue Project Director

Assumptions:

- The practice of dialogue has wide-spread endorsement¹
- The endorsement of dialogue has a long history
- The practice of dialogue benefits people, organizations and society
- Initiatives to encourage the practice of dialogue have short histories
- There is little sustained support for the practice of dialogue

Definition:

What do we mean by dialogue? *We are in a dialogue environment when we listen for what is meant and respond empathetically to what we hear, when we ask questions to clarify and draw out the thinking of others, when we resist being defensive, when we acknowledge that on which we disagree but seek to find that on which we do agree, when we try to discover more than to persuade, when we find ourselves changing our views or positions in light of what we are discovering.*

¹ Our yet-to-be published manuscript, *Dialogue: A Way to Live – Revised Edition*, is available by request. It includes background material on the history and advocates of dialogue that include Plato/Socrates, Martin Buber, David Bohm, Paul Tournier, Daniel Yankelovich, Ruel Howe, Peter Senge, William Isaacs, Jane Vella, Gordon Lippitt, Nancy Dixon, Richard Feynman, Sherry Turkle, Parker Palmer, and King Abdullah, II. However, many who, in spite of their passion, did not find the response, for which they hoped.

Examples of Continuity:

From our beginnings as human beings, there has been a spiritual force that has motivated people, communities, and leaders as well as institutions. It is beyond us, yet it guides and empowers us to live with principles that sustain and enrich our lives. Religion has a bumpy history – however, continuity has persisted based on the needs met and the benefits discovered in the practice of a faith in a transcendent reality.

Alcoholics Anonymous is probably the most successful recovery program in the world. It has been around since Bill Wilson and Bob Smith founded it in 1935. It does not have a bureaucratic, hierarchical structure and its members are anonymous. Members are understood, listened to, encouraged, challenged, supported, and loved. AA is nonprofessional, self-supporting, multiracial, apolitical, and available almost everywhere. “Membership is open to anyone who wants to do something about his or her drinking problem.”

The total quality movement (TQM) that sparked the economic revolution in Japan following WWII spread across the world. It had many champions and took a variety of forms. Where applied, TQM’s varied applications generated better products, services, and profit. Competition and leadership contributed to TQM’s progress. In addition, the applications that succeeded and endured were built on the dialogical engagement of all who needed to be involved.

The Dialogue Leadership Institute can be another example of an enterprise that is sustained because it meets a need like religion, alcoholism, and quality.

- The Institute's mission needs to be to reach, enroll, and support leaders led to practice and advocate dialogue.
- The Institute needs the long-term support of a foundation that extends beyond the interest of an individual or an annual budget.

How might a foundation approach this mission?

1. Form the foundation's Dialogue Leadership Institute with an appropriate budget.
2. Provide a quarterly think-tank for invited leaders at which they will learn of the work of the Institute's initiatives, be invited to support those initiatives, and encouraged to join the Institute's Dialogue Leadership Network.
3. Provide an umbrella for organizations promoting dialogue. Sponsor a forum for these groups to dialogue about what they have in common and how they might use their combined resources to advance this mission.
4. Initiate articles on dialogue, including examples of its successful applications, for media publications.
5. Develop dialogue resources to be available to schools and colleges for courses and workshops. This resource development will be a way to get the attention of our educational system in its role to make its constituents aware of the importance and potential of dialogue.
6. Identify, equip, and facilitate the availability of effective advocates of dialogue for TV, radio, and social media.

7. Generate research on the practice of dialogue including big data research.
8. Seek international opportunities to promote dialogue.
9. Employ interns for the Institute:
 - a. Two-year term (to maintain fresh and high energy leadership)
 - b. Job responsibilities to include: direct, promote, and facilitate Institute programs
 - c. Alternate between recent MBA graduates and recent Special Forces retirees

What follows is the product of our imagination.

What if a very good year for the Institute could include all of this?

Volume IX of The Shirley River Quarterly focuses on dialogue. The volume title is, "A Rising Tide." These are the lead descriptions of the articles.

- "Dialogue for All of Us," published by the Bella-Cohn Foundation's Dialogue Leadership Institute, has, in circulation, 10,000 copies in English, 5,000 copies in Spanish, and 3,000 copies in Arabic.
- The Algernon Monthly's article on a course being offered in ten nursing schools on nursing dialogue led by former patients.
- Indian billionaire, Azim Shindai, endowed the Eastern Political Business School with scholarships for politicians to gain masters' degrees in political dialogue.
- A syndicate of dialogue training organizations now offers a State Department course on dialogical diplomacy.

- Twelve federal judges, trained by the Bella-Cohn Foundation's Dialogue Leadership Institute, are volunteers in the Congressional Dialogue Facilitator Fellowship to facilitate dialogue for bi-partisan legislators.
- Immigration legislation, stimulated by a bi-partisan group facilitated by a Congressional Dialogue Facilitator Fellowship judge, was passed.
- Two recent interns from the Dialogue Leadership Institute are conducting courses on theological dialogue in six seminaries.
- Twelve high schools offer courses on transformational dialogue.
- Facilitated by interns of the Bella-Cohn Foundation's Dialogue Leadership Institute, seven students and a professor from the River's Edge Palestinian College and seven students and a professor from the Next Steps College in Israel are working on a grass roots peace plan for their nations.
- Professor Kim Vandenburg of Green College conducted a big data analysis on the curriculum seeds of dialogue practiced in American private colleges.
- Privately held Marketing Encounters offers its clients a unique strategy for employing dialogue in its marketing.
- The Dialogue Leadership Institute's Leadership Think-Tank offers dialogue training by its leaders for corporate executives.
- A task force from three state universities is evaluating the progress of the Bella-Cohn Foundation's Dialogue Leadership Institute's initiatives.

The Shirley River Quarterly reports that a record number of their Rising Tide issue has been purchased including by seven schools, five corporations, three national newspapers and three television networks. Three additional printings have been required to meet this demand.