

# the dialogue

## Tips for Dialogue Facilitators

### A note from the folks who created this design

Dear Facilitator,

You have been invited to facilitate a community dialogue on health care. This dialogue was designed by an experienced practitioner and has been tested in a variety of communities.

The design may differ from things you have created or facilitated. If so, we encourage you to give this novel approach a try.

If you are interested in the underlying theory and practice from which this design grows, we invite you to visit the web site of Global Learning Partners, Inc. at [www.globalearning.com](http://www.globalearning.com) and to investigate books written by Dr. Jane Vella.

Most of all, thank you for bringing your skill and experience to this important work.

Gratefully,

*Michael Culliton, Ann Neale, Jack Glaser and Irene Jillson*

### HERE ARE A FEW TIPS FOR FACILITATING THIS DIALOGUE.

#### Preparation is Everything

One key to a great dialogue is thorough preparation. Do all you can to familiarize yourself with the design by reading the “*Guide for Dialogue Facilitators*” and attending to the preparation tasks listed there.

#### Rely on the Script

The dialogue is divided into discrete conversations or tasks. Care has been taken to write and test a very clear set of directions that invites dialogue among participants.

The facilitator follows a distinct pattern for each exercise in this dialogue:

- Tell participants where the next exercise is in the guide: “*Directions for our next conversation are on page x.*”
- Introduce the conversation or task. Sample introductory script, in italics, is provided for you to either read conversationally or use as a springboard for presenting the same ideas in your own words.
- Read the directions for the conversation or task as written. Each set of directions is numbered (e.g. 1A, 1B). By setting directions in this way, participants can move through the steps of a conversation or task with clarity and ease.
- Set an end time. Tell people when the current exercise will be drawn to a close. For example, “*Let’s take until 9:10 to do this.*”
- Keep time. This design includes time for individual reflection and reading as well as group work. Don’t rush the quiet tasks. Be comfortable sitting in a chair, observing, and being available to anyone who may ask for help. We suggest using a chime or bell to signal the end of a time period followed by, “*We invite you to bring your attention to (the large group/your table group/the next step).*”
- Facilitate responses. This is the place where the improvisational skills of the facilitator are necessary: honoring each response with an echo or thank you, weaving threads of ideas together, making connections, asking

further probing questions. The challenge here is to accomplish this with an economy of words that allow participants maximum time to talk with one another. Work with your co-facilitator to help one another facilitate with a friendly and crisp pace.

- Close the conversation or task by offering a summary of what participants just did. (For example, after the Opening Go-Around: *“Now that we’ve reminded ourselves about the importance of health care, we turn to learning something about this dialogue process.”*) Provide a bridge or transition between what participants have just done and what they are about to do next.
- Periodically review where the group has been and where they’re going. Refer to the *“Overview of the Day”* chart and name the things that have been completed and things that are still to come.

If you have facilitation questions before the dialogue, please post these in the facilitator’s forum at [OurHealthcareFuture.org](http://OurHealthcareFuture.org) or send a message to the dialogue design team by using the “contact center” form on the web site. We’ll make sure someone responds to your inquiry.

After your dialogue, please visit the forum to let us know how it went and to share your insights and suggestions.

*Thank you for serving a vital role in this nationwide effort to create a better healthcare system!*