

THOSE WHO LISTEN, CHANGE THE WORLD

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The Little Book on Dialogue
from the Nobel Peace Center

PREFACE

Good dialogue can resolve conflicts; poor dialogue can create them. At the Nobel Peace Center, we are inspired by the Nobel Peace Prize laureates. Many of them have achieved the near impossible in their struggles for peace, fundamental human rights, freedom of expression and disarmament. They have used a wide range of methods and tools. Nevertheless, there is little doubt that dialogue and listening to the opinions of others has been crucial in their work to create change.

Most of us can remember deep conversations that have had a profound impact on us. Often such conversations are encounters with unfamiliar views that provide new perspectives on ourselves or our surroundings. Conversely, quarrels and conflicts can be experienced as very unpleasant. For many of us, they are so challenging that we prefer to avoid them. In a survey the Nobel Peace Center conducted in 2021, six out of ten said that they have refrained from addressing difficult topics with close relations because this makes them uncomfortable. As many as 46 percent said that they have lost friends or family due to poor dialogue.

The Nobel Peace Center wants to put dialogue on the agenda. We want to contribute to a culture where the public dialogue includes different points of view and allows a diversity of expressions. Dialogue has an important precondition – a belief that we all have something in common. Therefore, dialogue can help us relate to one another and interact in a more peaceful way.

“As many as 46 percent said that they have lost friends or family due to poor dialogue.”

This little book on dialogue provides knowledge, tips and examples, and illustrates how a number of Peace Prize laureates have used dialogue in their work. Dialogue expert Chro Borhan is responsible for the content. She has developed the principles based on dialogue theory and linked them to the Peace Prize laureates work. For more information, visit our website.

We hope to inspire you to use dialogue theory methods in your meetings with other people, in order to create enriching, safe and peaceful relationships.

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Executive Director
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WHAT IS DIALOGUE?

In everyday speech, dialogue is often used to refer to any conversation. But our exploration of dialogue as a method of communication and conflict resolution shows that it is far more than a normal conversation, debate, negotiation or discussion. Dialogue requires something more and therefore also leads to something more.

Dialogue is used as a method to improve communication between people, to resolve conflicts and to shed light on an issue from different points of view. An inclusive process, it can help us find new solutions. You cannot win a dialogue, and there should preferably be no losers.

In today's world of polarization, echo chambers and entrenched views, we believe that the work of the Peace Prize laureates can play a role in inspiring better dialogue. With more knowledge about dialogue methods, we can use them to enrich our interactions with other people and the situations we find ourselves in. If we use dialogue as a principle, we will reduce echo chambers, hate speech and hostile expressions of opinions. Dialogue will help to increase understanding and respect in the public discourse, and in both work-related and private contexts.

We have defined eight principles that together create good dialogue:

1. Dialogue should be a basic attitude
2. Create safe spaces
3. Include all relevant parties
4. In a dialogue, you must listen
5. Let everyone share their experiences
6. Ask questions
7. Talk about the difficult topics
8. Contribute to forgiveness and reconciliation

Knowledge of these principles and an ability to apply them, or just a few of them, can make a big difference in discussions and debates. This book presents knowledge, tips and examples, and illustrates how a number of Peace Prize laureates have used the principles in their work.



Inspired by Mandela and other Nobel Peace Prize laureates who have worked to promote dialogue, the peace bench is designed specifically to bring people together.

“The best weapon is to sit down and talk”

- Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela and Frederik Willem de Klerk received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993. Among other things, Mandela was praised for entering into dialogue with his former enemy without letting bitterness and hatred prevail.

Nelson Mandela has inspired our work with dialogue. With him as an example, the Nobel Peace Center has had a peace bench designed and placed outside our building. The bench is called “The Best Weapon” to reflect the historic Mandela quote, “The best weapon is to sit down and talk”.

Designed by Snøhetta on behalf of the Nobel Peace Center, the bench was constructed by Vestre in aluminium made by Hydro.

Sit down with someone you want to talk to – see what happens!

NOBEL PEACE PRIZE LAUREATES AND DIALOGUE

They are role models and heroic figures for millions of people around the world. Most of us think that it is impossible to be like them, but we can all learn something from them.

Many Peace Prize laureates have been branded liars by their opponents, or have been accused of being traitors by the authorities for promoting alternative political solutions. Many of them have been threatened with death and several have been subjected to serious violence. Nelson Mandela was imprisoned for 26 years. Shirin Ebadi eventually had to leave Iran, even though she was actually trying to enter into dialogue with the authorities to create positive change in her country. Martin Luther King Jr. was killed at the age of 39. He believed in dialogue and said that one of the main causes of structural racism was a lack of understanding of Black peoples' lives caused by segregation.

Peace Prize laureates have often been barred from making important decisions. Dialogue, on the other hand, aims to include all relevant parties. Inclusion is such an important principle that it cannot be overlooked. By including people, dialogue incorporates different perspectives and creates a better basis for making decisions. Collective wisdom is the key word. Juan Manuel Santos, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016, understood this. During the peace process in Colombia, he facilitated dialogue meetings between the parties involved in the long-running, armed conflict. Everyone was to be heard. Even the peace agreement was the subject of a referendum.





The Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet received the Peace Prize in 2015. They quickly understood that to avoid civil war in Tunisia after the Arab Spring, they would have to create dialogue between all the political parties. It was essential to find a common starting point for a political agreement. The process was initiated and led by organizations that believed in dialogue, and not by the politicians themselves. Everyone participated voluntarily to find a peaceful solution for the country, using dialogue as a working method.

Women are often excluded from important decisions. Leymah Gbowee, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Tawakkol Karman, who received the Peace Prize in 2011, promoted women's participation in decision-making processes. They all had non-violence as a starting point and were convinced that all conflicts could be resolved without the use of violence or war. Jane Addams, who received the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931, helped establish the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom to prevent conflicts by initiating international dialogue between nations.

“Collective wisdom is the key word”

The results of the work of Peace Prize laureates are sometimes difficult to understand, and it is certainly difficult to do them justice in a short text. In this book, we have selected eight Peace Prize laureates who have all worked to create dialogue. Although we could definitely refer to many more, we have tried to select laureates who embody the eight principles of good dialogue. Common to the laureates' work is that they make visible both the complexity and the humanity in a good dialogue process.

THE EIGHT PRINCIPLES OF DIALOGUE

- 1 Dialogue should be a basic attitude
- 2 Create safe spaces
- 3 Include all relevant parties
- 4 In a dialogue, you must listen
- 5 Let everyone share their experiences
- 6 Ask questions
- 7 Talk about the difficult topics
- 8 Contribute to forgiveness and reconciliation

Principle 1

DIALOGUE
SHOULD
BE A BASIC
ATTITUDE

Dialogue is something more than just communication skills. It is about aiming to treat people with respect, equality, openness and curiosity.

Dialogue as a basic attitude allows you to gain better insight into other people's thoughts. It lets you share your own experiences and opinions in an effective way, improves your communication skills and makes relationship building easier. By actively choosing dialogue, you can gradually change your own behaviour, exercise greater influence in your relationships and contribute to positive change in your neighbourhood.

With dialogue as your basic attitude, you have decided to live life in an open, curious and reflective way. Even when you find yourself in difficult situations that are challenging on a professional, personal or private level, you dare to meet other people as equals, show respect and try to listen with empathy. Dialogue should be an attitude that you embody wherever you are and constantly influences how you approach life.

WHAT TO CONSIDER:

1. Treat everyone with respect and equality, no matter what
2. Be open, curious and reflective
3. Decide to apply the principles of dialogue in encounters with others

Nobel Peace Prize laureates and the dialogue approach

It takes courage to enter into dialogue. You risk not getting the same basic attitude and respect back. Nevertheless, many people try to have dialogue as a basic attitude, and several of the Peace Prize laureates have promoted peace and justice through persistent attempts to create dialogue.

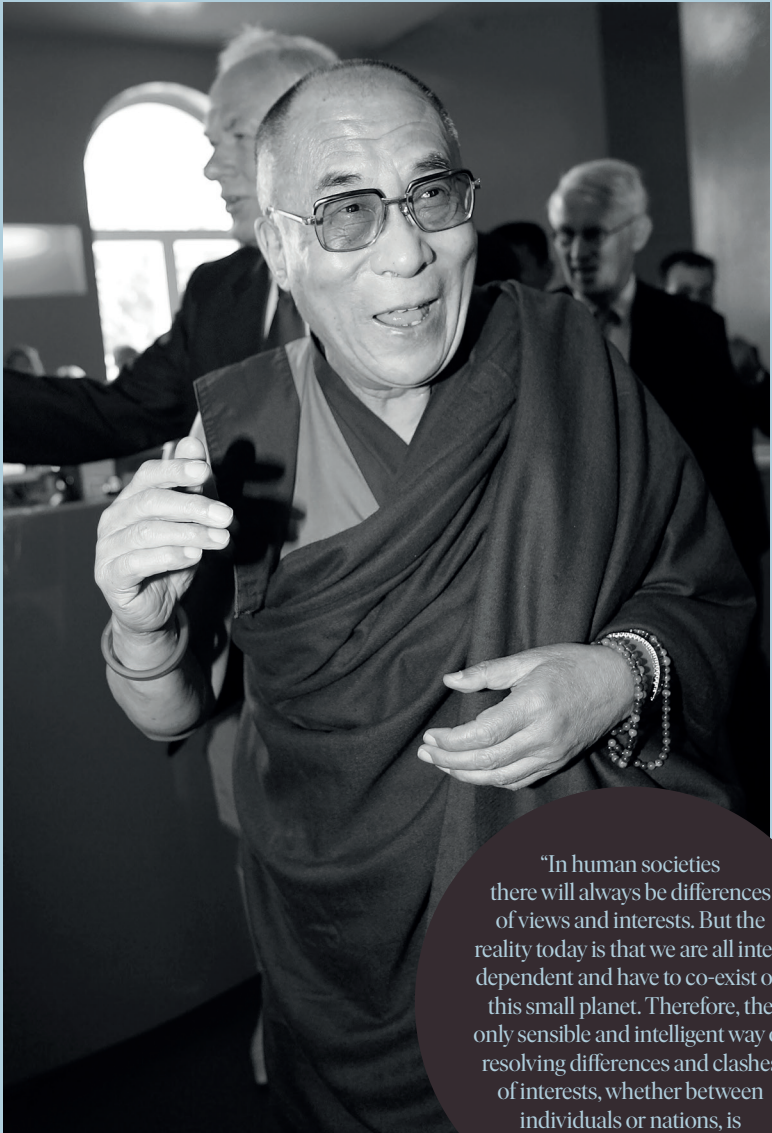
The 14th Dalai Lama

– Inner peace, non-violent philosophy and ecological sustainability

The 14th Dalai Lama was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989 for his peaceful attempts to use tolerance and mutual respect to uphold the historical and cultural heritage of the Tibetan people. This created an opportunity for him to present a plan for peace and human rights in Tibet. The goal was to start serious negotiations on the country's future status, but the Chinese government rejected this.

Despite brutal mistreatment of the Tibetan people, the Dalai Lama continues to uphold his belief in non-violent resistance and wants dialogue with the Chinese authorities to find a solution based on compromise and reconciliation. His Buddhist philosophy of peace is based on the idea of a universal responsibility for all living things, both people and nature itself.

The Dalai Lama's perspective is characterized by respect, equality, openness and curiosity. Actively seeking kinship with both people we deeply disagree with and with the nature that surrounds us – a continuous dialogue process – is his most important practice.



"In human societies there will always be differences of views and interests. But the reality today is that we are all inter-dependent and have to co-exist on this small planet. Therefore, the only sensible and intelligent way of resolving differences and clashes of interests, whether between individuals or nations, is through dialogue."¹

The 14th Dalai Lama

Photo: Håkon Mosvold Larsen/Nobel Peace Center

Principle 2

CREATE
SAFE
SPACES

In our busy everyday life, it can be difficult to find good opportunities for dialogue. It is important to seek out the safe spaces and opportunities, both physical and mental in nature. Dialogue can take place wherever people are treated as equals and with respect, openness and curiosity.

Safe spaces are essential if participants are to engage in the dialogue by expressing themselves openly and honestly. To ensure safe spaces, you should consider the following: Will everyone be able to see and hear each other? How can you ensure physical distance without losing human contact? Where should the various parties sit? Where and when should they meet? You must set aside enough time to allow for dialogue, be aware of the balance of power in the room and ensure the absence of all forms of violence.

If the dialogue is conflict-based and heated, you can use an external dialogue facilitator, who can either be a professional (for example a therapist), a friend or a colleague. The facilitator must not act as a judge or lawyer, but rather help to create a physical and mental safe space. The facilitator helps participants to achieve a constructive dialogue.

TO FUNCTION AS A FACILITATOR, YOU MUST:

1. Remain an impartial third party and support all relevant parties in the dialogue.
2. Ensure that everyone is listened to and that it is safe to ask open and exploratory questions.
3. Conduct conversations with all parties prior to the dialogue to get enough information to facilitate a safe space; what is confidentially shared with you in these conversations must not be shared with others in the group
4. Plan what to say when the parties first meet, including explaining the framework for the dialogue, your own role and any ground rules.
5. Make sure to keep the space safe and be ready to end the dialogue if something unexpected comes up that makes it dangerous or impractical to continue.

Although this advice may seem quite technical and for “professional” use, some of the principles can still be useful in more everyday situations.

Nobel Peace Prize laureates and their attempts to create safe spaces

Several Peace Prize laureates have tried to create safe spaces for dialogue. Some of them have wanted to resolve disagreements in a dialogical and non-violent way, but have been met with violence and threats. Thus, not enough safe space has been established for dialogue.

Betty Williams & Mairead Corrigan

– Non-violent philosophy and local peacekeepers in Northern Ireland

For Betty Williams and Mairead Corrigan, dialogue became much more than just conversation. They were both awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1976 for their efforts to establish a non-violent grassroots movement that aimed to create interaction and trust between Catholics and Protestants during the conflict in Northern Ireland.

The road to peace was paved with personal meetings. Williams and Corrigan organized joint peace marches, peace groups, and voluntary activities for Catholics and Protestants. Within a safe framework shielded from imminent threats of violence, it became possible to build trust between the parties through cooperation. Williams and Corrigan found that opponents who met in person showed greater motivation for peace and aversion to violence. People who previously stood on opposite sides of a violent conflict now had the opportunity to see, hear and get to know each other.



“...by getting them to know each other, talk each other’s languages, understand each other’s fears and beliefs, getting to know each other physically, philosophically and spiritually. It is much harder to kill your near neighbour than the thousands of unknown and hostile aliens at the other end of a nuclear missile.”²

Betty Williams (over) Mairead Corrigan (under)
Photos from the Nobel Foundation Archive

Principle 3

INCLUDE ALL
RELEVANT
PARTIES

Who decides who should be invited into a dialogue? An experience of omission and exclusion can contribute to creating divisions and obstruct participation.

Inclusion is a method that brings more people into a dialogue, holds more people accountable and gives more people a sense of belonging to the process itself. Active participation increases the possibilities of finding collective solutions.

By inviting and including people with different backgrounds in a dialogue, you will gain a more diverse perspective on your life at home and in the workplace, as well as a more diverse public debate. This will provide a broader basis for making decisions. A collective collaboration begins when you include people. This creates a stronger commitment to and increased participation in the building of democracy and in the creation of important institutions. Conflicts are resolved more effectively by inviting everyone to the table.

AN INCLUSIVE PROCESS:

1. Invite all the relevant parties.
2. Ask the question:
Who needs to talk to whom about what, where and when?
3. Ensure a transparent and open process about who should participate in the dialogue.
4. Try to include everyone who should talk to each other. There may be vested interests in not inviting relevant parties to the dialogue.
5. Find out if a party wants to set the agenda themselves, and will not give others access to important arenas where topics are raised and decisions are made.
6. Sometimes someone refuses to join a dialogue. Respect that this is their right.

Nobel Peace Prize laureates and inclusion

Many Peace Prize laureates have worked to create inclusive decision-making arenas. Several have experienced being prevented from speaking and being barred from important negotiations. In many cases, minorities, women and children have been left out of decisions that concern them. It is crucial that we allow a larger part of the population to have a say. To create lasting change, we must open up the conversation to people with different backgrounds, roles and perspectives. Many Peace Prize laureates have understood and done just that.

The Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet – Democracy and national dialogue

Following the Jasmine Revolution (the beginning of the Arab Spring), Tunisia was on the brink of civil war. Just when everything could have collapsed, 21 parties managed to agree on how to create a national constitution. Today, it is considered the most egalitarian and democratic constitution in the Arab world. One of the success factors in this turnaround operation was the Tunisian National Dialogue Quartet, which received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2015.

The Quartet was a temporary gathering of four central organizations that represented different sectors of Tunisian society and therefore were in a good position to negotiate. They invited 21 political parties into a national dialogue that allowed each party to have a say. Their national dialogue process shows what is possible when multiple parties are invited to the negotiating table. That the country's Islamist and secular forces could agree on common solutions shows how different voices can agree, even in situations that at first seem insoluble.



“Consensus requires well-planned preparation, genuine willingness for dialogue, pre-agreed controls of work and a framework in which ideas and viewpoints are shared by various political factions. In particular, a sponsor trusted and appreciated by all parties concerned should undertake the task of running and deepening the dialogue until it achieves its objectives.”³



Image top f.l.: Houcine Abassi, Mohamed Fadhel Mahfoudh. Image bottom f.l.: Abdessattar Ben Moussa, Wided Bouchamaoui © Photo: Johannes Granseth / Nobel Peace Center

Principle 4

IN A
DIALOGUE,
YOU MUST
LISTEN

Empathic listening requires you to listen to other people with kindness, so that they feel seen and heard during the dialogue. You listen with deep respect and humility to what is being said. Listening this way leads to increased understanding and empathy.

When people live in segregated societies, their opportunities to listen to each other are limited. There are fewer common arenas and safe spaces, which means that more conflicts can arise than necessary. Listening is more than merely hearing, listening requires focus and presence.

In conflict situations, it can be especially helpful to listen to different elements of a story – facts, feelings and needs.

Listening is a technique that must be practiced. You must remember to really listen and show that you are doing so. You will benefit from listening in meetings with your partner, your children and colleagues, and especially when you disagree with someone or find yourself in a conflict.

TIPS FOR GOOD LISTENING:

1. Listen to what is being said. Do not let your own thoughts and prejudices interfere with your ability to listen. Your perceptions can easily lead you to judge others long before they have finished speaking, and thereby limit your listening skills.
2. Do not give advice unless it is requested.
3. Do not interrupt. Let the other person finish talking.
4. Do not capture the conversation by drawing parallels to your own experiences, e.g., "I have experienced that too!" Allow the other person their time; you will get yours.
5. Be empathetic and show understanding for the other person's situation. Being empathetic means that you understand the other's feelings, without necessarily feeling them yourself.
6. Do not presume to know other people's opinions.

Nobel Peace Prize laureates and empathic listening

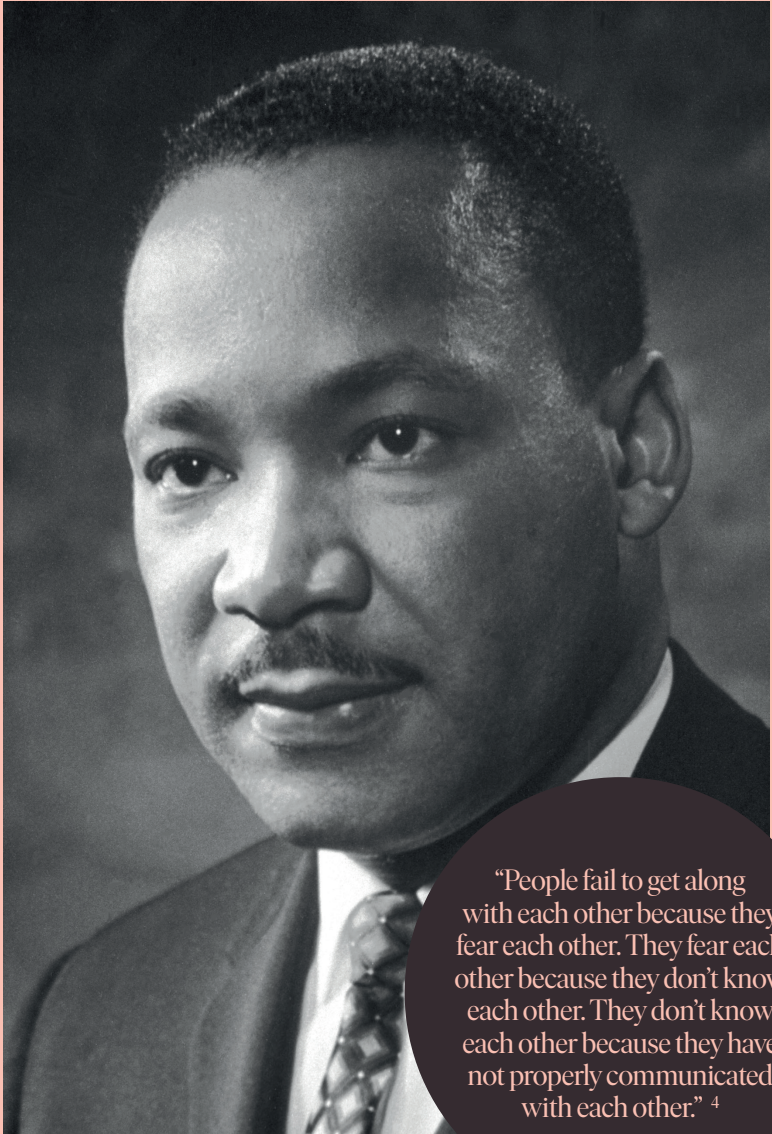
For many years, humankind has been practicing selective listening and using it consciously to oppress groups and individuals. Many Peace Prize laureates have experienced this for themselves. They have tried to find safe spaces for dialogue and non-violent action, but have not been met with respect and understanding. On the contrary, they have been met with violence. There are many reasons for the structural violence and racism that Black citizens have suffered in the United States, but in this context we will focus on the social consequences of a lack of listening and dialogue.

Martin Luther King Jr.

– The struggle for civil rights in the United States

Already as a child, Martin Luther King Jr. experienced how Black people lacked a voice. The racial divide was evident. Particularly in the southern states, Black people risked threats and violence if they spoke out. Nevertheless, King chose to devote himself to the non-violent struggle for civil rights in the United States. For this he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964.

What can we do when those in power do not want to listen? King's life provides an answer to this. In 1955, he started a campaign to get the US government to make the policy of racial segregation in the southern states illegal. He remained a supporter of Gandhi's philosophy of non-violence, even when racists responded with violence against the peaceful protests of Black people. In 1963, 250,000 protesters marched on the Lincoln Memorial in Washington. There, King gave his famous "I have a dream" speech. It must have had an effect, because the following year, President Johnson passed a law banning all racial discrimination. Using non-violent protest, King made the situation of Black people more visible. His legacy inspires us to this day.



“People fail to get along with each other because they fear each other. They fear each other because they don’t know each other. They don’t know each other because they have not properly communicated with each other.” ⁴

Martin Luther King Jr.
Photo from the Nobel Foundation Archive

Principle 5

LET EVERYONE
SHARE THEIR
EXPERIENCES

Research can determine whether something is valid or not. But when in dialogue with one another, it is important that we recognise each other's experiences as equally as important as our own.

In a dialogue, everyone's statements and opinions are equal.

This implies that any statement will be valid, because it comes from the individual's own perspective. However, this does not mean accepting racist or sexist statements, for example. These can be questioned in order to understand their origins.

The recognition that everyone is in possession of parts of the truth allows us to get a more complete understanding of the situation.

One of the great dialogue theorists, David Bohm, believed that a fragmented understanding of the world is one of the main reasons for conflicts and war. When you divide up reality and analyse it from a particular point of view, you create a partial understanding rather than trying to understand the whole. Many people subscribe to one particular point of view, becoming totally engrossed in it and its minutiae.

Bohm believes that dialogue can help to change a fragmented way of thinking, and that this is the main reason why it is needed in all walks of life, relationships, organizations and professional disciplines. Dialogue contributes to a holistic worldview where we understand that everything is connected with everything, and that caring just about parts of the whole has consequences. He believed that dialogue was the method of creating peace.⁵

In any dialogue, we should speak from our perspective and use "I-messages". This reveals our truth and creates familiarity and empathy. By using neutral forms such as "people" or "one", you create a distance between you and the message. This becomes especially important when clarification is needed after conflicts or misunderstandings.

Speak from your perspective, explain how you felt when someone acted the way they did. Conclude by describing your need for reparation.

Nobel Peace Prize laureates show the way

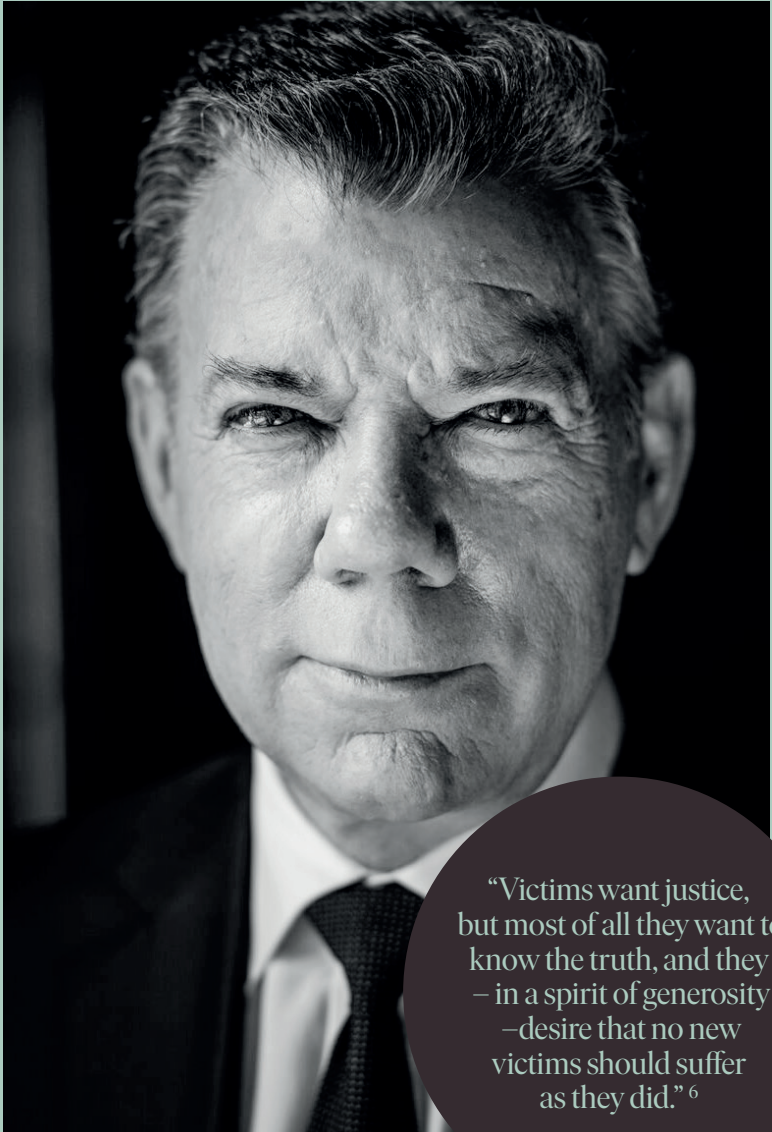
One reason that conflicts get entrenched can be a lack of understanding of the other party's opinions. This will always be a challenge. An important strategy used by several Peace Prize laureates has been to create a process whereby differing parties can share their stories, experiences and insights. This can produce progression in a conflict that at first seemed insoluble. In order to move forward, it can be crucial to allow victims of violence or oppression to express themselves.

Juan Manuel Santos

– Dialogue and the peace process in Colombia

President Juan Manuel Santos was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 2016 for his efforts to end the 50-year-long armed conflict in Colombia. Santos took the initiative to start dialogue and peace talks between the government and the guerrilla group FARC. Santos' Prize was both recognition of his peace facilitation and an encouragement to continue the talks on peace and reconciliation. Santos was the recipient of the Prize, but the Norwegian Nobel Committee emphasized that it was also a tribute to the Colombian people, who never gave up hope of a just peace despite great trials and abuses, and to all parties who contributed to the peace process.

For many years, it was taboo to talk about the traumas and consequences of the civil war in Colombia. Inspired by the peace process in South Africa, the victims of the war were invited to share their experiences during the peace negotiations. In addition, the perpetrators were also given the opportunity to tell their stories. While the process was certainly painful and difficult, it also laid the foundation for the dialogues that followed. The victims' rights had to be safeguarded before the peace process could happen.



“Victims want justice,
but most of all they want to
know the truth, and they
– in a spirit of generosity
– desire that no new
victims should suffer
as they did.”⁶

Juan Manuel Santos

© Photo: Mads Nissen/Politiken

Principle 6

ASK QUESTIONS

Asking open-ended and exploratory questions is helpful for understanding other people, especially when you disagree profoundly with someone. Dialogue does not try to force everyone to agree, but does involve everyone sharing their experiences. This allows you to question those you disagree with or do not understand properly. Well-formulated questions can be crucial.

Dialogue does not rule out constructive criticism; it requires that you take responsibility for how you express yourself and consider how to facilitate a safe, honest and open dialogue. Open-ended and exploratory questions help you to understand other people better. By opening up for deeper conversations, you get answers to your questions. You also give others the opportunity to clearly communicate their opinions and to explain their fears, hopes and experiences.

Dialogue is not the same as debate, but it is possible to arrange public dialogues and to invite dissidents into a dialogue process. This does not mean that you accept or legitimize radical, racist or offensive statements. You respect the person expressing the opinions, and acknowledge both their experiences and that their opinions are true to them.

HOW TO ASK GOOD QUESTIONS:

1. Ask open-ended questions (which do not allow for yes / no answers).
2. The questions should encourage more reflection and curiosity during the dialogue process. Therefore, formulate them carefully.
3. Ask questions in such a way that others want to clarify their views.
4. Ask questions that help you understand what you disagree with or do not understand.
5. Questions that start with *what* and *how* are less confrontational than those that start with *why*.
6. There are no stupid questions. Ask questions whenever you need to, so you don't later regret not asking them. Often, several people are wondering about the same thing.

Nobel Peace Prize laureates and the art of asking good questions

Many laureates have been involved in defending basic human rights. In countries that do not provide basic rights, laureates have challenged the authorities by asking questions that encourage them to take responsibility. In order to uncover human rights violations, it is important to involve a country's citizens. Questions that increase awareness and engagement also make it easier to create understanding between parties. It is crucial to trust that dialogue can change attitudes.

Shirin Ebadi

– The struggle for human rights

In 2003, Shirin Ebadi became the first Muslim woman and first woman from the Middle East to receive the Nobel Peace Prize. She had made a name for herself by promoting democratization and human rights in her home country of Iran. Ebadi was one of the first female judges in Iran, but was ousted after Khomeini came to power in 1979. She continued working as a lawyer to protect human rights, and regularly documented human rights violations committed by the authorities. In 2000, she was arrested for criticizing the Iranian regime.

Even after experiencing Khomeini's Islamist revolution, Ebadi kept her faith in dialogue, convinced that it was the key for achieving women's rights. She didn't believe that fundamental change could result from revolution, but rather from non-violent protests involving a dialogue that aims to create necessary changes in policy. Through dialogue, Ebadi presented a different way of relating to dissidents than that used by those in power. Dialogue proved to be particularly important in a country characterized by powerful disagreements.



“I maintain that
nothing useful and
lasting can emerge
from violence”⁷

Shirin Ebadi
Photo from the Nobel Foundation Archive

Principle 7

TALK ABOUT THE DIFFICULT TOPICS

Dialogue is not a perfect interaction in which everyone must be kind and diplomatic. We must also dare to talk about what is difficult. Dialogue provides an opportunity to put a difficult topic on the agenda. It helps us to build bridges with others, both on an individual level and between nations.

Conflict-prevention work is just as important in peacetime. To talk about what is difficult is the first step in contributing to positive change and development.

There has been a noticeable polarization in public debate in recent years. An increasing number of topics have become controversial or risky to engage with. In particular, online hate speech has become more common. This has at least two effects: many people hesitate to share their opinions; others participate in “echo chambers” characterized by disregard for opinions or facts that challenge their own or the group’s attitudes. These chambers avoid conflicting views and strengthen the group’s belief in its own opinions.

Dialogue involves responding to differing opinions with open-ended questions to explore people’s thoughts, attitudes and prejudices. Dialogue safeguards freedom of expression because it maintains respect for the people expressing statements and attitudes, while also holding them accountable for their opinions. It also allows us to respond to opinions with open criticism in the form of questions that everyone in the dialogue can engage with and express their opinions of.

Dialogue does not necessarily mean accepting the opinions expressed, but it does require respect for the person expressing the statements and attitudes.

There is a difference between acceptance and respect.

Nobel Peace Prize laureates address difficult topics

Many Peace Prize laureates have raised sensitive or controversial issues, sometimes based on their own experiences or those they have witnessed. This has not been welcomed by everyone, especially those with vested interests. Some issues can also be so painful and stigmatizing that many prefer to remain silent about them.

Nadia Murad

– Sexualized violence as a weapon of war

Talking about rape and sexual abuse is taboo in many societies. Nevertheless, Nadia Murad dared to speak out about what she and several thousand other Yazidi women experienced when they were attacked by Islamic State (IS) in 2014. In 2018, Murad and Denis Mukwege received the Nobel Peace Prize for their opposition to sexualized violence used as a weapon of war.

Nadia Murad belongs to the Yazidi minority and was born and raised in the village of Kocho, in northern Iraq. On August 3, 2014, Kocho was one of the first Yazidi villages in the area to be attacked by IS. While many in Murad's family were executed, she herself, along with around 6,800 other women and girls, were kidnapped and sold on as sex slaves. Murad was raped, beaten and tortured before she managed to escape three months later. When she then spoke out and told the world about the atrocities she and other Yazidi women were subjected to, it helped put sexualized violence in armed conflicts on the agenda. Murad herself did not want to enter into a dialogue with the abusers, but rather made a general appeal to us all and created space for a broader dialogue on this critical topic. By telling her story, she has placed the duty of responsibility on the abusers, as well as helping the Yazidi women and other victims of sexual violence.



“Let us all unite
to fight injustice and
oppression; Let us raise our
voices together and say: No
to violence, yes to peace, no to
slavery, yes to freedom, no to
racial discrimination, yes to
equality and to human
rights for all.”⁸

Principle 8

CONTRIBUTE TO
FORGIVENESS AND
RECONCILIATION

Reconciliation means reconciling yourself with something that has happened in the past. We all have something we should forgive others or ourselves for. This may be misdeeds, but can also be something we failed to achieve or that didn't go the way we wished.

Dialogue provides an opportunity to overcome life's difficulties and face future challenges in a more constructive way. Dialogue can enrich your life and make you wiser and more resilient. To force solutions or compel parties to agree on something on the wrong basis will often result in conflicts flaring up again. Hurried decisions or incorrect solutions can, at worst, aggravate the situation or cause wounds and traumas to remain unprocessed with the parties involved.

Desmond Tutu was a master of forgiveness. In *The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for Healing Ourselves and Our World*, he presented four steps:

1. Tell the truth.
Telling the truth will help give strength to the victim.
2. Express the pain.
Shaming pain and pretending it does not exist means that it remains in your body and heart.
3. Forgive.
Forgiveness is a conscious choice we make.
We must acknowledge our compassion.
4. Renew or let go of the relationship.
By telling the truth, expressing your feelings and finally forgiving, you will be able to decide whether to renew or let go of the relationship.⁹

Nobel Peace Prize laureates and forgiveness and reconciliation

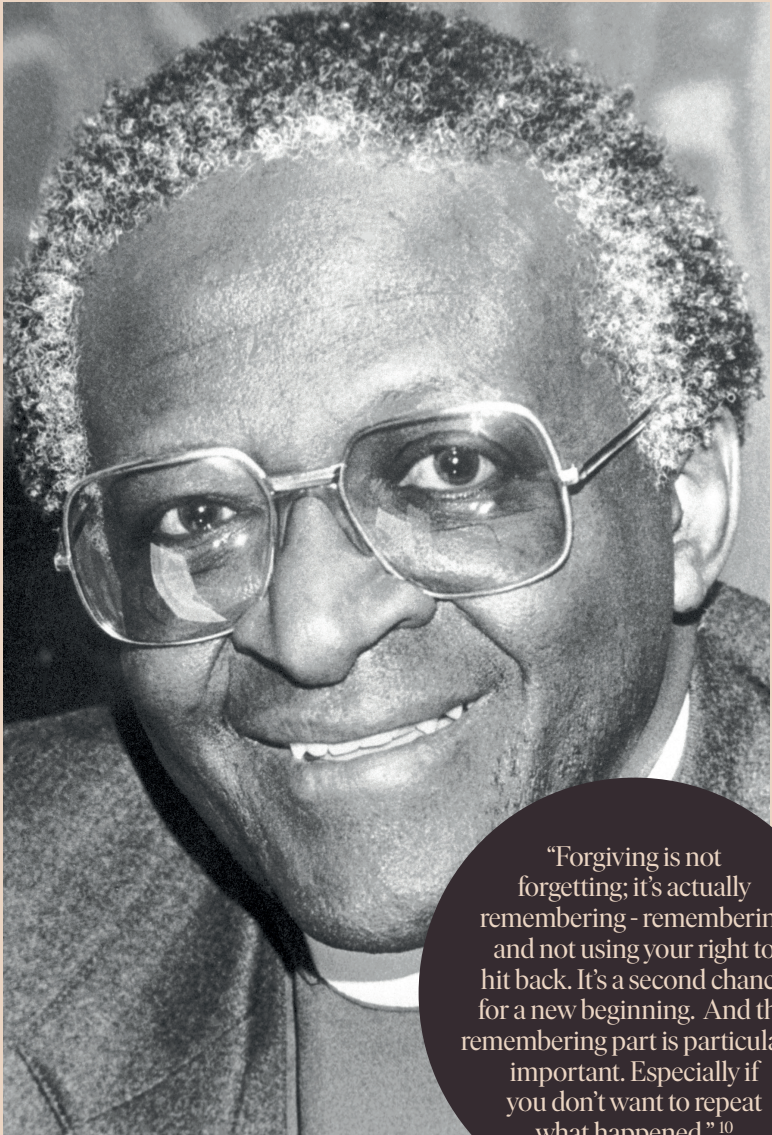
Several Peace Prize laureates have been occupied with forgiveness and reconciliation. By ensuring that everyone explains their role in a course of events, those who have been wrongdoers in war are held accountable. For some, this is part of the healing process that follows the trauma inflicted by war. Several laureates have deep experience of this type of dialogue process.

Desmond Mpilo Tutu

– Forgiveness provides freedom and release from past wounds

A Nobel Peace Prize laureate who has worked ceaselessly for forgiveness and reconciliation is Desmond Mpilo Tutu. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1984 for his role as a unifying leader in the non-violent struggle against the apartheid system in South Africa. Nevertheless, it is for the work he did after receiving the Prize, that Tutu is best known today.

His leadership of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in 1995 has left its mark. Tutu's groundbreaking contribution was to show in practice how to enter into dialogues with the goal of forgiveness and reconciliation. His perspective was founded on a belief that forgiveness and reconciliation are natural and positive. The Commission's work certainly opened up a painful process, but Tutu was unwavering in his belief that we are capable of forgiveness and reconciliation. He also maintained that its work was necessary for South Africa to be able to completely liberate itself from oppression and apartheid.



“Forgiving is not forgetting; it’s actually remembering - remembering and not using your right to hit back. It’s a second chance for a new beginning. And the remembering part is particularly important. Especially if you don’t want to repeat what happened.”¹⁰

Desmond Mpilo Tutu
Photo from the Nobel Foundation Archive

WHAT GOOD DIALOGUE CAN CREATE

We must not accept everything that is said in a dialogue. Nor do we always have to agree. Nevertheless the process is still able to create change. When we talk to each other, we sometimes expand our perspectives and are able to understand one another better. Change does not have to happen overnight; it may be slow processes that take time. When we reach out to one another, we sometimes also change ourselves.

Dialogue creates change both within us as individuals and at group and community levels.¹¹

INDIVIDUAL:

- 1 Increased self-reflection and insight about yourself, your own thoughts, attitudes and values.
- 2 Increased empathy for others. The traditional way of thinking about groups, which creates images of enemies, “us” and “them”, is weakened.
- 3 Increased understanding of others, when you gain insight into their thoughts and life experiences.

GROUP AND COMMUNITY:

- 1 Dialogue ensures reflection on how history has influenced the development of social structures and conditions. Thus, we gain a common basis to speak from.
- 2 Increased sense of belonging in local communities by creating possibilities for dialogue and voluntary work. For example, when you actively share your experiences of life in the neighbourhood with each other and find similarities, this results in less division.
- 3 In the long run, improve society's structures and communication skills. More people will dare to take the initiative and use dialogue rather than other forms of communication and methods.
- 4 Opportunity for a collective analysis of reality and joint discovery of the causes and consequences of developments and events in society.
- 5 Collectively identify different ways to interact.

CONTINUE THE DIALOGUE

Dialogue requires time and patience and the absence of violence. The principle of non-violence applies to mental as well as physical violence. Safe spaces are necessary for people to be able to participate, be engaged, be honest and open, and share their experiences and perspectives with others.

It takes just one person to initiate a dialogue. Longer dialogue processes to bring about social change require broad participation and cooperation. Dialogue involves communication skills, but also develops an attitude to life. Dialogue resolves conflicts in a constructive way, prevents new conflicts and creates better interpersonal relationships. It is also an effective method for building bridges between peoples, groups and nations.

Of course, dialogue will not solve all our challenges. It takes effort and determination to create good relationships. Furthermore, to create a good and peaceful society and bring about sustainable change requires a range of initiatives. Though the state must do its part to contribute to increased welfare and development, each individual can also make a positive contribution to change. With the help of dialogue, you can put different topics on the agenda and enable more people to be able to participate. Together we can find creative solutions to our many challenges.

At the Nobel Peace Center, we hope that dialogue can help everyone find better ways to live in their community, despite disagreements. When values such as mutual respect and equality and methods like empathic listening are more common, nurturing relationships and friendships will become just as important as finding solutions to disagreements. The Nobel Peace Prize laureates have believed in, practiced and promoted this in their struggles for peace and justice.



Photo: Håkon Mosvold Larsen / Nobel Peace Center

“In my opinion, one of the most important things we can do today is to educate future generations about the need to use **dialogue, understanding and a non-violent approach** to resolving conflicts.”

- Greeting from the Dalai Lama to the Nobel Peace Center's 10th anniversary in 2015.

MORE READING ABOUT DIALOGUE

Schirch, Lisa & Campt, David.

*The Little Book of Dialogue for Difficult Subjects:
A Practical, Hands-on Guide*

Tutu, Desmond Mpilo & Tutu, Mpho.

*The Book of Forgiving: The Fourfold Path for
Healing Ourselves and Our World*

Garrett, Peter.

A New Kind of Dialogue

Buber, Martin.

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Isaacs, William.

Dialogue: The Art of Thinking Together

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Where nothing else is listed, all other quotations and texts about the Nobel Peace Prize laureates are taken from their Nobel Lectures and the Norwegian Nobel Committee's announcements. These are freely available on the Nobel Prize website, www.nobelprize.org.
