

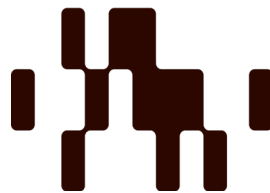


Filosofi i Skolen



Philosophical Dialogue

Filosofi i Skolen, Department for the Study of Culture,
University of Southern Denmark



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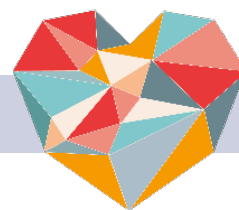


Dementia
in Cultural Mediation



With the support of the
Erasmus+ Programme
of the European Union

The activity



Name of the activity

Philosophical Dialogue

Summary

Philosophical dialogue derives from the tradition 'Philosophy with children' which is a collective term for different forms of conversation, where children, young people and adults through group activities develop their abilities to enter a philosophical dialogue with each other and develop the cognitive, personal and social skills.

How does philosophical dialogue take place?

A philosophical dialogue typically lasts 45-60 minutes where a group of participants sit together (preferably in a circle) and take part in a joint philosophical study focusing on one or more abstract ideas, eg art, power, trust, justice, freedom or responsibility . The philosophical dialogue is supported and organized by a facilitator who throughout the dialogue maintains the formal framework and asks in-depth questions to the participants.

The philosophical dialogue is kick-started by the facilitator presenting a stimulus, eg a story, a statement, a dilemma, a picture or a film, and then asks a starting question which relates to the stimulus and acts as a starting point for the dialogue. It is the participants who jointly create the content of the dialogue by sharing their opinions and ideas about the issue and related topics, but also by listening to each other and commenting on each other. Hereby, the participants jointly examine the given topic. The facilitator's task is to maintain the formal framework of the dialogue and create a safe space for the participants, but also to facilitate the dialogue between the participants, by asking in-depth questions and ensuring that everyone can have their say.

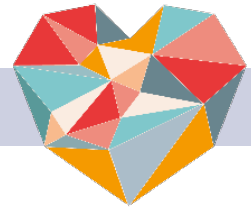
Often the philosophical dialogues are based on a stimulus that contains ideas or values that can be looked at in different angles philosophically. The purpose is not for the participants to learn about philosophy and the history of philosophy but to learn to philosophise. It is thus not a question of teaching certain theories, positions, or philosophers, but instead through philosophical discussions to work with the participants' curiosity, increase their ability to reflect and argue, as well as give them tools to talk together in a constructive way.

In the philosophical dialogue, we take as our starting point at the content that philosophy typically deals with, e.g. dilemmas, abstract concepts and "big questions" - all something where (yet) there is not one specific answer, but where there are many possible answers. It allows us to enter an equal dialogue with each other, where we can be curious together based on our point of view about something that affects us all. For example, "Is sign language a language?", "Who decides

that something is beautiful?”, “When is something music?”, “Can you do nothing?” or “Is an apple alive?”.

Content

Content



Target group

As a starting point, the philosophical dialogue can be used as an activity in several ways with different target groups. It's just a matter of adapting the content and framework of the activity.

It can, for example, be a group activity where people living with dementia in an early stage and their relatives participate in smaller groups (of 8-10 people) and take part in the philosophical dialogue together. The advantage of the relatives participating in the dialogue may be that they learn something new about their loved ones and can be common about the study of the philosophical issues. The disadvantage may be if the relatives start responding on behalf of their loved ones - most likely to help them - and thereby become too dominant in the dialogue. The philosophical dialogue can be a slow activity where we take time to think, speak and listen to each other.

For people living with dementia at a later stage, the philosophical dialogue can alternatively take place one to one, where the facilitator enters a dialogue with one person. The dialogues will most likely be shorter and can advantageously be based on the person's own questions and wonders.

As a facilitator, you must be aware of the various pitfalls that can be in relation to (unconsciously) manipulating the participants and creating an insecure space for dialogue. We therefore always recommend that you contact a professional facilitator and / or be trained to handle the dialogue. It is also important to have plenty of time to take care of the activity and to be aware that the participants are interested in being part of the dialogue - in other words, it is important to stop while the going is good.

Objective

It can be, for example:

- Working with and training the cognitive skills, e.g. giving examples, justifying oneself, seeing things from different perspectives or working between the concrete and abstract levels.

- To support and maintain social skills, e.g. to take part in a joint study, to listen to each other, to receive feedback from others or to answer the questioner.

- Supporting and maintaining personal skills, e.g. formulating thoughts for speech and explaining oneself, speaking in plenary or sharing one's own thoughts and ideas.

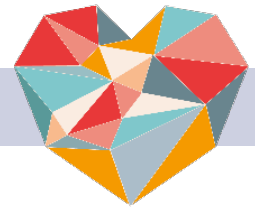
Something that always applies to the philosophical dialogue is that we seek to create an explored space - a philosophical space if you will - together! A place where we together explore the world around us based on each of our points of view.

Something that always applies to the philosophical dialogue is that we seek to create an explored space - a philosophical space if you will - together! A place where we together explore the world around us based on each of our points of view.

Partners

In getting participants to the activity, we used Demensfællesskabet Fyn.

Practical



Venue

What you need is a facilitator who has prepared the framework and stimulus for the dialogue. In addition, you need a room that can accommodate 5-10 people, (incl. Chair and tables) and where there is quiet. If you need to show a video to kickstart the dialogue, you need equipment for this. Access to toilets and kitchen to make coffee is preferable.

Day, time & duration

The Philosophical Dialogue can be held at any time of the day and any day of the week, but late afternoon has worked well for us as it gives the relatives better opportunities to participate. Duration is 45-90 minutes depending on how much energy there is in the group that day.

Group size

If you want to facilitate the Philosophical Dialogue as a group activity, the optimal group size is 5 to 10 people. One can also use the Philosophical Dialogue as a one-on-one activity where the facilitator has a dialogue with one citizen.

Supervisors and hosts

You will need some help for setting up tables, making coffee, guiding the participants to the venue and showing where the restrooms are etc.

During the dialogue, it is important that the facilitator and any helpers agree on whether the helpers are part of the dialogue or not.

Materials & facilities

The facilitator may use props to support the stimulus and the subsequent dialogue. It can be, for example, a short film, pictures, a piece of music or various objects. The props help us to make the problem concrete and act as a focus for the dialogue, so we always have the concrete element to "refer to" when we talk together in the Philosophical dialogue. For example, "What we heard on the video was not music because... But when I listen to a song by Queen, it is music because..."..

Costs

In our case, it was free to participate in the Philosophical Dialogue, but you could charge a small amount to pay for a facilitator, location and possibly coffee/tea.

Name tags

We did not use name tags in this course, but there is an option you can consider if you like it better to know the participants' names immediately.

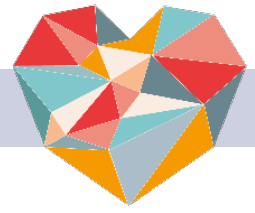
Memento

We did not give the participants any mementos after the Philosophical Dialogue, but if you think it is relevant to maintain the dialogue for the individual participant, you can consider writing down the stimulus and related questions so that the participants can take it home for further reflection.

Afterwards

We haven't planned any additional actions.

Communication & Registration



Communication

We used the local Dementia house for the recruitment. They were responsible for the communication to the citizens.

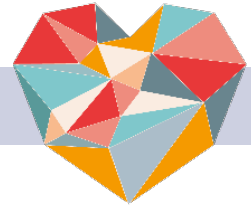
If you would like to know more about Philosophical dialogue, you can contact the project Philosophy in the School by email filosofiiskolen@sdu.dk or read more on the project's website <https://www.sdu.dk/da/filosofiiskolen>.

In addition, we can recommend from the project that you read the book "[The if Machine](#)" by Peter Worley, which contains a short introduction to facilitation and several exciting dialogue materials.

Registration

Demensfællesskabet Fyn used email and telephone for signing up participants.

Description & Program



A typical philosophical dialogue step-by-step

1. If the Philosophical dialogue is arranged as a group activity, it is important to find a place where there is calm so that everyone can hear what each other is saying. The participants and the facilitator typically sit on separate chairs in a circle, so that everyone is equal and can see / hear each other.

2. The facilitator introduces briefly to the activity's program and can possibly introduce participants to the concept of philosophy and philosophical questions. It is important that the facilitator does not record the purpose of the activity, as it can have a dampening effect on the participants and the open dialogue.

3. The facilitator can choose to start the activity with a small exercise where the group works with different cognitive skills eg concept clarification, categorizations or argumentation in a fun and easy way (contact filosofiiskolen@sdu.dk to hear more and receive materials).

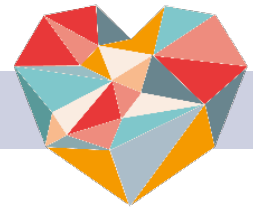
4. The facilitator then presents the stimulus and asks the starting question, which is the group's common third for the dialogue. The facilitator can advantageously use props which are placed in the middle of the circle, so that the dialogue also has a visually common third (contact filosofiiskolen@sdu.dk to hear more and receive materials).

5. It may be a good idea to start the dialogue with a talktime, where the participants talk together in pairs about the issue before the plenary dialogue.

6. The philosophical study can now go in many different directions and the facilitator facilitates the dialogue in the best way with in-depth questions. The facilitator stops the dialogue when the time has passed, or the participants need to stop.

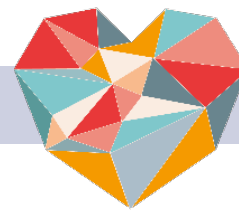
7. The activity can advantageously be rounded off with a small light exercise where the participants get up and stand and move a little (contact filosofiiskolen@sdu.dk to hear more and receive materials).

Evaluation



We did not make formal evaluations of the activities with the participants after the dialogues, but simply talked informally with the participants about their experience. All the participants (both the participants living with dementia and their relatives) expressed that they were happy with the activity, i.a. because they had the opportunity to talk and think about something that interested them and because it took place in an informal setting. For the relatives, it was very much an experience of hearing their loved ones reflect and talk with joy that was good.

Checklist, when to do what



One month before the activity

- Make sure you have an appointment with a trained facilitator in place and agree on a topic for the dialogue so that it can be announced in the invitation to the participants. Make sure all invitations are delivered.

Two weeks before the activity

- Check how many contestants has signed up and if needed broaden your scope for invitations .

The week before the activity

- Make sure all contestants has got the correct information regarding the activity.

The day before the activity

- Nothing specific.

Day of the activity

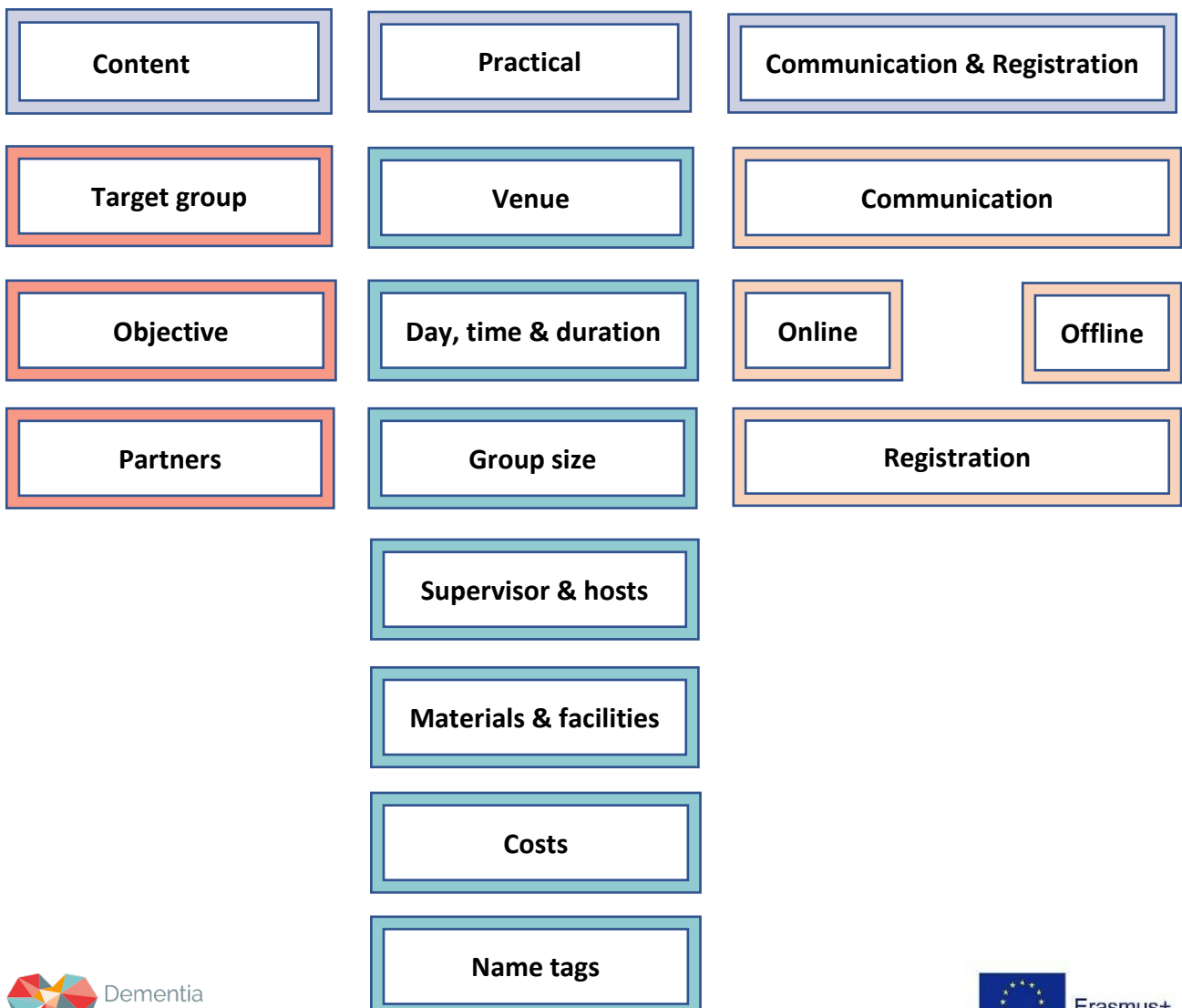
- Arrive at the venue in good time to connect with the people, helping out and make sure everything is ok.
- Make coffee and the for the participants.

Corona

We held the activities before the advent of the Corona, but the Philosophical Dialogue can easily be held in situations such as the Corona situation. All you have to do is make sure to book a large room so that there is a good distance between the chairs, and ventilate the room before, during and after the dialogue. Participants do not have to touch any things and can sit at a good distance from each other. However, it is NOT recommended that participants wear bandages during the dialogue itself, as it can be difficult to hear what people are saying with bandages on and it makes the dialogue more safe when we can see each other's facial expressions when we talk together.

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Points of attention



Memento

Afterwards

Evaluation

