

Facilitator Guide

Dispute Resolution & Prevention

**A practical NVC-based guide
to help facilitators manage tensions
and support collaborative dialogue**





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Introduction & Foundations

Purpose of the Facilitator Guide

This guide assists facilitators who assume roles within the informal dispute resolution mechanisms of the Western Quebec School Board (WQSB), as part of the Dispute Prevention and Resolution (DPR) framework. Its purpose is to offer clarity, confidence, and practical tools to those who accompany others through conversations that matter — especially when these are emotionally charged, complex, or rooted in misunderstanding or conflict.

This guide is designed to support facilitators in putting into practice three forms of support, each tailored to a different moment in the conflict resolution process:

- **Support Session** : A session designed to help a person prepare for a problem-solving discussion.
- **Individual Pre-Meeting** : A preparation meeting held with each person before an assisted dialogue.
- **Assisted Dialogue** : A structured dialogue between two people, supported by a facilitator.

Grounded in the principles of Nonviolent Communication (NVC), this guide encourages facilitators to hold both structure and compassion. NVC teaches to listen beyond positions and connect through needs, even in moments of tension. It aligns with the DPR approach, which seeks resolution through respect, voluntary engagement, and mutual understanding.

Throughout these pages, facilitators will find:

- Practical checklists and tools to support preparation and presence
- Scripts and questions to orient their support and guide meaningful conversations
- Invitations to embody empathy, authenticity, and shared responsibility
- Tools to offer to participants navigating conflict

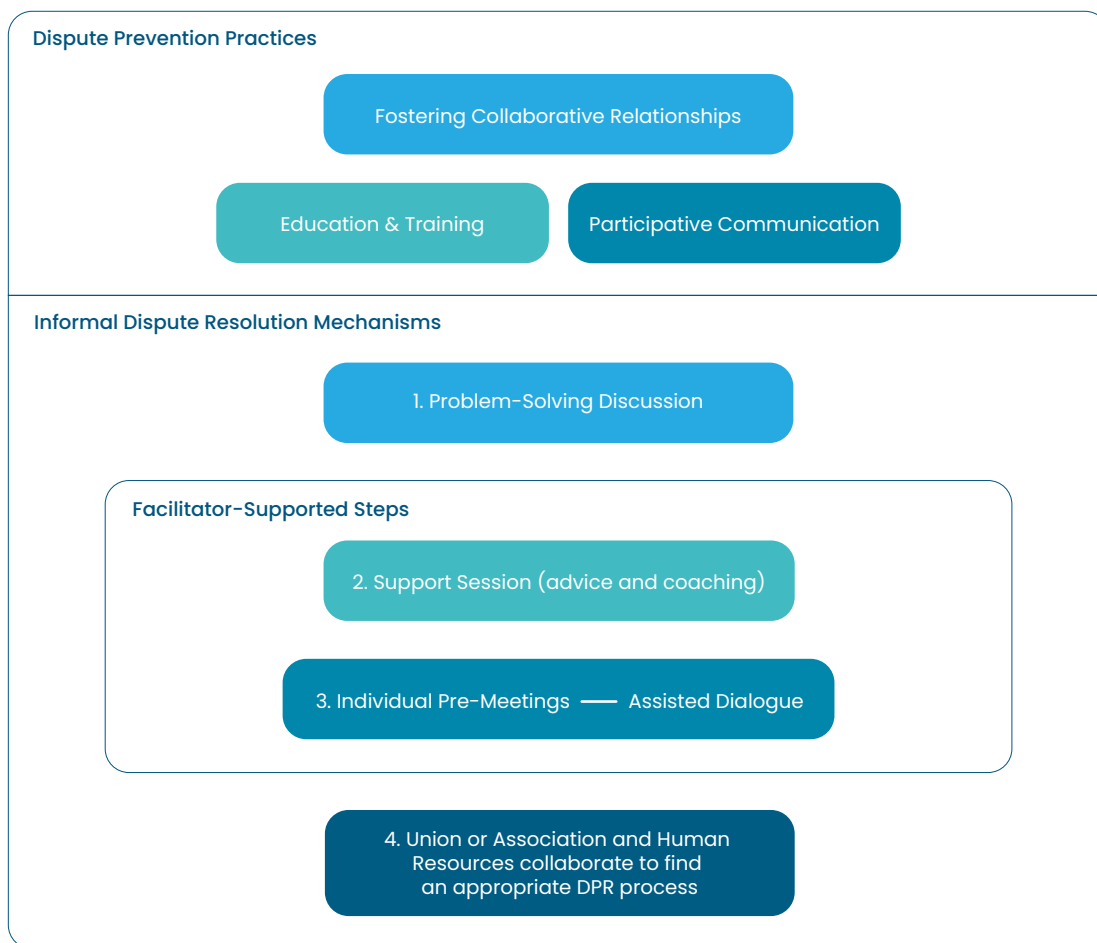
Rather than prescribing a fixed model, this guide offers a structured yet adaptable approach that facilitators can tailor to the context and the people involved.

As a facilitator, your role is not merely to manage a conversation; it is to hold space for individuals to move from disconnection to dialogue. This guide is here to help you accomplish that with confidence and care.

Overview of the WQSB DPR Framework

WQSB's DPR Plan is a structured approach developed collaboratively by unions, associations, human resources, and the Director General. It is designed to improve the well-being of employees and the way conflicts are prevented, addressed, and resolved.

Grounded in the belief that every staff member deserves to feel heard, respected, and safe at work, the framework provides flexible, confidential, and voluntary options for early resolution. It supports employees in addressing differences constructively, fosters collaboration and problem-solving, and offers meaningful alternatives to formal processes and escalation.



The approach is guided by principles of empowerment, fairness, and efficiency – ensuring that all employees can participate meaningfully in resolving conflict, access impartial and equitable support, and contribute to well-being and **mental health**, while reducing organizational costs such as absenteeism and workplace disruptions.

Ethical Considerations and Confidentiality

Respectful and constructive dialogue depends on clear ethical commitments. As facilitators, you are entrusted to create a safe, neutral space grounded in impartiality, confidentiality, and respect — all of which contribute to psychological safety.

The WQSB DPR framework supports psychological safety through:

- **Voluntary participation** – People enter the process by choice, which reinforces a sense of ownership and trust.
- **Confidentiality** – Information shared stays in the process, within clear legal and ethical limits.¹
- **Neutral facilitation** – No one takes sides; all are treated with fairness and care.
- **Respect for vulnerability** – People are invited, not pressured, to share what feels right for them.
- **Preparation meetings** – Individual sessions help participants feel informed, confident, and supported.
- **Collaborative process** – The intention is to move toward shared understanding and solutions that honor the needs of everyone.

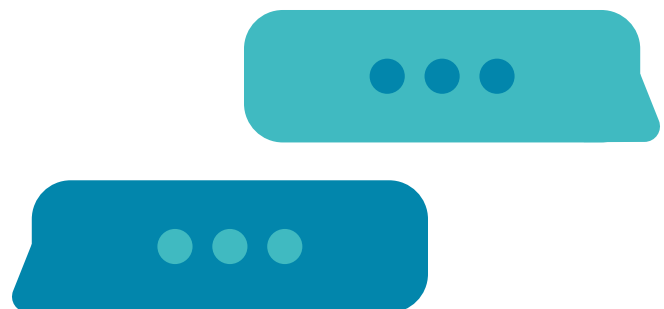
This safety is essential. When people feel safe — emotionally, socially, and professionally — they are more likely to engage fully, speak openly, take responsibility, and listen with care. Without it, conversations risk becoming superficial or even harmful.

Psychological Safety refers to a shared belief within a group that it is safe to speak honestly, without fear of judgement or retaliation.

Facilitator Role and Responsibilities

Facilitators within the WQSB DPR framework are employees who volunteer for this role alongside their regular duties. They come from a variety of job functions and departments or schools across the organization and share a commitment to fostering constructive workplace dialogue.

¹ See Section 9.0 Confidentiality and Record-Keeping in *Dispute Prevention and Resolution in the Workplace Guideline*.



What facilitators are...

- WQSB employees trained in dialogue facilitation
- Neutral and impartial
- Guides of the dialogue process
- Supporters of respectful communication

What facilitators do...

- Help people prepare for and engage in difficult conversations in a safe and respectful way
- Focus on how people talk and relate during the dialogue
- Ensure all voices are equally heard, regardless of role, status, or history
- Support listening, expression, and exploration of common ground and possible solutions
- Reframe statements, prompt reflection, and keep conversations aligned with shared intentions
- Intervene when necessary to restore clarity and respect
- End the dialogue or refer when conditions are no longer optimal

What facilitators are **not**...

- Mediators
- Investigators
- Decision-makers
- Advisors
- Conflict resolution experts

What facilitators do **not** do...

- Take sides
- Impose solutions
- Judge who is right or wrong
- Give advice or directives
- Advocate for anyone
- Determine outcomes or make agreements for participants

Understanding the NVC Approach

What is NVC?

NonViolent Communication (NVC) is a practical, relationship-centered approach developed by psychologist Marshall Rosenberg. NVC includes four steps and three competencies. It is grounded in the intention to foster mutual understanding, psychological safety, and voluntary collaboration, even in moments of tension or disagreement.

The core intention of NVC is to cultivate relationships rooted in authenticity, empathy, and choice.

NVC is not about being “nice” or avoiding conflict. It helps people stay connected to what truly matters – both in themselves and in others – while reducing blame, defensiveness, and reactivity.

The NVC process and consciousness apply to all relationships: at home, at work, and in the community. This approach is particularly relevant in workplaces where success relies on individuals collaborating through complex challenges and communicating effectively despite diverse perspectives.

The Three Core Competencies

Self-Empathy is the practice of pausing to acknowledge our own impulse to act, offering ourselves empathy for our underlying needs, and choosing a strategy that considers the needs present in the situation – rather than reacting with urgency.

“When I hear them raise their voice, I feel my body tensing up. I feel unsettled because I need calm and clarity in this conversation. I will take a breath before speaking and ask for a calmer tone in our exchange.”

Empathic Listening means listening with presence – without judging or trying to fix – while showing genuine curiosity, to understand what truly matters to the other person beyond their words or tone.

“It sounds like you might be feeling irritated, and really want to feel heard?”

Authentic Expression means expressing what matters to us – without blaming, demanding, or defending – by naming what happened (observation), how it affects us (feeling), why it matters (need), and what we are asking for (request).

“When I hear you raise your voice, I feel tense and unsettled because I need calm and clarity in our exchange. Would you be willing to lower your voice so we can stay focused on the conversation?”

The Four Steps of NVC

Observations refers to the facts, actions, gestures, and words that trigger our reaction.

"When I hear you raise your voice..."

Feelings refer to our internal state, manifested in physical sensations and body signals that are triggered by the observations and caused by our underlying needs.

"...I feel tense and unsettled..."

Needs are what truly matter to us – what we value, what we long for, and what supports our well-being. Awareness of our needs helps us better understand our inner state and increases the chance to connect with others in a genuine way.

"...because I need clarity and respect in our exchange."

Requests offer a concrete starting point for progress, clarify our intention, and open space for dialogue.

"Would you be willing to lower your voice so we can both stay engaged?"

Avoid exaggerations, generalizations, adjectives, and adverbs (e.g., "often", "all the time", "never", "too much", "not enough").

Avoid turning thoughts or judgments into feelings (e.g., "I feel that...", "I feel that you are wrong", "I feel rejected / betrayed / manipulated", "I feel like you don't care").

Avoid blaming, demanding, or turning needs into expectations (e.g., "I need you to stop being so rude", "I need you to apologize", "I need things to go my way").

Avoid vague or unclear requests (e.g., "Can you be nicer?", "Can you stop being so negative?") or demands disguised as requests when you are not genuinely open to hearing a no.

Building Readiness and Confidence as a Facilitator

Facilitating tense conversations takes practice, reflection, and support. It is perfectly normal to feel somewhat uncertain before stepping into a facilitation role. Before you step into DPR support sessions and dialogues, there are ways to prepare and grow your confidence:

- **Practice through role plays** – Simulate challenging conversations with colleagues to explore how to respond, try different formulations, and gain comfort with your tools.




- **Build a peer network** – Learn collaboratively by sharing experiences, strategies, and insights.
- **Co-facilitate** – Partnering with a colleague enables you to share responsibility, observe each other, offer mutual support, and exchange feedback.

Facilitation is about showing up with neutrality, care, and presence. **The simple presence of a third party can make a meaningful difference.** It slows reactivity and creates space for more honest and constructive dialogue.

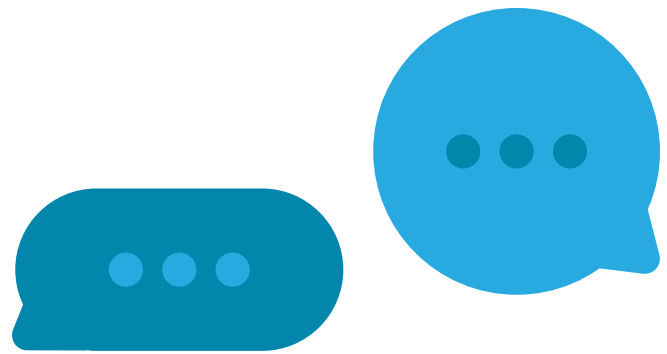
Assessing Conditions and Readiness

Before offering support, use the following tables to evaluate whether a dialogue is appropriate and whether you are in a position to facilitate with integrity.

Readiness is not a fixed state. Your role is to stay attuned to the situation, the people involved, your own capacity, and to support the next best step with care and discernment.

Should This Situation Be Handled Through DPR?			
Use this table to assess if DPR dialogue is appropriate. If one or more of the following conditions are present, a problem-solving discussion or assisted dialogue may not be suitable. In such cases, refer participants to the appropriate resources.			
Could someone be harmed physically or emotionally?			
Have concerns about harassment, bullying, or discrimination been raised?			
Is a formal complaint or investigation in progress or being planned?			
Has trust completely broken down between the people involved?			
Is there a power imbalance that would block open dialogue?			
Do participants expect you to judge, advise, or resolve the issue?			
Do participants reject the idea of hearing the other side, even with support?			
Is one person blaming the other entirely, without self-reflection?			
Is there a refusal to follow DPR boundaries or respect basic dialogue conditions?			

 No – appropriate
  Uncertain – requires clarification
  Yes – inappropriate



Is the Context Conducive?			
Use this table to assess whether the context supports moving forward. If one or more of the conditions are unmet, it might be more appropriate to delay, adapt, or replace the process with another form of support.	●	◆	■
Do you believe both parties feel free to participate without pressure?			
Is the issue suitable for dialogue (e.g., minimal work impact not justifying resource use, vague or overly subjective concerns, issues beyond the participants' control, etc.)?			
Has a problem-solving discussion already been attempted without success?			
Have support sessions or pre-meetings been held?			
Did you have time to gather enough context to proceed?			
Is there adequate time for a full and unrushed dialogue?			
Is the chosen space private and safe?			
Is the situation stable enough to allow for dialogue?			
Are participants emotionally regulated enough to engage?			

● Conducive ◆ Uncertain ■ Not supportive

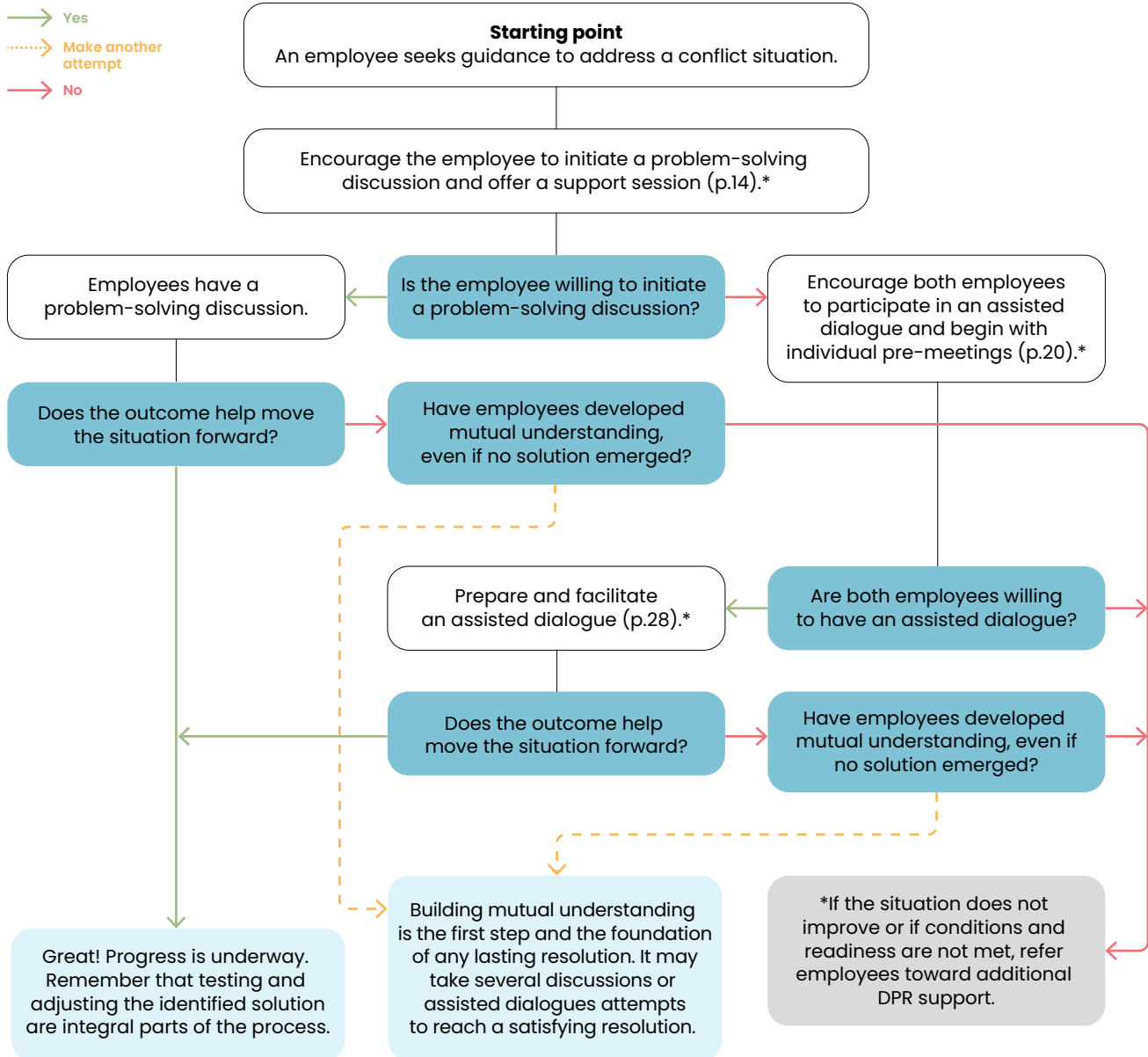


Do You Feel Ready to Facilitate?			
Use this table to assess your readiness. If several items raise concerns, consider pausing, seeking support, or referring to another facilitator. Awareness of your limits preserves both your integrity and participant safety.	●	◆	■
Am I clear about the scope and limits of my role?			
Do I feel clear about the steps of the dialogue I will be facilitating?			
Do I have the time and energy to engage responsibly?			
Do I feel grounded and emotionally regulated?			
Do I feel free of any personal or professional stake in the outcome?			
Do I feel I can remain neutral?			
Do I feel calm and emotionally centered when I think about the issue, or the people involved?			
Can I listen without trying to fix, judge, or take sides?			
Am I confident setting limits and upholding agreements?			
Am I willing to pause the process or make a referral if the situation calls for it?			
Am I clear about my personal limits and am I willing to ask for support or step back if circumstances require it?			
Do I know how to access support afterward?			

● Yes - ready ◆ Unsure ■ No - I would prefer to step back

Choosing the Right Intervention

The DPR framework offers several flexible paths. Use the following decision tree to identify which path best serves safety, clarity, and meaningful engagement.



Support Session

Purpose and Role

A support session is a one-on-one meeting to help an employee plan and prepare for a problem-solving discussion that the employee will initiate and lead. Think of the support session as a step-by-step process to help the employee gain clarity, direction, and confidence.

Your role is to support the employee to:

- **Clarify what happened and why it matters** by untangling facts, perceptions, feelings, and needs.
- **Explore possible needs of the other person** to consider their perspective.
- **Prepare for discussion** to set a constructive tone and openness to different forms of resolution.
- **Identify personal limits** by recognizing what is manageable and what is beyond their capacity.
- **Assess emotional readiness** and explore next steps.

Scripts and Key Exploration Questions

This section offers scripts and key questions to help you guide a support session with clarity, empathy, and structure. They are meant to inspire and can be adapted to match your tone and the context.

Welcome and Framing

Goal

“Thank you for taking the time to meet. The goal of this session is to help you prepare for a problem-solving discussion, if that feels like the right next step. This is not about figuring out who is right or wrong — it aims to clarify what matters most to you, what you might want to express, and whether you feel ready and willing to speak with the other person. If this is not the right time, we can explore other options too.”

“I am here to support your process. You can share what you feel comfortable with.”

Rules and Ethics

"Everything we discuss here will remain confidential, unless you ask me to share something or there is a serious safety risk. This is a safe space to think things through."

Process

"I will ask questions to help clarify the situation, understand what is important to you, and explore whether a problem-solving discussion might be possible or helpful. If that is the case, we will explore what kind of preparation could help you feel more confident and effective. We will go at your pace, and we can pause or shift course at any time. Does that seem clear? Any questions before we start?"

Exploration of the Situation

"To begin, can you share what has been happening? What led you to seek support?"

"I would like to hear your perspective on the situation. Take your time. I am here to listen and help you make sense of what is going on."

"How has this situation affected you – emotionally, professionally, or otherwise?"

"What feels unresolved or especially sensitive for you?"

You will find the [Problem-Solving Discussion Tool](#) related to this segment at the end of this section. It can be filled out together during the support session and serves two purposes: it supports the employee before initiating the discussion, and it offers you a helpful structure since it follows the flow of the session.

Self-Empathy – to Gain Inner Clarity

"Let us use the NVC reference points to take a step-by-step look at what happened, how it impacted you, and what this reveals about what truly matters to you. This process is a practice of self-connection and self-compassion. It helps bring clarity before choosing whether to move toward a conversation or take action."

Observations

"What happened, as factually as possible?"

"What specific words, actions, or moments stood out for you?"

"Can you give a specific example? When was the last time this occurred?"

"Describe the moment or interaction that impacted you the most."

Feelings and Needs

"How are you feeling about this now?"

"What values or needs of yours are unmet in this situation?"

"What is important for you to express or protect?"

"What matters most for you in this situation?"

Requests

"Now that we have looked at what happened, I would like to check in about what you are hoping for."

"Do you have any specific and realistic requests that you would like to express?"

"What would you like to be different for the future?"

"What would help this feel resolved, even partly?"

"Is there something you would like them to hear, understand, or acknowledge?"

Empathy – to Consider Another Perspective

“Another preparation strategy is to explore the other person’s experience, to understand what might have been happening for them.”

“If you imagine this from their side, what might they have seen, felt, and needed, or tried to achieve?”

“I understand you do not feel quite ready to listen to their perspective. That is completely okay. Would it be alright if I offered a few guesses about what might have been going on for them? Even if you disagree with their actions or behaviour, we can explore what possible reasons they had for acting that way.”

Intention – to Stay Grounded in the Conversation

“What makes this conversation important to you right now? What intention guides you?”

“What would you say is your core intention – not just the topic of the discussion, but what you hope to achieve or clarify through this discussion?”

Draft Authentic Expression Using NVC Steps

“How might you begin the conversation in a way that feels honest and respectful? Sometimes preparing one or two opening sentences can lower the pressure.”

“Let us try this structure: what you observed, how you feel, what matters to you, and what you would like next?”

Observation *“Can you describe what happened without judgement – just the concrete facts?”*

Feeling *“How do you feel right now as you think back to those events?”*

Need *“What need or value of yours is impacted by what happened?”*

Request *“What would you like to ask the other person – not as a demand, but as a request to support mutual understanding or change?”*

Draft Empathic Guesses Using NVC Steps

“How might you show curiosity in the discussion – even just for a moment – about what this looked like from their side?”

“It might help to imagine their response. Maybe they will agree, push back, or even get emotional. Let us walk through a few scenarios and explore how you could respond with an empathic guess to keep the conversation constructive.”

Wrapping Up the Session

Assessing Readiness

"Thank you for everything you have shared. Before we end, how are you feeling about the problem-solving discussion? Does it feel like something you might try – either now or later?"

"Do you feel ready to initiate the conversation, or is there more to explore or prepare?"

"It is okay if you are not ready or if now does not feel like the right time. Sometimes, more space brings clarity and perspective. Another option might be an assisted dialogue, if the other person is open to that process. I can explore some options with you, if you would find that supportive."

Optimal Conditions

"What conditions or supports would make the conversation possible and constructive for you? Are there specific arrangements that would help in terms of timing or setting?"

"Are there any concerns or warning signs that would tell you it is not the right time – either for you or for the other person? Would it help to name a few things to avoid, and a few things that help you stay connected to your intention?"

"Is there anything – from me or from the other person – that would help you feel supported?"

Closure

"I appreciate your openness. This work takes courage. Let me briefly recap the steps you are considering, and we can check if that feels accurate to you."

"Before we finish, would you tell me if there is anything from today that felt useful or supportive?"

"It is possible that several exchanges will occur before finding something that works for both. How would you feel about me checking in with you in a few days to see how things are unfolding? You are also welcome to reach out sooner if you want support or to talk through how it went."



Problem-Solving Discussion Tool

1. Self-Empathy – to Gain Inner Clarity

Observation	What concrete facts am I reacting to? What happened objectively?
Feeling	What am I feeling?
Need	What is my need? What do I value here?
Request	What would I like to ask? What do I want to happen next?

2. Empathy – to Consider Another Perspective

Observation	From their view, what happened? What did they see or hear?
Feeling	What might they be feeling?
Need	What needs might they be trying to meet?
Request	What might they be asking for, directly or indirectly?

3. Intention – to Stay Grounded in the Conversation

Why is it important to me to have this conversation with this person?
What do I hope this dialogue will achieve and foster?
How do I want to show up in this conversation?

4. Draft Authentic Expression and Empathic Guesses Using NVC Steps

Authentic Expression	Observation: When I see / hear / notice... Feeling: I feel... Need: Because I need / care about... Request: Would you be willing to...?
Empathic Guesses	Feeling: I guess you might feel... Need: Because you need / value...

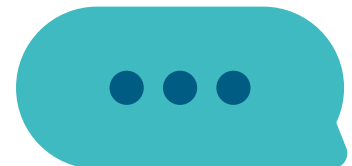
Individual Pre-Meetings

Purpose and Role

Individual pre-meetings are sessions held before an assisted dialogue, typically following a previous attempt at problem-solving discussions that did not lead to mutual understanding or resolution. Consider the pre-meeting as a way to assess readiness and build the conditions for a constructive dialogue.

Your role is to help each employee:

- **Build trust in the process** by creating emotional safety, demonstrating neutrality, and reinforcing agency and choice.
- **Clarify what they hope to express or understand** in the upcoming dialogue – based on current experience rather than solely past interactions.
- **Review past challenges** and identify what is within their reach to contribute to a more constructive dialogue.
- **Shift from a reactive stance** to a relational mindset that allows space for mutual influence.
- **Assess conditions for constructive participation**, including any sensitive issues or limits that may require care.
- **Determine readiness and willingness** of both parties to engage with respect and openness.



Checklist: Preparing for the Pre-Meeting

Before holding pre-meetings, ensure that you:

- Obtain the other employee's consent to begin the process.
- Gather background information: what happened, what was tried, and what is currently at stake.
- Share the **Assisted Dialogue: How to Prepare and What to Expect** (p. 24), along with any other useful documents, with both employees.
- Clarify the goals of the process, what participants can expect, timelines, and the scope of your role.
- Propose a timeline for the pre-meetings and the assisted dialogue and confirm participants' availability.
- Share the **Problem-Solving Discussion Tool** (p.18) and **Assisted Dialogue Tool** (p.25) and invite each person to review them, before completing them with your support during the pre-meeting.
- Secure a private, comfortable space and schedule enough time (typically 60-90 minutes) per pre-meeting.
- Review **Assessing Conditions and Readiness** tables (p.10) to evaluate if the process is timely and appropriate.
- Prepare yourself practically and emotionally: center yourself, revisit your intention, review the guide and tools, and seek support.

Scripts and Key Exploration Questions

Scripts and Key Exploration Questions from Section 2 remain useful to support clarity and connection. The additions below support a more active facilitation stance and emphasize learning from past conversation attempts to prepare with greater discernment.

Welcome and Framing

Goal

"This meeting prepares for an assisted dialogue between you and the other person. I am not here to take sides or decide who is right or wrong. My role is to support each of you in exploring unresolved issues, gaining clarity, and expressing what matters."

Rules and Ethics

"Before we begin, let me remind you of the principles guiding this process. What you share remains confidential, unless there is a serious safety risk. Participation is voluntary, and you may pause or stop at any time."

Checking-In

"Before we dive in, can I ask how you are doing today? Do you feel ready to have this conversation today?"

"Is there anything you would like me to know about how you are feeling right now, or anything that would help you feel more at ease?"

Exploration of the Situation

"What do you think made mutual understanding or resolution difficult so far?"

"Have you noticed any of your reactions or ways of showing up that may have contributed to the tension – even unintentionally?"

"Was there any moment of progress? What supported that?"

"What do you think was clear in what you expressed? What may not have landed as intended?"

"Looking back, is there anything you would do differently?"

"How do you imagine the other person might have experienced your past conversations?"

You will find the **Assisted Dialogue Tool** related to this segment at the end of this section. It builds on the Problem-Solving Discussion Tool by encouraging deeper reflection on past challenges and more intentional preparation for the next step.

Intention – to Shift to a Relational Perspective

"What kind of shift – in yourself, the other person, or the context – would make a real difference for this dialogue to be meaningful?"

"Is there a way to connect what matters to you personally with something that could also support collaboration between you or contribute to shared goals you are working toward?"

Translating Judgments into Needs

"When things are tense, people often think: 'they do not care' or 'they are being unfair.' What judgments come up for you in this situation? Write them down and let us reframe them as unmet needs."

"What do you believe the other person is upset about, or what might they blame you for? Can we take a moment to name that? Then, we can explore what they are trying to protect."

"Since their words or actions are attempts to meet something important — a value, need, or hope — what could that be? Even if the way it comes out is difficult for you, what valid reasons might they have?"

"What could they benefit from hearing or seeing from you to feel less defensive and more open?"

Expressing and Listening with More Intention

"If you were to express what is important to you again, how could you say it so they hear it better?"

"What would you hope to express or understand in this dialogue?"

Anticipating Challenges and Planning Support

"What feels most difficult or risky about the idea of meeting together?"

"What actions on their part — or what restraint — would allow you to truly participate?"

"Are there things you are worried they might say or do — like shutting down, getting defensive, raising your voice? Let us name them so we can prepare in case it happens."

"If one of those things happens, what could help you stay grounded? It might be a pause, a phrase you say to yourself, or something we agree on in advance."

"If things get difficult, would you like me to do anything in particular — like pause the conversation, help reframe something, or check in with you? Talking about it now can help me support you better later."

Desired Outcome and Next Steps

"What would a meaningful shift look like for you — something that would let you say, 'this conversation was worth having'?"

"That ideal outcome might not happen right away. Are there smaller signs of progress that would still matter? Can you name one or two?"

Wrapping Up the Meeting

Assessing Readiness

"Based on today, do you feel ready to participate in an assisted dialogue?"

"Is there anything that would make you feel safer or more supported during the dialogue? Are there any aspects you would like me to keep in mind to support you?"

Closure

"Thank you for your openness and willingness to approach this again with the other person and my support. What you shared helps me prepare a space that supports your needs. I will now meet with the other person, and once both pre-meetings are finalized, I will confirm whether the assisted dialogue will proceed."

"I truly believe this preparation creates the possibility for a more constructive dialogue. If you have questions or concerns before then, please contact me directly."

Assisted Dialogue: How to Prepare and What to Expect

An assisted dialogue is an informal but structured conversation, facilitated by a neutral third party. The goal is to offer employees in conflictual situations an opportunity to engage constructively in dialogue and explore their own solutions. The facilitator will guide the process, ensure both voices are heard, and help maintain a respectful tone throughout the exchange.

How to Prepare?

- Attend an individual pre-meeting with the facilitator to help you clarify what matters to you and prepare for the dialogue.
- Complete the Assisted Dialogue Tool in order to express yourself constructively, take the other person's perspective into account, and stay centered during the conversation.
- Read and sign the consent form that outlines the purpose and boundaries of the dialogue process.



What to Expect During the Dialogue?

- The facilitator will guide you step by step to express yourself and listen to the other person with care.
- They may pause the conversation or reframe certain parts to support clarity, mutual respect, and emotional safety.
- You are free to pause or stop the conversation at any time.
- You are not expected to agree on everything. The purpose is mutual understanding – not persuasion or resolution at all costs.



After the Dialogue

If relevant, next steps or agreements may be summarized in writing. A short follow-up may be proposed to help anchor progress or check in.

If you have any concerns or questions before the session, you are encouraged to contact the facilitator directly.

Assisted Dialogue Tool with NVC

1. Intention – to Shift to a Relational Perspective

What do I wish...	...for myself?
	...for the other person?
	...for our relationship?
	...for our shared mission?

2. Translating Judgments into Needs

What are the judgments or blame I carry?	How can I translate them into needs?
What judgments or blame do I perceive from the other person?	Can I make a guess about their underlying needs?

3. Expressing and Listening with More Intention

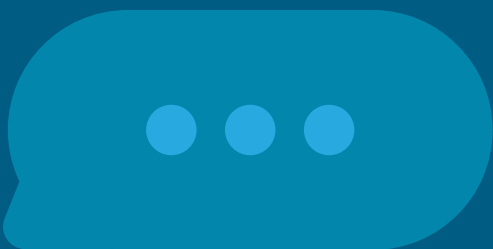
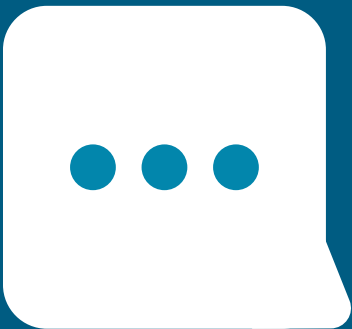
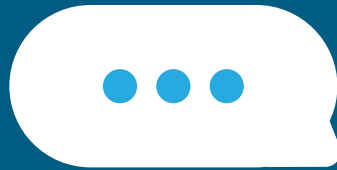
What do I really want to express and want the other person to understand?
What do I really want to understand from the other person?

4. Anticipating Challenges and Planning Support

What reactions, words, or behaviours do I anticipate or fear...	
...from myself?	...from the other person?
What can I do to support myself if that happens?	
How could the facilitator support me?	

5. Desired Outcome and Next Steps

What is my ideal resolution?	What small steps would show progress?
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Assisted Dialogue Session

Purpose and Role

An assisted dialogue is a structured conversation between two individuals who have experienced tension, misunderstanding, or conflict, supported by a facilitator acting as a neutral third party. While it does not guarantee resolution, it aims to create the conditions for a different kind of conversation. The goal is not to determine who is right, but to support both parties in exchanging with clarity and respect, in a way that opens new paths forward. Consider the assisted dialogue as a structured space where each person can speak openly and listen attentively.

Your role is to support the employees to:

- **Share what is important** with honesty and care.
- **Listen to each other's experiences** with presence and without interruption.
- **Clarify the impacts** of the past while remaining open to new perspectives.
- **Identify common ground**, shared intentions, mutual concerns, and areas for possible agreement.
- **Explore next steps** that can foster trust and support collaboration.
- **Clarify what would support** a respectful working relationship.

The following pages present the shuttle dialogue process, adapted from relationship coaching models. It is a structured approach designed to support communication between individuals in conflict — particularly when emotions run high, trust is low, or direct conversation risks escalating tensions.

You will act as a bridge between the two parties, guiding the flow of the conversation step by step. When introducing the process, explain the three phases, establish ground rules, and set expectations. Your clarity and leadership at this stage will help participants remain grounded if the conversation becomes emotionally charged.



Checklist: Preparing for the Assisted Dialogue

Before holding the assisted dialogue, ensure that you:

- Confirm both parties have completed pre-meetings.
- Secure a private, comfortable, and neutral space and schedule enough time (typically 90-120 minutes).
- Contact participants beforehand to confirm attendance and offer time for questions.
- Review **Assessing Conditions and Readiness** tables (p.10) to evaluate if the process is timely and appropriate.
- Review notes from pre-meetings, including themes, concerns, and boundaries.
- Coordinate logistics (seating, materials).
- Prepare an agenda (welcome, framing, phases, turns, and wrap-up).
- Prepare practically and emotionally: center yourself, revisit your intention, review the guide and tools, and seek support.

Shuttle Dialogue Process Step-by-Step

Listening Phase

In the first phase of the dialogue, each participant speaks directly to you, the facilitator. Your support at this stage models active listening and creates the conditions for a meaningful exchange, rather than revisiting past grievances.

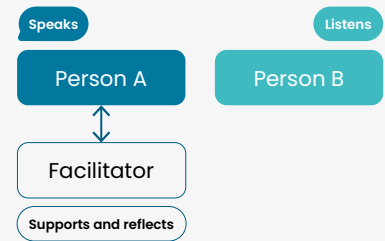
Step 1. Invite **A** to Speak

Begin the shuttle process with the person who initiated the request for the assisted dialogue. Your role is to support them in clearly expressing key experiences, feelings, and needs.

Invite **A** to share what has been difficult or challenging for them, encouraging them to focus on specific events – things that happened or did not happen – rather than interpretations or accusations.

Reflect what **A** says in more neutral, needs-based language, helping them clarify key issues and impacts to foster understanding. Use brief summaries and empathic guesses to validate their perspective and highlight the underlying needs. Check with **A** if they feel heard. If not, ask them to clarify what is missing. Reflect the missing part until **A** feels heard.

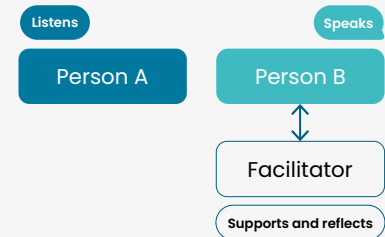
Ensure a balance pace that gives **A** uninterrupted space to speak and moments for you to reflect, to help **B** stay engaged.



Step 2. Invite the **B** to Speak

Then, turn your attention to **B**, offering the same opportunity for expression as **A** had, along with reflections.

Remain attentive to comparisons or reactive comments that may arise in response to what **A** has shared. When such comments surface, acknowledge these with care and remind **B** that this moment is for expressing their own experience, not about responding directly to **A** – that will come in the exchange phase.



Stay attuned to tone, posture, and emotional cues, as you are supporting participants in regulating tension, identifying what matters, and building readiness for the exchange phase.

Do not rush the listening phase. Participants may require more than one speaking turn to feel fully heard, settle their emotions, or clarify their thoughts.

When you sense that the most important aspects have been expressed, pause to check with them before moving forward. If they confirm that the essentials have been expressed, you can introduce the next phase of the dialogue.

Exchange Phase

In this phase, participants begin speaking directly to one another, one turn at a time, with your careful guidance and structure.

As you facilitate the exchange, pay attention to:

- Areas where alignment begins to emerge (shared concerns, mutual intentions, recurring needs, or signs of possible agreement).
- Unresolved issues that may require further support.

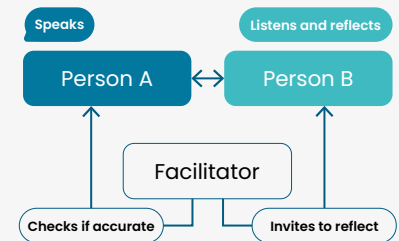
Step 3. Invite **A** to speak and **B** to reflect

Invite **A** to express directly to **B** what truly matters to them.

Ask **B** to reflect, in their own words, what **A** meant — without responding or defending.

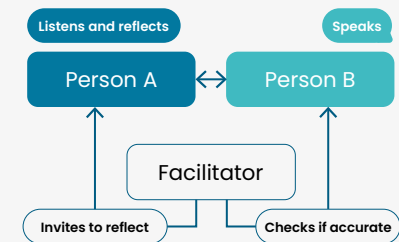
Check with **A** whether that matches what they meant to share. If not, invite them to clarify what is missing or inaccurate.

Support **B** to reflect again until **A** confirms they feel accurately heard.



Step 4. Invite **B** to speak and **A** to reflect

Repeat the same process with **B**.



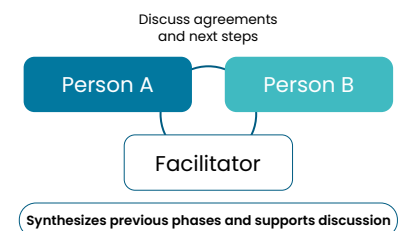
Resolution Phase

After a few rounds of dialogue, pause the exchange and review what has surfaced. Highlight both common ground and remaining differences and invite participants to consider possible next steps.

These may include:

- Continuing the dialogue on specific topics
- Formulating practical agreements
- Planning a second assisted dialogue, or
- Seeking additional support if required.

The dialogue continues until clear agreements are written down, or until both participants agree on next steps.



Scripts and Key Exploration Questions

Scripts and key exploration questions from previous sections remain valuable sources of support and inspiration. Facilitating a live exchange brings unique challenges; suggestions for managing the most common ones can be found in Section 5.

Welcome and Framing

Welcome

"Thank you both for being here. I value the effort you are making to show up for this kind of conversation. I recognize that it can feel challenging, especially when things have not been going well."

"I met with each of you to better understand the situation, and I appreciate what you have shared with me. I know prior efforts have been made to address the situation but have not led to the outcome you hoped for."

Check-In

"Let us start by checking in. Could you each share a few words about how you are feeling right now, as we begin this conversation?"

"Thank you for naming that. This helps me tune in and support you both in having a constructive exchange. My intention is to ensure this space is both safe and useful."

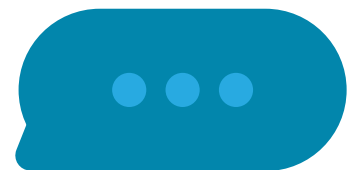
Goal

"To begin today, I would like to briefly restate some of what I shared in those individual conversations to ground our shared understanding."

"The goal here is not to convince one another or to determine who is right or wrong. What we seek is clarity and mutual understanding. Being heard and understood is already a meaningful step. You are not expected to resolve everything today, but we will explore whether there is a way to move forward with more ease and respect."

Your Role

"I will be facilitating the dialogue between the two of you today. I will not be taking sides, but I will support each of you in expressing yourselves clearly and listening to each other. My role is to guide the process and help you have a meaningful conversation."



Rules and Ethics

"Before we move into the dialogue, I would like to suggest a few ground rules to help us stay on track."

Voluntary Participation and Confidentiality *"Participation in this dialogue is entirely voluntary. You are both free to pause or stop at any time. Everything shared here is confidential, unless we agree otherwise."*

"If at any point you feel overwhelmed or unsure, it is acceptable to say so. We can slow down or take a break."

Take turns speaking *"To help keep things clear and constructive, I ask that we all commit to listening with as much presence and openness as possible. Please speak only when invited and avoid talking at the same time as the other person."*

"If interruptions occur – which is entirely human – I may step in to redirect us in turn-taking. Please know that if I interrupt, it is not out of disrespect. It is simply to help us stay focused and to ensure the process works for both of you."

Avoid blame *"We will aim to speak without blame, personal attacks, or harsh tones. Please refrain from interrupting or reacting in ways that might make the other person feel unsafe or unheard."*

"If I notice things getting tense or accusatory, I may offer support to help rephrase what is being said, so that the conversation stays constructive and respectful."

Check for Consent *"Before we move on, I want to ensure these ground rules feel like a shared agreement. Is there anything missing for either of you, or anything you would like to adjust so it works better for you?"*

"I am sensing this might not yet feel quite right. Would either of you like to add or change something before we continue?"

"Thank you for your trust. I am glad we can move forward with clarity. Let us stay open to adjusting along the way if something does not work."

Process

"I will guide us through a series of steps designed to make the exchange easier and more constructive. I will give clear instructions about who will speak and when – a bit like directing traffic, to avoid confusion and support active listening."

"In the first phase, I will invite each of you to speak directly to me, one at a time. This will allow me to help clarify what matters to each of you and will give the other person a chance to listen without the pressure to respond right away."

"Then, we will move to the second phase, where you will speak directly to one another – again, one step at a time, with my guidance throughout."

Listening Phase

Invite to Speak

*"Since you are the person who initiated this dialogue process, I will invite you, **A**, to begin. While you are speaking, **B** will simply listen. Once you have shared what is important to you, I will invite you, **B**, to express your perspective while **A** listens."*

"Could you tell me what has been challenging in this situation? Please speak from your own point of view and describe specific events or experiences that stood out to you."

*"Now I will turn to you, **B**. Thank you for listening to what **A** has shared. I imagine it might be tempting to respond to certain things that came up – especially if you experienced them differently or if something felt difficult to hear. For now, I invite you to take a moment to share your own experience. What has been difficult for you in this situation?"*

Reflect

"Let me see if I understand. You are saying that [observation – summary of facts]. What really matters to you here is [underlying need or value]. Is that right?"

"So, what I am hearing is that one of the key issues you mentioned is [observation – brief summary of facts], which impacts you by... [feeling and needs]. Did I capture that accurately?"

Support Expression

"What do you want the other person to know about your intention in bringing this up?"

"If you were to name two or three key things that you want the other person to understand, what would they be?"

"What are you hoping could be different after this conversation? If this conversation led to one small change, what would that be?"

Transition Toward Exchange Phase

"Thank you both for sharing. Do you feel that what matters most has been named? And if so, would you be ready to begin speaking directly with one another?"

Exchange Phase

Invite to Speak

"Now that you both have had a chance to share and listen, we will begin the direct exchange. I will invite you to focus on what matters most to you, or what you most want the other person to understand. Is there one of you who feels ready to speak first?"

"Now, would you like to respond to what you just heard – not by defending or debating, but by sharing what stands out to you now?"

Support Reflect and Paraphrase

"I would like to invite you to reflect in your own words what you heard the other person say. What are you hearing as the key message or the concern they are trying to raise?"

"Would you be willing to summarize what you heard the other person share, especially what seemed most important or meaningful to them?"

Support Expression

"Is there something essential you have not yet shared that could help the other person understand you better?"

"What would help you feel more understood in this exchange? Is there a key point that has not yet been heard?"

"Is there anything either of you would like to clarify, name, or add before we move forward?"

Transition Toward Resolution

"Let us pause briefly to see where we are. I can offer a summary of what has emerged, and then we can decide how to proceed together – whether that means continuing the dialogue, focusing on a specific point, or exploring possible agreements."

Resolution Phase

Recognize Common Grounds

"From what I have heard so far, it seems that both of you care deeply about [shared value or intention], even though you may be expressing it in different ways. Would that be accurate?"

"I notice that [theme] seems to matter to both of you. Would you be willing to explore a first step in that direction?"

Name Points of Tension

*"I would like to name a few unresolved tensions. I am hearing that **A** feels strongly about [theme], while **B** experiences [feelings, needs] and... Does this summary feel accurate to each of you?"*

"I notice some areas where you see things differently, particularly around [specific aspect]. Would you be open to exploring that further?"

Invite Joint Reflection

"Do you feel ready to discuss what you might implement together? Even if you are not resolving everything today, is there one small step you are both willing to try?"

"You have already taken some important steps. Would it help to review the conversation so far and identify what feels doable for each of you?"

Check for Agreement

"Let us try to describe this agreement clearly, leaving no room for ambiguity – what exactly will happen, by whom, and by when?"

"When will a follow-up conversation take place to check how the agreements are holding and whether any adjustments should be considered?"

"Does this feel realistic for each of you? On a scale from 1 to 10, how confident are you that you will be able to follow through with this agreement? If it is not a 9 or 10, what would help strengthen your commitment or confidence?"

Wrapping Up the Dialogue

Follow-Up

"I will send you the written agreement and an invitation to our follow-up conversation. In the meantime, please reach out if you need support."

"We have covered important ground today. At the same time, I sense that some areas might still need more space. Would it be helpful to meet again and explore these more fully?"

"Rather than deciding right away, I suggest taking some time to let things settle. I can follow up with each of you in a few days to check how you are feeling and whether another dialogue might be useful."

"Sometimes these conversations bring up sensitive things that may require support beyond this setting. If that is the case for either of you, I will provide some suggestions or resources."

Check-Out

"Before we finish, would each of you like to name one thing you are taking away from this conversation?"

"Would you like to share how you are feeling as we end this conversation?"

"Would you like to offer a word of appreciation – either for the process, the effort, or something that stood out?"

"Is there something you would like to express appreciation to the other person for?"

Closure

"Thank you both for your presence today. I understand that this is not easy, and I want to acknowledge the effort you have each made to engage respectfully."

"I heard several shared concerns and some that may require more exploration. I appreciate the way each of you has shown up today. It has made a difference."

Pausing and Structuring Turns

"You have touched on a few meaningful aspects already. Shall we pause here so I can reflect what I am hearing, before we move to the other person?"

"I want to make sure both of you have enough space to speak and keep things manageable for the listener. Let us pause here for now, and then we will come back to you after hearing from Person A/B."

Disregard of Rules or Process

New Content After Reflection

"I want to acknowledge that what you just shared matters. We will make space for that later. For now, I suggest we pause here. The purpose is to move through this, one piece at a time, so each part is fully heard. This also ensures that both of you have a fair chance to speak in turn."

"I would like to hold off on that for now. Let us first complete this part of the conversation and continue with Person A/B. You will have a chance to bring it back in once we return to you."

Speaking Out of Turn

"I will pause you for a moment. I understand that you may want to respond right away, and I ask you to hold your thoughts for now. Each of you will have time to speak fully, and I want to make sure we keep the flow we agreed on."

"Let us come back to one voice at a time. You will have your turn shortly. I know this may feel urgent, and I want to make sure each person is heard without interruption."

Disruptive Nonverbal Reactions

"I see that something came up for you. I want to make sure we hear that – may I ask you to hold it for a moment so we can keep the rhythm we agreed on?"

"I want to acknowledge that this may bring up strong reactions. At the same time, I ask that we keep the space calm and respectful while the other person is speaking."

Speaking of the Other Person

"To keep the conversation constructive, let us try to stay with what this situation has meant for you personally – rather than going into what the other person should or should not have done."

"I understand that you are upset. To help the other person understand you, I invite you to speak about your own experience – what you saw, what impact it had on you, and what matters to you."

For additional support with challenges that may arise during a dialogue, the following section **Managing Delicate Moments** addresses the most common situations you might encounter.

Managing Delicate Moments

NVC Tools for Challenging Situations

Even in a well-prepared dialogue, moments of tension, misunderstanding, or emotional intensity can arise. By recognizing early signs and using the NVC approach – pausing, offering an empathic guess, expressing yourself, or inviting a shift in tone or focus – you help maintain alignment with the purpose of the conversation.

This section introduces practical NVC-based tools to help manage difficult interactions with clarity, steadiness, and empathy.



Long-Standing or Recurring Conflicts

What to watch for: Participants may refer to past events, recurring patterns, or unresolved tensions that extend beyond the current dialogue, accompanied by accumulated hurt or frustration. They may say things like “This always happens” or “Nothing has changed”. The issue feels broader than the present situation, and their tone may carry resentment, exhaustion, or guardedness. Such references often reveal emotional fatigue or chronic mistrust.

Facilitator response:

- Acknowledge the weight and complexity of the shared history.
- Help focus on one or two specific examples from the current context.
- Support participants in identifying small, concrete steps, while recognizing that his conversation may not resolve everything.

Expression *“It sounds like this connects to a long history that still weighs heavily. I hear that there is a lot behind your words. At the same time, I am concerned that going over every past moment might only repeat old conversations without bringing the shift you are hoping for. Would you agree to focus on what could change from here, while still honouring what this carries for you?”*

Empathic Guess *“Are you perhaps carrying the weight of repeated disappointments and wondering whether change is even possible this time?”*

Invitation *“For today, could we choose one example that clearly shows how this affects you? Then we could explore one small step that might offer relief and begin to support a shift — even if it does not resolve everything right away?”*

Refusal to Listen or Rigid Positions

What to watch for: A person may interrupt, reject paraphrasing, shake their head, or repeat the same point without acknowledging what was shared. Their body may appear tense, with crossed arms and tight jaw, and their tone may be loud or clipped. This may signal a perceived threat, strong attachment to an outcome or narrative, or deep mistrust.

Facilitator response:

- Acknowledge the intensity or frustration without validating rigidity.
- Invite curiosity about the other’s view.
- Reframe the value of mutual understanding even when resolution is unlikely.

Expression *“When I hear ‘this is how it is, period’, I feel tense because I want to create a space where both voices can shift. Would you share what feels at risk for you in listening to their point of view?”*

Empathic Guess *“When things have felt stuck for a long time, it is hard to listen openly. Could it be that you are holding on because your experience did not feel fully acknowledged in the past? I wonder if hearing their point feels like it would invalidate your truth?”*

Invitation *“This is not about agreeing. It is about hearing each other’s experience. Your perspective may be different. We will hear it next. Would you agree to listen for now?”*

Emotional Overwhelm

What to watch for: A participant may become emotionally flooded by sadness, anger, shame, fear, or frustration, to the extent that they struggle to think clearly, speak constructively, or stay present in dialogue. Indicators include rapid or halted speech, disorganized or repeated statements, signs of helplessness or disengagement, visible trembling, tears, shallow breathing, lack of eye contact, or sudden withdrawal.

Facilitator response:

- Acknowledge the signs of overwhelm with care and check in.
- Normalize the emotional response and affirm the participant's experience.
- Offer small, supportive options while adjusting the pace of the dialogue.

Expression *"When I notice your voice softening and your shoulders tensing, I feel concerned because I want to keep this space safe and manageable for you. Would it help to pause for a moment before continuing?"*

Empathic Guess *"Is it possible that this moment feels too intense to stay fully present, perhaps because something deeply personal is being touched?"*

Invitation *"Just to check in — are you comfortable continuing, or is there anything you would like before we proceed? If at any point it feels difficult again, please let me know — whether you prefer to pause or would benefit from another form of support."*

Accusations or Blame

What to watch for: A participant may speak in a blaming tone, make harsh generalizations, or use phrases like "You always," "You never," or "This is your fault." They may use sarcasm or speak rapidly. Blame can be directed at the other participant, oneself, or third parties (e.g., colleagues, leadership). Their voice may rise, they may lean forward, or their facial expression may harden. This often reveals unspoken pain, perceived injustice, or a strong desire to be heard and validated.

Facilitator response:

- Interrupt escalation with care and curiosity, without shaming.
- Name the shift and reframe the intention behind the blame.
- Invite the speaker to express their experience or needs without labeling the other.

Expression *"When I hear the words 'This kind of behaviour is unacceptable', I feel some tension because I want to support your expression in a way the other person can hear. Shall we try to rephrase this to describe its impact on you, without making it about who is at fault?"*

Empathic Guess *"Is it possible that you hope the other person might recognize the impact their actions have had on you, even if it is hard to say it differently right now? Could we try to reframe this in terms of what you felt and needed in that moment? It sounds like you are feeling frustrated and need acknowledgement — does that sound right?"*

Invitation *"I would like us to move away from finger-pointing. Would it be okay if I tried to rephrase what I am hearing?"*

Insults or Aggressive Behaviours

What to watch for: A participant may raise their voice, use demeaning language, make personal attacks, or engage in mocking, sarcasm, or threats. Their posture may become physically imposing — leaning forward, pointing, standing, or using sharp gestures. These behaviours often stem from deep frustration, perceived lack of power, fear of not being heard or taken seriously. Aggression can serve as a shield against vulnerability or an attempt to regain control in a conversation where one feels the urge to defend oneself.

Facilitator response:

- Interrupt firmly and name the behaviour clearly and calmly.
- Invite the person to name what matters to them without attacking.
- Pause or stop the dialogue to protect the dignity and safety of both participants if necessary.

Expression *“When voices rise and words become sharp, I feel concerned because I want to protect this space as one where mutual respect remains intact — even during intensity. Could we take a breath and try again, focusing on what happened and why it matters to you?”*

Empathic Guess *“I wonder if your words come out strongly because being the focus of attention feels uncomfortable, or perhaps because you sense that you are being unfairly blamed?”*

Invitation *“I would like to pause you here. I want your perspective to be heard while keeping the space safe for both of you. Are you willing to shift the tone so we may continue? Can I help you in finding words that express your concern in a way that the other person can hear?”*

Imbalance in Airtime

What to watch for: One participant may speak significantly more than the other, offer lengthy explanations, interrupt frequently, or repeatedly shift the topic away from the other's contributions. The other person may remain silent or give brief answers. This may stem from enthusiasm, a habit of thinking aloud, or an attempt to control the narrative.

Facilitator response:

- Interrupt and acknowledge the imbalance without blame.
- Frame equity in airtime as a shared responsibility and a condition for meaningful dialogue.
- Check in with the quieter participant and re-center the conversation by explicitly inviting them.

Expression *“I notice that one voice is carrying most of the conversation. I feel some unease and I want to make space for both perspectives. I would like to turn to [the other person] now for a few uninterrupted minutes. Would that be okay for both of you?”*

Empathic Guess *“Perhaps you are sharing fully because you want to be clear and not leave anything out?”*

Invitation *“Thank you for what you have shared. I also want to ensure that we hear from the other person before continuing. [To the other person] Is there anything I can do to help you feel more comfortable or supported in bringing your voice into the space?”*

Using Authority, Expertise, or Moral High Ground

What to watch for: A participant may refer to their role, seniority, credentials, or decision-making authority to redirect the conversation. They may adopt a lecturing tone, oversimplify the other's viewpoint, or imply that the other person lacks understanding, competence, or legitimacy. These behaviours may be an attempt to maintain control or reinforce a sense of authority or certainty.

Facilitator response:

- Refocus the purpose of the conversation on mutual understanding, not persuasion.
- Encourage the person to speak from personal experience rather than from authority, expertise or moral superiority.
- Use paraphrasing to reinforce the quieter person's voice.

Expression *"I can hear that this is a well-developed perspective. I feel concerned because I am committed to creating a space where each voice carries weight. I want to ensure we are engaging with lived experience, rather than simply comparing arguments. Could we take a moment together to consider what each person is going through in this situation?"*

Empathic Guess *"Is it possible that you are speaking from strong conviction because this touches on something you value deeply — such as fairness, clarity, or being understood? Do you want [the other person] to recognize how strongly this affects you?"*

Invitation *"Before we move on, I am also curious — beyond the reasoning — would you be willing to share what this issue represents for you personally?"*

Seeking Validation or Support in Narrative

What to watch for: One participant may turn to the facilitator for reassurance, approval, or alliance — seeking confirmation that their version is "right" using phrases like "We all know that..." or "Can you believe this?" Their tone may convey urgency, righteousness, or emotional charge. These behaviors often stem from a desire to be acknowledged or emotionally supported.

Facilitator response:

- Avoid validating or invalidating any narrative.
- Reflect with care, focusing on the person's experience while clearly separating it from past events or future expectations.
- Redirect the search for validation toward mutual understanding.

Expression *"I imagine it may feel reassuring if you felt I agree with you. I want to acknowledge your perspective with compassion and recognize how important this is to you. At the same time, my role is not to determine who is right, but to help you both feel heard. Would you feel comfortable expressing your truth and sharing how this situation affects you personally?"*

Empathic Guess *"Are you perhaps seeking reassurance that your story is heard and taken seriously? From what I hear, you feel stretched because you long for shared reality and inclusion. You wish [the other person] could share your view on how to structure your exchanges."*

Invitation *"Instead of validation from me, could we focus on how this situation affected you? That may help [the other person] understand what truly matters to you."*

Withdrawal or Silence

What to watch for: A participant may become quiet, give short or vague answers, avoid eye contact, or appear emotionally distant. Their posture may seem slumped or still. This could indicate overwhelm, emotional shutdown, fear of judgment, or a sense of futility.

What to do:

- Acknowledge the silence with care and curiosity.
- Normalize the difficulty of the moment without pushing.
- Offer space to check in or pause.

Expression *“When I notice long silence or your gaze turned inward, I feel concerned. I want to ensure there is room for you here. I value your presence and wonder if something is making it hard to stay engaged. May I check in with you?”*

Empathic Guess *“Could it be that you are uncertain about how to respond to this? If you want to express something – even how this moment affects you – you are welcome to share.”*

Invitation *“If you feel ready, would you share what is happening for you right now – even if just naming that it is hard to speak?”*



Facilitator Inner Challenges

This section outlines inner challenges you may face, along with grounding perspectives to help you stay present, impartial, and aligned. The goal is not to eliminate these reactions, but to build awareness, reduce their impact, and return to a posture centred on curiosity, humility, and care for the process.

When You Think You Know the Solution

As a facilitator, you care about resolution and may have training or life experience that helps you identify possible solutions quickly. When participants seem lost, reactive, or stuck in loops, the desire to help them move forward is natural. However, stepping in too early with a solution can shift attention away from mutual understanding and may leave participants feeling unheard or overruled. It can also weaken their sense of autonomy or foster reliance on you, rather than strengthening their capacity for dialogue.

What to watch for: You may feel a strong urge to propose a next step, steer the conversation toward what you believe would resolve the issue, or speed up the process by offering clarity the participants have not yet reached.

Urgency Self-Empathy *"I want to help, and I care deeply about their progress. This urgency shows how much I value clarity and movement."*

Grounding Reminder *"I am here to foster understanding, not to resolve the conflict. Durable agreements emerge from insight, not instruction."*

Helpful Move Focus less on what is being said and more on how participants are engaging. Pay attention to the process, not just the content.

When You Feel Aligned with One Person

When a participant shares something that feels especially relatable or touches on your own values or experience, you may find yourself emotionally leaning toward them. While this alignment stems from care, it can subtly affect your neutrality and shift the other person's perception of your presence.

What to watch for: You might find yourself mirroring one participant's language, nodding more often, rephrasing with extra clarity or warmth, or feeling resistance when the other person speaks.

Urgency Self-Empathy *"I feel deeply moved by this. It shows how much I care about emotional safety and dignity."*

Grounding Reminder *"Let me stay with that intention and channel it into the process — even when I resonate more with one person."*

Helpful Move Soften your posture and shift your attention to what might matter right now for the other person.

When You are Emotionally Affected by What You Hear

As a facilitator, you are not immune to emotional impact. Sometimes, what is said may echo your own experience, challenge your values, or awaken something painful. Strong emotions may affect your ability to stay centered and present. This does not disqualify you from facilitating. The key is to recognize the signal and return to a grounded posture.

What to watch for: You may notice tightness in your body, mental spinning, disconnection, or an impulse to withdraw or intervene rapidly.

Urgency Self-Empathy *“I feel shaken because I care deeply about support and compassion, and wish no one had to go through this pain alone.”*

Grounding Reminder *“Strong feelings are a cue to reconnect with presence and purpose.”*

Helpful Move Breathe. Slow the pace, offer a summary or pause to give everyone — including yourself — a moment to land.

Follow-Up Options

After a support session or facilitated dialogue, intentional follow-up helps anchor progress, sustain momentum, and integrate emerging insights. In the context of an assisted dialogue, the goal is not to reopen the conversation, but to reinforce personal responsibility, acknowledge any relational shift, and support the integration of what was expressed or understood. These touchpoints help prevent regression into old patterns and affirm that the process is part of a larger journey.

Depending on the context and needs expressed during the conversation, follow-up options may include:

- **Individual check-ins:** Offer short follow-up conversations with participants to acknowledge their contribution, hear how they are doing, and identify any support required moving forward.
- **Voluntary reflections or next steps:** Invite participants to write a reflection letter or track their progress. Support them in naming one or two concrete actions they feel ready to take to improve their dynamic or fulfill intentions.
- **Agreements review:** If written agreements were made, propose a follow-up date (e.g. in 2–4 weeks) to revisit how they are unfolding and whether any adjustment should be considered.
- **Referral or ongoing support:** If emotional, relational, or systemic issues persist, encourage appropriate referrals (e.g. mediation, coaching, therapy, or organizational support), while always respecting participant autonomy.

Facilitator Self-Debrief

Taking time to debrief supports integration and allows you to grow in your facilitation practice. Write a brief journal entry or voice memo to capture insights.

Self-Debrief Questions:

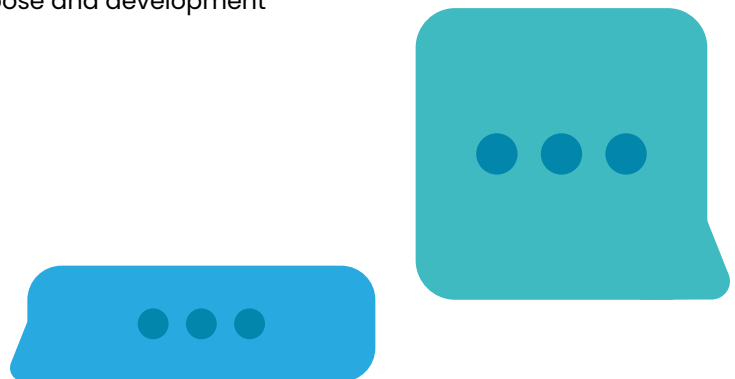
- What moments stood out as particularly challenging or impactful?
- Did you notice any inner reactivity? How did you navigate it?
- What did you learn about yourself as a facilitator from this experience?
- Which of your choices or contributions of yours do you want to celebrate from this process?
- What questions or challenges did this process raise for you?
- What support or next steps might help you address them?
- What might you do differently or similarly next time?

Peer Support Options

Engaging in peer support helps process what emerged, reduce isolation, and foster growth through shared exchange and insight. Whether you facilitated alone or with a partner, debriefing with a peer or co-facilitator is a powerful way to integrate the experience.

Supportive peer support options include:

- **One-on-one debriefs with a peer or co-facilitator:** Shortly after a session, schedule a meeting with a trusted peer. Invite them to listen with empathy to help you process the experience and clarify your insights. If desired, you may ask for feedback or advice, but the primary intention is to be heard, not evaluated.
- **Peer meetings:** Recurring check-ins with other facilitators offer a space to share highlights, struggles, and learning from your facilitation work.
- **Practice groups:** These groups focus on skill-building through dialogue, feedback, and role-play, based on the needs arising from real-life situations. Over time, they build community and mutual support, helping you stay connected to your purpose and development as a facilitator.



References & Resources

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