

ALED 342/ALEC 609 Learning Organizations
The Left-Hand/Right-Hand Dialogue Exercise
The Fifth Discipline Fieldbook, Peter M. Senge, [et al.], 1994, Page 246-47

Directions: Complete the activity as described below and bring your finished product to class on the assigned day.

Step 1: SELECT A PROBLEM

Select a difficult problem you have been involved with during the last month or two. The problem should be one that is a tough, interpersonal difficulty that many of us try to ignore. Your problem should be one where:

- You cannot reach agreement with your close associates (friends or co-workers).
- Someone else is not pulling his or her weight.
- You believe you are being treated unfairly.
- You believe your point of view is being ignored or discounted.
- The rest of the organization is resisting – or you believe they will resist – a change you want to implement.
- You believe your team is not paying much attention to the most crucial problem.

Step 2: WRITE A SHORT PARAGRAPH

Write a brief paragraph describing the situation. What were you trying to accomplish? Who or what is blocking you? What do you think might happen in the future in relation to this problem?

Step 3: CREATE YOUR CONVERSATION SHEET

Now, recall a frustrating conversation you have over this situation – or imagine a conversation that you would have if you brought up the problem.

Take several pieces of paper and draw a line down the center. Label the RIGHT COLUMN “What is said” and label the LEFT COLUMN “What I’m thinking.” (see sample below)

Step 4: THE RIGHT-HAND COLUMN

In the right-hand column, write out the dialogue that actually occurred. Or write the dialogue you’re pretty sure would occur if you were to raise this issue. The dialogue may go on for several pages. Leave the left-hand column blank until you’re finished.

Step 5: THE LEFT-HAND COLUMN

Now in the left-hand column, write out what you were THINKING and FEELING but not saying.

(SAMPLE SHEET)

What I'm really thinking

What is actually said

