Debate vs Dialogue Conflict Management Activity

From https://symondsresearch.com/conflict-management/

Activity: 20 minutes.

1. Ask the participants to work in pairs.

2. Ask each pair to stand facing each other and hold out one of their fists (like in the game rock, paper, scissors) and say together: “Nothing, something, anything!” Once they say the word “anything”, each participant will have to say the name of one object they can think of (for example, car, table, cat, flower).

3. Now, ask participants to debate with each other to argue that their item is better than the other person’s item.

4. Give them about 3 minutes to debate. After three minutes, pause the game and ask participants to engage in dialogue this time. This means asking each other questions about their items, listening to the answers and coming to an agreement between them. Allow them about 5 minutes for this.

5. At the end of the exercise, start a discussion with the whole class.

6. Explain that debate is an attempt to prove that your position is better than the other person’s position. The aim is to ‘win’ over the other person by finding faults in the other person’s position.

A dialogue instead is about understanding and cooperation. The aim of dialogue is to reach mutual understanding while valuing the strengths of the other person’s position.

7. Questions you can ask to start the discussion might include:

- How did you feel about each situation (debate vs dialogue)?
- How did you react to each situation?
- How would you behave in real conflict situations?
- How did things change when you switched from debate to dialogue?
- Is it difficult to listen when somebody disagrees with you? Why? How did you come to an agreement?