

Discussion Dispositions and Benefits

9 Key Dispositions that Discussion Helps Us Learn

1. **Hospitality** – an atmosphere in which people feel invited to participate; this implies a mutual receptivity to new ideas and perspectives and a willingness to question even the most widely accepted assumptions
2. **Participation** – everyone is encouraged to participate in significant ways on as wide a range of issues as possible; this implies that everyone’s participation matters and has an impact on others
3. **Mindfulness** – paying attention and being aware of the whole conversation – of who has spoken and who has not – and of doing what one can to ensure that the discussion doesn’t get bogged down but is open to all concerns; this implies willingness to listen carefully and patiently to what others say
4. **Humility** – willingness to admit that one’s knowledge and experience are limited and incomplete and to act accordingly; this implies an inclination to admit errors in judgment, admit the limits of our knowledge and opinions, and to acknowledge our own ignorance
5. **Mutuality** – to be interested in and to care as much about each other’s self-development as one’s own; this implies realizing that our own flourishing depends in a vital sense on the flourishing of all others
6. **Deliberation** – willingness to discuss issues as fully as possible by offering arguments and counterarguments that are supported by evidence, data, and logic and by holding strongly to these unless there are good reasons not to do so; this implies that exchanges of views may modify one’s own original opinions and beliefs
7. **Appreciation** – paying attention to and acknowledging thoughtful comments, powerful insights or wise observations that clarify key points or excite further curiosity; this implies expressing our gratitude openly and honestly and celebrating collaboration
8. **Hope** – a sense that all of our time, effort, and work in participating with each other will benefit us in the long run, even if only in a small way; this implies faith that people have the capacity to work through their own problems and that each person has something worthwhile and important to contribute to increasing understanding or resolving conflict
9. **Autonomy** – not a state of being separate and aloof and dismissing collaboration, but a temporary state of mind where an individual can claim a belief and take a stand; this implies courage to take strong stands and argue assertively for them but also a willingness to subject one’s convictions to continuous reevaluation and possible revision

15 Potential Benefits of Learning Through Discussion

1. It helps participants explore a diversity of perspectives.
2. It increases participants' awareness of and tolerance for ambiguity or complexity.
3. It helps participants recognize and investigate their assumptions.
4. It encourages attentive, respectful listening.
5. It develops new appreciation for continuing differences.
6. It increases intellectual agility.
7. It helps participants become connected to a topic.
8. It shows respect for participants' voices and experiences.
9. It helps participants learn the processes and habits of democratic discourse.
10. It affirms participants as cocreators of knowledge.
11. It develops the capacity for the clear communication of ideas and meaning.
12. It develops habits of collaborative learning.
13. It increases breadth and makes participants more empathic.
14. It helps participants develop skills of synthesis and integration.
15. It leads to transformation.