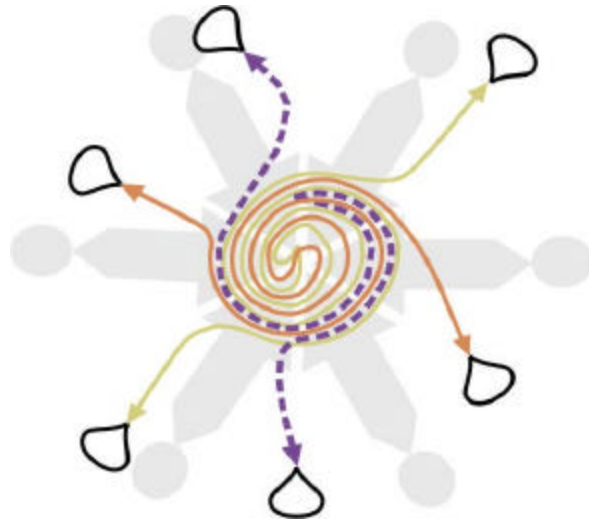


Bohm Dialogue & A virtual proposal

- o Dialogue
- o Generative
- o New Realities

Scott Trent

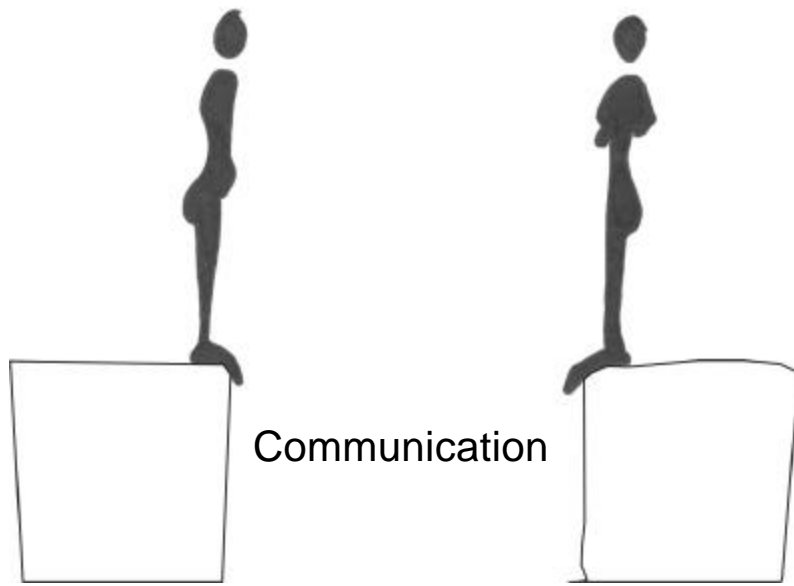


Dialogue and a higher level of connectivity is explored in three sections titled, **What?**, **So What?**, and **Now What?**

- The first section, **What?**, explores communication issues and the specifics of Bohm Dialogue in an effort to “Mind the Gap.”
- The second section, **So What?**, analyzes methods to bridge the communication gap.
- The third section, **Now What?**, proposes a product that addresses the issues of communication and provides solutions to close the gap.

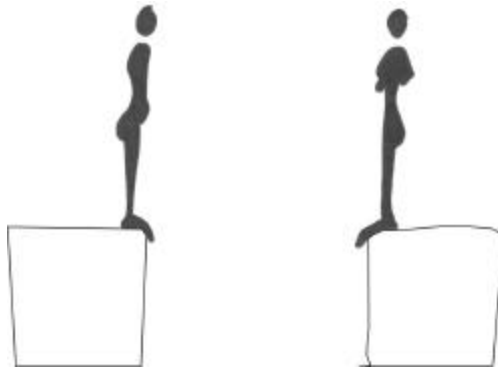


Scott Trent © 2006



What ?

Mind
the
Gap



Mind the Gap

This project began with my personal search for authenticity in communication and a deeper level of connectivity. As an artist, it is important to understand the way I interact with the world. I must understand my process and approach to the environment in order to create and interpret the world around me. Dialogue is the art of communication and the result is creating something, previously unavailable to any one person.

I focus on what's not being said, or the space between the words, or the unmentionables in the room. Mind the Gap perfectly summarizes my perspective and approach to life and the emphasis of this project.

The Gap is the space where attention should be focused. This metaphor came to me after a visit to London, England and hearing the constant announcement in the Tube; their underground railway, transportation system. On regular intervals, the statement, "mind the gap," was announced over a loud speaker.

This phrase reminds the commuters to heed the space between the train and the platform and be careful as they step on and off the train. I found this announcement to be the perfect metaphor to illustrate how we rarely find solutions in the beginning point, or the ending point, but the space in-between.

A key element to dialogue requires the participants to focus less on an original statement, or the final interpretation, but to create an awareness of the attached meaning and interpretations, common in our thought processes. The understanding of this space bridges the communication gap. It creates a greater understanding and a vision of new realities.

Connection

Bridging the Gap through Communication

Objective: Re-introduce and further explore the concept of Bohm Dialogue as a technique or process necessary for unaltered human connection and generative communication.

Plan: Develop a tool or method within a virtual environment that facilitates dialogue.

Summary: Using a method of communication called dialogue, developed by physicist David Bohm, as a base level of connection, I propose to further develop this technique and explore ways to improve the communication process using a virtual environment such as Linden Lab's Second Life.

Dialogue: A disciplined approach to a higher level of communication which generates a previously unrealized understanding, insight, or truth.

Dialogue requires participants to observe their thoughts, including reactions, perceptions, and ideas; then, to suspend any judgments or biases that might influence their ability to understand and connect with other members of the group.

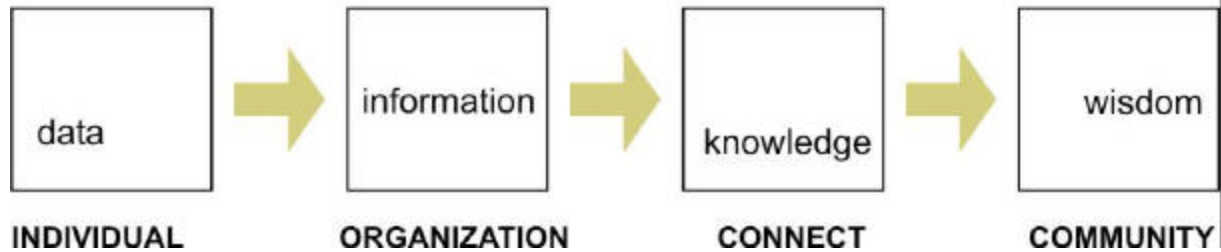
The premise is that most people live by their opinions and ideas, beliefs and values without consideration or contemplation. Blindly marching ahead through life, believing a mere idea or opinion is reality and acting from this place. The result is that many people, countries, and nations that will never connect because of ingrained beliefs which form insurmountable walls and impenetrable realities.

Three questions arise from the consideration of dialogue:

1. Are we our thoughts? How much influence should opinions and ideas have?
2. How can authentic and transparent communication be facilitated?
3. Whose reality do we follow?

Dialogue: A process to wisdom.

Adapted from Nathan Shedroff's chart:
Movement & transformation of data to wisdom.



Dialogue

The term dialogue is commonly accepted as a form of communication. It is defined as the words of a story, a conversation, the message, or exchange between people. For the purpose of this study, dialogue is a very specific form of communication developed by the late physicist, David Bohm. Bohm started his career as a Quantum Physicist in the early 30's. Einstein once described Bohm as his intellectual successor.

Later in his life, Bohm moved towards metaphysical interests, communication issues, and human thought. One of the resulting works from his research was Bohm Dialogue and a book titled, *On Dialogue*, published in 1996, four years after his death.

Bohm dialogue requires the participants to surface their assumptions and suspend their judgments in an effort to find a collective wisdom or unrealized understanding. This dialogue allows participants to move outside common communication hindrances and focus on issues such as what message is being sent, being received, what is the interpretation and resulting actions.



Model

**SEEK
KNOW
LEDGE**

Listen

**RE -
WIRE
REAL**

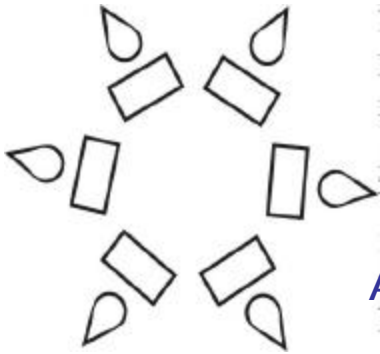
Perceive Reality Differently

**DIA
LOG**

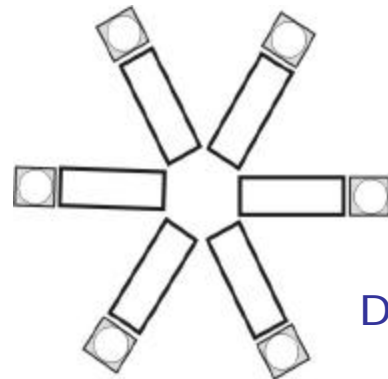
Create

Dialogue is a generative process

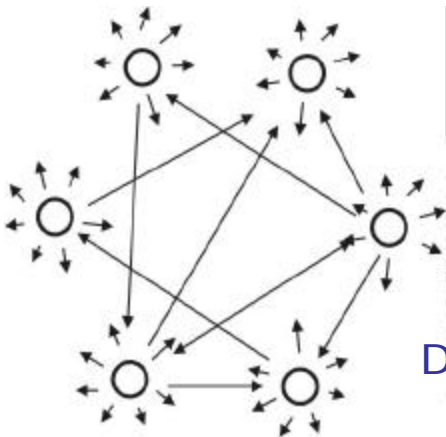
Communication



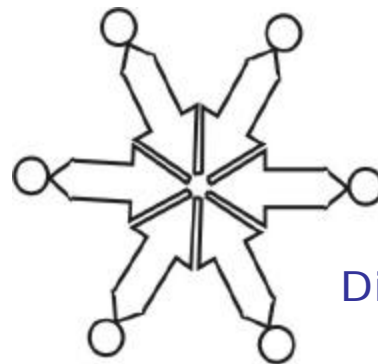
Argument



Debate



Discussion



Dialogue

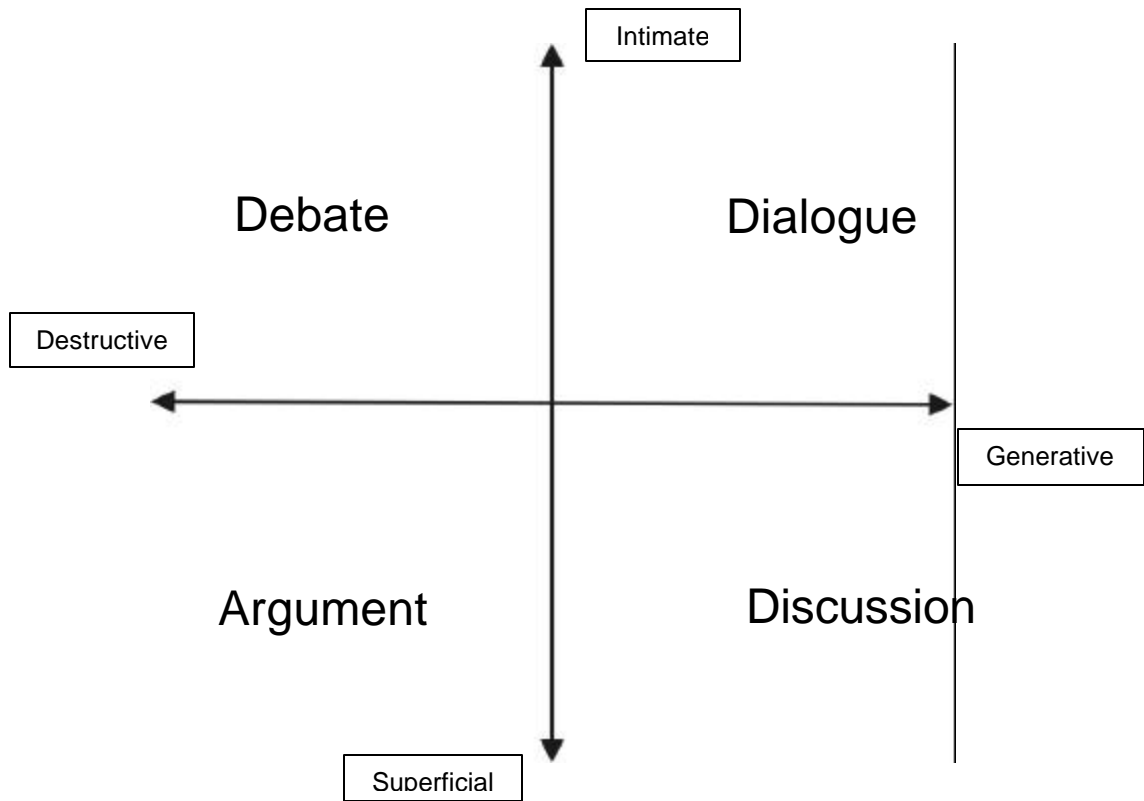
Communication can be divided into different sub-categories and interaction styles.

For instance, in a **debate**, participants are attempting to persuade or win with the most articulate presentation or most compelling point of view.

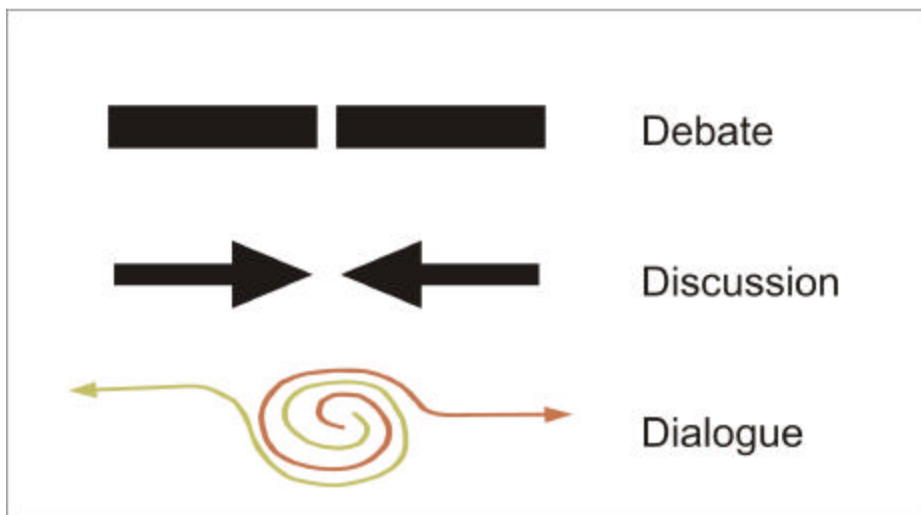
In **arguments**, words and opinions are hurled at each other with the purpose of strongly defending a point of view and achieving a selfish outcome.

Discussions are often self-centered, as participants exchange ideas and thoughts in an attempt to convince others of their own point of view, this occurs without deeply exploring individual meanings.

Dialogue is designed to cultivate a collective wisdom and collaboration of ideas and build on each others' thoughts. Specifically, Bohm Dialogue encourages deeper listening and a reflective process that inspires creativity and a higher degree of connectivity.

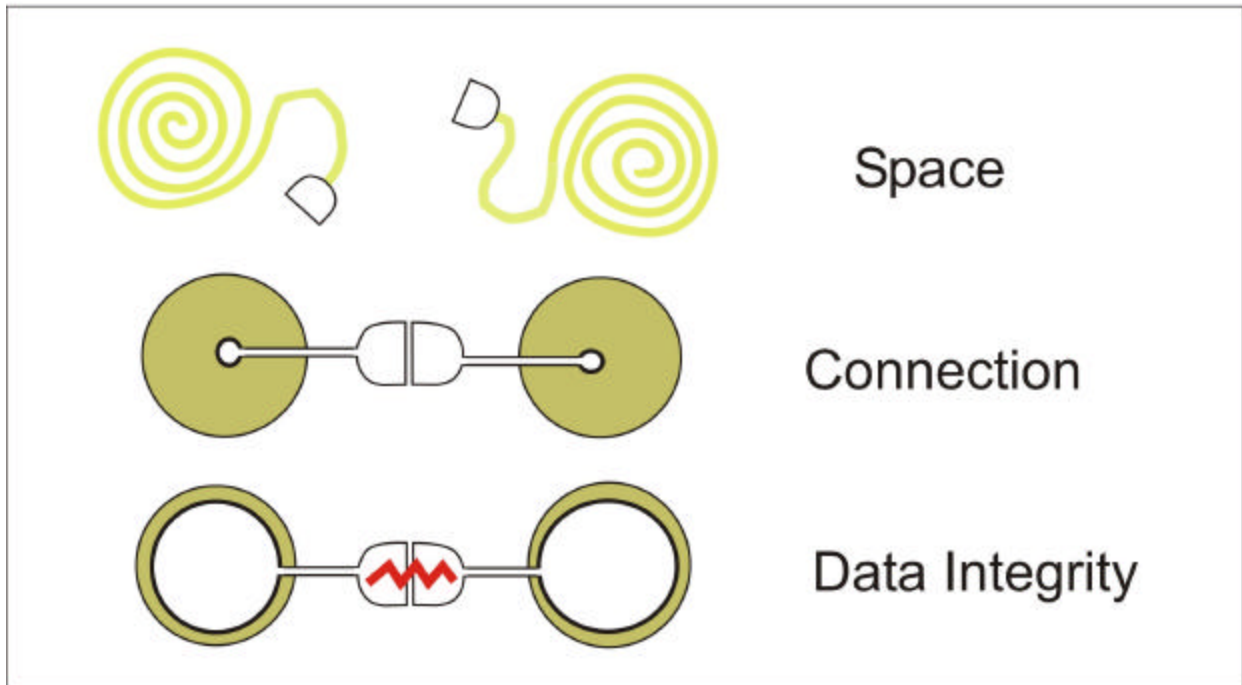


Definition



In most communications, participants are attempting to make a point or promote an idea; dialogue is designed to generate new understandings.

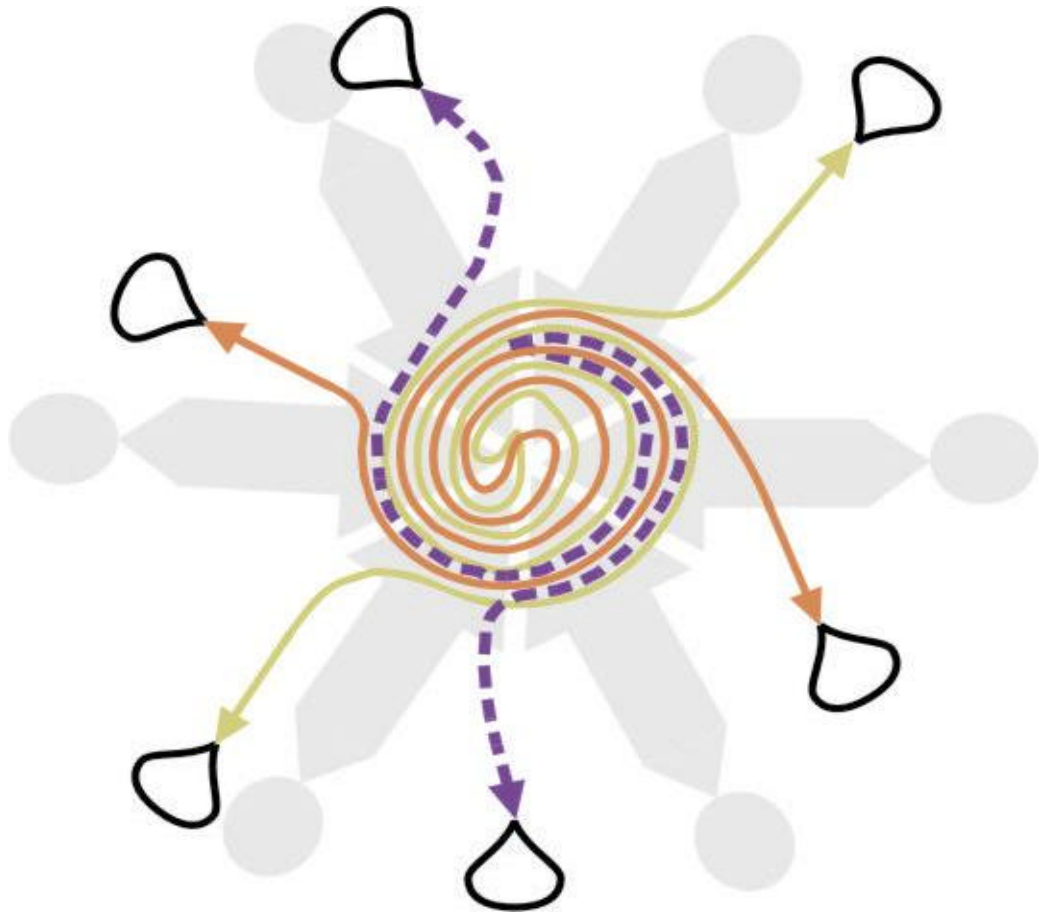
Results



Technology can expand, increase, and amplify the transfer of information. Without quality data, the message will be corrupted at best.

Dialogue transforms the open spaces of communication, bridges the Gap with a deeper connection, and allows the flow of uncorrupted data.

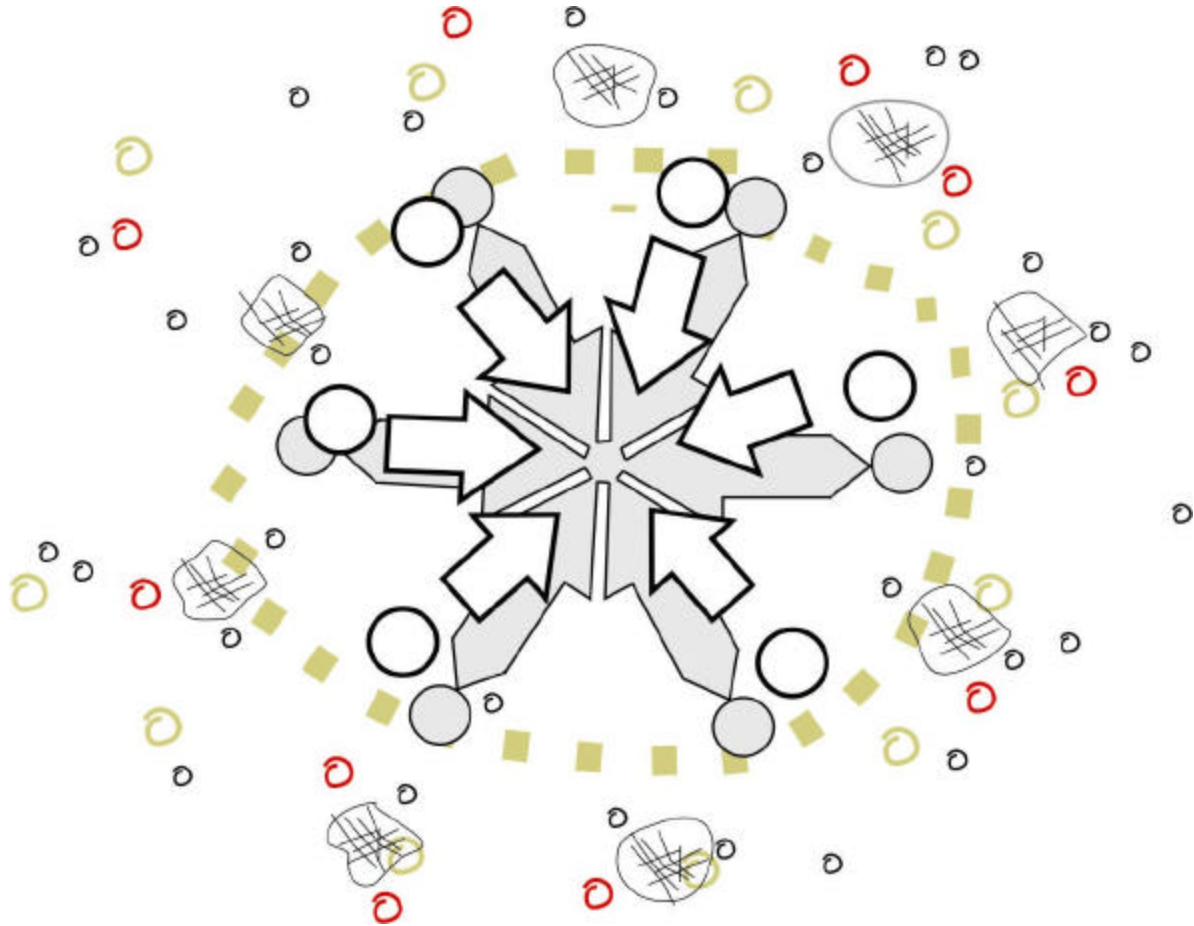
Dialogue is a higher level of connectivity.



- o Dialogue
- o Generative
- o New Realities

Questions that have surfaced throughout the process:

The key deterrent to dialogue is closed communication
inauthentic



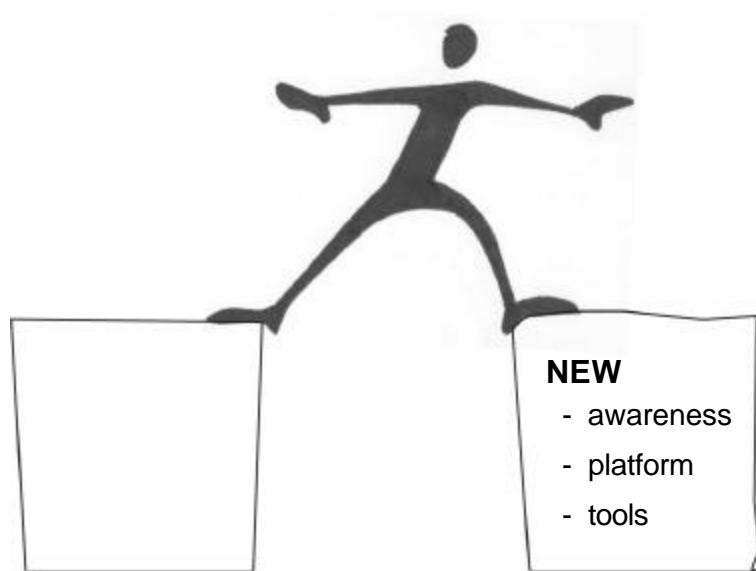
What's **not** being said ?

- In dialogue, there is still a filtering of information.
- It's not, what's not said, but why it's not said.

Why is *courage* necessary to say it ?

**SEEK
KNOW
LEDGE** **RE -
WIRE
REAL** **DIA
LOG**





New Realities

So **What ?**

Bridge
the
Gap

SOLUTIONS



Bridge the Gap

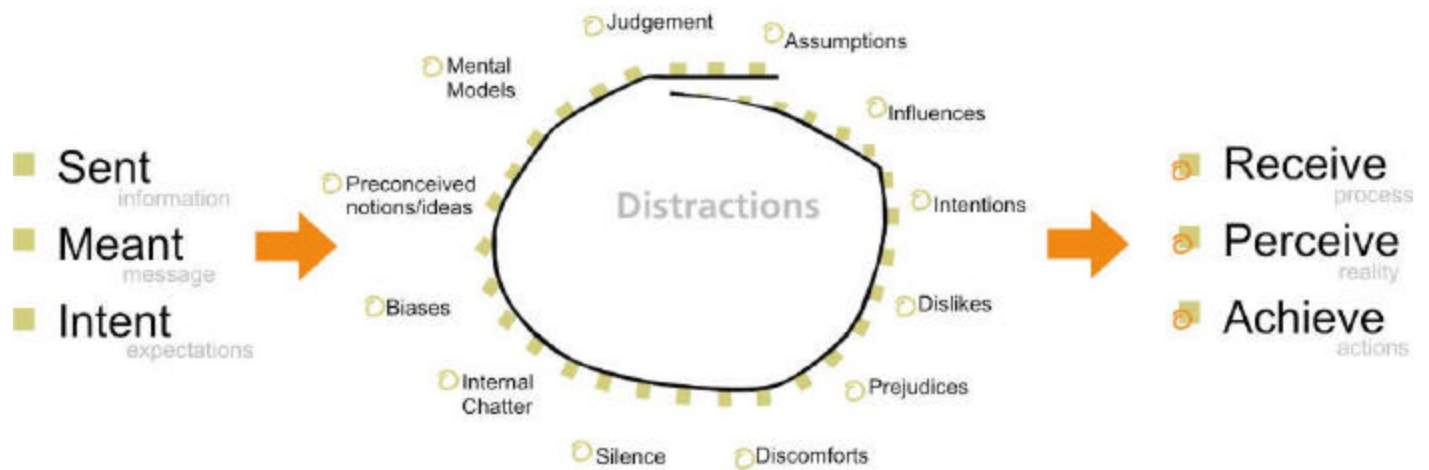
In dialogue, awareness of our thoughts and the meta-conversation creates tools that enhance the communication process. Assumptions, biases, and prejudices are identified and the message becomes less corrupted and meaning less filtered. A new space of understanding emerges and the conversation becomes generative in nature.

Bohm dialogue leads people to deeper connections and new realities. The gap between thoughts and actions, or facts and perceptions begin to close when the participants are open to expanding their horizons and expect a deeper connectivity.

Dialogue is a collaborative process and needs a community to succeed. The opportunities are endless: From improved employee performance, to community building, individual connections, and addressing societal issues, dialogue brings a deeper understanding to human issues. The challenge will always be appealing to the non-visionary type, those who place their individual concerns ahead of the larger cause.

Dialogue is a collaborative process that promotes the other person and benefits the individual only after the group has expanded.

Gap Analysis



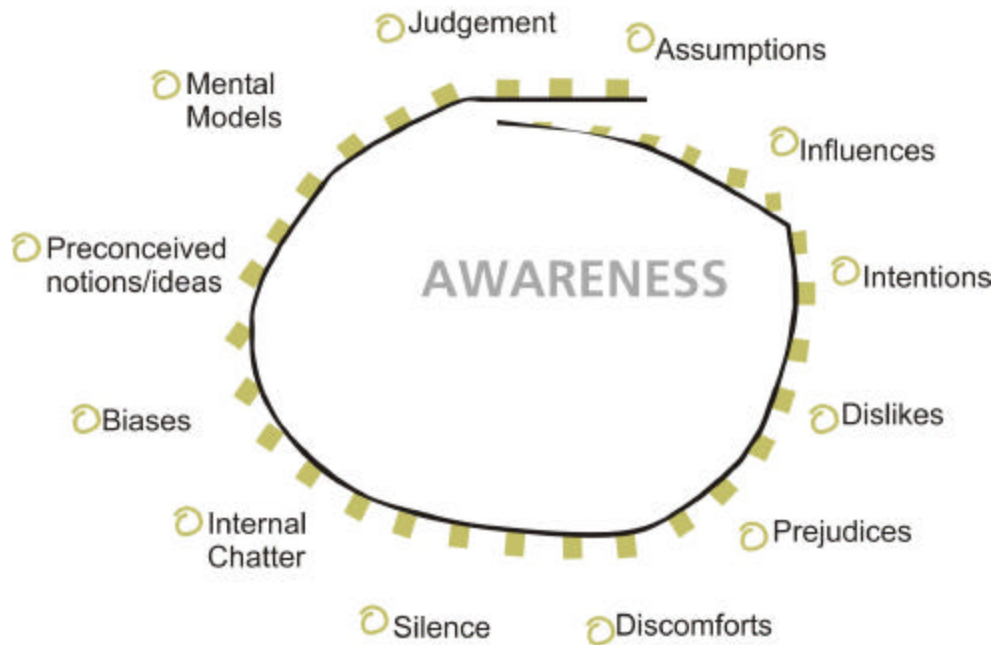
In communication there are many distractions which affect the message received.

As the initial message is filtered through biases, prejudices, and assumptions, it is easy to misinterpret the final message received.



I am not my thoughts

Elements

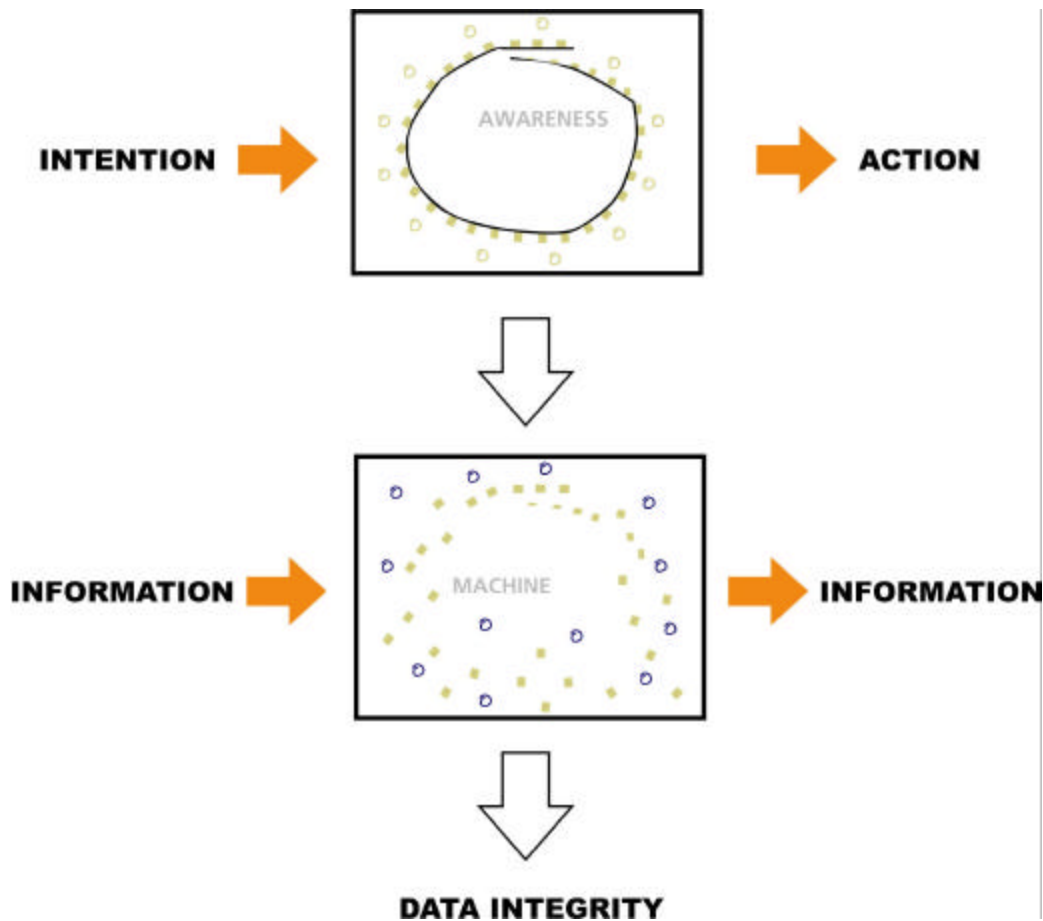


SELF AWARENESS: In the very act of identifying an assumption, one begins the process of suspending it.

Understanding our thoughts is the first step in the dialogue process. As we identify our assumptions, beliefs, biases, and prejudices, we gain a better understanding of our actions and reactions. Dialogue helps the individual realize that a thought might cross their mind, but does not mean an action is required. Once the choice has been made to not act on a particular thought, this very act re-wires the synapses and continues to redefine the individual. Many thoughts are rooted in cultural stereotypes, family lore, or societal biases, and acted on as a global reality. A disassociation from these prejudiced thoughts can help the individual process incoming information with less of a personal bias and act in a more deliberate and inclusive fashion. The result is we choose the ideas we embrace and not blindly accept the attached reality of all of our thoughts.

Reality is unique to me

Reality in this sense describes a person's perspective on life: Their paradigms in relation to their surrounding environment. As our thoughts occur, we construct our reality and react accordingly. The variable often ignored is that our perspective is developed by a multitude of stimuli, many colored by biases, prejudices, emotional attachments, and other uniquely personal influences. Thoughts create our world perspective and many times we interact with others as if there were a common reality. This assumption can be a barrier to open communication. To truly connect, two or more people must find a common meeting place; this begins by identifying and acknowledging the multiple realities present.

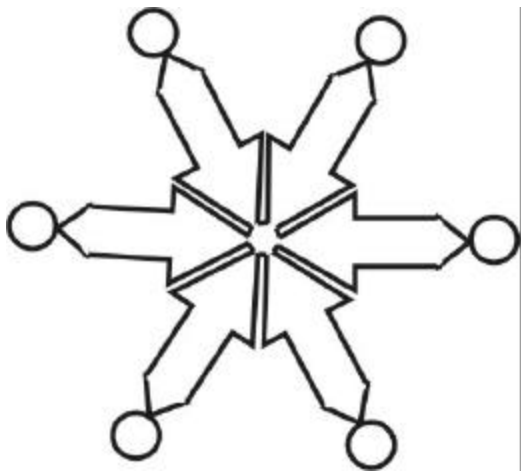


Automata theory challenges the logical assumption: Heightened awareness to the process, and introspection, can achieve a higher level of communication and a rare degree of connectivity. After exploring and observing the actualities, common communication, and the difficulties in dialogue, a diverging idea surfaced that maybe; instead of a more empathetic, human approach to communication, a machine like interface could accomplish the desired level of connectivity.

It appears, as long as the inner states of the human communication model is comprised of emotional and unpredictable variables such as intentions, assumptions, and preconceived notions, the output will never be consistently predictable. The only way to accurately interpret the input information as intended and process the output information without deviation is with defined inner states.

A diverging theory explored, using a loose interpretation of the Turing machine and Automata Communication Theory, the idea that attention must turn away from perfecting awareness and towards an established set of inner states which support data integrity. This idea still has a radical idea feel to me, but is constantly present as the search for improved communication tools continues.

Level of Connectivity



Average population:

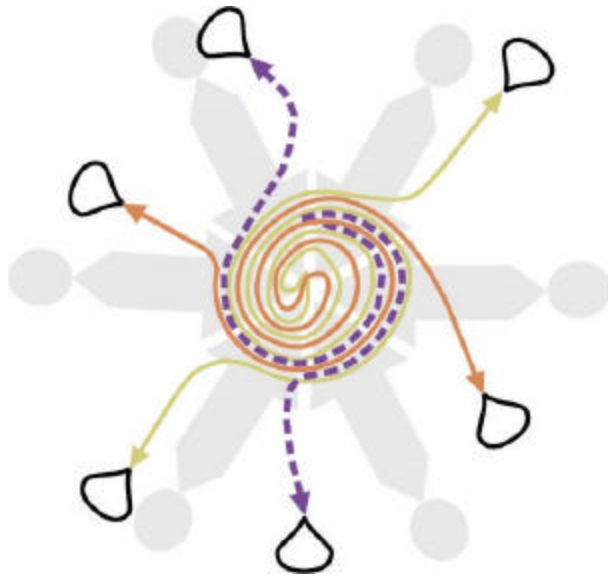
2% connect beyond superficial level.

50% effective when attempt.

From a general observation, the statistics above seem accurate. They were reinforced in a recent group experiment where seven participants met for three sessions in an attempt to dialogue.

Even with a facilitated, highly structured environment, the group never achieved a 50% success rate in their attempt to dialogue.

Ultimately, the goal is to create a tool that improves communication that increases the level of connectivity.



Objective:

90%

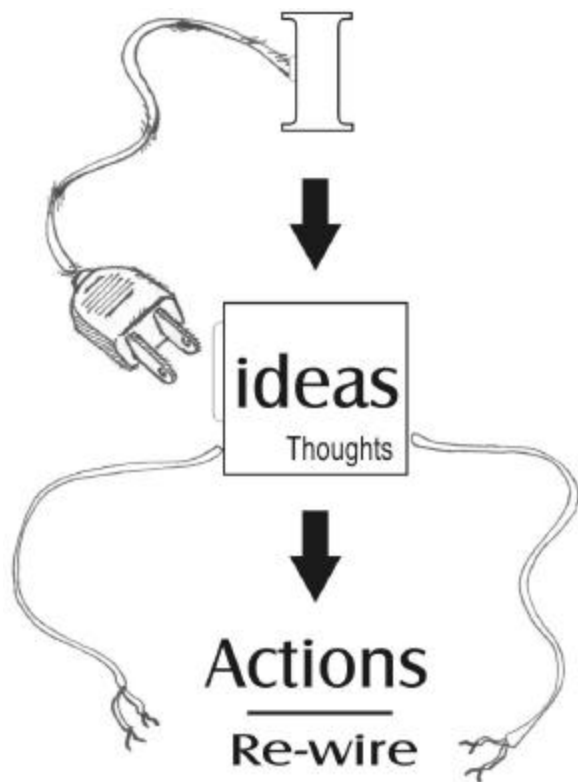
Through facilitated **DIALOGUE** & **AWARENESS**

Dialogue

Convergent Concept

Key elements to dialogue

- 1.) Understand own response.
- 2.) Suspend judgment of “right” or “wrong.”
- 3.) Listen to understand.
- 4.) Detach self from beliefs.



Unplug to connect

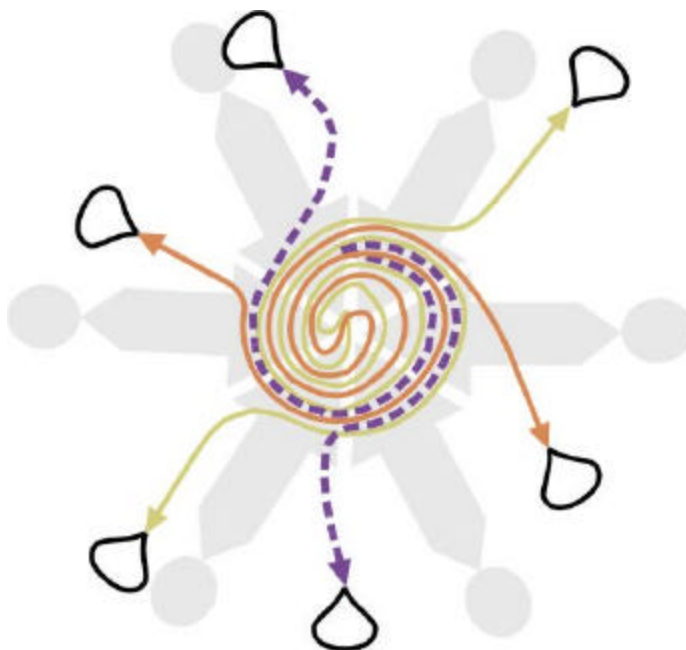
The idea that participants must unplug to connect was a converging idea that evolved throughout the process.

Specifically, a person must unplug from their thoughts to make a connection with another individual. Unplug is a metaphor which implies an individual can disconnect and not be personally attached to their ideas, beliefs, or thoughts.

This turns an individual's attention to the thought process and allows them to consciously choose which thoughts and ideas will influence their actions. Dialogue is a group process that requires participants to simultaneously disconnect and reconnects as a deeper level of connectivity emerges.

Awareness & Choice = Freedom

The conclusion: With an attention to the thought process and our unique reality, coupled with the knowledge that we can choose the thoughts which influence our actions, a deeper level of human connection is possible. The freedom describes a separation from the self-constructed barriers which limit our ability to communicate openly and authentically



This graphic illustrates the flow of information in a dialogue and the multiple levels of input from each participant. The meta-conversation is represented by the shaded input and wisdom received by the irregular circular shapes.

Once a channel of communication has been developed or expanded by dialogue, and a connection is practiced that allows people to communicate freely, detached from personal limitations; then the foundation for the next phase of the project has been established. My point of view has not changed as much as expanded and I've identified a connection between my area of interest and the Arts & Technology Department. The opportunities provided by such a flexible and interactive environment as Second Life is ideal for exploring the intricacies of communication in an emerging medium.

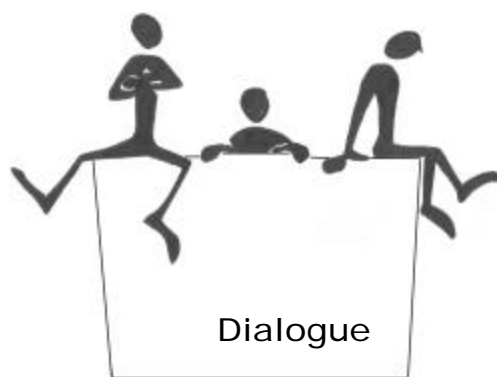
The final research section asks, "Now what?" This focus explores the opportunities for a deeper human connection through communication in a virtual world environment. Specifically asking: What is the best environment to facilitate dialogue and what are negotiable factors which influence these channels of communication? How can a virtual world platform enhance human connection through communication?



Now **What ?**

Close
the
Gap

CREATE



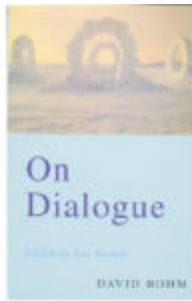
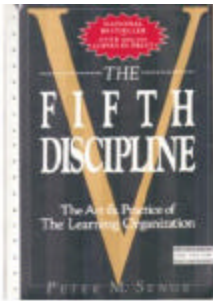
Close the Gap

The value of dialogue is found in the connection, the resulting ideas, and the overall community created.

This form of communication is applicable in every environment, appropriate for any platform, and achievable by anyone committed to the process.

The key is caring, awareness, and practice. Once a community of like-minded individuals, commits to developing the dialogue technique, the process can be fully explored and new tools created to close the gaps in communication.

Bridging the Gap

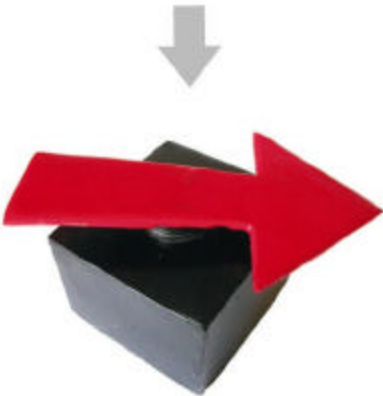


I was introduced to David Bohm & dialogue in the book, *The Fifth Discipline*. Peter Senge described a type of communication necessary to accomplish his vision of a learning organization.

David Bohm's dialogue is detailed in his book, *On Dialogue*.

A dialogue tool I created is the Communication Flow Device. The bright red arrow is designed to amplify the meta-conversation.

The arrow draws attention to the flow of information and assists participants in managing the conversation.



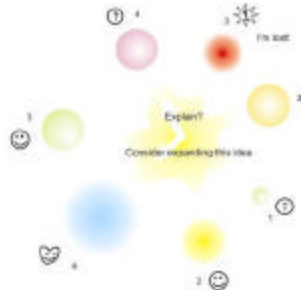
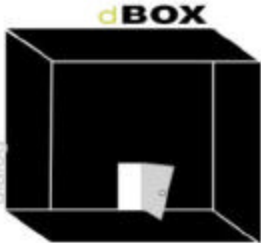
The next tool created is the dialogue box. This box is the first attempt to create a space that promotes dialogue and facilitates a structured interaction.

Participants are prompted to dialogue by strategically placed images, text, and a background, looping, sound track encouraging action: Dialogue.

Finally, the combination of these concepts will be realized in Second Life inside the **dbox**.

This tool will combine the facilitated conversation and prompts which have proven successful in the past.

The **dbox** will remove many distractions which can hinder the message & create a supportive environment where participants are fully immersed.





Title: Communication Flow Device

Mission:

Create awareness amongst group participants, and emphasize the flow of information within the conversation.

Description:

The red arrow swivels on a small black metal box. The arrow is placed in the middle of a conversation and pointed towards the speaker. The arrow facilitates a conversation with an emphasis on inclusiveness and full participation. The goal is to have the arrow constantly moving; ultimately, making a 360 degree turn, indicating that everyone in the group is participating in the conversation.





Title: Dialogue Box: A place where ideas are explored.

Mission:

In an effort to encourage dialogue, a space (box) has been created that establishes a face-to-face encounter. Inside the space are six questions and images that explore art and technology. An ambient soundscape fills the box as a way to further encourage dialogue.

Description:

A box sits on casters in front of a banner backdrop of the history of humankind. The box allows participants to look into an enclosed space (box) with 3 questions on one wall and corresponding images on the opposite side. Three different questions and images are displayed on the adjoining walls. A three-minute ambient soundscape loops in the background with a voice overlay which adds supplemental questions to the six primary questions and prompts the participants to interact—Talk.

Handles attached to the dialogue box allows participants to hold the box and consequently moves the space according to the flow of the conversation. This feature gives a physical cue if any one participant is dominating the conversation, as the box moves towards other group members not forcibly pushing their points forward.



In further research of the facilitated conversation, a group was formed to explore dialogue. This was a beginning that can serve as the core for further dialogue experiments.

Dialogue Project

Participants:

- Chip Wood
- Matt Chapius
- Kate Dixon
- Kathy Cohen
- Annemarie St. John
- Scott Trent
- Vanessa Paugh

1st. Session, Saturday, Oct. 14, 2006

Bonded and shared an openness and acceptance.

Tested this space and was pleasantly surprised and viscerally shocked.

Between Scott's, Annemarie's and Vanessa's statements and disclosures, each person in the group felt their opinions, beliefs, and values noticeably surface and influence their current perspective. These thoughts triggered an internal response and physical reaction.

2nd. Session, Saturday, Oct. 28, 2006

Began hesitantly and respectfully. There was an initial intellectual connection which warmed the room. Each person seemed relieved, and embraced the time spent processing the previous session. Dialogue was further defined and participants pushed a little, shared a little more, and recognized dialogue a bit.

There was a strong group bonding and an overarching desire to connect.

The mood was respectful and eager to create a group connection.

3rd. Session, Saturday, Nov. 4, 2006

Expectations

The third session, the following questions were posed and the group was challenged to focus on dialogue and not connecting.

- What is dialogue?
- What is the purpose?
- What is the value?
- Is this worth the investment?
 - time
 - exposure
 - effort
 - energy
 - commitment
- Why?

Dialogue Project continued

One of the participants was not present and there was a noticeable detachment from some. The session started 30 minutes later than the scheduled time. Two group members were more engaged in the conversation and participated more actively than the previous two meetings. We included an empty chair in the dialogue circle to keep the missing person present in spirit. This chair was referenced once during the meeting.

In summary: The group was very effective. They intuitively recognized dialogue when it occurred and could distinguish the difference between a conversation and dialogue. The majority of the time was spent in conversation and even dipped to a mild argument. Occasionally, the exchange would turn to dialogue. This is the process and the interaction slides smoothly in and out of dialogue with a goal of sustaining a higher level of communication for longer periods of time. All agreed that this process is difficult and requires an extreme amount of attention, with the conclusion that there must be a strong desire and motivation to pursue dialogue.

A facilitator's note: It is disheartening when anyone who experiences dialogue recognizes the benefits, such as a deeper connection, and an expanded wisdom amongst the group; and yet, still the process is considered too difficult to sustain. My conclusion: It is too important not to pursue, simply as humans who must coexist.

In the final processing, time was spent discussing the value of a facilitator in this process. Some believed a facilitator was not necessary and reinforced a separation of power or created an authority figure into the group. One group member suggested a facilitator created boundaries or structure to an event that should be free-flowing and even chaotic at times.

My observation: A structure is needed to create a space for the chaos to occur and the free flow of communication can only occur with a guiding hand. The goal is to have the group facilitate the process, but I believe there will always be a meta-conversation around the dialogue and this at times requires facilitation. Another group member used the example that a facilitator is necessary, even if they are only arranging the chairs and keeping the time for the group.



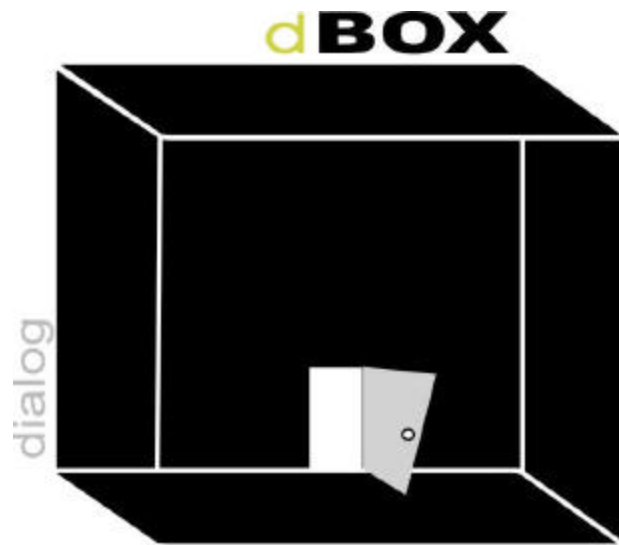
Virtual Realities

Second Life will serve as the laboratory for most of the communication experiments. The final product will develop from discoveries made in the virtual environment.

The goal is to create an environment that promotes a higher level of communication and a deeper level of human connection. The final challenge will be translating benefits realized in Second Life and then recreating these successes in “real” life .

The premise: As residents in this virtual world are able to shed unwanted worldly personas and negative societal perceptions, this same environment will offer an alternative for common communication blocks.





The **dbox** will be a space created in a virtual environment where participants shed their avatar presence to become an orb of light. The session begins once all participants are present and signaled by a change in room color. The participants/orbs are arranged in a circular fashion and randomly rearranged throughout the process. (See diagram B)

Communication is conducted by typing and the text is displayed at various points within box space, according to the type of informational input. Words are displayed on the inner walls of the cube to emphasize the current topic, point, or idea. Words highlight or fade depending on group usage. (See diagram C)

Located in the center of the dialogue circle is a glowing orb of color. This serves as a gauge of the group's success in dialogue. The orb expands towards speakers and enlarges depending on the degree of interaction. Participants' orbs expand or contract according to participation with a number displayed indicating the amount of times they've contributed to the conversation.

The box facilitates the conversation by tracking participation and limiting participants to a set ratio of input compared to other group members. Emoticons are used to indicate emotions or feelings pertinent to the exchange. (See diagram E)

dbox detailed

Thought experiment

Environment

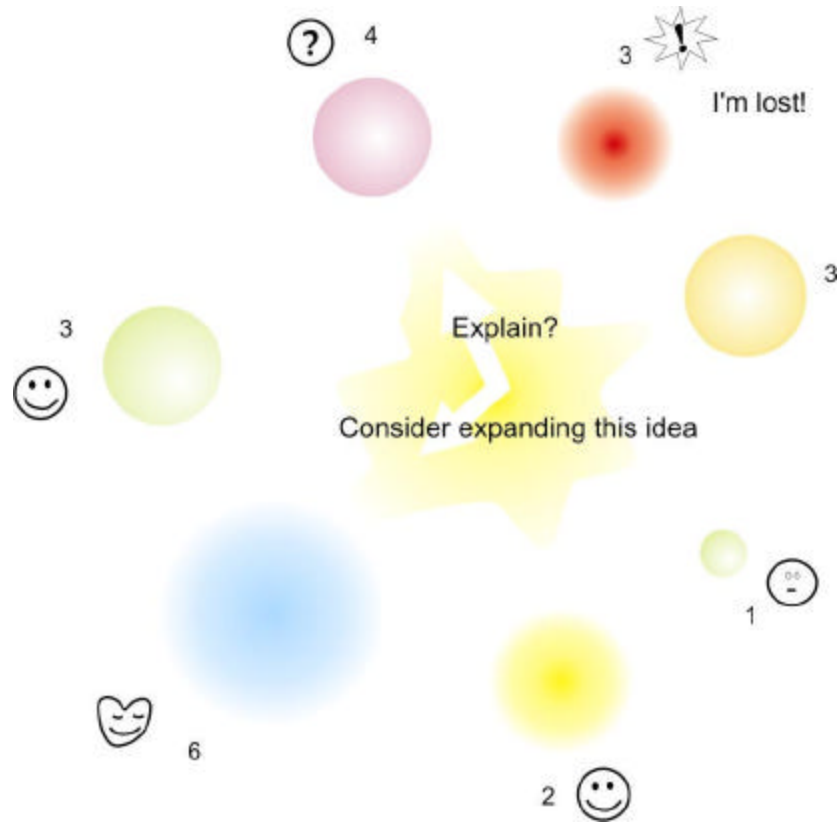
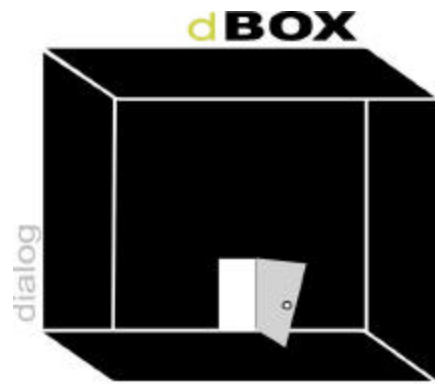
- The **dbox** is a closed cube that participants enter and dialogue.
 - Once inside, participants take on a glowing orb appearance.
- Participants will be arranged in a circular formation & rearranged randomly.
 - (Purpose: re-focus attention to information, not individual)
- Key words will be displayed on one of the six walls during the exchange.
 - o The words will brighten or fade according to usage.
 - o Word will remain visible on the wall as long as they are used.
 - o Other words will completely fade after a time of non-use.
- Interior lighting will change using colors to accentuate the tone of the conversation.
 - o The room & walls will begin white and change colors to indicate a start & stopping point.

Participants

- Participants enter the **dbox** as a glowing orb.
 - o This orb enlarges and brightens when speaking
 - o The orb will change color based on emoticon
 - o The orb will shrink each time participant hasn't spoken
- In the middle of the dialogue circle formed by participants is a light glow:
 - o The middle glow enlarges with dialogue
 - o The middle glow shrinks without dialogue
 - o The middle glow expands and connects to each speaker
 - It stays connected if participant asks a question
 - (Goal to enlarge and connect all participants at once)
- Emoticons are floating close to the participant's orb.
 - This represents emotional intention:
 - Happy, angry, frustrated, loving, confused, playful, disgusted.

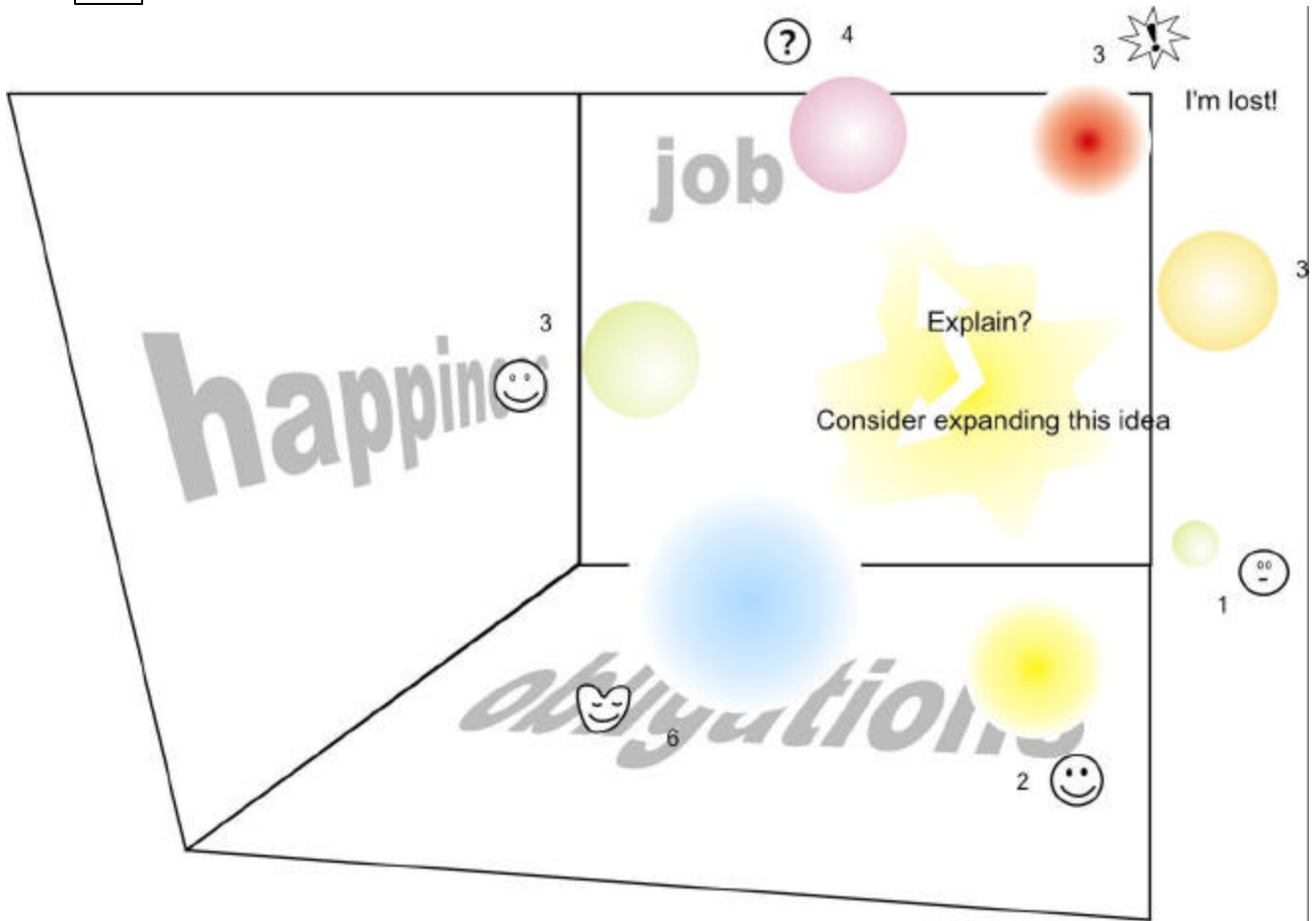
Training mode

- Typing is good, it slows the conversation.
- Typed text appears in different regions of space.
 - o In middle of circle if dialogue
 - o Questions appear above recipient's orb
 - o Argumentative text appears behind speaker- separate from circle
- Numbers appear over each participant indicating number of times submitted input
- Monitors and controls input of participants
 - o Does not allow consecutive inputs & considers input ratio
 - o Can't contribute more than twice the # of participants
 - (exm: 10 people- no more than 20%)



B

C



E

emoticons



happy



frustrated



exclamation



confused



angry



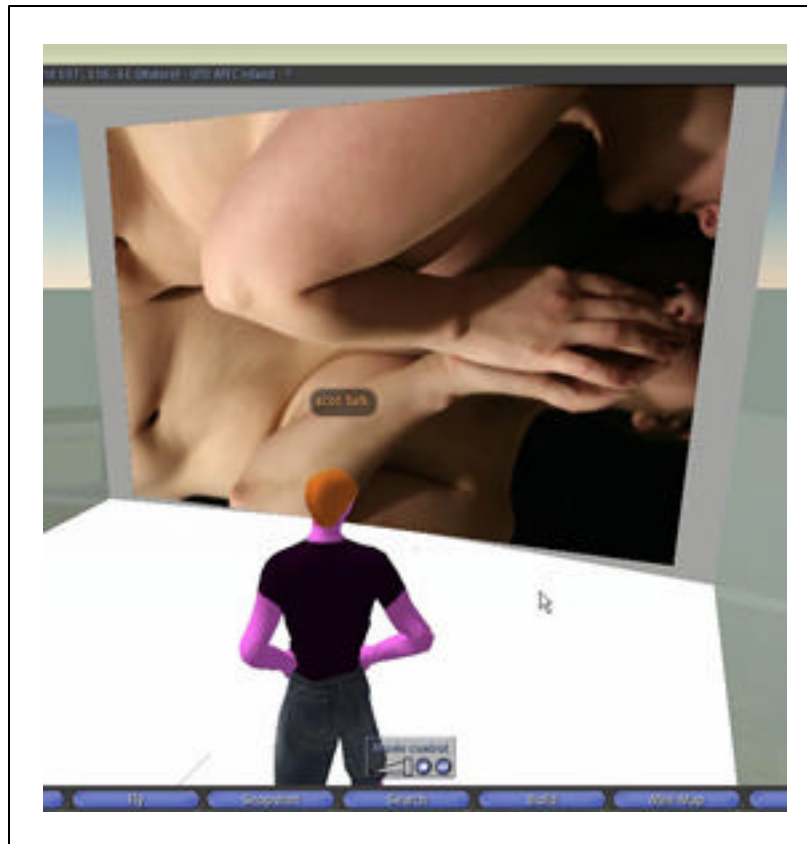
question



loving



blocked



As the lines between art and technology continue to blur, a perspective emerges that reveals a new and exciting world.

Communication will always be a vital part of any reality created. The difference is what level of connection will be necessary to maximize future opportunities.

Dialogue, in a virtual environment, facilitated by the **dbox** has the potential to make a difficult process accessible to the masses. The same concept will expand to other structured communications such as debates, debriefs, brain-storming sessions, mediated disputes, and facilitated meetings.

I envision a virtual space where rows of boxes are available to serve individuals, organizations, or governments in need of some form of connection locally or globally and require a structured communication to connect.

The **dbox** will contain specific inner states, designed to anticipate and facilitate communication.



As long as an individual believes their perception is identical with who they are, they will be unwilling to see from another's perspective: To do so, would mean negating their very identity.

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