

Dilemma:

“How can it be OK for me not to participate in social events?”

Each group has a host.

This dilemma card is for the host and contains:

- A host guide
- A dilemma
- Fact boxes
- A question guide for dialogue one and dialogue two

Host guide As a host, your role is to facilitate a good, constructive dialogue where everyone gets to speak. Your role is not to participate by sharing your own perspective, but you are welcome to put your perspective into play by phrasing it as a question (“What if they ...?”).

Try to be curious (“Why do you think that?”) and investigative (“What if they react differently than you assume?”).

Aim to make it safe for participants to say or share something vulnerable by making it clear that different perspectives are welcome and that everyone should be respectful.

The dialogue is divided into two parts.

The first part is about giving advice to the person who posed the dilemma, and the second part is about the theme of the dilemma from the perspective of the panellists and their experiences at DTU.

On pages 3 and 4, you will find questions and data, which you can use to qualify the dialogue.

After reading this guide and skimming the question guide, please read out the dilemma to the panel. Give them a moment to reflect on the dilemma. Then initiate dialogue one.

Dilemma:

Jens really likes working at DTU and working with his colleagues. His department has many social activities, and people are generally very proud of and happy with the culture there.

However, he is not interested in attending Christmas parties, receptions, and other social events. The reason is that they are very draining for him because he is an introvert. Any social energy he has left when he comes home from work, he would like to devote to his family and friends. The few times he did participate in a social work event, his social side was working overtime.

Jens' dilemma is that he is afraid that his colleagues misunderstand why he doesn't participate and thinks that he is uninterested in them, and that he feels like a bit of a workaholic who only wants to work. Furthermore, he is also nervous about how skipping on shared experiences will affect his inclusion in the group of colleagues.

Every time an invitation pops up at work, he immediately starts thinking of excuses for not participating.

But that's not the only challenge. Because when the event is over, there is a new challenge: the chit chat about the event the following Monday. When there has been a social event, he feels like people are talking past him by the coffee machine, because he did not attend the event. Preferably, he would like it if both ways of being a colleague were acceptable, and if people would include him in the chat by telling him what happened instead.

Worrying about being included by his colleagues further drains his energy. But what should he do? Can he change the culture alone? Should he?

Or should he rather make the effort to participate just once in a while, even if he doesn't want to? Or will less also do?

Dialogue one:

1 What advice does the panel give?

- [Start by hearing each panellist's thoughts on the dilemma so everyone gets the chance to speak from the start]
- "What could the underlying cause(s) for the dilemma be?"
- "Managers sometimes view social events at work as a benefit, but how does that leave someone like Jens?"
- "What could Jens or his workplace do to keep him feeling included, even if he doesn't attend social events outside of working hours?"
- "What do you think of the options stated by the person who posed the dilemma?"
- [Feel free to use the data from the boxes to boost the discussion]
- [Other investigative questions]
- "We have to come up with an answer, but you don't all have to agree. What does each of you think the person who posed the dilemma should do?"

Nearly half (47 per cent) of employees say that they sometimes or almost always attend social events at work because they feel obligated to do so. (Questionnaire by the Wilke research institute)

Researchers believe that between 30-50 per cent of the population are introverts and 50-70 per cent are extroverts. The difference in percentage is due to the fact that there are different tests and definitions of introvert vs. extrovert.

2 Dialogue two:

What do you do, and what could you do?

This part of the dialogue focuses on the panellists' own experiences at DTU.

Start dialogue two by telling the panel that the focal point is still the theme of the dilemma, but now they should look at the conditions in their own unit as well as considering other solutions.

Please note that dialogue two may be a bit more sensitive. Aim to create a safe and respectful space for everyone. The goal is still not to agree on everything, but to learn more about each other's perspectives.

- "Do you recognize the dilemma or parts of it, either on a personal level or through observation?"
- "Does the culture in your unit cater mainly to extroverted employees or is there a balance? How is this evident?"
- "Is it socially acceptable not to attend the Christmas party, for example? If it is, what has been done to create that culture? If it isn't, what could you do?"
- "Is there a part of the advice you gave that you practise in your unit? If yes, what? If no, would that be possible?"
- "What else could you do? At individual, group, and organizational level?"
- [Other investigative questions]
- "What will each of you take with you to your unit, either as a point of attention or as possible solutions related to the theme of the dilemma?"