

Dilemma:

“Do I have to choose between my family and my career?”

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:

Mikkel is a dedicated researcher at DTU, who has been working to achieve a remarkable career within his field for a long time. He is known for his hard work and long hours in the office. However, something has changed, which has created a dilemma for Mikkel that he would like to have the panel's opinion on. He recently started a family and feels a strong urge to spend more time with them. In short, he wants to create a healthy balance between his working life and his family life but doesn't know if that is compatible with his research career.

Mikkel's experience is that the working culture is characterized by a strong focus on long-term dedication and an expectation that researchers prioritize their work and spend many hours at the University. He believes his talent should not be defined by the number of hours he puts in, and his results also depend on his overall well-being.

Mikkel is facing a complex dilemma:

Should he continue to work long hours and risk missing important moments and experiences with his new family? Or should he change his work schedule so he can spend more quality time at home with the risk of falling behind in his career development?

A third option could be to try to influence the culture at his department towards a greater work-life balance and a career trajectory that has room for the different stages of life. But how can he do that? He would like the panel to discuss this.

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?"
- "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?"

A lack of salary negotiations, changes in work tasks, and the worst-case scenario—dismissal—can be the result when an employee informs their manager that they are going to be a parent. (A map of the experiences of Danish parents and future parents with discrimination related to pregnancy and parental leave, The Danish Institute For Human Rights, 2015)

"We need to have the courage to say that you can have a normal family life and an ambitious research career at the same time. We shouldn't schedule meetings late in the afternoon. That doesn't work for men or women, and it's not very productive. I understand that there can be special circumstances and exceptions, but it shouldn't be standard practice to hold each other 'hostage' after business hours," says Cecilia Ramlau-Hansen, a researcher at Aarhus University, in an article on AU.dk

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?"
- "Is there a so-called busy culture in your unit? If yes, how is this evident? If no, what are you doing to create a culture where busy-ness doesn't equal a good career?"
- "Do people look down on those who leave early to pick up their kids or stay home with a sick child without working from home?"
- "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?"