

# Dilemma:

## "I feel guilty all the time."

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:

Diana is a PhD student and a mother. Both roles take time and dedication, and both make her feel that she's not giving enough.

At DTU, she feels that—despite great flexibility—there is an expectation that research is a lifestyle and that it can't be done in a normal working week. For example, she finds that not all people at the department are understanding when she prioritizes family life, e.g. by not working when one of her children is sick.

Outside of work, she has two small children who need to be picked up from day care, get sick, need to go to the dentist in the middle of the day, and generally need time and care when they are not at day care.

To make it work, she leaves work at 2 p.m. and then works from home in the evening when the children are sleeping. This means that she often loses sleep and feels tired. But despite the hours she puts in at night, she still feels like she's not doing enough. She keeps comparing her own efforts with those of her colleagues who don't have children, and the result is a feeling of having unequal conditions when the time comes for her PhD assessment.

The constant guilt is wearing her out and she wants to do something about it. But what should she do? She sees three options, which she would like the panel to consider.

1. The children are there to stay, so should she throw in the towel and find another job, even though she is talented and thinks it should be possible to be a researcher and have work-life balance?
2. Should she accept that her PhD will be done within a 37-hour working week? This means facing the challenges as they come, e.g. when others make her feel guilty about prioritizing her children and completing a PhD at a slower pace compared to her colleagues who put in 50 hours a week.
3. Should she apply for an extension to get more time—even though there is a risk that she will have to finance it herself?
4. Or go for a solution suggested by the panel?

# 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 could the management do to help create a better work-life balance for employees?"
- "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?"

*More than one in three feels exhausted "often" or "all the time". Nearly the same number of people feel emotionally exhausted. And 39 per cent feel stressed "often" or "all the time". (Analysis by the academic union DM and the national network of PhD associations, PAND, 2024)*

*For men with children and men without children, it takes almost the same amount of time to get to a permanent position. For women with children, it takes 13 per cent longer. Only one in four female researchers with children who are pursuing a scientific career at a university becomes an associate professor in the standard time. (The Danish Council for Research and Innovation Policy, 2019)*

# 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?"
- "Do you actively work to create a working culture where there is also room for family life? If yes, how?"
- "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?"