

Dilemma:

“Should we all be treated the same when we are different?”

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:

Michael has a colleague, who is particularly sensitive and is more easily overwhelmed by sensory input than others. This means that he needs to shield himself during the day in order to work. He therefore prefers having a private or very quiet office and that meetings are not too long.

Michael himself doesn't think it is a problem, but he has noticed that their manager doesn't recognize the need. Several times he has overheard his manager becoming annoyed that the colleague needs peace and quiet when he works, and that he can't handle meetings that last for several hours, when everyone else can. Recently, it culminated in a rough exchange between the manager and the sensitive colleague, where the colleague tried to explain that his well-being is at stake if he doesn't have the opportunity to shield himself from sensory input, while the manager stressed that he will treat everyone equally and doesn't give anyone special treatment.

Personally, Michael believes that people are different and should therefore be treated differently to have equal opportunities. However, he can sense that his manager has a different opinion, and he can also sense that his colleague is gradually succumbing to the pressure of adapting, but that he is suffering because of it. The colleague has become more quiet and can handle less. Michael fears that his colleague will end up feeling so bad that he will either have to go on sick leave or quit.

Michael is not sure if he should interfere. On the one hand, he wants to have a culture with room for diversity, including neurodiversity. On the other hand, he is unsure whether he can actually make a difference and nervous about what it might do to his relationship with the manager. And how can you create a change in the culture, when you are not a manager?

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?"
- "How can managers create space for diversity?"
- [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?"

According to the Confederation of Danish Industry (DI), research shows that it can take as long as 25 minutes to refocus on work after being disturbed. The consequence is a decrease in productivity.

Particularly sensitive traits are connected to the brain's nervous system and way of processing sensory input. 15-20 per cent of the population is extra sensitive and becomes overstimulated more easily, says Elaine N. Aron, American clinical research psychologist

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?"
- "How would Michael's colleague feel in your unit? How would you be able to tell?"
- "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?"