



Restorative Practices in Schools

What? How? Why? When? Where? With Whom?

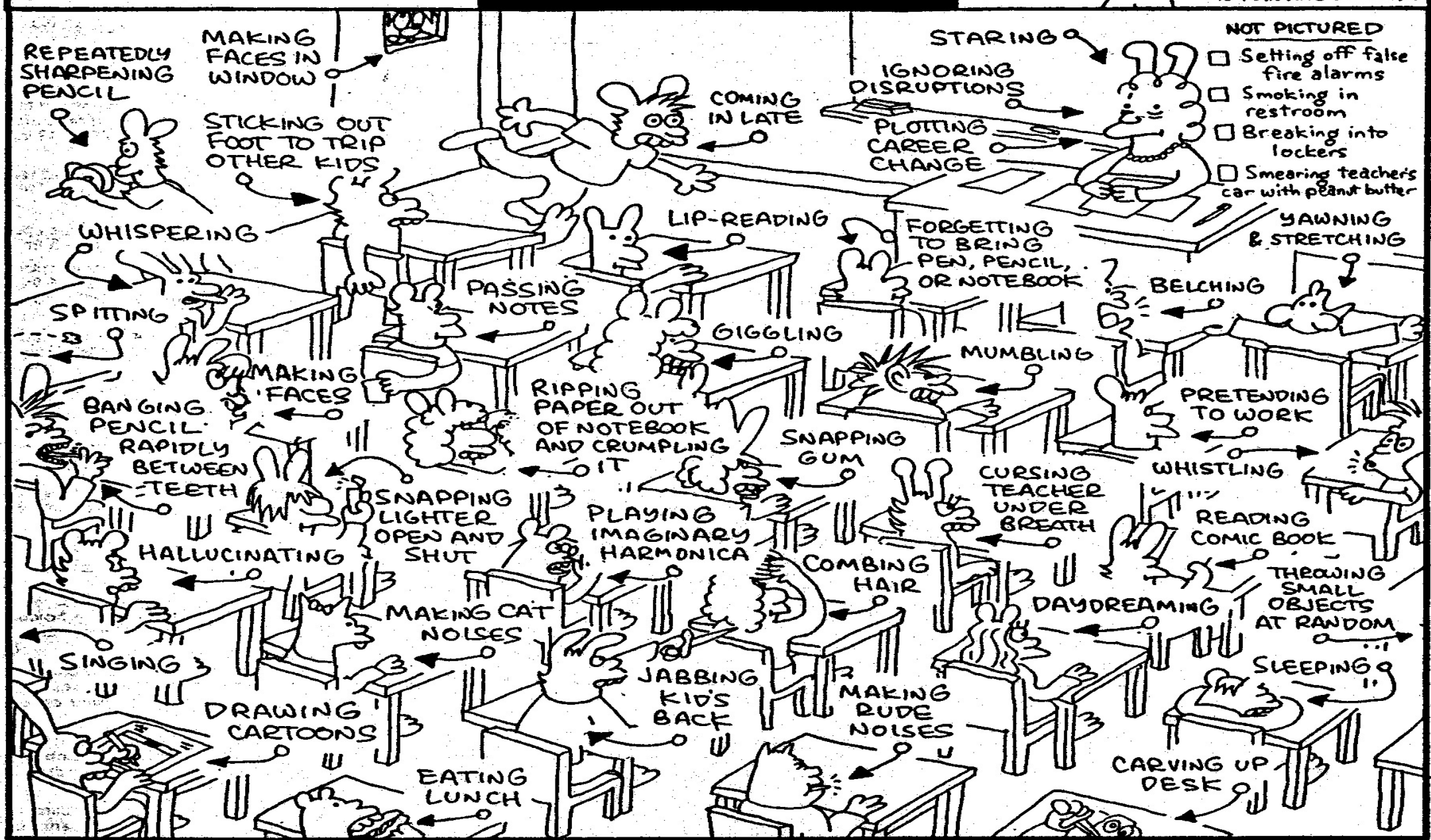
Jon McGill Baltimore Curriculum Project 2021

Disclaimers!!

- This material and perspective is based on experience and research.
- I will send the power-point to anyone who wants it: simply e-mail to jmcgill@Baltimoreecp.org and I will send.
- There is no substitute for your own research and experience: reach out to other schools and staff who have expertise, whose schools are using RP, or planning to develop the processes.
- IIRP is a valuable resource but not the only one. However beware of quick fix “consultants” who exist in the multitudes but are not actually school-based experts. BCP can help advise on this, and other references are in this ppt resource list.

A Lord and Lady: Who Is To Blame?

- A medieval Lord, upon leaving his castle for a two-day excursion, including a visit to his mistress, told his Lady that on no account whatsoever should she leave the castle until he returned. The penalty for disobedience would, he said, "be very harsh indeed."
- As soon as he left for his trip, the Lady also left the castle to rendezvous with her own lover. After a night of passion and bliss, she returned to the castle only to find the drawbridge had been raised. Without any hint of concern, she called out to the Gateman "Please lower the drawbridge!".
- "My dear Lady, I am forbidden by my Lord to do so: he gave explicit instruction that if you left the castle I should raise the bridge and not lower it until he came home!"
- Not dismayed at all, the Lady went to the rear gate of the castle and called out to the Boatman "Please row over to this bank and ferry me to the gate!"
- "My Lady, I cannot, on pain of death at the hands of my Lord: he has forbidden that I should help you.!"
- Now somewhat irritated, the Lady went to the home of her friend and asked for aid. "My dearest friend, I am also a dear friend to your husband and I cannot take sides in this. I cannot help"
- The Lady was now frightened and turned in panic to her lover. He replied that, in fact, they were a mere "fling" and his involvement in helping her would put his own life in danger. He would not help.
- That evening the Lord returned home and, finding his wife sobbing by the castle drawbridge, he drew his sword and thrust it several times through her quivering body.



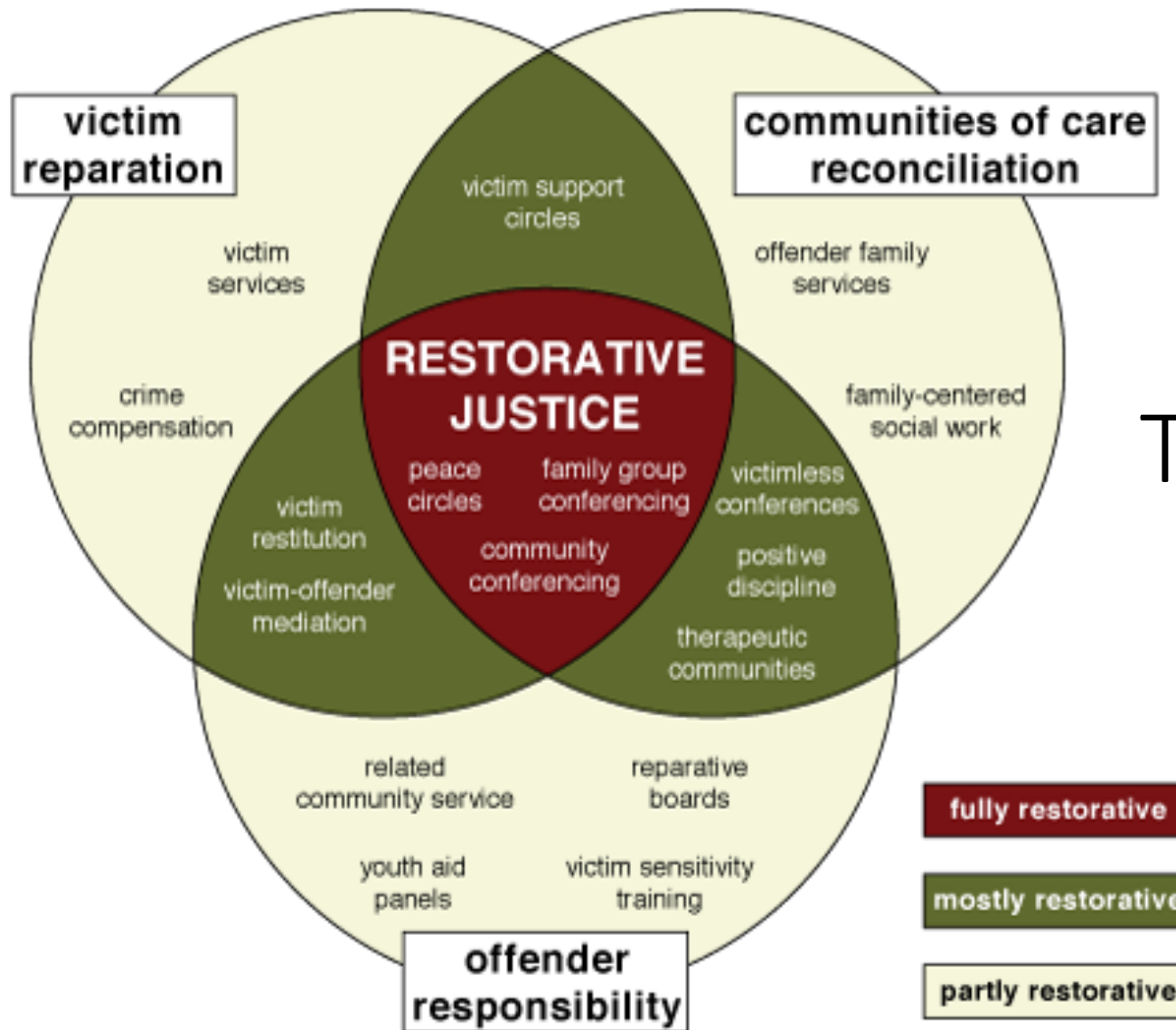
What Are “Restorative Practices”

- Depends upon genuine engagement from adults: “all about relationships”!
 - Research-based (IIRP and many other sources)
- Originated in thinking about the criminal justice system
 - Designed to **strengthen** civil society/communities
 - Promotes positive relationships with students
 - Promotes widespread leadership
 - Restores **damaged** relationships
 - Repairs broken lines of communication

Restorative Justice?

- It is a variant/subset of Restorative Practices, focusing mainly on criminal activities and damages. Regarded by many as the original inspiration for RP.
- It tends to be “reactive”: responding to crime or to potential criminal harm
- It is not designed to have an impact on other community aspects or issues
- Does not always include “victims”
- Emerged in nations that had “first nations” peoples





The Model

Restorative Justice (2)

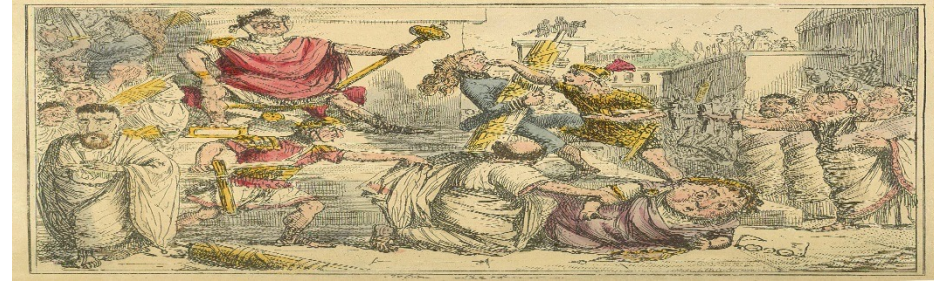
- Designed to bring victim and victimizer together.
- Often involves a wide range of people.
- Is both process and outcome-focused.
- Might involve circles but not necessarily.
- Where there is a victim, and criminal wrong-doing, there will be other outcomes (incarceration, for example).
- It tries to avoid recurrence but is not designed to stop or prevent prior to the initial offence.

Restorative Practices

- Involves the study, through social sciences, of behaviors and outcomes.
- It engages all those who should be involved in decision-making
- It intends to “restore” what we assume was a positive environment prior to the “act” or event: that might not always be true!
- RP is designed to have people work together, with supports: it is not something done to people or for them!
- It is a way of resolving conflicts, bringing people to agreement where there was previously very little.



Some pertinent history.....



Restorative Justice originated, as far as we can trace, in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, when Mark Yantzi, a probation officer, arranged for two teens to meet directly with victims after a vandalism event. This led to a "victims/offenders reconciliation" project funded initially by the Mennonite Council and in collaboration with the local criminal justice system. This process was successful, under varied labels, in various parts of the world.....and Australia/New Zealand and Canada proved to be wonderful breeding grounds for the Justice part of Restorative processes.....not least because all three have indigenous peoples who have been badly treated by majority cultures and federalized governments. "First Nations" people in Canada, Maori in New Zealand and original ("aboriginal") peoples in Australia have all been invested in Restorative processes. Not surprisingly, the move from family counseling and criminal justice to education was a natural outgrowth of the ways in which group work was being done. In 1994, the first work was done in schools. By 1999, the International Institute for Restorative Practices was formed in Pennsylvania under the leadership of Ted Wachtel. IIRP became an accredited graduate school, licensed to develop and offer courses in RP. In the years since, IIRP has developed courses in family welfare, schools, counseling, social work schools, faith communities and workplaces.

Restorative Practices, Race and Anti-Racism

Restorative Practices has an equity/social justice orientation but it does not often specify exactly how race/anti-racism fits into the processes. It would be very hard to envision an effective RP program that was not fully aware of the racial context of individual schools, districts and the country at large. How this context is addressed and accounted for really depends on those who manages and directs the programs. Virtually every conceivable use of Restorative Practices demands that we factor in race, gender, identity, developmental levels of students, community factors, and much else. However, it might be time for RP to develop an explicit menu of equity issues outside the realm of school behaviors and “discipline”.

This might include:

- Looking at traditional discipline with an equity lens
- Recruiting a diverse core of RP practitioners
- Including assessments of community norms and attitudes
- Looking at RP language
- Ensuring that data is gathered and assessed

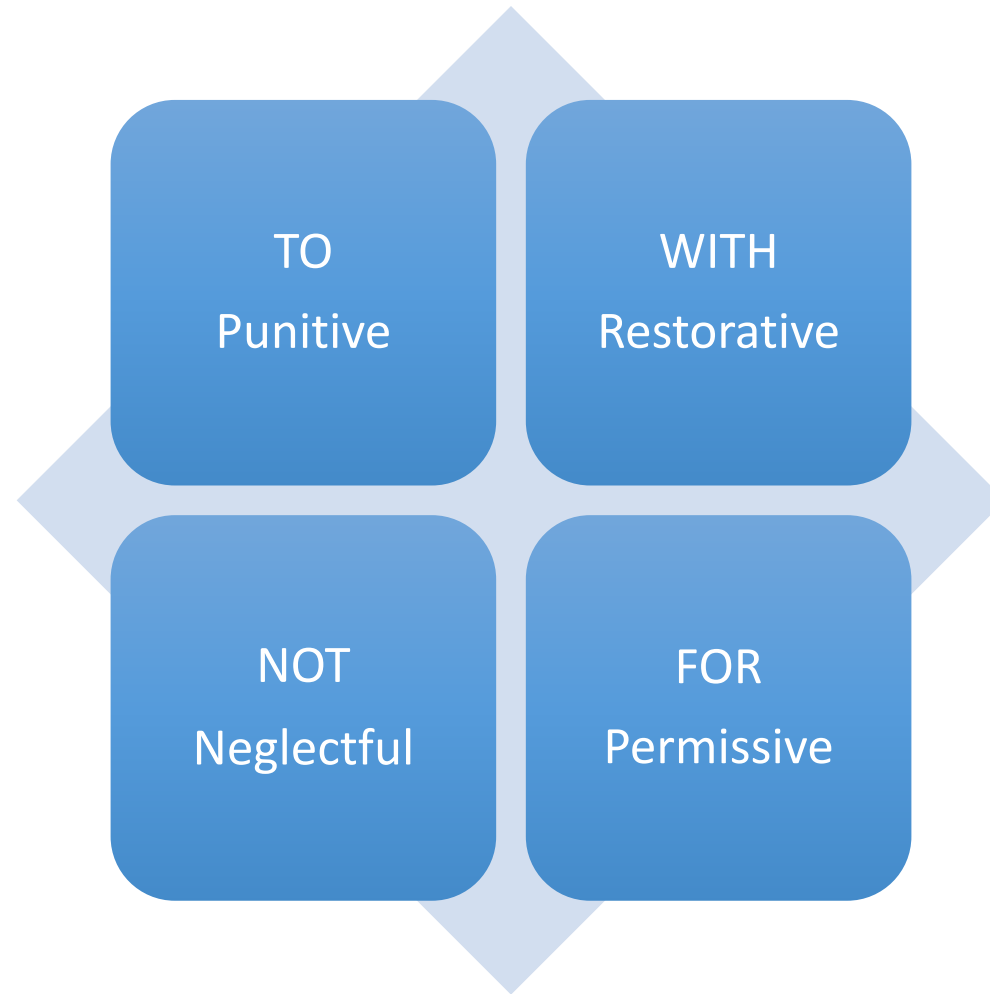


Climate, Culture and Discipline

- **Restorative Practices programs won't serve as school discipline or behavior management processes.** It does have a great impact on how staff define “discipline” and classroom/school site management. Attempts at using circles to reprimand or impose group or individual discipline, or to correct “bad behaviors” will undermine the basic premises and philosophies of Restorative Practices.
- School culture and climate work should include Restorative Practices but such work needs to be on-going and direct itself to more than RP!
- The process of deciding to implement RP should include all staff, parents and students. A steering committee is recommended and a preparation time frame of Summer through Spring is also recommended.
- Restorative Practices process does not take anything away from teachers and administrators in terms of providing consequences for difficult or disruptive behavior. RP provides greater context and includes everyone in a process that provides more authority, not less!



SOCIAL DISCIPLINE WINDOW



“Four Corners”

The social discipline window is a “leadership model”. The optimum place to be is the “with” window: high control with high support. Using that space allows for the notion that ***“human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things with them rather than to or for them.”***

This formulation is based on the work of criminologist John Braithwaite whose perspective was based on understanding the limits of punishment as a social regulator. Braithwaite’s work focused on moving from shame and stigma to restoration and reintegration.

Two Approaches

(Example from Schott Foundation)

Punitive

- Student greeted by metal detectors
- Teacher scolds him at start of school for minor details: student talks back, is given detention, sulks
- Still angry, gets into altercation in hallway
- School police detain him, arrests both kids
- Takes to juvenile detention center
- Faces school suspension
- Suspended for three days



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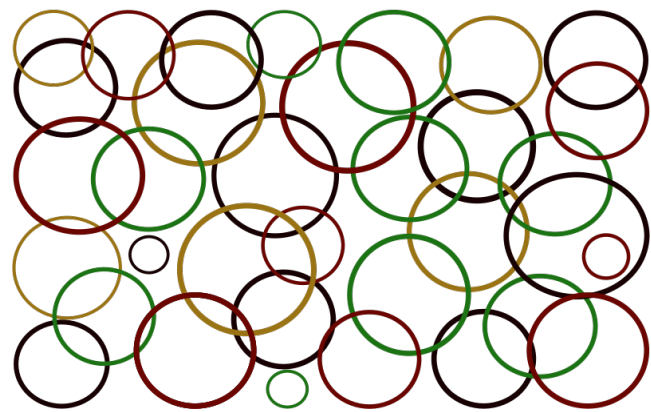
Restorative

- Teachers and admin welcome kids and parents at the door
- Teacher waits until after class to speak with student about lateness
- Sets up meeting for later that day with school counselor
- Minor altercation in cafeteria results in peer mediation/students sit down and talk. De-escalation results
- Students agree to clean cafeteria as outcome, student still meets at end of day with counselor

Restorative Processes and Tools

- **Restorative Conferences:** voluntary, informal, includes all “stakeholders”. Not counseling or mediation. Arrives at agreed-upon ways forward. Conference can be supplemented by added consequences or there can be agreed solution to issues without further action.
- **Who uses conferencing?** Courts, schools, colleges, workplaces, for things such as truancy, disrespect of others, attendances issues, conflicts, disputes.
- **Scripted or not scripted?.** Open to facilitator’s choice. Scripts can be seen as too controlling but they do provide consistency and a level of preparation along with the certainty that issues will be covered. (See slides 33/34)

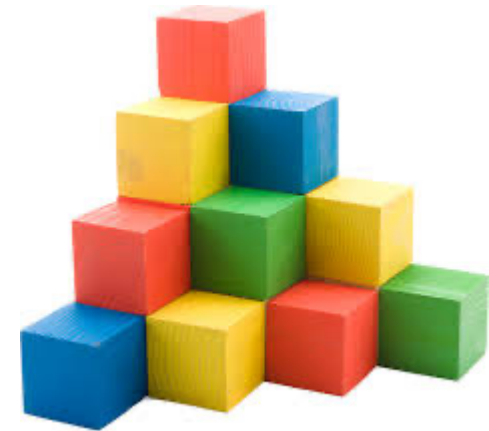
Circles



Circles???????

From the vantage point of schools, the Circle aspect of RP is the fundamental building block of practices and processes. The circle creates:

- Safety
- Decorum
- Equity and equality
- Encouragement
- Outcomes
- Shared rules and procedures

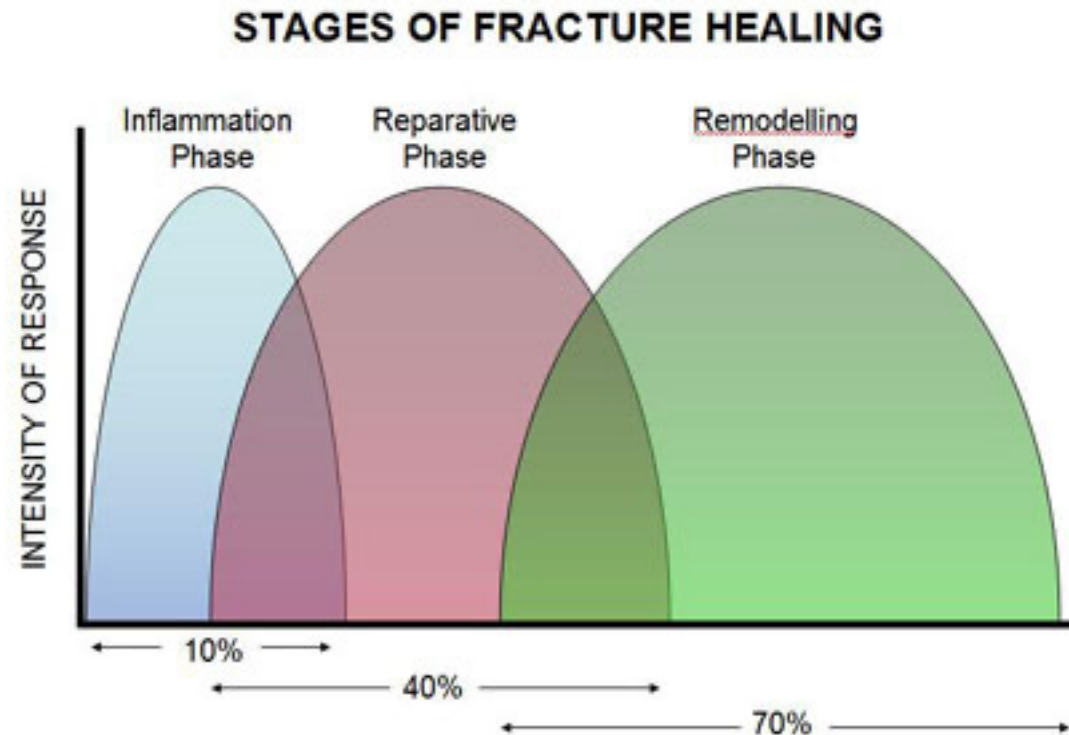


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Circles (2)

Circles Promote:

- Conflict resolution
- Healing
- Support
- Decision-making
- Relationship development



Circles(3)

Using the circle is not simply a matter of gathering students and jumping straight in. Circles must have purpose and planning!

“A basic premise of Restorative Practices is that the increasingly inappropriate behaviors in schools is/are a direct consequence of the overall loss of connectedness in our society.”

But RP is not a discipline substitute!

Getting started? Go slowly: with new groups, this means using circles in safe circumstances.



Circles (4)

- Need clear guidelines and goals
- Equip yourself with Circle starter questions
- It is acceptable to use circles to reinforce academic work
- Start with safe stuff!
- Sequential
- Non-Sequential,
- Fishbowl
- Be present yourself
- Use something tangible to indicate who has speaking rights? A ball, a hat, almost anything small enough to pass around the circle.

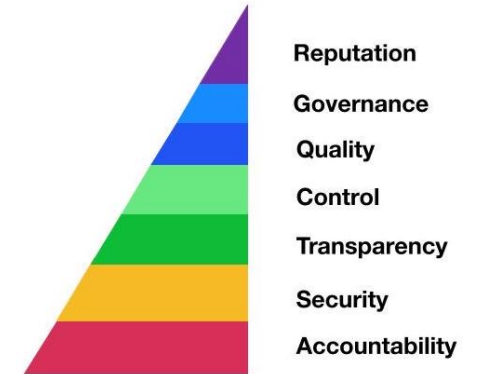


What Gets In Our Way?



- Lack of trust
- Lack of knowledge
 - Aggression
- School Climate and Culture
 - Lack of time
- Inexperience (students and staff)
 - Wrong purposes
 - Emotions

The Elements of Trust



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What To Use in Circles

- **Questions**: almost anything that is likely to elicit positive responses will be suitable. “What’s your favorite thing to do?”/”Where is your favorite place?” “Who is your role model?”
 - Poems or short stories serve as ideal starters.
- See **“Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles”** by Amos Clifford, San Francisco Unified School District
- And: **“Restorative Circles in Schools”**, Costello, Wachtel, Wachtel, IIRP, 2010

Circle Questions

- What makes a good friend? Teacher?
- What is something you would like to know how to do?
- What are you good at?
- What do you like most about your school?
- If you were the Principal for one day, what would you do?
- If you could paint like an artist, what would you paint?
- What do you like most about yourself
- What is one thing you would change about yourself if you could?
- What is your favorite possession?
- If you could spend a day with any person in the world, who would it be?
- What is the career or job you would most like to do?
- If you were stranded on a desert island for months, what would you want to take with you: book, food, music?



Think carefully about “safe” questions versus those that might elicit unwanted responses/emotions.

Affective Statements

Typical

- Stop Teasing Billy
- You should not do that
- Sit down and be quiet
- I don't want you to.....
- That is inappropriate

Affective

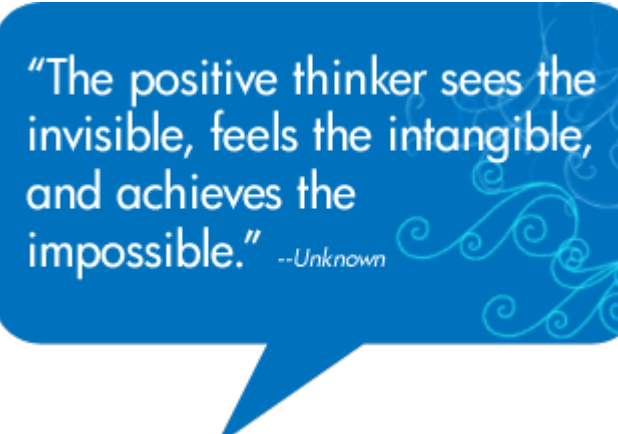
- It makes me uncomfortable when you tease.....
- I am frustrated that you are not listening
- I feel unhappy/sad when you say something like that to.....
- I was shocked when you hurt Jabari



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Affective Questions

- What happened?
- What were you thinking when this happened?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who was affected? In what ways?
- What might you do to set things right?
- What impact has this had on you and others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What could others do to be helpful?



"The positive thinker sees the invisible, feels the intangible, and achieves the impossible." --Unknown

What You Can Do

- Think carefully about the ways in which you now work and whether you can adjust your practice to include RP
- Ask questions about the behavior of your students
- Do some research: are there other schools nearby where RP is in use?
- Speak with other teachers in your school.
- Advocate for training!
- Start slowly and with a focus on one aspect of RP.
- Include parents and students as you plan and prepare

"In most schools, you are reprimanded and tucked away.

Not only does this **not resolve the conflict, it leaves a harmful imprint on the students involved."**

Rules and Behavior

Restorative Practices won't be useful as a “behavior management program or process”. You set your own rules. Here are some tips:

Avoid unclear rules: “be a good citizen”; pay attention”; “be ready to learn”; “Do your best”; “Respect others”; “be kind to others”; “be responsible”. These are all worthy goals but they aren't effective rules.

Why not?



Rules (2)

- Raise your hand if you want to speak
- Follow my directions (CHAMPS!) Be in your seat when the bell rings
- Walk, don't run, through halls and rooms
- Keep hands feet, objects, to yourself
- Don't put your hands on other people



Guide to Case Studies

- Each case study is an actual event
- Ask questions
- Consider who is involved
- Who should be involved?
- What is best for student/school/community?
- What is the format for decision making?
- Who benefits from the outcome?



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Case Study 1: Situations

Scenario for Discussion

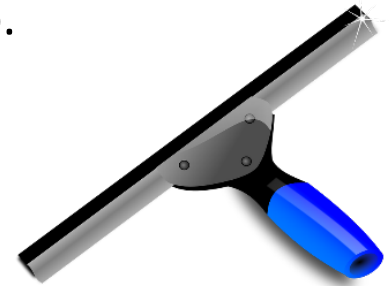
- A fourth-grade parent has been acting somewhat differently this year from behavior in the past three at the school. She seems overly stressed about her son, often hovering near the classroom during the day and refusing to let him stay for the after-school program he attended for the previous three years.
- After school yesterday, she got into an altercation with another parent after school and that turned into a shouting match which one of our teachers attempted to break up: there were no physical threats or actions, but it spilled into the student pick-up area outside and many parents and students witnessed the events.
- It was hard to calm Mom down and the issue was only resolved by her leaving the area, son in tow. She refused to come back inside to talk with the Principal
-
- The standard procedure at our school for this kind of thing is to impose a thirty-day ban on being on the school property.
-
- Next Steps?

Case Study 2

Devon is an 8th grade student who has recently been appearing at a local intersection, with some older youngsters (high school age), offering windshield cleaning in the hope of getting donations. Yesterday, an altercation developed after an argument with a driver got heated and angry, resulting in police involvement. The youngsters felt that the police did not listen to their side of the story but only to the driver. The driver felt that the kids threatened him and his daughter. The driver and daughter were white, the kids all African-American. The police took the kids to the station and parents were called to come pick them up. The school was informed by a parent last night and was asked to help.

Questions?

Is there a role for the school? What are the next steps?

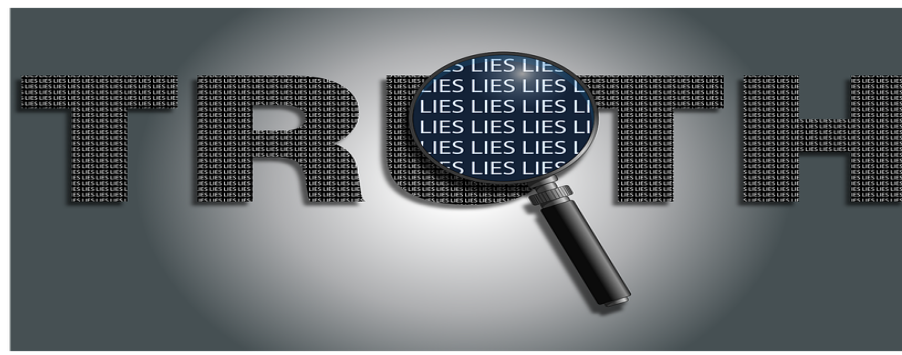


Case Study 3: Jamila

Case Study: Jamila

- Jamila and Monique are both eighth grade students at Disco Tech, a middle school in Baltimore. Monique and Jamila have known each other for a long time and have, in the past, been close friends. Now, however, they see themselves as mutual “enemies”. The reasons are both simple and complex but have to do with their mother’s friendship, which has broken down, some neighborhood conflicts involving relatives, and some classroom taunting that resulted, yesterday, in an actual fist fight that was hard to break up. The fight was followed by a visit from the mothers, both of whom also seemed ready to fight each other. Police were involved and the entire set of issues really seemed close to boiling over into the larger community. We are worried that someone will be hurt.
- We are not yet at a stage where we could even have a simple circle with both girls in the mix. Neither of the parents seem ready to cool down and participate in some kind of restorative process. The immediate solution is to suspend both girls: we are not comfortable with that. We could also go with the police recommendation that we press charges against both parents. That seems unlikely to bring healing.
- We are now ready to convene a discussion of how we should approach this issue. What questions do we need to ask? Who needs to be part of any possible solutions? Where is the starting point?

Case Study 4



- **Rodney** is an eighth-grade student at Baltimore Academy. He has been a good student until recently, maybe the last three months, during which he has been very quiet, missed some school days, and arrived late on others. His homeroom teacher has had a reasonably good relationship with Rodney. She has talked with him, she has tried to contact parents, she has mentioned his issues to other teachers.
- This morning, Rodney came in late to homeroom, and did not participate in the circle. When his teacher collected homework, he had none on his desk. The teacher asked for it, he mumbled that he did not have it.
- **“This is not the first time, Rodney, and I am tired of this. Go wait outside and I will come to talk with you in a moment.”**
- As Rodney, now quite upset, walked toward the door, one of his classmates giggled and said something as Rodney walked past. Rodney stopped and punched the boy in the back of the head and a fight looked inevitable. Other students and the teacher intervened, and Rodney was escorted by another staff member to the office.
- Rodney met with the Principal and the result was a three-day suspension for violent behavior. The Principal called home but no one answered. The Community Liaison staff member was asked to escort Rodney to his house, even though Rodney said no one would be home.
- “Do you know where your parents are, Rodney?”
- “Yes. They are out.”
- The back story? Rodney has a father who was physically abusive to Rodney’s mother. This had been going on for some time and. last night, Mom was attacked so badly she had to go to the hospital. A neighbor called police during the argument with the result that Dad was taken to jail. That same neighbor brought Rodney to school in the following morning and tried to talk to the school secretary who told her she had no time to talk, just leave Rodney to go to class. Rodney went to class but obviously in emotional disarray.
- Next steps?

Situations



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- **Student C is often “out of control”. Uses foul language, curses at other students and teachers. Refuses to cooperate, behaves inappropriately, academic success is non-existent. Mother and Grandmother have been in school several times this year to discuss this. Nothing has changed.**
- **Student B brought a squirt bottle full of flavored water to school and squirted several students, ruining their school shirts.**
- **Student A has been disrespectful in Math class, tells folks to “shut up” or “get the f---out of my face”. There is more and more of this behavior from the seventh and eighth grade..**

What would you do in each case?

Restorative Conferences

Purpose: Brings together everyone affected by situation or incident

Discuss the situation in a calm and process-driven way

Find solutions

Write agreement

Support in every possible way

When Is It Used? This is determined by faculty trained in RP, and school administrators.

Bullying

Truancy

Academic issues

Vandalism

Most ongoing behavior issues

Single important events



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Conferencing (2)

The Process:

Decide who should attend

Get agreement from everyone about the need and the process

Set time frame

Appoint neutral facilitator

Go over ground-rules and process

Include everyone

Decide about how things can be “put right”

Provide written outline of agreements, signed by all participants



Sample Community Conference Agreement

- I understand that my attendance at the Conference is voluntary
- I understand that this meeting is an attempt to resolve an issue and that it will be facilitated and structured
- I understand that I will be asked to sign a written agreement at the conclusion of the conference
- I will follow the rules as agreed upon for the conference
- I will listen carefully and respectfully, and will speak in the same way
- Other guidelines can be added as contexts differ. The point is to make sure every participant is given the same guidance and understand the parameters and objectives of the conference.



How To Begin.....

- Start slowly: the school administration needs complete commitment to the process and a thorough understanding of the main objectives and how to initiate.
- Training: absolutely critical: the entire staff needs to commit to training.
- Consider staffing for RP: a Director?
- Involve students and parents in trainings.
- Recruit trainers who are licensed via IIRP or other organizations.
- Budget for this!
- Spend a year planning?
- Make training an ongoing process.
- Measure and assess.
- Don't make it a "behavior management" program!
- Do invest time, money and staff!
- **CARE**: Create A Restorative Environment!



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The Environment That Supports Restorative Practices

- Uses RP processes for the adults also;
- Supported by administration and by parents;
- Widely understood
- Not a panacea!
- Daily and weekly work takes place
- Recruit Director of RP
- PD and more PD!
- Has to be re-invented frequently!



Resources

- **International Institute for Restorative Practices:** books, courses and materials, including videos
- **Oakland (CA) Unified School District**
- **San Francisco Unified School District**
- **Inclusive Solutions:** British group of educational psychologists @InclusiveSolutions.com
- **Chella Drew/Rodney Toulson:** licensed consultants who do lots of training
- **Restorative Practices Consortium Resource Project:** Ontario, Canada: excellent organization/site full of resources
- **Orange County (CA) Department of Education:** serves over 500,000 students and has many resources on RP
- **Schott Foundation** (Quincy, Mass) @ Schottfoundation.org
- Gloria Ladson-Billings **Just What Is Critical Race Theory and What Is It Doing In A Nice Field Like Education?** International Journal Of Qualitative Studies in Education
- Linda-Darling-Hammond, **Teaching for Social Justice: Resources, Relationships and Anti-Racism.** Learning Policy Institute, September, 2017
- These articles, and many others, stress the need for training in **culture, anti-racism and social justice** in the context of school “discipline”.

The Purpose of Conferencing

The Wrong Approach

Some time ago I was recruited by a school to facilitate what was supposed to be a Restorative Conference, designed to do several things: first, get agreement on the facts of an incident involving a sixth grade student who did not receive appropriate care when he reported that he was injured. The parent of the student was angry but under control: she wanted explanations and acceptance that things were not handled correctly, and not much else. Surprisingly she was not looking for legal redress or punishment or anything else but a promise that the school would handle things differently in the future. One complicating factor: the teacher who mishandled things lost the confidence of the class because of the way she handled things overall.

Several things went wrong: the school was reluctant to engage in preparation for the conference: I was not given access to the students: the teacher was not willing to accept that they needed to repair with the class in general and was uncertain about how to handle the fact that she did not do the right things. I did meet with the parent and student beforehand, and the administrators. I had some confidence that we could go ahead with a conference that included some of the students who were most vocal about the relationship breakdown.

The Result? Awful! At the conference, administrators were defensive and unwilling to accept any fault. Students were hostile and emotional. The teacher was unprepared. The parent was reasonable but unhappy with the way things went. The injured student was frustrated. I probably should not have agreed to move forward with the conference!

Next steps?



Questions/Comments?

- What Have I missed?
- What do you need?
- Where do you get help/advice?
- What is hard to understand?
- Will this work in your context?

