

Building the Foundation for Restorative Practices

Restorative practices is an approach intended to repair harm by focusing on relationships rather than punishment. Restorative practices create an avenue for an individual to return to their better self, to be in healthy relationships with others, and to be recognized as a contributing member of the community.

It is the knowledge that one can be “restored” that motivates a person to enter into restorative processes. It is about being given the opportunity to make amends and be welcomed back after a mistaken action rather than being set aside, alienated, or punished.

Restorative practices may involve consequences to demonstrate both that a lesson has been learned and that a person has earned the right to return to their relationships and community. However, the power that restorative practices hold is not in the consequences that may be given, but rather that the person is motivated to have the restorative experience of being embraced within the community.

The real work of restorative processes is not in finding the proper consequences, but in creating the sense of self, regard for relationships, and healthy responsive community that makes it seem worth being restored to. Therefore, we set the grounding for restorative practices in two key ways. First, we create a cohesive culture and functional community of which people want to be a part. Second, through the power of strength-based communication, we demonstrate to the individual that we actually see and hear them. We do not regress to the labels they have received in the past, nor focus on their mistaken behaviors. Rather we give them the space in which they feel valued for who they truly are. Their participation in this kind of a community is what makes them want to be a part of it, to earn their right to be welcomed into it, and ultimately to contribute to it.

Resources

Ameen Akbar. Restorative Practices: Addressing Problems by Using Strength-based Rather Than Punitive Practices. In “Reaching Teens: Strength-based, Trauma-sensitive, Resilience-building Communication Strategies Rooted in Positive Youth Development”.

The Schott Foundation. Restorative Practices: Fostering Healthy Relationships & Promoting Positive Discipline in Schools: A Guide for Educators

<https://schottfoundation.org/restorative-practices/>