

Restorative Practice

The Traditional Approach to School Discipline

The traditional approach to school discipline asks three questions in response to wrongdoing:

- What happened?
- Who's at blame?
- What do they deserve?

The traditional approach however leaves those who have been most affected by the wrongful behaviour without a voice, and without their needs being addressed as part of the 'solution'. It does not effectively challenge the wrongdoer to be accountable to those they have harmed.

The Restorative Approach to School Discipline

The Restorative approach starts with a different set of questions:

Restorative Questions 1: When things go wrong

- What happened?
- What were you thinking at the time?
- What have you thought about since?
- Who has been affected by what you have done? In what way?
- What do you think you need to do to make things right?



Restorative Questions 2: For the Person Affected

- What did you think when you realised what had happened?
- What impact has this incident had on you and others?
- What has been the hardest thing for you?
- What do you think need to happen to make things right?

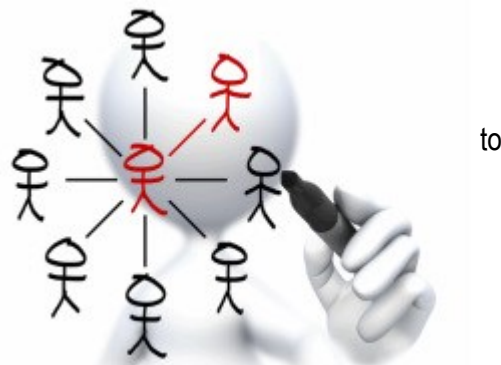
In this approach to dealing with wrongdoings, the focus is on the harm that has been done and the obligations this brings on the part of those responsible to 'right the wrong' as much as possible. It's an approach that seeks to develop in the wrongdoer an understanding of the breadth and depth of the harm their behaviour has caused to others so that they can best try to make amends to those most affected. In this way, it's an educative approach.

It also ensures that those who have been most affected by the wrongdoing have the opportunity to be involved in working out what has to happen in order to move forward.

Put simply, Restorative Practice is a way of viewing relationship-building and behaviour management in schools that works to strengthen community among students and between students, teachers and parents, through educative processes.

In the Restorative Practice Philosophy, conflict or wrongdoing is seen as causing harm to people and relationships, and there is an obligation first to repair this harm in order for the people involved to move forward. It is a way of educating students towards self-regulated right behaviour that is respectful of all concerned. In particular, it puts the onus back on the wrongdoer to be truly accountable for their behaviour and to repair any harm caused to others.

It is important to note that, with the focus on relationship building, any punitive consequences issued as a result of a student's behaviour are confidential and rarely communicated other parties involved in the conflict.



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