

Understanding Restorative Justice At-A-Glance

Restorative justice seeks to move away from addressing safety problems with punishment to focus on creating stronger and healthier relationships. Restorative approaches center the needs of those who have been harmed, and ask those who have caused harm to account for the impact of their actions. Restorative approaches also give those who have caused harm an opportunity to right the wrong. Beyond the individuals at the heart of a conflict, restorative justice asks everyone participating in the process about our collective responsibility for creating conditions that enable and foster harm, while also accounting for the ripple effect of wrongdoing in our communities.

Rooted deeply in indigenous tradition, this is a healing practice.

Here's what you should know:

- While court-incurred punishment furthers disconnection, restorative justice responds by strengthening relationships.
- Restorative processes are forward-looking and can both respond to and prevent harm.
- A restorative justice process is survivor-centered, demands active-accountability, activates collective responsibility, and harnesses community wisdom.
- Those who have caused harm have often survived it themselves: restorative justice invites participants to bring all of their identities and experiences into the process.
- Restorative justice is not a silver bullet and will not alone cure our systems. Without meaningful investment in human rights

such as housing, healthcare, education, and an opportunity to earn a living, the capacity for healing and justice through restorative processes will remain limited.

Restorative justice works. Here are some highlights from the field:

- Restorative programming can help communities heal. In partnership with communities, we can create peacemaking hubs across New York City to handle conflict and violence at the local level.
- Victims partaking in restorative justice programs generally report higher perceptions of fairness, greater satisfaction, and improved attitudes towards the offender, as compared to those processed in the traditional court system (Wilson et al., 2017; Strang et al., 2013; Sherman & Strang, 2003).
- A study of the Community Works West's Restorative Community Conferencing program, found that 91% of victims

participating had overall positive experiences and would participate again (Baliga, Henry, & Valentine, 2017).

- Restorative interventions result in lower recidivism rates for offenders, particularly those involved in violent crimes, with the steepest decline for high frequency offenders (Sherman et al., 2015).
- The Syracuse Peacemaking Project made deep investments in the community through 22 revitalization projects in addition to soliciting feedback from community members about what the space of the peacemaking center should look like and ensuring that the staff reflected the neighborhood demographics (Cissner, 2019).

Robust and well-funded restorative justice teams can transform school culture and climate. Teams of restorative justice coordinators can build or strengthen relationships among students and teachers that disrupt the school-to-prison pipeline and create an avenue towards equity.

- In schools where restorative practices are implemented, fewer exclusionary discipline measures are used for Black and Latinx students. (Gregory et al., 2014; Anyon et al., 2016).
- Students who report high experience of restorative practices in their school also perceive an improved school climate, more school connectedness, and better peer relations than students with self-reported low experiences of restorative practices (Acosta, 2019).

For More Information

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