

The 5 R's of Restorative Practice

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Relationship

Restorative practices recognize that when a wrong occurs, individuals and communities feel violated. It is the damage to these relationships that is primarily important and is the central focus of what restorative practices seek to address. When relationships are strong, people experience more fulfilling lives, and communities become places where we want to live. Relationships may be mended through the willingness to be accountable for one's actions and to make repair of harms done.

Respect

Respect is the key ingredient that holds the container for all restorative practices, and it is what keeps the process safe. It is essential that all persons in a restorative process be treated with respect. One way we acknowledge respect is that participation in a restorative process is always optional. Every person is expected to show respect for others and for themselves. Restorative processes require deep listening, done in a way that does not presume we know what the speaker is going to say, but that we honor the importance of the other's point of view. Our focus for listening is to understand other people, so, even if we disagree with their thinking, we can be respectful and try hard to comprehend how it seems to them.

Responsibility

For restorative practices to be effective, personal responsibility must be taken. Each person needs to take responsibility for any harm that was caused to another, admitting any wrong that was done, even if it was unintentional. Taking responsibility also includes a willingness to give an explanation of the harmful behavior. All persons in the circle are asked to search deeply in their hearts and minds to discover if there is any part of the matter at hand for which they have some responsibility. Everyone needs to be willing to accept responsibility for his or her own behavior and the impacts it has on other individuals and the community as a whole.

Repair

The restorative approach is to repair the harm that was done, and the underlying causes, to the fullest extent possible, recognizing that harm may extend beyond anyone's capacity for repair. Once the persons involved have accepted responsibility for their behavior and they have heard in the restorative process about how others were harmed by their action, they are expected to make repair. This allows us to set aside thoughts of revenge and punishment. It is essential that all stakeholders in the event be involved in identifying the harm and having a voice in how it will be repaired. It is through taking responsibility for one's own behavior and making repair that persons may regain or strengthen their self-respect and the respect of others.

Reintegration

For the restorative process to be complete, persons who may have felt alienated must be accepted into the community. Reintegration is realized when all persons have put the hurt behind them and moved into a new role in the community. This new role recognizes their worth and the importance of the new learning that has been accomplished. The person having shown him or herself to be an honorable person through acceptance of responsibility and repair of harm has transformed the hurtful act. At the reintegration point, all parties are back in right relationship with each other and with the community. This reintegration process is the final step in achieving wholeness.