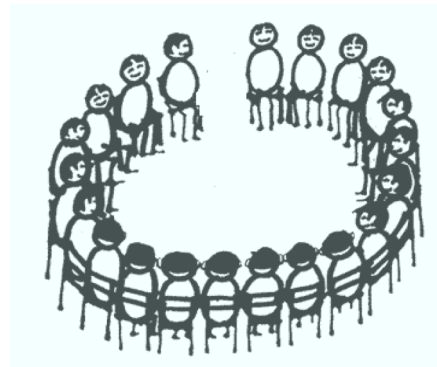


Creating Learning Spaces Worth Having: Reflective and Restorative Practices

Key Themes

- Whole School Approach
- Circle Space
- Restorative Conferencing
- Culture of Peace
- Peer Mediation



Whole School Approach

Reflective practices are aimed at providing opportunities for ongoing collaborative learning, including the restoration of relationships that have been damaged or fractured.

From a collaborative learning perspective, there is an **INTENTION** on behalf of the leader to create a space where the responsibility for learning is shared and everyone is **INVITED** to contribute.

From a restorative perspective, the intention is to create a space where those involved in relationship break-down are invited to be part of the process of **RESTORING** the wellbeing of the community.

Everyone needs to understand the vision, aims, values and skills that create the container for a reflective and restorative culture - everyone is invited to be part of the transformation. Shared meaning and shared understanding from the outset leads to shared commitment and consistency. A whole school approach diminishes the risk of simply tinkering with a 'power-over' model - rather than shifting to a 'power-with' model.

Reflective practices are about '**CREATING A PAUSE**' to think about an aspect of lived experience, consider the implications and share the learning with others in a respectful way. It embraces the ancient arts of storytelling and deep listening in the ancient tradition of the circle gathering.

Restorative practices are interventions that share some common principles:

'everyone affected by harmful behaviour, a conflict situation or a problem has the opportunity to talk about what happened, explain how they have been affected by it, describe how they are currently feeling about the situation and what they want to do to repair the harm caused'

(Hopkins, p32)

They can take the form of restorative inquiry (asking questions and listening to understand), restorative discussions (broader conversations on listening and speaking truth), mediation (intentional use of a neutral third party, can be used with victim-offender engagement), community conference (issues relating to a wider group of people), family conference (meeting with wider family support group), open space gathering (for those who are passionate about addressing the issues..)

Schools often dismiss the impact of 'the school system' on the behaviour of students. For example, school reports do not often record the potential contributions of teachers or an overloaded timetable to a student's behaviours or to escalation of conflict.

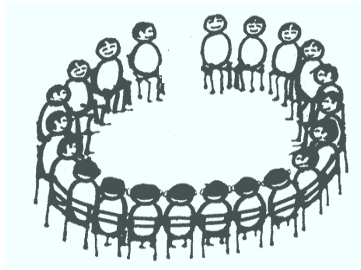
Question:

“is everything that we do here at this school informed by this ethos, these values and a philosophy that gives central importance to building, maintaining and, when necessary repairing relationships and community?”

(Hopkins, p38)

Skills and Values

- Clear Intention
- Remaining impartial and non-judgmental
- Respecting the perspectives of all involved
- Actively and empathically listening
- Clearing communication channels between participants
- Inviting participants to come up with solutions rather than imposing them
- Creative questioning
- Genuine interest, attention and patience
- Compassion



Circle Space

“A whole school restorative approach can provide opportunities for teachers to develop in themselves, and in young people, the skills that they value as central to lifelong learning”

(Hopkins, p50)

Guidelines for how we wish to relate and work with each other, that are created by the group, will more likely be accepted and adhered to by the group. These will be sustained as people long for, and are drawn towards, belonging and community cohesion. People are motivated by their own sense of well-being and by contributing to the wellbeing of others within the group.

Restorative practice is about remembering and returning to these essential values for maintaining healthy relationships, for working well in our classroom and for sustaining a sense of belonging within a wider community.

Relational skills
are required to
optimize restorative
results

**Core values
identified
(RAWSOME)**

- **Respect** for each person
- **Accept** and embrace diversity
- **Wholistic** approach inclusive of feelings, needs and perspectives
- **Space** for people to tell their stories
- **Ownership** of responsibility and choices
- **Modeling** the desired approach
- **Everything** connects - alignment of intention and process

Ceremony

This is a different space

Talking Piece

Regulates the dialogue...
provides turn-taking

Facilitator or Keeper

Creating participation safety

Guidelines

Created by the group as
promises to keep the space
safe for truth-telling

Consensus Decision-making

Willingness to support the
decisions taken

The Beginning...

- *Facilitator sets up the circle (place, time) and introduces the process of 'speaking in turns' using a talking stick or other symbol of shared leadership.*
- *Whoever has the talking stick has the honour of speaking and others have the responsibility to listen.*
- *When finished, or there may be a time limit, the speaker passes the talking stick on or leaves it back in the centre of the circle for anyone else to pick up*
- *There is the 'right to pass'.*
- *Group can go bush and pick/decorate their own 'talking stick'*

Start simple....introduce the circle, get used to the rhythm of speaking and listening

Q: what did I have for breakfast/what did I watch on tv/where did I go at the weekend?

Q: what is my favourite pet/animal?

Q: how am I feeling this morning?

Q: what do I really like about being in this class?

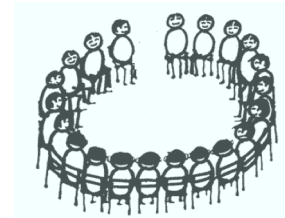
Q: what do I dislike?

Move to more sophisticated questions/statements

Q: what can others do to help me learn better?

Q: how can I help others to work at their best?

Q: what needs to happen to make this class even better?



Restoring Circles

*"Not everything that is confronted can be resolved
but nothing can be resolved until it is confronted"*

James Baldwin

When the circle has been 'fractured', ask questions to involve people and promote learning

The philosophy of circles acknowledges that we are all in this together and that by helping others, we help ourselves

- *what happened?*
- *how has that affected people?*
- *how can the harm be put right?*
- *what has been learned about the choices made?*
- *how can this learning be applied in the future?*

Restorative Inquiry

Question	Seeking Response
Can you explain what happened?	<i>thinking/interpretation</i>
What were you thinking at the time?	<i>thinking</i>
How were you feeling at the time?	<i>feelings</i>
Who else has been affected by this?	<i>feelings/thoughts of others</i>
In what way?	<i>empathy</i>
What have you thought about since?	<i>thinking</i>
How are you feeling now?	<i>feelings</i>
What do you think you need to do to make things right?	<i>thinking/needs - self/others</i>
How will you do this? When?	<i>thinking/action/commitment</i>
How do you feel about the whole thing now?	<i>Feeling/reflective thinking</i>

Noticings

Being curious about difference - rather than 'winning the argument'

Having difficult conversations - courage to communicate cleanly/clearly

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) framework

Instead of 'you make me feel....'

- When I see/hear....I feel....what I need is...would you be willing to...?
- So when you see/hear...are you perhaps feeling....do you need....and would you like?

A: so tell me what happened from your perspective

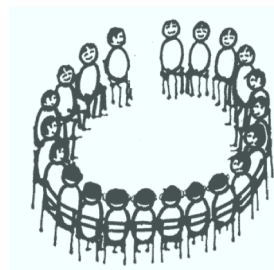
B: she called me a fat slob and I hit her

A: so let me get this right....you are saying that...

Restorative Conference

'...it is the people with the problems who are best placed to resolve them and to come up with appropriate solutions'

(Hopkins, p 58)



When there have been serious fractures of relationships within the community/class, a restorative conference might be appropriate.

PREPARATION

Inviting appropriate people to participate in a restorative meeting.
Who are the people affected by the incident and behaviours?

Suitable venue and time - this may be in the school or external, in school hours or afterwards...

The facilitator may be a member of the school community or external. Impartiality is important.

FACILITATION

- Everyone has same information - transparency important
- Who is invited to go first? Usually the victim's choice....


Facilitator questions:

- *What happened?*
- *What were you thinking at the time?*
- *What have you been thinking since?*
- *Who has been affected by what happened?*
- *In what way?*
- *What has been the hardest thing for you?*
- *What do you think you need to do put things right?*

- Tease out the stories - for example:

Would you tell me more about that? Can you be a bit more specific? And then what happened? And before that? And after that? Repeating last comment where appropriate. Allow for silence

- When everyone has had an opportunity to speak and be heard, there is a break to work out where to next...then reconvene to listen to suggestions, offers, requests...
- An agreement can be written up at the end of the meeting for key participants to sign



Circles reflect a universal human longing to be connected to others

MEDIATION

Mediation is a process in which people in conflict are supported by a neutral third party (or parties) to hear each other's story and find a mutually acceptable way forward.
(Hopkins p95)

Peer mediation - when young people mediate and facilitate outcomes with each other.

Imposed solutions (retributive) usually do not get to the underlying issues - and resentment/bitterness that might be left over. When students themselves become involved in the restorative process, they can facilitate resolutions with each other.

For examples: www.restorativepractices.org.au

- 1 Establish guidelines/framing the container
- 2 Provide space for others to tell their story, explaining thoughts, feelings
- 3 Identify what is needed to reach mutual agreement and be able to move forward
- 4 Clarify agreement - commitment
- 5 Conclude - summarise, acknowledge, invitation to ongoing reflection/learning

Restorative practitioners need to 'walk the walk' and 'talk the talk' and this will be what transforms a school, a community and, eventually, society at large"

Hopkins, p93

SKILLS FOR CREATING A CULTURE OF PEACE

Aware of self	What is my intention?	
Body language	How do I present myself?	
Listening	Intention to learn and understand	
Honour, respect and value the speaker	Validation of speaker story <i>'I have been heard'</i>	
Express Empathy	Let them know you understand	
Curiosity	Deeper understandings for each other	
Identify feelings	Are these evident? Can they be named?	
Identify needs	What needs are not being met? What do you need now?	
Requests	What are you requesting of me? What am I requesting of you?	
Offers	What can you offer others? What I am offering you?	
Build Bigger truth	What is emerging now?	
Identify learnings	What have you learnt from this? What have I learnt from this?	
Make commitments	What will you do now? What will I do now?	

Resources

Hopkins, Belinda, Just Schools – A Whole School Approach to Restorative Justice. JKP, 2004

Pranis, Kay, The Little Book of Circle Processes: A New/Old Approach to Peacemaking. Good Books 2005

Rosenberg, Marshall, Nonviolent Communication – A Language of Life. Puddle Dancer Press, 2003

Zehr, Howard, The Little Book of Restorative Justice. Good Books, 2002

Restorative Practices for Schools (Graeme George, Brisbane)

www.rpforschools.net

Restorative Practices WA (Gabrielle Lawlor, Perth)

www.restorativewa.com

Restorative Practices (NSW)

www.restorativepractices.org.au

International Institute for Restorative Practices www.iirp.edu

Alternatives to Violence & Help Increase the Peace (WA)

www.avpwa.org

Transforming Conflict - Belinda Hopkins (UK)

www.transformingconflict.org

Circle Speak - Peta Blood (NSW)

www.circlespeak.com.au

"ASSASSIN", "CHILD-KILLER!", "MURDERER!"

Marshall Rosenberg

(Nonviolent Communication, pp12-14)

I [Marshall Rosenberg] was presenting Nonviolent Communication in a mosque at Deheisha Refugee Camp in Bethlehem to about 170 Palestinian Moslem men. Attitudes toward Americans at that time were not favorable. As I was speaking, I suddenly noticed a wave of muffled commotion fluttering through the audience. "They're whispering that you are American!" my translator alerted me, just as a gentleman in the audience leapt to his feet. Facing me squarely, he hollered at the top of his lungs, "Murderer!" Immediately a dozen other voices joined him in chorus: "Assassin!" "Child-killer!" "Murderer!"

Fortunately, I was able to focus my attention on what the man was feeling and needing. In this case, I had some cues. On the way into the refugee camp, I had seen several empty tear gas canisters that had been shot into the camp the night before. Clearly marked on each canister were the words "Made in U.S.A." I knew that the refugees harbored a lot of anger toward the U.S. for supplying tear gas and other weapons to Israel.

I addressed the man who had called me a murderer:

I: Are you angry because you would like my government to use its resources differently? (I didn't know whether my guess was correct, but what is critical is my sincere effort to connect with his feeling and need.)

He: Damn right I'm angry! You think we need tear gas? We need sewers, not your tear gas! We need housing! We need to have our own country!

I: So you're furious and would appreciate some support in improving your living conditions and gaining political independence?

He: Do you know what it's like to live here for twenty-seven years the way I have with my family-children and all? Have you got the faintest idea what that's been like for us?

I: Sounds like you're feeling very desperate and you're wondering whether I or anybody else can really understand what it's like to be living under these conditions.

He: You want to understand? Tell me, do you have children? Do they go to school? Do they have playgrounds? My son is sick! He plays in open sewage! His classroom has no books! Have you seen a school that has no books?

I: I hear how painful it is for you to raise your children here; you'd like me to know that what you want is what all parents want for their children-a good education, opportunity to play and grow in a healthy environment...

He: That's right, the basics! Human rights-Isn't that what you Americans call it? ** Why don't more of you come here and see what kind of human rights you're bringing here! **

I: You'd like more Americans to be aware of the enormity of the suffering here and to look more deeply at the consequences of our political actions?

Our dialogue continued, with him expressing his pain for nearly twenty more minutes, and I listening for the feeling and need behind each statement. I didn't agree or disagree. I received his words, not as attacks, but as gifts from a fellow human willing to share his soul and deep vulnerabilities with me.

Once the gentleman felt understood, he was able to hear me as I explained my purpose for being at the camp [to give a training in Nonviolent Communication]. An hour later, the same man who had called me a murderer was inviting me to his home for a Ramadan dinner.