

Five key themes for restorative practice

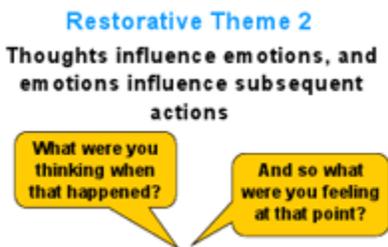
A whole environment can be transformed when people bear these five themes in mind in all their interactions with family, friends, neighbors, colleagues, clients, service users and even total strangers.

Theme 1 – Unique and equally valued perspectives



Everyone has their own unique perspective on a situation or event and needs an opportunity to express this in order to feel respected, valued and listened to. There are many ways to invite people to share their perspective of what is going on in a current situation, or of what has happened in the past.

Theme 2 – Thoughts influence emotions, and emotions influence subsequent actions



What people think at any given moment influences how they feel at that moment, and these feelings inform how they behave. The thoughts and feelings are 'beneath the surface' and yet very important to understand. Again there are many ways to invite people to share their thoughts and feelings. Here are a few suggestions:

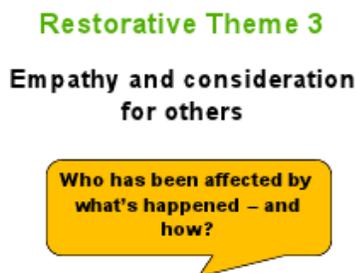
It's important to use a variety of different 'thinking' questions so you do not sound like a stuck record:

- What was on your mind at the time?
- What was going through your head?
- What were you telling yourself?

But try to avoid asking for opinions –don't ask questions like "What did you think about that?" or "How did you feel about that?"

Opinions and judgments can block effective communication and polarize people.

Theme 3 - Empathy and consideration for others



When there are conflicts or disagreements harm can result – in terms of negative emotions such as anger, hurt, fear, frustration and confusion and in terms of damaged relationships and connections between people. To live in harmony together people need empathy and consideration so they understand who is likely to be, or to have been, affected by their choice of action in any given situation and how.

Theme 4 – Awareness of our own and others' needs

Restorative Theme 4
Identifying needs comes before
identifying strategies to meet
these needs

What do you need so things
can be put right and you can
move on from this?

Needs can include:



Unmet needs can be the underlying cause of inappropriate or harmful behavior.

Theme 5 – Trust and empowerment

Restorative Theme 5

Trust and empowerment

What needs to happen now to
repair the harm/put things right?
(What could you do?)

It is the people affected by a situation or event who are best placed to identify what should happen. As far as children and young people are concerned this is in accord with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Children have the right to be heard in all matters affecting them, and for their views to be taken into account.

It isn't always appropriate to ask all sides what they could do to help move things on, but often even those who have not been harmed have ideas and can be allowed to join in the discussion. This can help re-empower them after having been disempowered by their experiences.

Our thanks to Belinda Hopkins <http://www.transformingconflict.org/>