

What is Restorative Justice?

Restorative justice's three main goals are:

- **Accountability.** Restorative justice strategies provide opportunities for wrongdoers to be accountable to those they have harmed, and enable them to repair the harm they caused to the extent possible.
- **Community safety.** Restorative justice recognizes the need to keep the community safe through strategies that build relationships and empower the community to take responsibility for the well-being of its members.
- **Competency development.** Restorative justice seeks to increase the pro-social skills of those who have harmed others, address underlying factors that lead youth to engage in delinquent behavior, and build on strengths in each young person.

Why should schools use restorative justice?

Restorative justice emphasizes values of empathy, respect, honesty, acceptance, responsibility, and accountability. Restorative justice also:

- Provides ways to effectively address behavior and other complex school issues.
- Offers a supportive environment that can improve learning.
- Improves safety by preventing future harm.
- Offers alternatives to suspension and expulsion.

Fostering a restorative school culture

Schools may implement restorative justice in varying degrees, from a single program to a permeating school philosophy. Restorative justice can be implemented through daily practices used by everyone in the school, from administrators to students, or as a formal program available to students who have violated school rules.

Classroom problem-solving that incorporates restorative practices may include:

- Developing trusting and caring relationships between adults and students.
- Fostering skills to resolve conflict, such as listening, empathy, critical thinking, and self-control.
- Determining what has happened and why by asking questions and listening to the answers.
- Maximizing student involvement in deciding how to resolve problems.
- Resolving problems with open-ended questions, exploring different responses, reflecting on motives, and allowing for disagreement.
- Assisting students in considering ways to make amends for misbehavior, such as replacing, repairing, cleaning, or apologizing.
- Following up to determine whether the problem was solved and or more work needs to be done.
- Encouraging reflection.
- Allowing flexibility for different students, needs, and situations.
- Minimizing the punitive impact when control is necessary to repair the relationship and address underlying issues.

Using Restorative Discussions

As a Mentor in the classroom you can help deal with some of the following situations:

- Minor student worries
- Minor disruptions
- Need to debrief and discuss issues
- Challenging situations
- Worried parents
- Disruptions
- Interpersonal conflicts

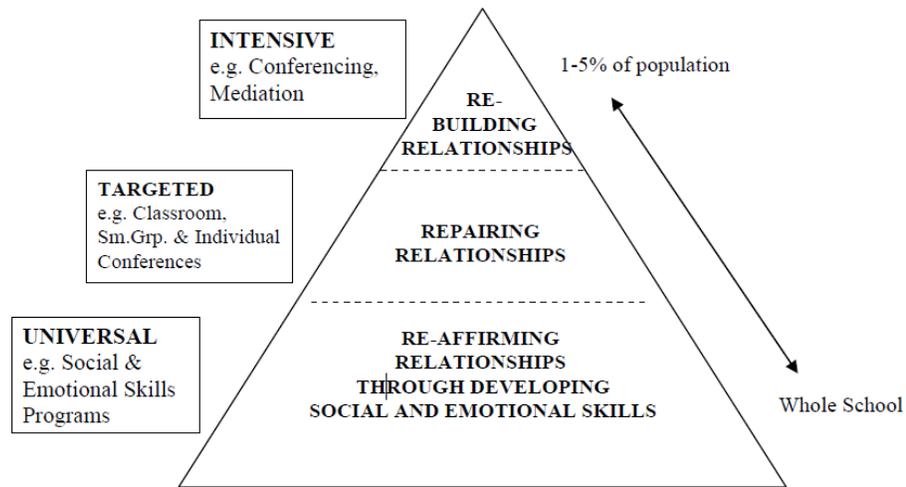


Figure 1: Hierarchy of Restorative Responses, Morrison (2004)

The interventions you are doing in the classroom fit in the lowest tier of the triangle. You are working towards address concerns and re-affirming and strengthening relationships.