

Restorative Dialogue: *Using the Restorative Questions*

The basic questions for responding to challenging behavior are:

1. *What happened, and what were you thinking at the time of the incident?*
2. *What have you thought about since?*
3. *Who has been affected by what happened and how?*
4. *What about this has been the hardest for you?*
5. *What do you think needs to be done to make things as right as possible?*

These questions lay the foundation for and act as the building blocks for all forms of restorative processes that seek to discover the root cause/s of challenging behavior, determine impact, repair harm, and ultimately restore damaged relationships.

Restorative questions:

- are non-blaming and open ended
- allow for storytelling and attentive listening
- separate people's behavior from their intrinsic worth as a person
- allow for all people involved to identify their thoughts and feelings associated with particular actions
- provide a forum for meaningful expression of emotions (affective statements)
- focus on impact and how others (people and community) were affected by the action/s
- are an inclusive and collaborative approach to problem solving, emphasizing finding solutions rather than assigning blame
- holds people accountable
- requires people to take responsibility for their actions
- attends to the needs of those harmed
- resolves underlying issues that act as the root cause of challenging behavior.

Conflict is natural and likely to occur when people with diverse opinions and experiences unite. Restorative practices views conflict as an opportunity to foster meaningful learning experiences and strengthen relationships.

Proficiency Criteria for Restorative Questions

(The International Institute for Restorative Practices, Edwards Dolquist Implementation Tactics.)

1. When using the restorative questions you:
 - a) Ask the wrongdoer to identify who has been harmed.
 - b) Ask the wrongdoer to describe what harm was done.
 - c) Ask the wrongdoer to describe what needs to be done to make things right.
 - d) Require a verbal or written response from the wrongdoer.
 - e) Ask the person harmed to express their feelings by using Affective Statements to describe the harm done and to identify what needs to be done to make things right.
2. You strategically use Restorative Questions:
 - a) in a non-judgmental way that communicates a genuine desire for understanding.
 - b) in an appropriate public or private setting.

Application of Restorative Questions:

With slight modification, the restorative questions can be used in a wide variety of situations and settings, ranging from brief impromptu hallway interventions to classroom management strategies to formal conferences.

Number of Participants: As little as two or as many as an entire class is able to participate in restorative interventions.

Using the restorative questions can be an effective approach to resolving conflict/problem behavior in the following example situations.

Inside the classroom		Outside the classroom	
Patterns of disruptive student behavior	Tardies/chronic absenteeism	Hallway skirmish	School yard fight
Bullying	Interpersonal conflict	Counseling office referral intervention	Student conflict
Student-teacher conflict	Student defiance	Substance use	Staff conflict

Accountability and Natural Consequences vs. Punishment: (Material taken from The Restorative Practices Handbook, The International Institute for Restorative Practices)

When wrongdoing/misbehavior occurs it is important that consequences are identified and required. The restorative questions allow for deeper exploration of impact and involve all stakeholders in the process of determining the most appropriate consequences along with the person who caused the harm. With natural consequences, students become active participants by recognizing the harm they caused and by taking responsibility to make things as right as possible by following through with the identified consequences.

Natural consequences are defined as a result or effect of an action or condition, while punishment is defined as something that is imposed on someone, generally with the intention of creating pain and discomfort. Punishment allows for the person to remain a passive recipient without having to take responsibility for their actions.

Facilitating Restorative Dialogue

The following steps provide the format for a restorative dialogue to be used in a variety of different situations.

Note: *Here you will find additional questions that may be useful.*

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1. Engagement (to all involved in the incident)

- *We need to talk about what just happened.*
- *Can you tell me what happened?*

2. Reflection (to person responsible for the harm)

- *What were you thinking about at the time?*
- *What were you hoping would happen?*
- *What made you decide to do that?*
- *What have you thought about since?*

3. Understanding the harm/impact

1. First to the to person who caused harm

- *Who has been affected by what happened?*
- *How do you think they have been affected?*

2. To the person harmed:

- *What did you think when that happened?*
- *What was that like for you?*
- *What was the worst bit?*

4. Acknowledgement (to person responsible for harm)

- *What do you think now about what you did?*

5. Agreement (to person harmed first)

- *What would you like to happen as a result of our chat?*
- Then to person responsible – *Is that fair?/ Could you do that?*
- To both – *What else needs to happen to fix this?*

6. Arranging Follow-Up

- *Let's make a note of our agreement and I will catch up with you tomorrow to see how the agreement is going.*

Format for Restorative dialogue: to be used when there is a clear distinction between the person harmed and the person who harmed (also known as victim-offender).

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- **Please Note:** 1. *Follow this format unless the person harmed states that they would prefer to respond first.*
2. *Here you will find additional questions that may be useful.*
3. *The questions with a * are critical questions to ask.*

1. To the person who has done the harm:

- What** happened?
- Who** else was there/around when it happened?
- What** were you thinking at the time?
- Who** has been affected/upset/harmed by your actions?
- How** do you think they have been affected?

2. To the person who has been affected:

- What** was your reaction at the time of the incident?
- How** do you feel about what happened?
- What** did you think at the time?
- What** have you thought about since?
- How** has it upset/hurt/harmed you?
- What** has been the worst or hardest thing for you?

3. To the person who has done the harm:

- Is** there anything else you want to say?

4. To each person including any observers:

- What** would you like to see happen to repair the harm?
- Is** that okay? / **Do** you agree? **Is** that fair?
- Is** this realistic and achievable?
- How** can we make sure this doesn't happen again?
- Is** there anything I can do to help?
- Is** there anything else you would like to say?

5. Conclusion:

- Formally record the agreement.
- Congratulate the students for working it out.
- Arrange time to follow-up / meet again to see how things are going.

6. To each person

- Is** there anything else you would like to say?