

# HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS: RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Psalm 86:5

For you, O Lord, are good and forgiving, abounding in steadfast love to all who call on you.

“Healthy relationships are based on respect, caring, empathy, trust, and dignity, and thrive in an environment in which diversity is honoured and accepted.”

*Ontario Health and Physical Education Curriculum (2015)*

**Restorative justice** is a strategy that can be used in response to cyberbullying and cyberviolence in schools and on social media. Restorative justice practices complement the *HEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS: Navigating Cyberviolence and Cyberbullying Placemat* (**Proactive** and **Reactive**).

Restorative justice is proactive in that it supports well-being by building and strengthening a safe and caring school culture. It is effective when responding to an incident by seeking to repair and restore relationships. This approach allows administrators to consider a different way of thinking about harm, the people involved and the responses to the harm.

When leading or facilitating a restorative justice approach, principals and vice-principals know that restorative justice

- helps the individuals involved to own and reflect on their actions
- seeks to make it as right as possible for those harmed
- involves the school community in helping both the person who harmed and those who have been harmed
- acknowledges that those who harmed need healing as well.

“Restorative practices also include preventive measures designed to build skills and capacity in students as well as adults.”

*Smith D., et al. (2015) Better Than Carrots or Sticks: Restorative Practices for Positive Classroom*

Restorative justice offers **benefits** to

- the school community (reduced recidivism, increased safety, stronger community)
- the student/community member who was harmed (empowerment, recovery, and satisfaction)
- the student/community member who caused the harm (opportunity to make things right, put the incident behind them in a timely manner)



Public Safety Canada offers more information on [restorative justice's impact on participant health](#).

[LEARN MORE](#)

## Why restorative justice works

### Mindset/Values

**RESTORATIVE JUSTICE MINDSET:** a different way of thinking about harm and the response to it. Restorative justice is pursued through a cooperative effort by all school community members including the person(s) who caused the harm.

## What is the goal?

### Outcomes

When a school community is in need of restoration, the restorative justice process facilitates healing, helps all affected to feel better, restores order and peace, nurtures and builds healthy relationships.

## Whose voice is heard? ...not heard?

### Practices

The person who has harmed is provided opportunities to understand how they harmed and take responsibility to make things right, as much as possible. Restorative justice practice empowers those who were harmed to participate in a healing process.

## How restorative justice works

### Processes

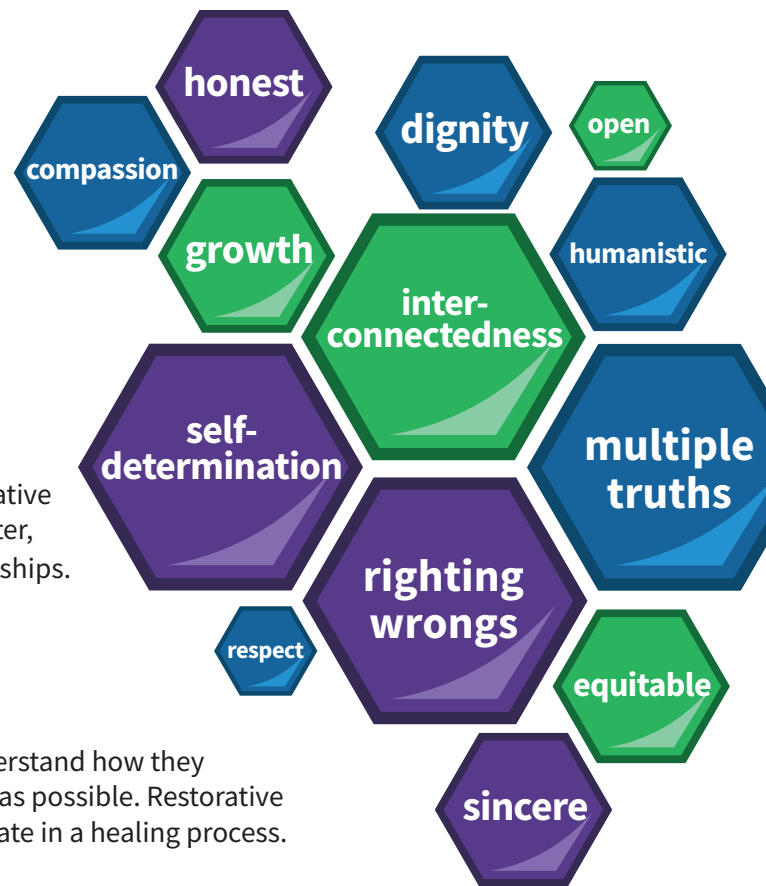
By seeking to heal and put right the wrongs, the process for restorative justice may be implemented through mediation, restorative conversations, conflict resolution, conferencing, talking circles, community panel/board, effective statements and restorative questions, etc.. It is founded on self-care, collaboration, SEL (Social Emotional Learning), communication for connection, conflict management strategies, etc..

## Questions to consider when implementing restorative justice

In your role as principal or vice-principal, you might ask yourself these questions:

- *Are the wrongs being acknowledged?*
- *Are the needs of those who were harmed being addressed?*
- *Is the one who committed the harm being encouraged to understand the damage and accept their obligation to right the wrong?*
- *Are those involved in or affected by this being invited to be part of the “solution”?*
- *Is concern being shown for everyone involved?*

If the answers to these questions are “**no**,” then even though it may have restorative elements, it isn’t restorative justice. Howard Zehr, [zehr-institute.org](http://zehr-institute.org)



The site [IIRP Canada International Institute for Restorative Practices](http://IIRP Canada International Institute for Restorative Practices) includes many educational resources, as well as information on the annual virtual conference.