

RJ Workshop 2012: Diverse Needs; Unique Responses

This workshop is intended for 6-20 participants, and is designed to last approximately 2.5 hours, depending on time allotted for breaks and the depth of discussion generated. Workshops should be facilitated by at least two people.

Goals

Through this workshop, participants will gain:

1. An understanding of restorative justice and a restorative circle.
2. An appreciation of how restorative processes can bring more satisfaction for everyone affected by an offence.
3. An opportunity to think about their role in implementing practices of restorative justice in their own communities.

Materials

- Flip-chart, markers, tape or blue tack
- Copy of the Agenda posted on the wall
- Scrap paper and pens for group work
- Copies of Scenario 'Audrey's flowers' for sharing
- Copies of the "Head, Heart, Feet" reflection sheet
- Information on local organizations concerned with justice issues: a restorative justice agency, victims' advocacy group or prisoner advocacy group (e.g. John Howard Society). Contact the Church Council on Justice and Corrections for assistance with this if needed
- Information for resources table, such as *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* by Howard Zehr, CCJC brochures, Restorative Justice Week Materials, local organizations' contact information or brochures (If you need assistance, please contact CCJC).
- Refreshments for sharing after or during the workshop

You may also want to invite people from local restorative justice organizations to be present in your workshop and help with providing information on RJ in action in your community.

1) Introduction/Welcome

Housekeeping

Let participants know where washrooms are located and remind them to turn off cell-phones. Refer them to the Agenda, which is ideally posted on a wall. You may also wish to post the ground rules and guiding principles and invite participants to add any guidelines which would make them feel safer or

more able to fully participate (i.e. someone make ask to add that everything said within the room remains confidential).

Presentation of workshop agenda

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| 1) Introduction | 5 mins |
| 2) Opening Circle | 5 mins |
| 3) Opening prayer/reflection | 5 mins |
| 4) Story – Audrey’s flowers | 10 mins |
| a. Questions for discussion | 10 mins |
| 5) Introduction of Restorative Justice | 10 mins |
| 6) Group work – assessment | 15 mins |

BREAK

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|---------------------------------|---------|
| 7) Restorative circle | |
| a. Talking circle principles | 10 mins |
| b. Role play | 20 mins |
| 8) Reflections on the role play | 20 mins |
| 9) RJ in the community | 10 mins |
| 10) Closing | 15 mins |

2) Opening Circle

Begin the workshop by establishing the existing understanding of Restorative Justice that participants and facilitators bring to the workshop.

My name is: ...

I understand RJ as: ...

Facilitator introduces him/herself. My name is: ... Based on my experience, I understand RJ as: ...

3) Opening prayer or reflective text

Though this section of the workshop is optional, facilitators may wish to begin with a prayer or a reading. This could be led by a facilitator or by the leader of the place of faith hosting this workshop.

A prayer you may consider using is that of Saint Francis of Assisi:

*Lord, make me a channel of thy peace.
Where there is hatred, may I bring love;
Where there is wrong, may I bring the spirit of forgiveness;
Where there is discord, may I bring harmony;
Where there is error, may I bring truth;
Where there is doubt, may I bring faith;
Where there is despair, may I bring hope;*

*Where there is darkness, may I bring light;
Where there is sadness, may I bring joy.*

*Lord, grant that I may never seek so much to be consoled as to console,
to be understood as to understand,
to be loved as to love.*

*For it is by giving that we receive.
It is by forgiving that we are forgiven.
It is by dying that we awaken to eternal life.*

4) Story – Audrey’s flowers

For years Audrey has been helping her church decorate and prepare for special services. For this year’s Easter service she carefully prepared a beautiful display of potted lilies, arranged within fabric and canvas so that the flowers seemed to be growing right out of the floor and dais steps.

When she arrived at her church on the morning of Easter Sunday, she was shocked to find her display in tatters. Many of the pots were knocked over, the fabric was torn and dirty, flower stems were bent and petals were bruised and spoiled. The display looked terrible. Audrey tried to quickly tidy up and arrange the surviving flowers before service began, but display looked weak and dishevelled.

Throughout the Easter service, Audrey had a hard time concentrating. Who had wrecked her flowers? Was it deliberate? Was someone upset with her? She felt angry and hurt. She also felt embarrassed; everyone knew she was responsible for decorating the church and this display was pathetic. Then she felt guilty that she was unable to concentrate on the service, so distracted by her thoughts about the broken flowers.

After the service, the youth minister approached Audrey. He told her that last night the youth group had met in the church. There had been an argument between two young men. One had left the room and the minister assumed he’d gone outside to cool off. Only later did he see the over-turned flower pots.

“That young man has always been trouble,” he told Audrey. “And I told him in no uncertain terms what he did was unacceptable and he will not be welcome back until he can learn to behave.”

In the coming months, though she tried to let it go, Audrey was still saddened by what happened to her display and she still didn’t understand. Who was this young man who wrecked her flowers? Why take out his anger on them? She thought of all the time and energy she had invested in the display and how quickly it was destroyed. When it came time to plan for Advent, Audrey did not volunteer again to help decorate her church. Those who continued with decorating have asked that the chapel door be locked prior to special events.

As for the young man, when he was at church he imagined accusatory looks from the ladies in the front and felt the disdain of others in the youth group who talked about him as if he were a criminal. It wasn’t long before he stopped coming to church or attending youth events.

Questions for Discussion

Break into groups and discuss the following questions. After 5-10 minutes, return to the group and use a flip chart to record some of the responses.

- 1) Who has been hurt in this scenario?
- 2) What do they need?
- 3) What was done to address this situation? Was this enough? Did it satisfy the needs of those hurt?

5) Introduction of Restorative Justice

“Restorative justice is a process to involve, to the extent possible, those who have a stake in a specific offense and to collectively identify and address harms, needs and obligations in order to heal and put things as right as possible.”¹

Restorative justice is a broad approach that is based on values of reconciliation, accountability and communication. Offenders are encouraged to take responsibility for what they have done and to make things as right as possible. Victims are given opportunities to talk about their experience and what they need to heal and move forward. Communities are often invited to participate in and support such conversations and discussions.

Restorative justice generally involves an acknowledgement of the wrong or injustices which have occurred and discussion about equity and trust can be restored. How this is accomplished can vary according to such things as local culture, the type of offence, the needs of various stakeholders, and the resources available. Practices may include direct or indirect communication between victims and offenders, such as face-to-face mediation, group dialogue, letters of apology or victim impact, etc. (Facilitators are encouraged to speak to their experience). Forgiveness is not required or expected, although it may often flow from the process.

Generally, restorative approaches seek to facilitate safe places to address, prevent and reduce ill-will and conflict. What are some possibilities for a restorative approach to this scenario?

Who are the stakeholders who could be involved in a restorative process? Invite brainstorming.

Identified stakeholders may include:

- Audrey
- Youth
- Youth minister
- Members of decorating committee
- A friend of Audrey's
- A friend of the youth from the group

¹ Howard Zehr, *The Little Book of Restorative Justice* (Intercourse PA: Good Books, 2002), 37.

6) Group work – assessing hurts and needs

Divide into small groups (number of groups = to number of identified stake holders). Ask each group to brainstorm around how the person in this scenario was hurt and what they might need to put things right. Each group is to elect a person for a restorative circle role-play.

Break

Time for refreshments, informal discussion.

7) Restorative Circle

Restorative justice can take many forms. This workshop will explore one of these forms – the restorative circle.

The facilitator will invite role-players to come forward and form a semi-circle (so that others can see what is happening without directly participating). A facilitator will introduce the circle process and the principles of a talking circle. (It may be helpful to have the ground rules and guidelines written out in advance and posted on the wall.)

Talking circle principles

Talking circles can be used to foster a safe and respectful place for sharing thoughts and feelings. Rather than a forum for verbal, positional debate, often dominated by a few assertive individuals, the circle process can be used to foster a safe, non-hierarchical place in which everyone has an opportunity to speak.

How circles are facilitated and moderated can vary according to their purpose and the participants involved. In some circles participants simply take turns, listening to one another without interruption. In other circles, facilitators may take an active role to guide discussion.

While circles may vary, there are some basic ground rules that generally apply and can be used for today's exercise:

Ground Rules:

1. Listen with respect.
2. Each person gets a chance to talk.
3. One person talks at a time. Don't cut people off.
4. Speak for yourself and not as the representative of any group.
5. It's OK to disagree. No name-calling or attacking.

Guidelines for Participation:

1. Listen from the heart. Be attentive and sincere. Bear witness to the words and experiences of others. Practice deep compassionate listening. Focus on what the other person is saying, not on what you will say.

2. Speak from the heart. Speak from your own true stories. Share your own journey. Do not speak philosophically or in the abstract.
3. Speak concisely. Aim for clarity and simplicity of language. Do not seek to dominate the discussion.
4. Be spontaneous. Speak honestly. Do not speak with prepared, positional statements.

Role-play

The facilitator will invite role-players to hold a restorative circle. Each participant will be given opportunity to talk about how the offence made him/her feel. There will then be discussion about what might be done to heal the hurt - this can be guided, but ideally participants will come up with their own solutions.

What could be the possible outcomes from this process? (For example, the youth remains in church, perhaps even making a public apology or doing 'community service' by helping with church displays; Audrey continues to participate in decorating committee; trust is restored.)

8) Reflections on the role play

Following the circle, the participants will move their chairs to become part of a larger circle. The facilitators will invite everyone to reflect on what has just taken place and on their understanding of restorative justice.

In subsequent rounds of the discussion, the question can be asked about how people can imagine implementing RJ principles and practices in their own communities.

9) RJ in the community

Facilitators can use this time to introduce some RJ initiatives in the community – perhaps by inviting people from these organizations to present their work. This is also a time to encourage discussion about how the principles and practices of RJ could apply in cases of crime. Invite participants to individually reflect on how willing they might be to participate in a RJ process if they were the victim of a crime, or, if they have been the victim and were this process to be available now, would they participate. Invite participants to reflect on the potential for healing and restoration afforded by restorative practices.

Using the "Head, Heart, Feet" reflection sheet as a guide, participants will be asked to identify how they will transfer their learning about RJ into the community. Participants are invited to take action.

10) Closing

In a closing circle, participants are invited to share their reflections on the workshop and on their understanding of justice.

If appropriate, the facilitator may wish to close with a prayer or reading from a sacred text.