

Restorative Circles in Schools

About Restorative Circles:

Restorative Circles are a method of facilitating restorative justice processes in different settings. Restorative Justice offers a different lens of looking at crimes and misbehavior. Under the restorative justice approach, crime is viewed as a violation of people and obligations and justice would entail involving persons harmed, persons who caused harmed, and the community to put things right.

Restorative Justice in Education:

Restorative Justice in education is about "facilitating learning communities that nurture the capacity of people to engage with one another and their environment in a manner that supports and respects the inherent dignity and worth of all." (Evans & Vandering, Little Book of Restorative Justice in Education)

Under the restorative approach, misbehavior in the classroom is viewed as a social and emotional learning opportunity for children. Instead of punishment and exclusion, restorative processes focus on value-based dialogues to set things right and repair relationships.

Restorative Approaches in Schools:

Schools in Australia, Brazil, Canada, New Zealand, UK, USA, are using restorative practices to build a positive, respectful and caring culture. It is used to address bullying, exclusion, and disciplinary issues, but is not confined to just these.¹

¹ Wendy Drewery, Restorative Practices in New Zealand Schools: A Developmental Approach. Paper for Restorative Approaches to Conflict in Schools, Seminar Two: International Perspectives on RA, p.4, available at <https://www.educ.cam.ac.uk/research/projects/restorativeapproaches/seminartwo/1Drewery%20210610%20Restorative%20Practices%20in%20New%20Zealand%20Schools.pdf>

“Teachers who use these methods often find that the overall proportion of time dedicated to managing behavior is reduced. This means more instructional time becomes available. It also means that students (and teachers) have happier, more peaceful experiences of their school days.” (Teaching Restorative Practices with Classroom Circles, <https://www.ocde.us/HealthyMinds/Documents/RP%20Resources/Teaching%20Restorative%20Practices%20with%20Classroom%20Circles.pdf>)

The Circle creates a safe space for everyone, adults and children, to share their values, stories and reflections. It is a tool that facilitates self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, responsible decision-making, and helps foster positive relationship skills.

The target audience for the RJ training aimed at schools are senior management, teachers, counsellors, and support staff. Following its introduction in schools, students can also be trained to become peer facilitators.

A basic training would include the following:

- Introduction to Restorative Justice
- Experience of Restorative Circles
- Experience of facilitation of life skills through Circles
- Introduction to Harm Circles

Refresher trainings and advanced trainings will be offered to those who complete the basic training. To initiate this work in your school or to learn more about Restorative Practices, please contact info@enfoldindia.org