

## **Restorative Circles In the Community**

### **Restorative practices to build community:**

Restorative practices require community members to come together, sit in a circle and share their experiences, feelings and views on a topic. This is done while holding each participant to a set of values and guidelines that the members of the group agree to uphold. This method of relating to each other builds trust, listening and understanding between the participants. It builds community spirit and prevents conflicts. It strengthens the community so that in case harm happens, the community is better able to deal with it.

*Restorative practices*<sup>1</sup> also include the use of informal and formal processes that precede wrongdoing, those that proactively build relationships and a sense of community to prevent conflict and wrongdoing.<sup>111</sup>

Restorative Circles are useful when concerned/ affected people (Kay Pranis):

- Want to work together as a team
- Have a disagreement
- Wish to share difficulties
- Want to learn from each other
- Need to make decisions
- Need to address an experience that resulted in harm to someone

### **Restorative practices for healing from harm:**

Restorative Justice is an approach to justice that focuses on the needs of persons harmed and persons causing harm, as well as the involved community with the objective of ensuring accountability and setting things right.

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<sup>1</sup> Wachtel, Ted. "Defining Restorative". The International Institute for Restorative Practices. Retrieved 11 July 2012.

Invoking the formal legal system may not be practical or desirable. Yet, accountability and closure may be necessary for the community to move forward. Many a time, an acceptable resolution to the issue is found during the discussions, through sharing and respectful listening by all parties. Restorative processes can help create a safe and respectful space for harm to be acknowledged and action to be taken to address the needs of affected persons; thereby restoring justice at a personal and community level.

Since 2016, staff and consultants with Enfold have been trained on restorative justice processes by international experts.<sup>2</sup> In addition, Dr Sangeeta Saksena participated in several RJ training programs and Restorative Circles in different contexts in the US in 2018.<sup>3</sup>

**To initiate this work in your community or to hold training for your organization's community field workers, please contact [info@enfoldindia.org](mailto:info@enfoldindia.org)**

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<sup>2</sup> Staff and consultants at Enfold have been trained by Sujatha Baliga, Impact Justice USA on circle process and harm circles; by Terry O'Connell, Real Justice, Australia on Restorative Justice Conferencing; and by Sonya Shah, Ahimsa Collective, the USA on circle processes.

<sup>3</sup> (a) Introduction to Harm Circles for Domestic and Sexual Violence by Sujatha Baliga and Nuri Nusrat - April 16-18th 2018 in Richmond, CA

(b) Victim Offender Dialogue in Crimes of Severe Violence by

Michelle Armster, Lorraine Stutzman Amstutz and Martina Lutz Schneider, May 1-4 2018 in Oakland, CA

(c) Advanced issues in Domestic Violence Harm Circles by Sujatha Baliga and Nuri Nusrat - May 8-10 2018 in Richmond, CA

(d) Attended Restorative Circles in school and prison settings