



THE RESTORATIVE PRACTICES --ADVOCATE--

VOLUME 4: ISSUE 1 – August-September 2023

A NEWSLETTER for EDUCATORS

Restorative Expression

“We can say ‘Peace on Earth.’ We can sing about it, preach about it or pray about it, but if we have not internalized the mythology to make it happen inside us, then it will not be.” - **Betty Shabazz**

“Violence is unnecessary and costly. Peace is the only way.” - **President Julius K. Nyerere**

“The restorative justice movement is grounded in values that promote both accountability and healing for all affected by crime.” — **Mark Umbreit**

“Justice will not be served if we maintain our exclusive focus on the questions that drive our current justice systems: What laws have been broken? Who did it? What do they deserve? True justice requires, instead, that we ask questions such as ... Who has been hurt? What do they need? Whose obligations and responsibilities are these? Who has a stake in this situation? What is the process that can involve the stakeholders in finding a solution?” - **Howard Zehr, The Little Book of Restorative Justice**

CALENDAR

FOR YOU!

October 2023 - IIRP Coaches in Select USD 259 Schools (Check w/Principals)*

October 12, 2023 – One Day IIRP Restorative Conferencing Training*

October 17, 2023 – 4:45-6:15 PM Equity Champions Learning Academy

November 6, 2023 – 6:00-7:30 PM Engaging Congregations (partnering for school success.)

March 20, 2024 – Restorative Practices Listening Circles

* For details, contact: **Michele Ingenthron** or **Branden Johnson**.

For Your Information

The International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) is leading on-going RP training and coaching in our district to augment and enhance efforts by select district employees and resource people. RP work is also underway in the Wichita community, Kansas, and beyond. Your questions, input and feedback are welcome!



By Rob Simon

Relationships Are Still Primary in Restorative Practices Work

In Restorative Practices, we say, “It’s **ALL** about **RELATIONSHIP**!” ... because it IS. Given the right opportunities, I will sometimes challenge people – especially kids – to name anything in life that is NOT about relationship. I think it’s impossible... and no one has proven me wrong yet. The need to focus on building good relationships is also never-ending, and sadly, there are those who believe otherwise ... and some are presumed to be adults.

For example, **Andrea Piros**, a friend that used to teach in Wichita’s Buckner Performing Arts School (where my wife also taught for 22 years) reposted this message on Facebook:

“PSA if you are a full-grown woman and still a “Mean Girl,” please seek help. It’s weird. It’s 2023. We don’t sneak diss, bully, or hate on other women. We uplift, encourage, and applaud each other. And if you really don’t like someone or something then simply don’t interact with them. Don’t be messy or miserable. Please evolve and adapt to the times.”

Andrea says the creator of this message is unknown, so we can’t give credit; but my guess is that there are girls and women who may read this message and immediately be feeling a hearty amen.

Because females are socialized in our culture to allow for and even cultivate emotionality, they also know what hurts because they are in touch with feelings. Unfortunately, some know HOW, and then they CHOOSE to weaponize vulnerability and affect to hurt others.

The **Research Corner** article on the flip side of this page features information about lessons developed by a veteran teacher, “**Ashleigh**,” to address the kind of “**girl drama**” that unfolds from this interpersonal dynamic. She QUICKLY points out that it is really about “**relational aggression**” ...and it’s NOT just about women.

Also, the need to start addressing this behavior early with our children is paramount. Just two days before this writing, my niece’s little pre-school daughter was shoved into a fence by another pre-schooler – a boy who wanted the hat she was wearing, and got mad when he couldn’t have it. Relational aggression. Pre-schoolers. My great-niece needed a stitch and a Band-Aid afterward.

My understanding is that the little boy was temporarily suspended for his infraction...an outcome that my niece pointed out actually punishes the parents. And THIS is why we do harm repair in Restorative Practices, and exercise more first resorts before we get to the last resort. Excluding kids from school qualifies as a last resort. It shouldn’t be a first choice for disciplining a child.

Ladies and gentlemen, we still have work to do in our schools and communities, and relationships are still primary, so ... **We. Stay. The. Course.**

"As a teacher, I felt like one of my weakest areas was dealing with what is often called "girl drama." When I saw this as a teacher, I struggled to find the root of the issue, to have time to deal with the problem, and to know what to do about it. I was also uncertain of where to draw the line between normal friendship issues and problematic behavior. My tendency was to encourage the student to find someone else to [associate] with or to ignore the situation.

However, as I saw these behaviors increase in frequency and intensity, ... I made it my mission to learn more about 'girl drama'. Each of the lessons I describe below can be used on its own. I have created accompanying printables that you can see [here](#).

One of the first strategies I learned is to not discount these behaviors as "girl drama". The behaviors can be serious issues with lasting effects, and it's certainly not limited to girls. Many of these more serious behaviors can be labeled with **relational aggression**. Relational aggression is behavior that is intended to harm someone by damaging or manipulating his or her relationship with others. Examples of behavior aggression include **gossip and rumors, alliance building, taunting, and social exclusion**.

Below are seven lessons I teach my students to prevent relational aggression and to equip students to handle conflict, as well as stand up for themselves....

- [Lesson 1: What Not To Do](#)
- [Lesson 2: Gossip and Rumors](#)
- [Lesson 3: Building Alliances](#)
- [Lesson 4: Taunting](#)
- [Lesson 5: Social Exclusion](#)
- [Lesson 6: Refusal Skills](#)
- [Lesson 7: Conflict Resolution](#)

For more information: <https://www.ashleigh-educationjourney.com/why-its-not-just-girl-drama-relational-aggression/>

For your...

RESTORATIVE
TOOLBOX



180 Questions for Connecting Circles and Delightful Discussions

Compiled and modified by Elaine Shpungin, Ph.D., Conflict180.com

chrome-extension://efaidnbmnmbpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://conflict180.files.wordpress.com/2018/11/180-circle-questions-for-building-community_pdf.pdf

[This resource is] edited from, and inspired by, questions compiled by Mary Davenport (Edutopia.com), Kit Miller (M.K. Ghandi Institute), and educators around the world. To get to know each other, build trust and community, or save a terrible day from the jaws of darkness - break out these questions and connect. *[The following is an edited sketch of the introduction to this document.]*

"TIPS

- **EDITS:** Feel free to edit the questions to suit your needs...
- **AGES:** These questions have been tried and tested with adults, pre-teens, and adolescents...
- **FAVORITES:** Participants ... prefer NOT to be asked about their favorites. ... [It] may be more effective to ask, "Right now, what is a _____ you enjoy?" ...
- **VULNERABILITY:** If participants are new to each other, ... you may want to ...move to "deeper" questions as a sense of community and trust develops.
- **CULTURE:** Try to be aware of cultural norms and social class privilege when thinking about your questions...or consider editing the questions for social context.

IDEAS FOR CHOOSING QUESTIONS

- LEADER CHOICE:** Choose 1-3 questions with a goal in mind (depending on vulnerability of the group or what you'd like them to think about). Divide participants into dyads, use for small or large group discussions, or use as in a large group circle.
- PARTICIPANT CHOICE:** Have participants choose 1-3 questions from the list. Participants can be chosen randomly or by turns.
- RANDOM TECH:** Use a random number generator (random.org) that chooses a number from 1-180 for you. Mark down the ones you have already used if you want them to be fresh every time.
- RANDOM OLD SCHOOL:** Print the questions out and cut them up into slips. Allow participants to choose questions out of a box or can.

CIRCLE REMINDERS [This article includes circle reminders such as:] 1. Invite everyone to sit so they can see each other's faces. 2. Set the tone by describing the purpose of the activity ... 3. If using a talking piece, describe its meaning. 4. Go over circle values (e.g., speak from the heart; listen ... trust that you will find the right words when your turn comes; work on being non-judgmental). 5. Once you have led a few of these, have participants take over as circle keepers. 6. Circle keepers model by answering each question ...7. For quick circles, choose ONE question. 8. For longer circles, use 3-three [questions and] end on a positive.

For academic circles and questions on other topics (e.g., problem-solving circles), see the book [Circle Forward](#).

Useful basic ideas are always available in: **20 THINGS School Staff Can Do Right Now That Are RESTORATIVE**

To access, log into your District Google Account, then click: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1A6zynybJoW9tKB6FIBhfrKj7R9ZrpSI>

For further info or questions: rob.simon.rp@usd259.net, jmilne@usd259.net, wpolite@usd259.net, kreynolds1@usd259.net