



THE **RESTORATIVE PRACTICES**

— **ADVOCATE** —

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A NEWSLETTER for EDUCATORS

Restorative Expression

"[When I have sneaked into the second act of a show,] without seeing the first act, I didn't fully understand the relationships, the conflicts or the emotional stakes. I witnessed conclusions without context, and resolutions without origin. And I realize, now, that this is often how we engage with life. We 'second-act' people – enter into someone's journey midstream and presume to understand. We form judgments, draw conclusions and project meaning... all without the full story.

"Spiritual maturity asks more of us. It asks us to pause before assuming, and invites us to hold consideration for the unknowns in others and in ourselves... to admit, 'I don't yet know the whole narrative,' and let that become an opening ...not a verdict.

"Assumptions breed suffering, but curiosity breeds compassion. In this play called life, we are perpetual second-actors. Let's be humble about that. Let's be willing to pause in the wings before immediately judging what's on an individual's stage, to observe more deeply and receive the fuller story when or if it is ready to be told." - Dr. David Ault, Science of Mind Magazine, November 2025

CALENDAR

FROM YOU!

SHARE EVENTS OF VALUE! – If you should become aware of any scheduled events, trainings, conferences etc. that would be useful in enhancing our district's restorative practices related **ATTITUDES, SKILLS or KNOWLEDGE**, please pass them on to possibly be included in this newsletter. Write to rob.simon.rp@usd259.net.

For Your Information

The National Association of Community and Restorative Justice (NACRJ) is hosting their 10th Annual Conference in New Orleans – July 7- 10, 2026. Touted as "a powerful space for community building, learning, and transformation," you can get more information at nacri.org/2026-conference/.

Restorative Practices Entry Points, Turning Points & Quantum Leaps

By Rob Simon
RP Consultant/Advocate

Association of Community and Restorative Justice (NACRJ) is hosting their 10th Annual Conference. A group of Kansas Restorative Practices trainers – myself included – is in the process of proposing a workshop presentation with the above title... and here's why.

There is no doubt that a dedication to restorative practices gets positive results in schools and a variety of other community agencies and entities world-wide. The power of prioritizing relationships to leverage for accountability cannot be overstated. What is clear, though, is that people who have interest, opportunities or obligations to engage in restorative practices are in various stages of readiness.

Fortunately, there are recommendations and strategies appropriate for everyone – and they are applicable in a way that can be integrated within an organization to address myriad needs at the same time.

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For folks who are just beginning, it's important to at least get basic training, to experiment consistently with best practices, and consult those who have been at it for a while. These are top **entry points**.

And for those who have some experience and have achieved some successes, the recommendation is to network with others at a similar or higher level of practice, and adapt as necessary, but stay the course with what has been successful for those doing the work, fine tune approaches based on the exchange of ideas, and engage in regular dialogue about what works. This is basically how practitioners can reach a **turning point** to more meaningful innovation and excellence.

Finally, it is possible to achieve **quantum leaps** in effectiveness as schools and other groups embed restorative practices systemically and with consistency, congruence, and fidelity. Particularly, a focus on fair process in leadership is indispensable so everyone connected with the collective effort feels acknowledged, appreciated and valued for what they contribute to the good of the whole.

We. Stay. The. Course.

AI FOR RELATIONSHIPS: THE INTEGRATION OF "AI IS MORE THAN SUMMARIES AND AUTOMATION; IT HAS THE POTENTIAL TO STRENGTHEN AND TRANSFORM RELATIONSHIPS FOR GREATLY CONNECTED AND TECHNOLOGY RESTORATIVE PRACTICES AND TECHNOLOGY

The quickly expanding uses of Artificial Intelligence (AI) are seemingly boundless. From home kitchens to space stations, AI has found its way into many aspects of human life. But what about using AI to improve our relationships? AI for better conversations with fellow humans? Can AI support the use of restorative practices?

IIRP student **Lee Fletcher-McGookin**, a retired leader in education, challenged herself to have better conversations, and she used AI to help her do it.

During her coursework, she was required to create an experiential model to implement restorative practices. Since she is no longer working in a professional setting, she engaged her sister, and she agreed to enter into six weeks of discussions aimed at deepening their relationship. Lee came up with several questions to ask her sister but found that, even after having a close relationship for more than 50 years, there was still a sense that their conversation sharing was superficial and often avoided sensitive topics. Lee turned to AI to help her expand on what she already knew and hone the questions she wanted to ask. By feeding an AI platform her initial questions and supplying it with the outcome she was seeking (deepening her relationship with her sister and others), she was able to refine a list of 39 questions for her sister and an additional seven to ask her adult children.

Lee reflects that, "After six weeks, my sister and I both sincerely felt the exercise had significantly changed, deepened, and enriched our relationship. We were able to openly (and with vulnerability) discuss all topics, particularly sensitive ones." On using the questions with her children, she mentions, "I have found these questions push the conversation to a more profound level and have built trust, empathy, and greater understanding between us. These questions do not come naturally to me, but I am trying to weave them (or similar ones) into conversations when appropriate."

The potential for the use of AI in restorative practices is being explored by our students with great success. That success lies within the human desire to connect and the discernment needed to navigate new technologies. As the world changes, our students change with it. Fiercely grounded in their humanity, they move forward—guided by restorative principles—and let innovation support them along the way."

FROM: *Restorative Works 2025. International Institute for Restorative Practices (www.iirp.edu).*

Staff Meetings Using Circles – A Very Useful Idea!

Circles are one of the primary tools used in restorative practices in schools and elsewhere. And if you have not seen **Restorative Circles in Schools: A Practical Guide for Educators**, a small book published by the IIRP, it would be worth your while to read.

In particular, this article is to promote staff meetings using circles. As stated on page 102 of the book, *(and this is important)* **"An entire meeting need not be conducted in a circle format for circles to play a part.** Rather, the meeting may be largely administrator-centered and the circle format used only when responses are sought. For instance, in one meeting, an administrator might ask teachers to respond with their thoughts on how to successfully implement a new procedure. At the next meeting the administrator might ask, **'What's working and what's not working, and how might we make improvements?'**" And there are lots of other possible questions that could be easily processed in circles whether small in size or the whole staff group, and then further shared or processed with the whole staff by doing shout outs for the benefit of the entire group.

Staff meetings using the circle format can build community and address issues by using structured dialogue – which can include check-ins and check-outs, and any topic-based questions or ideas desired. Circles might be especially useful if the objective is to share information and goals within departments, subgroup level appreciation for colleagues, or reflecting support that may be needed.

The energy of the circle is remarkable for its ability to connect people better than the random scattering typical of such meetings or the tendency for attendees to settle into cliques. It can also be more efficient and effective for some outcomes being pursued. Read the book ... or just TRY it! You'll like it!