



THE RESTORATIVE PRACTICES --ADVOCATE--

VOLUME 7: ISSUE 1 – August 2026

A NEWSLETTER for LEARNERS & PRACTITIONERS

Restorative Expression

"No matter how big a nation is, it is no stronger than its weakest people, and as long as you keep a person down, some part of you has to be down there to hold him down, so it means you cannot soar as you might otherwise." - **Marian Anderson**

"The way you treat people today will either come back to help you or haunt you tomorrow. Which would you prefer?" – **Rob Simon**

"I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. This is the interrelated structure of reality." ~ **Martin Luther King**

"If you are serious about doing the work of equity, you recognize that this is not for the faint of heart, it is not for the thin-skinned, and it is not for those easily shaken by criticism." **Tyrone Howard**



By **Rob Simon**
Editor

CONFLICT TRANSFORMATION

A Tough Yet Terrific Restorative Practices Target

Conflict management is the practice of identifying, handling, and working to resolve disagreements productively and respectfully. It aims to reduce the negative impact of tension while promoting open communication and healthy problem-solving between people in shared environments.

Whether viewed through a personal or systemic lens, there are standard conflict models (like the Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Mode Instrument) that suggest people handle disputes basically in one or more of five ways: **Avoiding, Accommodating, Competing, Compromising, and/or Collaborating.**

Then, usually, conflict **resolution** is the immediate goal of whatever management strategies are used. But conflict **transformation** may be a better target to consider when things go wrong in relationship and community. And yes, it takes more time, but it's ultimately more effective.

Conflict RESOLUTION ends a specific dispute and reaches a settlement between parties. (Not a bad outcome.) Conflict TRANSFORMATION seeks to change the underlying social structures, cultural dynamics, and long-term relationships to prevent future trouble. (A better outcome.)

The major differences between the two can be described as ones of **focus, time spent, and how conflict is viewed and approached.**

- **Resolution** aims to solve a clear problem, is short-term and outcome-driven, treats conflict as a negative state to fix, and uses negotiation or mediation to compromise. *(We could consider this a peel and stick bandage ... which works fine if the conflict is relatively minor.)*
- **Transformation** aims to reshape systemic issues and build healthy relationships, is a long-term ongoing process, treats conflict as an opportunity for positive growth and social change, and alters the broader context and personal perceptions behind the clash. *(This is more like a healing and may be indispensable if a conflict is deep seated, historical, and/or ongoing. Also, success depends on emotional intelligence, and clear communication – including active listening, and negotiation skills.)*

There are many real-world situations that call for a choice between conflict resolution and conflict transformation in schools, workplaces, organizations, businesses, congregations ... and wherever people are in community – including at international levels.

What we must determine is whether we want a bandage or a healing. Maybe it's both ...depending on circumstances. But if it's the latter, conflict transformation may ultimately be the most reasonable option, so it is worth considering this more challenging course of action. Regardless of which path we take, however,

We. Stay. The. Course.

CALENDAR

FROM YOU!

SHARE RESTORATIVE EVENTS OF VALUE! We'll promote them here. Write to: rob@centerforrestorativecommunities.org or rob.simon.rp@usd259.net.

For YOUR Information



The **10th National Conference on Community and Restorative Justice** was held in **New Orleans, July 7–10, 2026**. Nearly 1700 practitioners, advocates, educators, and community leaders from across the country and elsewhere were in attendance. Stay tuned for reflections of useful knowledge gleaned!



REVOLUTION BY CONVERSATION

The Restorative Practices future is still being influenced by Ted Wachtel, founder of The International Institute of Restorative Practices. BANR is part of the new vanguard of community focused RP! Ted's current thoughts and notice of BANR events can be accessed at <https://banr.foundation/>.

Focusing on “The Good of the Whole” and Why It Matters (Expanding The Restorative Practices Social Engagement Model - Part 1)

In *The Strategy of the Dolphin* by Dudley Lynch and Paul Kordis, the authors use an introductory conceptual anecdote about researchers placing 95 sharks, 5 dolphins into a large pool together where carp are also present to illustrate behavioral mindsets and competitive strategies in a changing world. [1, 2] They categorize human and organizational approaches into three archetypal aquatic styles: [1, 3]

- **Sharks:** Operate with a rigid, zero-sum, aggressive "win-lose" mindset where winning requires others to lose. They are locked into destructive patterns and brute-force competition. [1, 3, 4]
- **Carp:** Act passive, reactive, and paralyzed by conflict or change, often becoming victims of their environment.
- **Dolphins:** Represent optimal, adaptive intelligence. They are flexible and strategic, capable of choosing cooperation or competition to achieve win-win outcomes. [1]

The conclusion is that the dolphins are the ultimate survivors because they are proactive and collaborative.

Add to this understanding research from evolutionary biology, sociology, and behavioral economics and we learn that the **"good of the whole"** or group-beneficial behavior is driven by multilevel selection, social norms, and insights from cooperative game theory. **Humans thrive when groups put collective survival above pure self-interest.** [1, 2, 3, 4, 5] Explicitly, we see some aspects of how we best thrive in these ways:

Evolutionary Biology and Selection

- **Multilevel Selection:** Evolutionary theory shows that natural selection operates on both individuals and groups. Groups with high cooperation beat selfish groups.
- **Kin Selection:** Organisms protect relatives to pass on shared genes *[and other traits – which begs the question of who is a “relative?”]*
- **Reciprocal Altruism:** Individuals help others with the expectation of future payoff. [1, 2, 3, 4] *[and also without expectation of reciprocity.]*

Sociology and Social Psychology

- **Social Identity Theory:** People tie their self-worth to group membership. They act to help the group succeed.
- **Collective Efficacy:** Groups with high trust and shared goals achieve better outcomes in health and safety.
- **Norm Compliance:** Societies build unwritten rules that punish cheaters and reward sharing. [1, 2]

Economics and Game Theory

- **The Prisoner's Dilemma:** Studies prove that mutual cooperation yields a better long-term payoff than betrayal.
- **Public Goods Games:** Experiments show people regularly sacrifice personal gain to fund shared community resources. [1, 2]

(The Development and Validation of the Motives to Donate Scale - Sara Konrath, Femida Handy, 2018; Sociologists explain giving behavior by the theory of “social norms” (Bernheim, 1994; Elster, 2000).; Bounded Rationality (Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy/Fall 2020 Edition); #309 Robert Sapolsky: Human Behavior, Evolution, Morality, and Free Will)

Now... consider all of this in light of the fundamental hypothesis of restorative practices: **“People are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in behavior when those in positions of authority do things WITH them, rather than TO them or FOR them”... or not at all.** When we focus on the good of the whole, does this not align with the cooperative spirit of this hypothesis?

To be continued...

For your...

RESTORATIVE
TOOLBOX



WE HOPE THIS NEWSLETTER IS OF USE TO YOU!
It is intended to be, but we want to know what YOU think!

The **Restorative Practices Advocate** has been in existence as a monthly newsletter since 2021, and it has always been designed the same way – with the same key features; but this may be the first time you have seen it.

We KNOW there is an audience that appreciates this newsletter's **Restorative Expressions**, **Calendar of Events and Opportunities**, **News and Commentary**, & **Research and Tools** that all relate to the growing SOCIAL SCIENCE of **Restorative Practices**, and we want to find our audience and serve up tasty morsels of good and useful information and ideas on a regular basis. We are interested in what helps us ALL to GROW!

If this publication is new to you, let us show you more. If you find any value here – a quote, an insight, an event, a tool, share the newsletter with others. We are glad to email and include any reader in our completely

FREE

distribution, and we will take any feedback at all from anyone who is willing to take the time to share it. Also, when you catch on to what we are delivering month to month, we will also happily accept *(and likely print)*

SUBMISSIONS

that fit with **ATTITUDES, SKILLS & KNOWLEDGE a.k.a. The ASK Framework** as it relates to **Restorative Practices**. And for the record, our feelings won't be hurt if you would rather NOT receive our newsletter. Let us know that, too. We don't want to waste your time any more than we want people to waste ours. **COOL?**

For more information, questions or requests, contact rob@centerforrestorativecommunities.org or rob.simon.rp@usd259.net.