
A Theory of Trouble

There is an alternative to viewing misbehavior as necessarily a negative thing.

Consider this theory of trouble:

- Some of life's most important lessons are learned by getting into trouble, and then getting back out again.
- Our responses to the trouble we create can shape how we learn lessons about friendship, morality, citizenship, ethics, work habits, and more.
- Is it possible that we sometimes create trouble specifically to call into our lives the circumstances we need to learn hard, but important, lessons?

In restorative practices we are open to viewing troubling circumstances as teachable moments.

One of our best tools for succeeding is cultivating an attitude of curiosity. When trouble arises, we can often deal with it best by setting our initial judgements aside and approaching it in a way that opens the gates of possibility. We may be surprised at what we learn.

The restorative questions (other side) are tools we can use to help cultivate curious minds that are ready to learn.

Some Social and Emotional Learning Benefits of Restorative Approaches

- Understand the harm and develop empathy for both the harmed and the harmer
- Listen and respond to the needs of the person harmed and the person who harmed
- Encourage accountability, responsibility, and personal reflection
- Reintegrate harmer(s) into the community as valued, contributing members
- Support (but do not require) resolution and healing for those who have been harmed.
- Create caring climates to support healthy communities
- Change the system and organizational culture when they contribute to harms



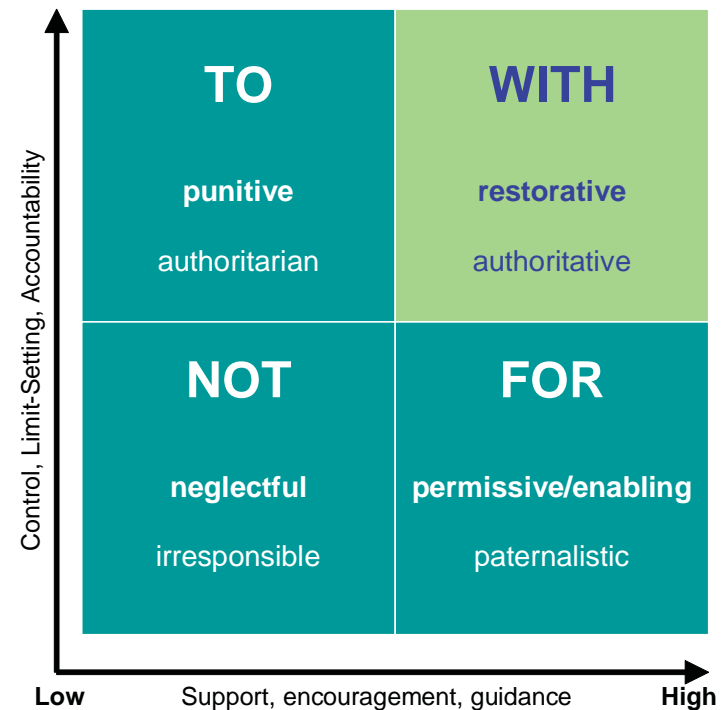
Restorative Practices

Some behaviors cause harm to self, relationships and community

- We are learning how to confront these behaviors in a way that helps restore ourselves, our relationships and our communities to wholeness and health.
- We call these methods "restorative practice."

The Social Discipline Window

Restorative methods combine high accountability for behaving appropriately with high support for success.



"Human beings are happier, more cooperative and productive, and more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when those in positions of authority do things *with* them, rather than *to* them or *for* them." --Ted Wachtel, President, International Institute of Restorative Practices.

Tools for Restorative Responses to Challenging Behaviors and Situations

Questions to help someone who has been harmed explore and explain the impacts

1. What did you think when you realized what had happened?
2. What impact has this incident had on you and others?
3. What has been the hardest thing for you?
4. What do you think needs to happen to make things right?

Powerful transformation and healing can occur when a misbehaving student listens to the answers to these questions and the victim knows they have been heard.

Questions to use when Challenging Misbehavior

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What have you thought about since?
4. Who has been affected by what you have done? In what ways?
5. What do you think you need to do to make things right?

How you ask is as important as what you ask...it's not about shaming and blaming!

Acknowledgments: the social discipline window and restorative questions are from The International Institute of Restorative Practices, IIRP.org.

Tell someone how their behavior impacts you in a way that invites a restorative response...

1. When you....(describe the harmful behavior)

2. ... it impacts me by (describe how the behavior impacts you...try to be concrete about the harmful consequences of the behavior on you and others)

Stop. Allow time for a response. Very often, this is all it takes for the person to change their behavior based on *understanding, empathy, and altruism*.

If you do not feel you've been heard, repeat 1 and 2, and pause for a response. If you still do not feel heard, repeat steps 1 and 2 and add:

3. I feel...(describe your feelings, be more precise than "upset").

Stop. Allow time for a response. Very often, this is all it takes for the person to change their behavior based on *understanding, empathy, and altruism*.

If you still do not feel heard, repeat steps 1, 2, and 3 and add:

4. I would like for you to...(describe the specific change in behavior you are seeking.)

Check for agreement: **"Are we agreed?"**

You may justifiably feel angry. It's okay to show how you feel. But allow reason to rule your emotions during restorative encounters.

Remember: the goal is to repair harm and restore relationships.

Punitive responses are rooted in the idea that shame and pain will lead to positive changes in behavior. Changes can be forced by outside authority.

Restorative responses are rooted in the idea that when we share with open hearts, the innate capacity for empathy is awakened, and this in turn sparks the natural altruistic desire to help. Change comes from within.