

7b9

Restorative Justice

Do

Take the harmed person and the offender through a process of restoration as an alternative to punishment of the wrongdoer.

Story

John really hurt Darren in a serious bullying incident at school. His head of Year used a Restorative Approach by asking John, Darren and other stakeholders these questions:

- What happened?
- What were you thinking?
- What are you feeling?
- Who has been affected by what happened?
- How can we put things right?

This Restorative discussion thus included empathic questioning (and listening) with all those concerned. This approach tries to avoid instant judgements, even with children who have a history of difficult behaviour.

Hints & Hazards

In schools or communities where the usual way of dealing with conflict is largely punitive, retribution is accepted and the sanctions given do not often bear any relation to the 'offence' committed, restorative justice approaches might be seen as a soft option. Here's some ways to get the idea across:

- Explain to the pupil that it is a 'new' way being used to sort out problems by talking together and finding a way for the offender to put things right.
- Ask if the usual sanctions actually solve problems.
- Explain that a conference is safe and calm and allows victims and offenders to meet and talk in turn about the incident and how it has affected them.

- The people concerned talk together about how the problem can be resolved and they made an agreement of what needs to be done to achieve this.
- Pupils make the choice whether to take part or not. It's OK to say 'no'
- The conference takes place as quickly as possible so that those involved do not miss out on the benefits of participation in the setting.
- After the conference, the facilitator will follow up to see that there are no further problems.

Read about a range of restorative approaches such as the *Short Restorative Conference and Full Restorative Conference in Hopkins (2004)*