

Restorative Approaches to Support Positive Relationships and Behaviour



This resource is designed to provide information about restorative approaches to support universal day to day relational practice. Further professional learning and practice would be required to use restorative approaches at a more skilled level such as restorative meetings or conferences.

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Appendix 1

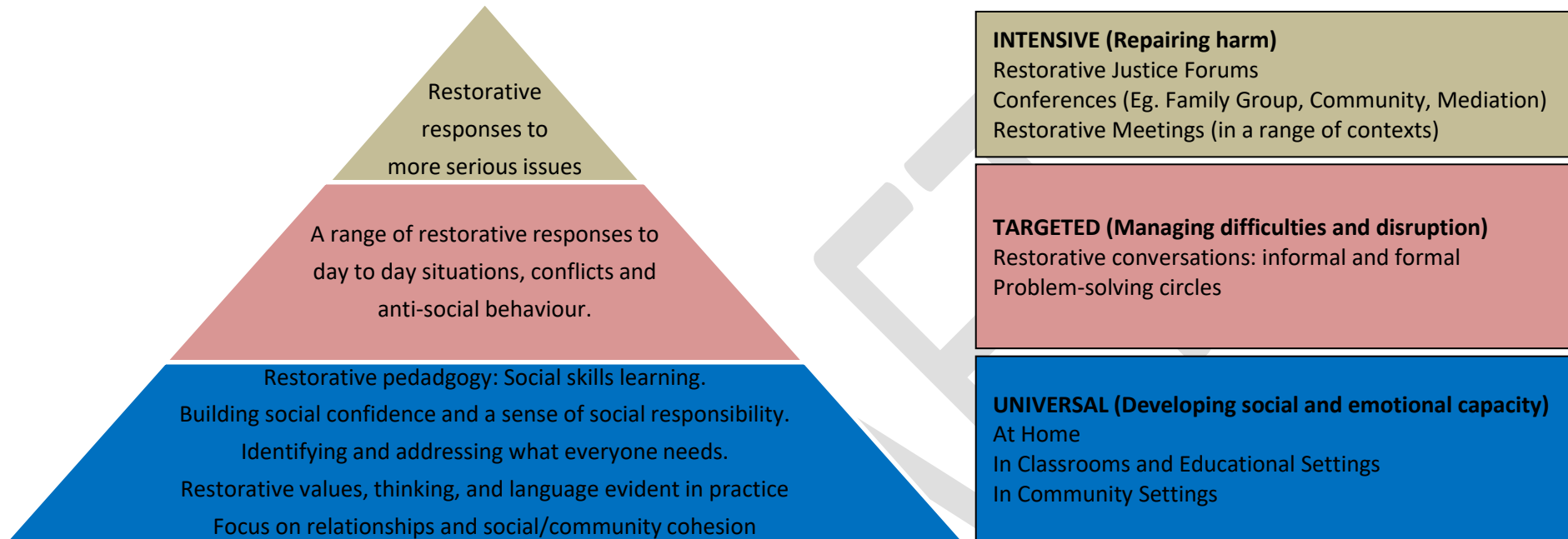
References

Section 1: Introduction

The restorative approaches we use today originate from the ideas and principles behind restorative justice first used officially as an alternative to punitive justice in the 1970's. Restorative justice is based on the idea of restitution and enables those who have been harmed to come together with those who have caused the harm to explore and acknowledge the impact of their actions and potentially provide redress to those impacted by the harmful behaviour.

In Scotland today restorative justice is used primarily to provide victims with the opportunity to explain the emotional, physical and practical impact that harm has had on their lives or to hear directly from those who caused the harm. There is sound evidence that restorative justice can empower and provide redress not only to those impacted directly by the harmful behaviour, but also to wider communities. In the Scottish Governments Programme for Government they have committed to making restorative justice services more widely available across Scotland by 2023, with the interests of victims at their heart ([Restorative Justice: Action Plan](#)). Restorative justice however is a reactive and 'intensive' intervention conducted by skilled professionals. The model below illustrates the other levels of restorative approaches including the early intervention and prevention work of proactively building positive relationships and cultures of cooperation and reconciliation.

The Restorative Hierarchy of Approaches

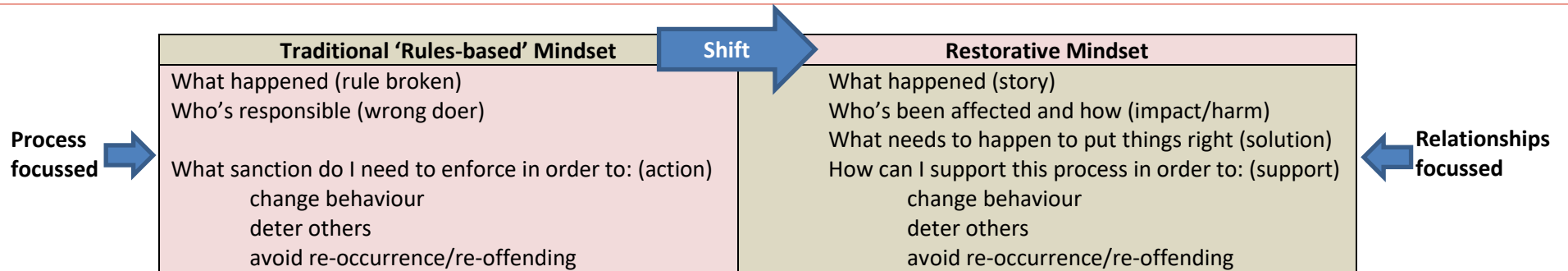


Adapted from Restoring Safe School Communities (Morrison, 2007) and Implementing Restorative Practices in Schools (Thorsborne & Blood, 2013)

Establishing an early understanding of restorative approaches with children and their parents and embedding them in everyday practice will help to support restorative practice and mediation in more serious scenarios within an educational setting and in settings outside of education. Children and parents familiar with restorative language and conversations will usually respond more positively in potential 'conflict' situations, for example, during family arguments, in difficult meetings or reviews, in family decision making conferences, the children's hearing, in a restorative justice situation, or in court. Sharing common values, thinking and language across children's services will support consistent practice and help children and parents benefit most from a restorative approach (and potentially act as a diversion from more formal or statutory involvement or measures).

[FILM](#): An introduction to Restorative Approaches for children, parents and educators (2 min)

For some practitioners to adopt restorative approaches may require a shift in mind-set. Restorative approaches are not about teaching children 'to do what they are told' they are about teaching children to be responsible citizens. Some might think these are one and the same!



The goal of the 'rules based' approach is compliance usually gained through the use of extrinsic motivators (sanctions and/or rewards). This approach can be expedient, easy to apply, doesn't rely on relationships, and doesn't require much input (other than compliance) from children. It is however very limited. If sanctions aren't sufficiently scary or rewards sufficiently attractive then motivation to comply will decrease. Also sanctions and rewards will not work for some children, often the more vulnerable, as other factors in their lives are more immediate or important. This approach does not teach children to think for themselves and often marginalises those children who are already vulnerable.

A restorative approach recognises that people are the experts of their own solutions and if implemented effectively will promote accountability and maximise personal responsibility. A restorative approach focusses on helping children develop a sense of autonomy, agency and an affiliation with their community which creates intrinsic motivation to be more thoughtful, considerate and respectful. Developing this sense of social connection and social responsibility takes time. Some children, often those who are more vulnerable to social isolation or exclusion, may need more help with this than others. Restorative approaches are relational and therefore a strong relationships-based culture is essential for restorative approaches to work. Helpful relationships foster positive social interactions and establish an environment of trust and support that will support restorative approaches.

- FILM [The 'Why' of restorative practices](#) (14 min) Set in an American Public School this film explains why restorative approaches are needed and work
- FILM [Restorative approaches in Schools](#) (5.49 min) UK Primary and secondary examples from Richmond
- FILM [Restorative consequences in schools](#) (14.35 min) Explains what restorative consequences are and why they are more effective than traditional sanctions.

Further Reading:

[Establishing a Restorative Mindset: Considerations for Adults in Schools](#) (Feb 2018)

[Restorative Practices in Three Scottish Councils](#) Scottish Government Research Executive Summary (2007)

[A Generation Later: What we've Learned about Zero Tolerance in Schools](#) Research Paper

Relational and Restorative Approaches – Similarities and differences

Restorative approaches articulate with, and compliment all other relational approaches, and influence the emotional atmosphere in a learning community. Relational and restorative approaches all require a similar knowledge and skills base (see Section 2 for an introduction to the knowledge and skills that underpin relational approaches). In addition to the common knowledge and skills base used for all relational approaches, restorative approaches offer a framework of values, thinking and language that is helpful when something needs to be repaired or restored.

In different contexts this could be:

- effective communication
- relationships or friendships
- empathy and understanding for another person's perspective
- trust and respect (this could mean a sense of security, self-confidence, self-respect, or dignity)
- understanding the impact of our own behaviour on others
- repairing damage or replacing something

If implemented effectively they will promote accountability and maximise personal responsibility. Effective implementation relies on ALL staff believing in and being committed to demonstrating relational consistency based on shared understanding, knowledge and skills. This can be a challenge.

Being restorative can be proactive and universal (relationship building) or responsive and targeted (relationship repairing) and can be used at every level from everyday informal interactions to more formal restorative meetings and conferences.

Universal Restorative – Relationship Building Approaches

The power of values, thinking and language

At the most universal and basic level all practitioners can behave in a restorative way by demonstrating restorative values and using restorative thinking and language to:

- understand another person's behaviour and reflect on our own behaviour (See information on Nurture, Attachment and Shame)
- have self-compassion, empathy and compassion for others
- find solutions to disagreements and potential conflicts
- 'think together' to develop our openness to alternative ways of thinking and potentially new ways of behaving

[Restorative Thinking: Whole School Restorative Practice in Secondary Setting](#) (7.59 min) Video Case Study

Values

Restorative **values** are those that:

- promote relationship building, conflict resolution and reconciliation
- create environments where social learning and personal development can be supported
- embrace qualities such as open-minded thinking, compassion, empathy, perseverance and cultural sensitivity

Values drive behaviour therefore practitioners who are committed to restorative values will:

- show unconditional positive regard and embrace qualities such as open-minded thinking, kindness , empathy and perseverance
- help children to understand the impact of their actions and behaviours
- focus on inclusion, wellbeing, and addressing barriers to learning rather than punitive processes (this does not mean they are permissive)
- listen, with purpose, to children and young people
- understand and respond to behaviour in a child friendly and holistic way considering the young person in the context of their family, community and culture
- proactively develop responses to support learners wellbeing and learners who may be at risk of disengaging or of being excluded
- model the behaviour they wish to see

Thinking

Restorative **thinking** can be simply explained through five key themes identified by Belinda Hopkins (2011: 32):

- | | |
|---------|---|
| Theme 1 | Understanding that everyone has their own unique and equally valued perspective |
| Theme 2 | Knowing that thoughts influence emotions and emotions influence actions (Think Good- Feel Good) |
| Theme 3 | Having and showing empathy and consideration |
| Theme 4 | Identifying needs and unmet needs |
| Theme 5 | Supporting a culture of collective responsibility for problem solving and decision making |

These themes could potentially be used to form the basis of a shared understanding or part of the establishments vision, values and aims.

When we observe behaviour that causes us concern this understanding prompts us to reflect (internally) on the following questions:

I'm wondering	Links to:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what's happening? (actual actions and possible thoughts and feeling) 	Behaviour, Thinking, Feelings -> Theme 1 and 2
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • who is being affected and how? 	Impact -> Theme 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • what does each person involved need? 	Needs -> Theme 4
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • how can I help those involved to make things better? 	Support -> Theme 5

Naming, blaming, shaming or punishing are not part of this thought process. However this thinking is not permissiveness of harmful behaviours. Theme 5 creates the expectation that if something or someone has been harmed then those involved should be encouraged and supported to repair the harm.

By directing our thinking in this way we prepare ourselves for giving those involved the chance to tell their side of the story from their unique perspective by asking them a similar set of questions . So the next step in the process is using dialogue to work through a similar set of questions with everyone involved. The 'how' of 'putting it right' is underpinned by the principle that this is agreed by and the responsibility of those involved.

How we explore the story, and the language we use to do this, will influence how well those involved engage and cooperate with us and feel motivated to take part in a restorative process.

Language

'The **language** we use creates the reality we experience' (Whittaker, 2021: 66). Our words are not neutral. Language patterns, vocabulary and ways of talking can shift the emotional state of the listener (Mahoney, 2003: viii). Restorative **language** and having restorative conversations can generate opportunities for listening and participation, co-operation, build an awareness of social responsibility, and sensitively recognise social and cultural differences.

Speaking in a restorative and relational way means:

- showing empathy and being attuned to the other person,
- being as neutral as possible,
- using non-judgemental language
- using solution-orientated language if problem solving is needed.

The idea is to open, or keep open, the lines of communication and to reduce defensiveness. Speaking in a restorative way requires a great deal of self-awareness to avoid slipping into the language of opinion, assumption, or judgement. Restorative language involves more than our words, it involves our tone of voice and our body language all of which should be congruent with each other, i.e. delivering a restorative script in a loud voice whilst taking an aggressive stance will not be restorative. Positive assertive language, giving safe choices and using good questions are restorative. Demanding and cajoling language should be avoided. Restorative language motivates a positive change. Some simple examples of how language can be made more relational and restorative include:

Please stop running	becomes	I need you to walk in the corridor, thanks
If you don't finish your work now, you'll have to do it at break		You can choose to finish your work in 5 minutes or now
Stop doing that		What should you be doing?

Don't forget to use PRAISE: Praise is relational and can affect the person being praised on an emotional (intrinsic) level. Genuine praise expresses approval and can be a powerful motivator for children.

For more information on using language that builds and repairs relationships in different contexts click [here](#).

Restorative Conversations

Restorative chats and informal conversations can be preventative and de-escalate situations and can also lay the foundations for the more formal restorative meetings by building the habit of talking and listening. A restorative conversation can be used to elicit information about what the child is thinking and feeling and therefore requires listening carefully for meaning. Sometimes informal chats can be used to give prompts and reminders or to distract and deflect a child away from conflict.

Restorative conversations may only take a few minutes or they may have to happen over a number of short chats. Regardless of how quick or extended the conversation the key elements of the conversation should include:

- portraying a strong message of care for the child
- giving the child an opportunity to say "what happened" from their perspective
- communicating how their behaviour made you feel
- reiterating the shared high expectations of your setting
- discussing alternative behaviours and potentially creating a plan for the future

Restorative questions used in informal conversations and formal meetings follow on from restorative thinking and the silent questions we have already reflected on internally (as outlined in the previous section). Restorative questions should explore behaviour, thoughts and feelings, and follow a timeline:

What happened?

Who has been affected by this?

What needs to happen now?

Depending on the age, cognitive ability, and level of engagement of those involved this could be a very quick process or may require the language to be made simpler or may require the use of supplementary questions. Some examples include:

The Storytelling

What were you doing/saying then?
Before that/ after that/ and then what happened?
Tell me more about that. Anything else?
Your thoughts then?
How were you feeling then?
What did you see them do? ..hear them say?
[be sure to connect thoughts, feelings and behaviour]

The Impact

How has this affected you? Tell me more.. What's been the hardest thing?
Who else has been affected? How have they been affected? How do you know?
How do you feel now? Anything else?
[prompt and be explicit if they don't volunteer or know eg. how was Jenny affected by that?]

The Solution

What should happen now?
What would that look like?
What will help that happen? Who can help? When should that happen?
Do you agree with the plan? What's first? Then? Your thoughts now?
How do you feel now? Are you OK?

Restorative scripts are popular in many settings however scripts can mean that the delivery is formulaic, impersonal and not tailored to the ability or capacity of the person (child or adult) it's being delivered to. Basing the approach on restorative values, thinking restoratively and using restorative language fitted to a practitioners personality and communication style is much more likely to be effective. Having a prompt card with the questions on it may however be useful as an aide memoire!

FILM [Restorative language](#) - The questions on a timeline of before, during and after (3.30 min)

FILM [Restorative affective statements](#) (4.45 min)

FILM [Restorative Conversations](#) – Useful film to introduce restorative conversations (3.15 min)

FILM [Restorative Conversations](#) – Explores the steps in the conversation with examples of questions (4.55 min)

Responding restoratively in a more formal way, such as a restorative meeting after an incident, does require a higher level of skill and if managed poorly can damage trust and relationships. Skills however in all restorative approaches from informal to formal settings can be developed through professional learning and practice however restorative approaches will only be effective in the context of relationships. Relationships always come first - 'connect before we correct'.

Circles (Teaching and Problem Solving)

Restorative circles are based on the idea of all participants are equal and should have the opportunity to be seen, valued and heard. Circles provide children and young people with an opportunity to practice respectful listening and healthy self-expression.

Why do circles work?

The structure of circles encourages power sharing, minimises any sense of hierarchy, and encourages cooperation. Circles change the dynamics from teacher-led learning to learning together and supports a collective sense of respect and responsibility for both what happens in the circle and the purpose of the circle (what it is addressing). Physically sitting in a circle creates a sense of connection and belonging (no-one on the edge or at the back), and encourages everyone to get involved. Circles have the power to create and strengthen support systems between peers, and lay the groundwork for trusting classroom environments. Circles are a versatile restorative practice that can be used proactively, to develop relationships and build community or reactively, to respond to conflicts and problems.

Circle formats The main types of circles are sequential (systematically moving around every one in the circle), non-sequential (using a talking piece), or fish bowl style (with an inner talking circle and outer circle of observers). Certain kinds of circles are better suited for certain situations. For more information about circle formats click [here](#).

Circle purpose The range of uses of circles is wide. Circles can be used for checking in and checking out, learning (exploring or summarising topics), getting feedback from learners on a particular issue or topic, or for problem solving. For example, at the start of a day or an activity a mindfulness circle can set the participants up for a positive start or a reflective circle could be used to assess how participants are doing. Regular use of circles in a proactive and learning context supports the use of circles for restorative purposes.

Core elements of successful circles:

- One person speaks at a time
- There is an established mechanism for turn taking – moving around in a sequence, having a talking piece, hands up,...
- Listen in silence and look at the person speaking
- No put downs
- Confidentiality

FILM [Restorative Circle – How to facilitate a circle?](#) (15.03 min)

FILM [Example of a Restorative Problem Solving Circle in School](#) (8.07 min)

FILM [Restorative Circles – Creating a safe environment for students to reflect](#) - alternative to exclusion (3.44 min)

Targeted Restorative – Relationship Repairing Approaches

Meetings

Restorative meetings differ from restorative conversations in that they are more intentional and require planning. They provide a safe space in which to discuss difficult or sensitive issues with the purpose of improving relationships, resolving conflicts and easing tension between people. A basic premise of restorative meetings is that everyone involved is willing to participate. A meeting to address low level disruptive behaviour may only require a little preparation (a quick chat with the class teacher or playground supervisor to check a few facts) however meetings after more serious incidents may require considerable preparation including helping everyone involved to get to the point that they are ready and willing to participate, ie. removing emotional barriers to participation. The preparation will establish if it is safe and appropriate to proceed with the meeting. If a meeting cannot go ahead the facilitator then has two options: to provide those involved more support or time to get ready for the meeting, or in the event that safety (emotional or physical) is an issue they may need to fall back on 'last resort' responses such as exclusion. In these circumstances it is important to explain the 'response' in terms of the need to create safety and also to keep the door open for re-starting the restorative process.

FILM [Example of a restorative meeting](#) (? min)

Australian setting – two children spoken to individually and then brought together

FILM [Restorative approaches in Child's Hill](#) (? min)

UK Primary setting Child's Hill School – a meeting with one child

Restorative meetings require skill and experience to be effective. A poorly managed meeting can be harmful to participants if not handled with care and understanding.

Circles (Restorative and Healing)

The restorative circle can be used to build community cohesion and wellbeing by bringing communities together, supporting more effective communication, resolving conflict, supporting healing and making collective decisions. The circle process is used to change and improve relationships within the community by providing a safe and controlled space in which participants come together as equals to find common ground and understanding on shared issues to create trust, good will and belonging. These circles are facilitated by one or two trained 'circle keepers' who maintain the rules and order of the group. Circles provide the opportunity for everyone to speak, listen, and hopefully come to a consensus about how to address issues.

FILM [Step inside the circle](#) (6.51 min)

Powerful example of a healing circle (Compassion Trauma Circle) – Compassion in Prison Project

Conferences

Restorative conferences are formal, structured meetings where everyone involved prepare in advance to participate. Participants might only include a facilitator and those involved in an incident or they you could include supportive third parties.

A conference provides the opportunity for	
the person who has been upset to:	the person who has caused the upset to:
have their say (tell their story) ask questions explain what they think and feel potentially receive an apology be reassured about the future	put things right potentially give an apologise explain misunderstandings resolve any remaining resentment work out a plan to avoid any future incidents

FILM [Restorative Conferences](#) (3.37 min)

Explanation of Restorative Justice Conferences – Community context

Complimentary Relational Practices

Peer Support and Peer mediation

Peer support is often incorporated as part of schools restorative approaches. Peer support can involve both giving and receiving support. It brings children together to share their experiences and provide emotional, social and practical support. For more information on peer support programmes in schools click [here](#).

Peer mediation is a process where those involved in a disagreement volunteer to discuss the issues and explore how best to take matters forward. It requires them to operate within a whole school ethos, which is itself restorative. For more information on peer mediation click [here](#).

Solution-Orientated Approaches

These approaches are used as an effective way of identifying positive outcomes to complex or challenging issues. They focus on the strengths of the learner and solutions rather than perceived learner deficits and problems. For more information on solution oriented approaches click [here](#).

[Solution Focus in the Classroom](#)

Academic Paper

Simple ideas for how staff, pupils, parents and partners can engage with restorative approaches

Restorative approaches can be embedded in the everyday practice and learning activities such as:

- staff modelling their shared understanding of restorative values, thinking and language in everyday practice
- through the curriculum particularly in the context of HWB, PSE, Social and Emotional Learning programmes, Citizenship or IDL activities etc.
- providing pupils, parents and partners with accessible information in the form of posters, leaflets, on the establishments website and/or social media, or in assemblies, at parents evenings and partner events (see [Appendix 1](#) for an exemplar of a Parental Information Leaflet)
- directly involving pupils, parents and staff in mentoring or facilitating meetings (eg. peer support or mediation) or in circles for participation/problem-solving such as parent and pupil councils, and other planning/decision-making groups

Managing and leading restoratively

Restorative approaches are for the benefit of everyone in the learning community therefore managers and leaders need to be sensitive to and take account of the emotional needs of their staff if they are to support them in being restorative.

FILM [An antidote to teacher stress: Restorative practices as a wellbeing initiative](#)

This 20 min film provides an overview of the range of restorative practices used in schools and its potential impact on school ethos and teacher stress levels.

Practitioners who are required to conduct restorative meetings should have adequate initial and on-going professional learning and participate in professional supervision. Most local authority educational psychology services provide professional learning on restorative approaches including meetings and Education Scotland can provide professional learning on restorative approaches on a train-the-trainer basis.

Exemplar of PL: Perth and Kinross Councils Restorative Approaches [Professional Learning SWAY](#) - includes short presentations on Restorative Approaches, A Restorative School, Restorative Values and Skills, and Restorative Processes.

Research Paper: Produced by North Ayrshire Council [What impact has the Educational Psychology Service had on the implementation of restorative approaches activities within schools across a Scottish Local Authority?](#)

Section 2: Knowledge, skills and understanding to support the implementation of restorative approaches

For most practitioners what is needed, and wanted, are the informal strategies and skills needed to address everyday challenges. In order to effectively implement a whole school approach everyone within the establishment should be willing and able to use basic relational and restorative pedagogies and a smaller number of staff should be upskilled in the more intensive interventions.

What you should know (knowledge)

Click on the following tabs to access a short presentation on each topic. An information leaflet to accompany each presentation can be found below.

Introduction: Why are Nurture Principles important?	Introduction: What makes practice trauma-informed?	Introduction: Attachment What does it mean?	Introduction: Shame How does it affect behaviour?	Introduction: The process of Regulate-Relate-Reason-Repair	Introduction: The Social Discipline Window TO vs WITH ?
Leaflet	Leaflet	Leaflet	Leaflet	Leaflet	Leaflet

What you should do and say (skills)

Click on the following tabs to access a short presentation on each topic. An information leaflet to accompany each presentation can be found below.

Introduction: Practical applications of Nurture Principles	How to be attuned to support engagement	Active listening to encourage engagement and communication	Reframing thinking to influence feelings and behaviour	Being solution-orientated and using SO language	Regulating myself and supporting others to regulate themselves
Leaflet	Leaflet	Leaflet	Leaflet	Leaflet	Leaflet

What you should have (shared understanding and approach to)

Shared ethos, values and beliefs	Boundaries and Expectations	The Power of Praise	Positive/ restorative consequences	Time for dialogue and learning	
Leaflet	Leaflet	Leaflet	Film	Leaflet	Leaflet

Appendix 1: Exemplar of a Restorative Approaches leaflet for parents and partners		BACK
Restorative Approaches at The Calm and Kind School		
<p>Our restorative approaches are based on sound learning theory regarding how people (learners and adults) relate to each other and how best to meet the different needs that can arise from conflict or harm. Our restorative approaches offer an alternative way of thinking about addressing behaviour and provide us with a language and consistent framework for responding to behaviour. We use restorative approaches everyday informally in all our interactions with others and more formally when things go wrong.</p>		
<p>Our restorative approaches build upon the basic principles of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • genuineness - honesty, openness, sincerity • positive regard for all individuals - valuing the person for who they are • empathy – being able to understand another’s experience • individual responsibility and shared accountability • optimism about personal development - we can learn and we can change for the better 	<p>Our restorative approaches build upon the basic principles of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • genuineness - honesty, openness, sincerity • positive regard for all individuals - valuing the person for who they are • empathy – being able to understand another’s experience • individual responsibility and shared accountability • optimism about personal development - we can learn and we can change for the better 	
<p>To be restorative we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • prioritise building relationships and take the time to nurture these • listen and respond calmly, empathically and without interruption or judgment to all sides of an issue • inspire a sense of trust and safety (physical and psychological) • encourage people to express their thoughts, feelings and needs appropriately • appreciate the impact of people’s thoughts, feelings, beliefs and unmet needs on their behaviours • find solutions together that work for everyone involved 		
<p>When things go wrong we ask:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What has happened? • Who has been affected and in what ways they have been affected? • What needs to happen to put things right or to make things better? 		
<p>This approach encourages those involved to identify ways in which whatever needs to be restored or repaired can be and how they can move forward. By giving learners this responsibility we are supporting them in developing their own strategies for avoiding and resolving conflict. If pupils reach their own agreement as to how to move forward after a conflict, they have ownership and are more likely to abide by it than with a response imposed on them by an adult.</p>		
<p>Using restorative approaches consistently we:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • create a calmer, quieter and more productive learning environment • support everyone to be more honest and willing to accept responsibility • help everyone feel more supported when things go wrong 		

References

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