

Discussion Questions: Restorative Practices & Principles

Use the questions to guide in-class discussion or post them to the Collaboration Corner.

Unit 1: Restoration Basics

Restorative Justice

Restorative Practice

1. What is your happiest memory? Where were you, who were you with, and what were you doing?
2. When have you felt the most at peace? Where were you and what were you doing?
3. Is it ever too late to turn your life around and return to a happy and healthy state of mind? What stands in the way?

The Labeling Theory

1. Have you ever been labeled as something by others?
2. Do you think attaching labels to one choice sets the expectations for that person to continue the same behavior? Have you ever seen this happen in real life?
3. What does it mean to separate one's identity from their actions?

Learned Definitions & Context

1. What is one healthy behavior you've learned from experience or by seeing it from others?
2. What is one unhealthy behavior you've learned from experience or by seeing it from others?
3. Is everything we learned growing up "right"? How can we judge learned behaviors more accurately?

Being Patient with the Process

1. Is it easy to let go of things that are bad for us? What if those things make us feel good sometimes?
2. Is there a certain amount of time that moving on from something should take? Why is it important to accept your own pace?
3. What are some ways to remind yourself that you are moving towards a good thing when you are having doubts?

Absence of a Parent

1. What are some negative effects of having an absent parent? How can acknowledging those negative impacts help you or someone overcome them?
2. What is the difference between replacing an absent parent and filling the void of an absent parent?
3. Does having an absent parent mean you have to miss out on anything or bear the negative effects of it forever? What are some positive things that could come out of learning how to live without one or more parents?

Self-Punishment

Why We Punish Ourselves & Others

1. What personal standard do you hold for yourself? Do you punish yourself when you feel like you don't live up to it?
2. Do you hold others to the same standard that you hold yourself? Is it reasonable to hold others to our own established standards?
3. Is your standard of living better or worse than anyone else's that you meet?

Regret

1. Why do we have regrets? Do you think regrets are healthy?
2. Have you ever regretted something to the point where it impacted your mental health and behavior?
3. How do you cope with regret? How can you become better at remembering the truths and facts of a situation, rather than the things that are outside of your control?

Anxiety & Guilt

1. Do you agree that almost everything is possible to overcome? When something goes wrong, do you think we tend to focus on the worst possible outcomes of a situation or the best?
2. What happens when we bottle up our feelings of anxiety and guilt about a situation? Is it benefitting anyone, or just hurting ourselves?
3. What have you felt anxious or guilty about in the past that you were able to overcome? What helped you accept it and move on?

Accepting Your Flaws

1. What is unique about you that others don't have?
2. Are you comfortable with your flaws? Have you accepted them?
3. How do your relationships help improve you? What do you bring to the table that helps improve others?

Breaking the Cycle

1. Do you think you rely on a positive or negative way of thinking?
2. What things or circumstances trigger you to think negatively? Why do you think you have this reaction?
3. Can a situation ever be so bad that you can't see it in a positive light? Explain.

Mindfulness and Accountability

What Happened from My Perspective?

1. What does it mean to reflect on your perspective?
2. How can communicating our perspectives help others understand our choices or actions more clearly?
3. How often do you reflect on your perspective? Do you feel worse about yourself after, or are you motivated to do better moving forward?

What Was I Feeling?

1. Why is it important to reflect on the feelings you had during past intense situations?
2. Do you think you are able to think clearly when your emotions are high? How does emotional intensity change the way your thought process works?
3. How do you tend to react to situations? Are you usually proud of your reactions, or do you find yourself having to apologize for them often?

Perspective-Taking

1. Are you the same person that you were five years ago? In what ways have you changed?
2. Have you ever judged someone and later found out that the situation was much different than it had seemed?
3. How does perspective-taking and "giving the benefit of the doubt" relate to one another?

Respecting the Rights and Interests of Others

1. What do you tend to argue or disagree with others about? Why?
2. How does your listening compare to your speaking when you interact with others?
3. Is it wrong, weak, or uneducated to "agree to disagree," given that we all have very different backgrounds and perspectives?

Repairing the Harm

1. Have you ever made a mistake that you later realized was your fault? Did you apologize for it? Why or why not?
2. Do you think anything is unforgivable if you take responsibility and apologize?
3. How does forgiveness play a role in repairing the harm in a relationship?

Restorative Circles

Affective Statements

1. Should honest communication be a substitute for punishment? Explain.
2. How can you use affective statements in your own life?
3. How do you think conflict would change if honest communication played a bigger role in the response to it?

Reflecting on Your Feelings with Others

1. Are you comfortable with expressing your feelings? Why or why not?
2. What is “ego”? Do you think ego plays a role in how we express our feelings to others?
3. Do you think the people in your life feel comfortable approaching you about how your actions make them feel? Why or why not?

Asking the Right Questions

1. What does it mean to “ask the right questions”?
2. Do you think you ask enough questions before reacting?
3. How does reacting prematurely undermine your ability to handle a situation appropriately? Has this ever happened to you?

Establishing Trust

1. How does consistency play a role in establishing trust?
2. What does trust mean to you? How do you gain trust for others in your personal relationships?
3. Do you usually “keep your word”? Do you think this impacts how much or how little trust others have for you?

Saying Sorry

1. What does it mean to say sorry, but on your terms?
2. Do you think it's easier to say sorry to someone you're not very close with versus people you have personal relationships with? Explain.
3. Do you tend to hold grudges? How important are grudges at the end of the day?

Unit 2: Restorative Prevention

My Environment

A Product of Your Environment or Your Mindset

1. How has the environment that you're in impacted you, both positively and negatively?
2. Which do you think has a stronger influence on who you are: your mentality or your environment?
3. If you could pick anywhere in the world, where would you like to live in the future? If it's different from where you are now, what do you need to do now in order to set yourself up to get there?

Managing Codependency

1. What can codependency look like in your peer group? What about with your family?
2. Have you ever felt like you were forced to be in an environment you didn't want to be in or do something you didn't want to do? What did that feel like?
3. How would you define yourself? Is it aligned with how you live your life? In what ways?

Life Stress

1. Do you tend to stress over things you can't control? Give at least one example.
2. What is the most recent stressful thing you've experienced, and how did you handle it?
3. Do you agree that good people make bad choices sometimes? Explain.

Creating Boundaries

1. What are the different ways that a boundary could look in a relationship? Explain.
2. Have you ever had to set a boundary in a relationship? Explain.
3. How do you know when you need to set a boundary in place?

Put Yourself First

1. How often do you put yourself first?
2. Have you ever tried to help others to the point where you were unable to care for yourself? How did you feel?
3. How can you safely communicate to others that you can't be what they need right now because you need to put yourself first?

Mental and Emotional Regulation

Who I Am and What I Value

1. What do you stand for and deem to be important?
2. What does it mean to be secure in your identity? How does this help with confidence?
3. Where do you think your values and sense of identity come from the most: the influences around you or who you are on the inside?

Feel What You Need to Feel, Then Move Forward

1. Do you think others can tell when you are bottling up about what you are feeling? Can you tell when others are doing it?
2. What does it mean to "feel" your emotions in the moment instead of avoiding them?
3. How can built-up emotions come out in unhealthy ways?

Breaking Free from Inherited Family Expectations

1. What are some examples of inherited family expectations?
2. Do you have to fulfill the expectations that are placed upon you? Explain.
3. What would you do and who would you be if there were zero expectations placed on you by others?

Don't Be So Hard on Yourself

1. What are you most proud of yourself for?
2. When have you failed? How did you feel afterwards?
3. Which do you feel defines you more: your successes or your shortcomings?

Be Vocal About Your Hardships

1. What does Lakeesha mean when she says, "You are your best advocate"?
2. Do you tend to be ashamed of your hardships? Why or why not?
3. What are the advantages of sharing your hardships with someone else?

Who I Am and What I've Done

Tracing My History

1. How have your experiences shaped you?
2. What have you learned from having negative influences around you or negative experiences in your life?
3. Does your history have to dictate the person you become? How can you use it to help shape you, but in a positive way?

Gaining Control over the Present

1. Do you tend to live in the past, the future, or the present? Which do you want to live in?
2. Should you have everything figured out now? Can you ever really expect to have it all figured out?
3. How can you take steps to make sure you're living in the present moment?

Dictating My Future

1. What have you already achieved and what would you like to achieve in the future?
2. Why have you chosen the things you want to achieve? Who/what are you working for/toward?
3. How can having goals keep us grounded through life's challenges and unexpected turns?

Each Day is a New Opportunity

1. Do you feel like the way your days tend to go depend on what emotions you are feeling?
2. Do you treat each day like a new opportunity? What are the expectations you set for yourself each day?
3. How do you want to feel when you go to sleep tonight?

Be Teachable

1. What does it mean to be "teachable"?
2. How often do you learn from others during your conversations?
3. Do you agree that you can learn something from every person you interact with? Explain.

Foster Care and Home Life

Handling the Rejection from Family

1. Do you feel like you and your family have a good understanding of one another? How does this impact you?
2. If you put yourself in one of your family member's position, how would that change your outlook on them?
3. What is the difference between sympathy and empathy?

Regret and Resentment

1. How can regret and resentment impact the other areas of your life that matter?

2. Do you think you can come to school and work successfully if you are battling things at home or outside of class?
3. Despite all of the things you may have lost or don't have, what things DO you have that make your life special or enjoyable?

Incarcerated Family or Friends

1. How have your loved ones' mistakes actually helped you?
2. How can we empathize with someone, even if we don't understand their situation or choices?
3. Why do you think people sometimes make wrong choices?

Personal Empathy

1. What is personal empathy? What would be an example of it?
2. Do you think the choices and behaviors you've made based on what you've dealt with has affected those around you?
3. How can we empathize with people who, to us, seem to be doing something unimaginable?

Adapting to New Homes & Schools

1. Have you ever moved schools or homes? What was that transition period like for you?
2. Based on what you learned in the video, how will you interact with new students in the future?
3. Do you think it's easy adapting to new circumstances? What is the biggest change you've experienced so far?

Unit 3: Restorative Intervention

Violence

School Violence

1. Should you ever feel guilty for telling an adult when you have even the slightest suspicion that someone could be planning to hurt another person?
2. Is bullying that happens after school or online still an issue of school violence? How do you think it changes someone's experience when they come back to school?
3. What could you say to someone who is expressing their wishes to hurt someone else? At what point should you not say anything, and just tell an adult?

Learned & Unlearned Violence

1. Why do you think it's so hard for us, as humans, to turn around and walk away from an intense situation?
2. How can having a strong sense of "knowing who you are" help you out of situations before they escalate?
3. How big of a role do you think miscommunication plays in disagreements? Why?

Verbal Assault and Emotional Abuse

1. What is something you could say to someone who is "gaslighting" you, or trying to make you doubt your experiences or emotions?
2. Why do you think people feel the need to emotionally abuse others? Who does it say more about, the abuser or the victim?
3. What should you do if you feel like someone in your life is emotionally harming you in some way?

Physical Assault

1. Is physical assault something that only impacts certain people, such as women? Why is this important?
2. What are some other examples of less-obvious acts of physical assault that might go unrecognized? For example, in the video, Elijah uses pinching.
3. Do you think someone who truly loves someone could ever physically hurt them? Why do you think it can be so hard for victims to get out of these dangerous situations?

Domestic Violence

1. Why do you think it's sometimes very hard for victims of domestic violence to reach out to others to help them get out of the situation?
2. Is domestic violence ever excusable? Whose safety is most important in those situations?
3. What are some ways a person suffering from domestic violence can seek help, without putting themselves at risk of receiving more abuse for it?

Truancy

Truancy and Absenteeism

1. What can you miss out on by not being at school when you are supposed to be, aside from assignments and academic instruction?
2. What are the long-term negative effects of missing school without good reason? Are these always obvious in the moment?
3. What habits and mindsets can you develop that keep you engaged, motivated, and committed to staying in school and achieving your goals? What is standing in the way of that right now, if anything?

Skipping Class and School

1. What habits have you formed in the past? Did you break them, or are they still with you today?
2. What are examples of positive habits you've intentionally formed? How/when did you realize such a habit was important to your well-being?
3. How can skipping school lead to developing larger negative habits?

Frustrations with Studies

1. How do you study best? Have you found your personal study rhythm?
2. How do you learn differently from others? Why is it important to be mindful that these differences occur?
3. How would you describe your friend group in terms of their motivation and set goals? Do you think this has any impact on how you think and behave?

Meaningful Attachments

1. What are examples of meaningful attachments?
2. What meaningful attachments are you a part of? How does this help you stay grounded and focused?
3. Why is it important to have a goal and actively be working toward achieving it? In what ways does this positively impact you?

Assigning Purpose to Learning

1. What does it mean to be an "excited learner"?
2. How can you be more purposeful about learning?
3. How can what you're learning now help you with your goals?

Hate Speech & Graffiti

The Impact of Negative & Hateful Words

1. What is hate speech?
2. What are some examples of hate speech?
3. What is the best way to respond to hate speech or negativity, in your opinion?

Vandalism and Graffiti

1. What is the difference between vandalism and street art?
2. What are healthy ways to express yourself that don't involve hurting or vandalizing a community or property?
3. How can vandalism and graffiti impact a community as a whole? Do you think the perpetrators of vandalism and graffiti consider the greater impact? Why or why not?

Creating a Safe Environment

1. How would you describe a "safe environment"?
2. Is a safe environment simply one in which there is no fear, violence, or bullying?
3. How can you make sure the environments you're in are safe for everyone within them, without someone having to speak up first?

Be What You Want to Receive

1. Do you ever really know what people have going on in their personal lives? Why is this important?
2. How does treating others with respect and positivity bring positivity to your own well-being?
3. How do you want others to treat you? Are you treating others the same way, even if you are not getting the same in return?

Reflect on Your Perspective

1. Are you comfortable with admitting when you were wrong or had a change in opinion after receiving more information?
2. How do you deal with negativity happening in the news or around you?
3. Do you have to have the same opinions as your family members or peers? How does individuality play a role in belief systems?

Drug Abuse & Rehabilitation

What is Drug Abuse & Rehabilitation?

1. Is there a difference between drug addiction and drug dependency? How are the two commonly understood?
2. What are some signs of needing help with drug abuse? If someone else is showing signs, how can you respectfully provide insight and support?
3. How can the people around you help or hurt you when it comes to your attitude about substances? How can their influence on you go unnoticed or unrecognized?

Substance Addiction

1. How can using “I-statements” help you get control over your reality, decisions, and interests?
2. Why is admitting that you have a problem so important to the process of getting help for substance addiction?
3. What are some changes that someone can make to their lifestyle, habits, and relationships that will most strongly support them in overcoming a substance addiction?

My Family or Friends Use

1. How can the behaviors of others skew our understanding of right and wrong?
2. How much of an influence do others have on our perception? What are some examples of things that you think/once thought are okay because you saw others doing it?
3. What are your values and views about using substances? How can you make sure your beliefs are healthy, and not easily influenced by the norm or decisions of others?

The Process of Rehabilitation

1. Where does the process of rehabilitation start?
2. What are some resources for navigating the process of rehabilitation, and how can you find them?
3. Why is the process of rehabilitation so important and more effective than trying to figure out the situation on your own?

What Can Go Right & Wrong

1. Is it ever easy to change your own behavior and habits? Why is it important to persevere, even when it's difficult?
2. What is a type of behavior, aside from substance use, that is hard to change but important to do?
3. How can you celebrate small successes in a healthy way? Why is celebrating yourself important and unselfish?

Unit 4: The Process of Restoration

Overcoming the Past

Choosing Change

1. What circumstances do you think you should change? How would doing so improve your life and overall well-being?
2. Have you ever had to change your circumstances and put yourself in a better position? What difficulties did you have to face to do so, and how did you persevere?
3. How do we know when we need to change our circumstances? How does “trusting your gut” play a role here?

Accepting Our Mistakes

1. What role does believing in yourself play in the ability to forgive yourself for past mistakes?
2. What are mistakes you’ve made that you’ve forgiven yourself for? How does this empower you and positively contribute to your self-esteem?
3. Why is it easy to blame ourselves? Why is blaming ourselves the worst thing we can do for accepting our past mistakes and moving forward?

Learning from Our Mistakes

1. What life lessons have you learned by making mistakes?
2. Is it reasonable to expect us all to make the perfect decision all the time? How can this expectation hurt us and our relationships with others?
3. Give an example of a time you made a mistake and did your best to correct it. How did doing your best to make amends give you the freedom and peace of mind to move forward?

Finding a New Crowd

1. What role does trust play in who you decide to have relationships with? What does it mean to truly “trust” someone?
2. Do you think others trust you and feel like they can confide in you for support?
3. How can you tell if the people around you would be supportive of and trustworthy to you? Is it more worth it to have bad friends than no friends at all?

Avoiding Recidivism

1. Is avoiding recidivism easy? Why is it easier to continue the same behavior that we are used to?
2. What opportunity for growth can happen once you remove yourself from bad situations or cycles?
3. What things around you can you partake in more that will lead you down better paths? What interests do you have that you can rely on to keep you grounded and focused?

Understanding Cultures and Diversity

The Value in Diversity

1. What has diversity taught you?
2. How do you think our experiences shape us? How have yours shaped you?
3. What are some ways in which you think diversity adds a positive value to our world and society?

Encouraging and Respecting Diversity

1. What does it mean to encourage diversity? How can you encourage diversity from where you are?
2. What does it mean to respect diversity? How do you respect diversity in your everyday life?
3. What are some respectful ways to ask others about their culture and ways of life?

Learning about Other Cultures

1. Why is it not other people’s jobs to teach us about their cultures?
2. How does the individuality of each person play into learning about other cultures?
3. When listening to someone talk about their culture, why is it important to remember that the conversation is NOT about you?

What Is Cultural Appropriation?

1. What are some examples of cultural appropriation?
2. Why is cultural appropriation something we should avoid?
3. What are ways to properly respect a culture and its customs?

Acknowledging Cultures and Diversity

1. Why is saying “I don’t see color” actually problematic?
2. When have you changed or updated your opinion about something? How did doing so help you grow?
3. Why should we all be comfortable with saying “I don’t know”?

Healthy Lifestyles

The Weakness in Being “Tough”

1. How do you think being “tough” is seen in your school or community? Is it more counterproductive than productive, from your experiences?
2. What does it mean to have empathy for others? When have you had empathy for someone whom you didn’t like or maybe didn’t deserve it?
3. How is showing compassion and empathy the most courageous thing that you can do? How can it change a situation or environment?

Don’t Limit Your Dreams

1. Do you think any major inventions or ideas that changed the world sounded realistic before they happened? Why should this inspire you to chase your dreams, rather than steer you away from them?
2. What barriers do you think we have become conditioned to? How can you break out of them?
3. What is your wildest dream? How can you believe in yourself and not let the opinions of others impact your ability to achieve something amazing?

Be a Self-Starter

1. What does it mean to be a self-starter? What does a self-starter look like in their daily routines?
2. Would you consider yourself a self-starter? How can you exercise your brain to become better at it?
3. What does your vision consist of? How did you create it or find it?

Learn from Others

1. When have you had to “learn the hard way”? What lessons have you learned just from observing others and deciding that it is not something you want for yourself?
2. What does our reactions to others’ behavior show us or teach us about ourselves? Do you tend to notice your uneasiness or disapproval and then contemplate where it is coming from?
3. Is it true that you can learn something from everyone you come in contact with? How can disagreement actually be the best way to learn?

Critical Thinking

1. How often do you engage in critical thinking? Why do you think it is important in the different areas of your life?
2. When has applying critical thinking helped you in your life? When has the lack of applying it hurt you?
3. What role does communication play in your ability to accurately think critically?

Moving Forward

Competency

1. What role does competency play in both your current circumstances and your future?
2. What opportunities are available to you to learn more about the workforce and gain new skills?
3. What jobs interest you? If you aren’t sure, what skills are you interested in learning? How can you take your interests and find ways to make them a future reality?

Establishing Trust

1. What does it mean to “burn a bridge” in your relationships? Are they repairable?
2. Why is trust so important to relationships? Do you take this into consideration before deciding what decisions you are going to make?
3. When have you had to “right a wrong,” and how did you come to the decision to do so?

Be Clear on What You Want and What You Don't

1. What are some values and beliefs that you are sure you want to hold for yourself?
2. What are some values and beliefs that you are sure you DON'T want to hold for yourself?
3. Do you act based on what you want for yourself and your core values, or do you tend to just follow the crowd? Is it easier to be a leader or a follower?

Where Focus Goes, Energy Flows

1. What are your core beliefs and values? What do you stand for?
2. Where is your current focus? Is it intentional, or just to get through the days?
3. What do you think your purpose is? Why do you think your purpose is tied to that specific thing?

Establishing a Strong Foundation

1. What is your foundation? Is this based on you or others' expectations placed upon you?
2. Is your foundation the same as everyone else's? What makes sense for you?
3. Why do you think we're so afraid of failure? How has failing actually helped you in the past?