



Restorative Justice

UNIVERSITY OF NORTH ALABAMA

CONFLICT, HARM & RESTORATION

How hurt people hurt people & the Restorative Justice solution

We are all familiar with the grandmother who loves to cross-stitch. Have you ever seen a finished cross-stitched piece? It's always so fascinating to see the intricate beauty and the vibrant color. But have you ever turned a finished

piece over? I have. Once, my grandmother did a cross-stitch of a beautiful bird. Curious, I turned it over to see the other side, expecting to simply see a reverse of the same image. Imagine my surprise when all I saw was a total mess- an indiscernible wad of threads that looked like total chaos with no order or continuity of any kind. I remember thinking, *how could something so messy under the surface give order and beauty to something on the other side?* This is what Restorative Justice does. It delves into the messy places of life and attempts to bring healing, accountability and, yes,

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restoration. "At the moment of healing there is connection (or reconnection) but no longer emotional and psychological entanglement. There is no gap. The burning questions that may have haunted one or both parties for months or years are resolved or become irrelevant; the fear, anger, shame, and guilt evaporates" (Wallis). Like the mess of threads flipped over to reveal something beautiful, and unlike the current system of criminal justice, Restorative Justice gives a voice to everyone. Real healing and accountability can be achieved in a way that benefits the whole community and provides a map to a better way of doing life together. "The key value is that because injustice hurts, justice should heal. Responding to pain with 'another spoonful of pain' is seen as a less satisfactory response than responding with healing or repair. A

VALUES IN THE COHORT 2 COMMUNITY AGREEMENT

- Open-mindedness
- Accountability
- Mutual respect
- Honesty
- Vulnerability
- Transparency
- What's said in the circle stays in the circle
- Willingness to "agree to disagree"
- Equality
- Adaptability

reason is that hurt tends to beget hurt, creating a vicious spiral of retribution and feuding. Alternatively, it is possible to flip this dynamic into one of healing begetting healing - a virtuous cycle" (Braithwaite).

SHAKESPEARE AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Timeless Plays with Timeless Problems that have Timeless Solutions

We are all familiar with at least the most popular works of Shakespeare. The interesting thing to notice is the timeless nature of the problems and tragedies that Shakespeare brings to light in his works. Some things are held in their time period as if they were sealed in a capsule, but most things in life are timeless across humanity- not bound by time or even culture. Tragedy, hardship, pain, love & loss are all predictable parts of our existence. This is why it's difficult to read a work of Shakespeare and not connect it to the principles, practices and processes of the Restorative Justice Circle. In the Circle, the painful tragedies in life

that have caused us hardship are addressed with the big picture in mind. Timeless hurts are faced with the person harmed, the person who caused harm, and the greater community all in mind.

Just a quick glance at Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale* shows us that the pain and hurt that humanity faced in the early 17th century are still the same hurts that plague humanity today. This tragicomedy opens with the tragic consequences of unchecked jealousy, insecurity, and wrongful accusation. Sometimes it's hard to decipher from a play written in 1611 and the things written in our own personal journals in 2025. This is what makes

us think Restorative Justice is needed now more than ever before because of its ability to bring beauty out of the ashes and an opportunity for humanity to heal from our self-inflicted wounds.

This semester, the Restorative Justice Lab has brought into "hi-def clarity" the hurts that humanity faces and the injustice of our society in how it goes about dealing with those hurts. We believe that the Restorative Justice Circle processes are the key to bringing true healing and restoration to our society today, and real accountability moving forward.



Graphic from the International Institute for Restorative Practices

The Restorative Justice Program prepares students to make systematic change within their communities by providing skills that foster accountability, perspective-taking and social engagement.