

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE THROUGH POETRY

March 2026 Cohort 2 Volume 4

While dealing with a personal conflict, I performed a breathing exercise (see below) and wrote this poem:

Triumph through Tragedy

Conflict, contending in warfare. Physical or verbal—at odds
Two parties, misunderstanding. Combative thoughts—furtive nods.
We need a circle! Let's get together—cool our heads—talk it out.
Won't be a statistic—an environmental product—must quell not shout.
Must achieve understanding—justice—transformative strategies.
Peacebuilding our way—hold space—heal from tragedies.
We'll overcome conflict—irreconcilability—be solutionary.
Be restorative—brainstorm— Be conducive and revolutionary.

Poem by a UNA student

MEET LIMEY!

The Limestone Restorative Justice Skunk!



BOLO

Be on the lookout for how these topics show up:

- In media – movies, TV shows, music, news, books, etc.
- In conversations you have and hear
- In your self-talk

BREATHING EXERCISE

(FOR AS LONG AS NEEDED)

Sit comfortably with your neck and back straight

- Lower or close your eyes
- Taking a few deep breaths
 - On the in-breath: first, fill your stomach then fill your chest and, starting at your feet, become aware of your body
 - On the out-breath: first, empty your chest then empty your stomach and relax your body
- Let your breathing return to normal while continuing to pay attention to your breath and body



Be very quiet,
I'm hunting
restorative justice

TOPIC IDEAS

Human Value – Every person has equal precious value – permanent – can't be lost or forfeited

Dehumanization – Labeling people - usually to justify harming them

Self-Compassion – Treating self with loving wisdom – different from self-indulgence which can be harmful

Empathy – Walking a mile in the other person's shoes

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE NEWSLETTER

"POETIC PATHWAYS OF HEALING"

WHY RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Restorative Justice

- Meets needs that result from harm
- Meets needs so harms can be prevented
- Values life, healing, accountability, and healthy communities
- Restorative Justice (RJ) is an opportunity to promote equality among parties when someone has been harmed
- RJ allows access for a different world view that can offer pathways for problem solving and conflict resolution

RESTORATIVE JUSTICE OPERATES THROUGH THE "CIRCLE PROCESS"

Circles can address many different needs. Formal circles address more serious issues such as "sentencing," victim-offender dialogue, and other conflicts that require trained facilitators with specific experience. Talking circles can be facilitated without any formal training.

Here are some guidelines to "show you the ropes" to facilitate your own circle!

GUIDELINES

Only the person with the talking piece is allowed to speak - moves in order around the circle. Make sure to use respectful speaking & listening. Confidentiality is key. Establish the **group's chosen values** - (see "Ceremony").

PREPARATION & SETUP

(2-5 MINS.)

Participants: Invite change four to six people ideally. **Set up a place:** Wherever you can comfortably sit without disturbing the community. **Talking piece:** Meaningful object that can be held in hand representing some values. **Topic Selection Questions** - see reverse.

TESTIMONIES FROM INCARCERATED PEOPLE AT LIMESTONE CORRECTIONAL FACILITY AFTER THEIR 1ST CIRCLE EXPERIENCE

"At first, it made me take a look in the mirror. It was very inspirational. It also made me want to do the right thing—or at least attempt to. I think it's something all the dorms should be doing."

"I liked it! It was something good to know and hear at the same time. I feel like everybody should be able to do it. Take your mind off the everyday stuff so you can find some peace."

"It relieves the pressure. It allowed me to express myself without having to worry about being judged. I realized that I was hurting people with my words because I was hurting. Dehumanization only leads to more dehumanization. I think that we need more of this. When is the next circle?"

CEREMONY

5 MINS.

Ceremony marks the circle as a special time & place. Grounding - this is a breathing exercise to focus and embody you in the circle. **Values** - participants decide what is needed for self and others. **Activate Talking Piece.**

CHECK-IN

(2-3 MINS.)

Start by asking a lighthearted question to learn something new about each other.

PRESENT THE TOPIC

(ABOUT 2 MINS.)

Circles already have a topic in mind before setting the space, but take this time to bring everyone's focus to what is being discussed.

QUESTION ROUNDS!

(ABOUT 20 MINS. BUT CAN DIFFER FROM CIRCLE TO CIRCLE)

Circles usually bring 2-5 questions to the table. Pass the talking piece around; each person has an opportunity to speak on the topic.

CLOSING ROUND!

(ABOUT 5 MINS.)

Take these last few minutes to bring questions to a close, discussing what each participant may have learned, as well as discussing future circles! End this discussion by sharing what this experience can do for you moving forward in your everyday life.

Note: Circle are for storytelling; they are not made for persuasion.