

The Center for Dispute Resolution at the University of Maryland Francis King Carey School of Law (C-DRUM) advances conflict resolution processes to transform relationships, systems, and the world.

Restorative Approaches Lesson 6: Where Can It Work?

Key Takeaways:

Restorative approaches focus on healing the harm that conflicts and misconduct can cause. Traditional approaches to conflict often create winners and losers, but restorative approaches help people come to mutually agreeable decisions that unravel conflict and help return to normal.

Participants' Learning Objectives:

Students will understand the foundations of the restorative justice philosophy and how it differs from a more traditional punitive approach to addressing misconduct and conflict.

Materials:

1. Choose an object to serve as a talking piece. The object should fit in students' hands and can be easily passed from person to person. The object should have some meaning to you that you can imbue it with by telling a story or describing its value to you and why it has that value.

Examples:

- a. "This stick drawing represents a video we will watch as part of today's lesson."
 - b. "This ball of yarn symbolizes the conflicts and emotions you will see in the video we will watch during today's lesson."
2. Pull up Lesson 6 PowerPoint on your computer and project it on your classroom screen so everyone can see and hear it

Procedure:

1. Begin the lesson in your regular classroom arrangement so students can all see the video and slides. No circle is needed at the start of this lesson.

2. After the video (which runs about 2.5 minutes) Follow the slides to take your students into one large circle to think about and discuss the points raised in the video.
3. Bring your chosen object into circle so you can use it as the talking piece and explain why you chose it or why it is meaningful to you.
4. Once you have completed the lesson, have students return their chairs to the regular configuration.

Approximate Time: about 20 minutes

Timing will vary, of course, but since the video is under 3 minutes, you should have plenty of time to discuss the circle questions. The opening process for engaging in circle should be familiar enough to everyone that you can move quickly through the Seven Core Assumptions and Guidelines Review.

Pro Tip:

Restorative approaches can be difficult to understand if you have only experienced a punitive discipline system. It might be helpful to allow students time to talk about the video informally in circle. Often when we have open discussion, the facilitator will announce they are “suspending the talking piece” so everyone can talk openly. If you do this, simply set the talking piece down by your chair and pick it back up again when you are ready to resume circle turn-taking. When you are ready to do this, just tell everyone we are going back to using the talking piece.

Extend the Learning:

This video uses simple animation to explain a fairly complex concept. Draw a series of pictures to explain restorative approaches, or any aspect of the restorative philosophy we’ve covered in these lessons.

How could artwork be used to help people in conflict work through their anger?

Give some historical or cultural examples of how artwork—drawings, painting, videos, photography, music, poetry, etc.—has been used to express emotions and concepts that inspire people to take action.

This series of restorative approaches lessons for high school students is made possible through the generous financial support of the Charles Crane Family Foundation.