

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 9: Affective Statements & Questions**

### **Key Takeaways:**

Restorative approaches engage the person harmed, the person responsible for causing the harm, and members of the community also affected by the incident of harm. This means the restorative process offers tools to address conflict BEFORE it gets out of hand. Simple restorative practices called Affective Statements and Affective Questions can help nip potential conflicts in the bud by because they help individuals express their perspectives and understanding by sharing personal experiences and feelings.

### **Participants' Learning Objectives:**

Students will learn about some restorative practices they can use to quickly address potential conflict or misconduct as it arises, and before it accelerates into a disciplinary situation.

### **Materials:**

1. You will not need a talking piece for this lesson because there is no circle activity. If you and your class decide to engage in circle after the lesson is completed, feel free to use whatever talking piece makes sense to you.
2. Pull up Lesson 9 PowerPoint on your computer and project it on your classroom screen so everyone can see it.

### **Procedure:**

1. Conduct this lesson in your regular classroom arrangement so students can all see the slides. Because we want to foster natural use of these restorative tools, no circle is needed for this lesson.
2. Follow the instructions on the PowerPoint slides as you take your students through the exercise.

3. After you present the sample affective statements and questions on slide 2-8, ask your students to pair up, or forms groups of three, to work through the exercise on page 9.

### **Approximate Time: about 20 minutes**

Timing will vary depending on the number of students and how long they take to answer the various prompts. If time allows, you may want to help your students talk through and process how they feel using affective questions and statements in these situations. Maybe they can consider other scenarios they experience where these restorative practices could be helpful in averting conflicts.

### **Pro Tips:**

Not all situations of conflict or misconduct require a circle to come to resolution. In fact, in schools that integrate the restorative philosophy and practices into their culture, students find that they naturally resolve situations that had once led to discipline. This happens largely because students feel empowered and encouraged to address misunderstandings or offenses at their earliest stages when they can be resolved most easily. One valuable tool for doing this is the affective statement and affective question. Often, when others understand and recognize how their behavior is affecting someone else, they will take steps to change it. Frequently a simple, “My bad” or “Sorry, I didn’t realize” can keep the situation from escalating and prevent confrontation that could require discipline.

Building on what we learned in Lesson 8, the restorative process forces us to examine situations through the direct experience of others and whose experiences are not our own. Often when we hear other sides of the story, we gain understanding and develop empathy. While restorative interventions such as circles and conferences engage participants in collaborating to heal the harm or solve the conflict as much as possible, affective statements and questions can also lead to collaboration and empathy organically as part of mundane and every-day interactions between members of the learning community—students, teachers, parents, and any combination of these groups.

We encourage you to join in one of the small groups or try out some of your affective statements or questions with your students to hear from them how they might react. Frequently, students aren’t aware of how their words or actions affect adults in their learning communities, but they are happy to adjust their behavior once they understand.

### **Extend the Learning:**

Academic studies point to improved student outcomes in many schools and systems where restorative philosophy and practices are part of the way the school functions. Those who want to learn more could research the following districts on the vanguard of fully

integrating restorative approaches (also called restorative practices, restorative practices in education, or restorative justice).

- [Oakland Unified School District](#), Oakland, California
- [Denver Public Schools](#), Denver, Colorado
- [St. Paul Public Schools](#), St. Paul, Minnesota

[C-DRUM's Restorative Approaches Collaborative website](#) includes manuals that some of these school systems have used to integrate restorative approaches into their learning communities and studies that show positive outcomes associated with restorative cultures. Explore that website using the QR Code on Slide 10 to learn more.

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