



Restorative Strategies for Family Conflicts and Resolutions

Restorative strategies focus on understanding the harm done by the actions of one or more people and to develop empathy for both the contributor(s) and the receiver(s). When the whole family can listen and respond to the needs of all individuals affected by the conflict they encourage accountability and responsibility. This allows the contributor to reintegrate into the family dynamic. This builds a family community of healthy and safe relationships.

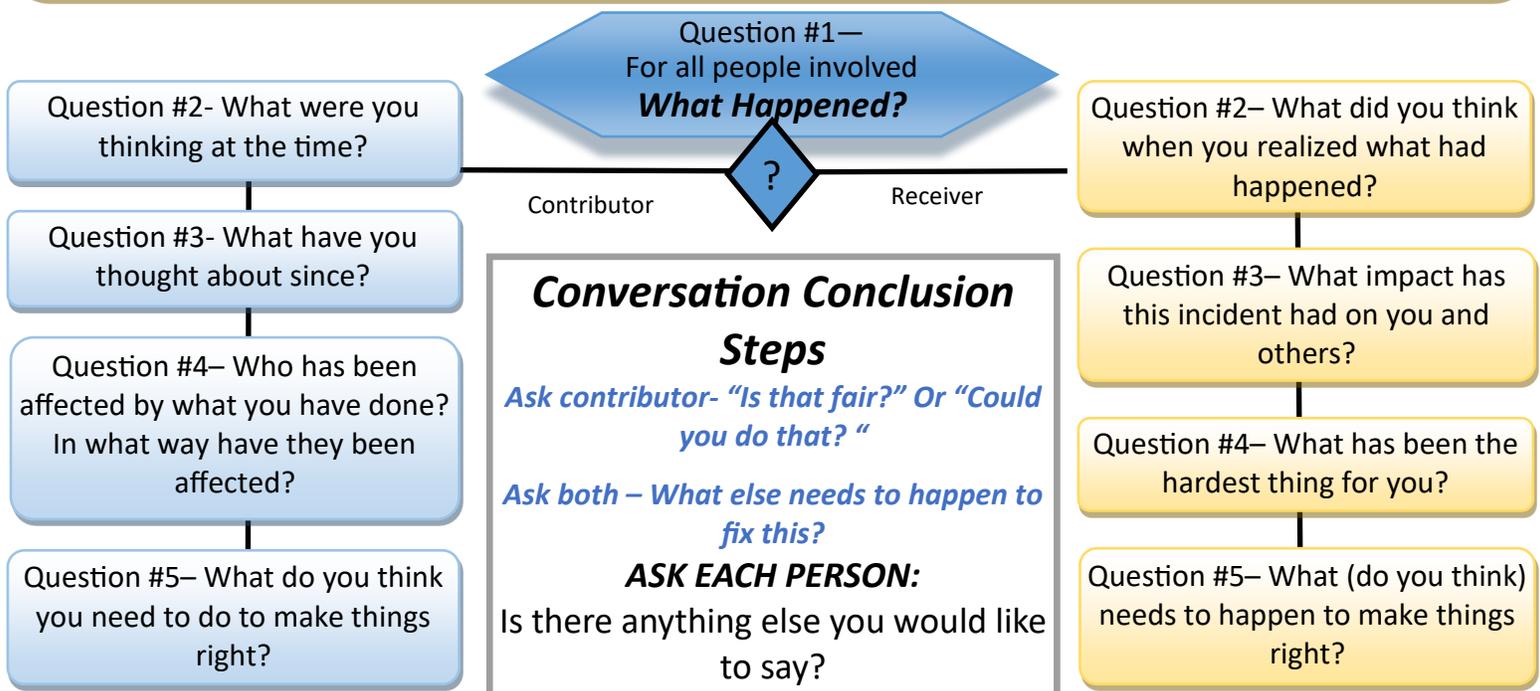
Roles Defined
Contributor—person who contributes to the harm of others.
Receiver—person who is harmed.

Punitive vs Restorative Discipline	
Punitive	Restorative
Wrongdoing is defined as an act against authorities	Wrongdoing is an act against real people (parents, siblings, friends)
Accountability is suffering through punishment	Accountability is defined as taking responsibility for behaviors and making things right
Contributors are excluded from the community (family, school, events)	Contributors are kept in the community to be directly accountable to those they have harmed
Contributors are defined by their misbehavior	Contributors are defined by their ability to take responsibility for their actions and learn from their mistakes
Children are motivated by external rewards and punishments	Children are motivated by internal sense of right and wrong
Children are pre-occupied by blame	The emphasis is on resulting harm and how to repair
Children are deterred by linking punishment	Deterrence linked to relationships and personal accountability

Thinking of your child as behaving badly pre-disposes you to think of punishment. Thinking of your child as struggling to handle something difficult encourages you to help them through the distress.

Restorative Questions

When responding to conflicts or discipline issues, consider asking these questions rather than lecturing or immediately disciplining based on your observations. Taking this approach allows parents to separate the behavior from the child's intrinsic worth as a person. This allows children to identify their thoughts and feelings in connection with actions. All questions are non-blaming and open ended. They require parents to listen attentively and not make judgments. These questions give children time to understand and reflect on their actions to be aware of how they have harmed others.



Empathetic Listening – Strategies for ALL questions.

Listen to the responses from all participants with your eyes, heart, and ears – Only 7% of what we communicate is transmitted through words. 40% comes from tone, and the remaining 53% is through body language. Paying attention to tone and body language is just as important as hearing the words a person speaks.

ASK YOURSELF:

What is the speaker's posture?

How loudly or softly is the speaker speaking?

What is the look in the speaker's eyes communicating?

Which words are the speaker emphasizing?

Be mindful during these conversations

ARE YOU....

Multitasking while attempting to listen? (On your cell phone, driving, watching TV, on the computer...etc.)	Letting the speaker know whether you agree with him/her? (DO NOT TAKE SIDES!)
Thinking about what you are going to say next while someone else is speaking? (Already determining punishment?)	Asking too many probing questions when the speaker is not ready to share? (Stick to the basic questions, don't force it.)
Thinking about how what the speaker is saying relates to our personal experiences when the speaker is talking about his/her own experience?	Giving advice? (Trying to solve the conflict for the child does not allow the child to problem solve.)
Judging the speaker or what the speaker is saying? (Placing out bias on how to handle the situation before giving a chance to the speaker.)	Providing interpretations of the speaker's motives or behaviors? (Never assume the WHY behind the actions.)
Listening Obstacles	Response Obstacles

If you don't listen eagerly to the little stuff when they are little, they won't tell you the big stuff when they are big, because to them ALL of it has always been big stuff. Catherine M. Wallace

Scenarios

Two children were wrestling on the floor. I walk over to the girls and ask, "What is happening here?" They were both laying on the floor but stopped rolling around when I asked the question. They looked up at me and said, "What do you mean?" I just repeated my question, "What is happening here?" One girl answered me, "We are just playing with the headbands." There was a headband game on the low table next to them. The game was closed and no game pieces were out. So I said, "You are playing that game?" Then I pointed at the game. I then said, "Are you thinking you can play that game from the floor?" "No, I guess not," replied one of the girls. So I said, "What are you thinking now?" She said, "I guess if we want to play the game we better sit up." I said, "Yeah, I am thinking that too!"

I realize there wasn't HARM here to repair. But before I knew how to use Restorative Language I probably would have handled this differently. I would have said, "We don't wrestle around on the floor in this room. It isn't safe. Now I will watch as you get up off the floor and show self control." The difference (in my opinion) is that with Restorative Language the children get a voice. They get to tell me what they are thinking and make a correction on their own. I don't TELL them what to do. The Restorative Conversation leads them to the logical conclusion. Of course with younger students you may need to guide or make suggestions through the magic questions.

A six year old crafter makes a mess! Monday morning, while cleaning, mom finds a wooden piece of furniture layered in hardened paint, glue and glitter. No luck in cleaning it, that stuff was like cement. So mom took the wooden cabinet out to the burn pile.

After school mom escorted the six year old out to the burn pile, pointed to the cabinet and asked, "What happened to my cabinet?" Her eyes got big and she looked at the painted messy top and said, "I don't know". Mom pointed to the cracked on glue, glitter and paint and said, "How did this happen? Aren't you the one who painted on this?" She looked down and quietly replied, "Yes". Mom asked, "Well, what were you thinking?" She just stood there and started getting tears in her eyes.

Mom added, "Well, I can tell you what I am thinking and you can tell me if you agree. I think you were doing your crafting and forgot to clean up your mess. And because you are six years old you didn't know that the paint and glue would get hard and ruin my cabinet ". She raised her head and nodded. Mom then asked, "How are you going to fix this?" She again just stared at mom, so mom waited until she said, "I can buy you a new one". Mom replied, "Gosh, I don't think that will work because you don't have \$100 dollars to buy a new one. And I don't think that's what I need to feel better about this anyway." Mom added, "What I think now is that you know about paint and glue getting hard and ruining things. You didn't know before because you are only six. BUT NOW YOU DO KNOW." She nodded vigorously!

"So you can make this right by always cleaning up your craft messes right way so we don't have this problem again. Can I trust you to do that?" She looked right at me and replied, "oh yes, I am going to be six and one half pretty soon and now I know about glue and paint getting hard." She still felt bad as we walked away from the burn pile (she turned around twice to look back at it) but she obviously felt bad about what happened....not about what kind of person she is. She was excited to prove to me that she was older and wiser now.

There was no punishment involved but she was held accountable and will hopefully clean up immediately after her next glue, paint and glitter craft project.