

In recent years public confidence in our justice system has been declining. There is a feeling that offenders are not held accountable for their actions, and that victims and communities have little say in the justice system.

Restorative justice is a way of thinking about crime and conflict. It challenges us to look at how we think about ourselves collectively as a society, how we respond to crime and how we restore the balance after a crime has been committed. Restorative justice can come in many forms, depending on the circumstances of the case and the traditions and preferences of the community involved.

Restorative models focus on holding offenders accountable in a more meaningful way, repairing the harm caused by the offence, reintegrating the offender into the community, and achieving a sense of healing for both the victim and the community.

What are the benefits for me?

Victim

Restorative justice recognizes that as a victim, you have distinct needs. Restorative justice will provide you with an opportunity to:

- Express your feelings and ask questions
- Have your experience, your feelings, concerns and suffering acknowledged
- Develop some understanding of the offender's motivation for committing the offence
- Say how the harm done by the incident might be repaired

Offender

Crime hurts victims, communities and offenders and creates an obligation to make amends. Restorative justice will provide you with an opportunity to:

- Take responsibility for your actions in a safe environment
- Be an active participant in determining how you may begin to repair the harm done
- Hear first hand how your behaviour has affected people
- Ask for help with problems that may have contributed to the wrongdoing

Community

Crime affects everyone, and we need to work together to repair the harm and create safer communities. Restorative justice actively involves community members by providing an opportunity to:

- Take responsibility for, and actively participate in, achieving justice in your community
- Focus on the causes of crime and do something about them
- Support the victim and ensure there are opportunities in the community for the offender to make amends

We deserve to have our needs met within the justice system. We deserve to have an opportunity to take part in a process that will help to repair the harm caused by an offence, prevent crime, and create safer, more secure communities.

Restorative justice is not a replacement for the current system. A restorative approach will, however, help meet needs that are not often met by the current system. Reducing recidivism, increasing victim satisfaction and public confidence in the system will take enormous effort over many years. It will require smarter, more effective ways of making our communities safer.

A promising road toward improvement is in a way of thinking about conflict and crime that has been captured by the modern phrase "*restorative justice*".

Crime HURTS... Justice HEALS

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