

Restorative Justice Circle Guidelines and Questions (Teacher Copy)

Background: Restorative Justice is a process that focuses on addressing the harm caused to victims and the community by the offender. The focus is on healing for all parties. Restorative justice promotes positive social behaviours such as listening, empathy, personal responsibility, and community connectedness.

Restorative justice can take place in many contexts. In this activity, students will complete a restorative justice circle regarding a social issue affecting their community. Potential topics include harassment, substance use, and vandalism.

Guidelines for Restorative Justice Circles:

- If possible, the circle should be capped at 12 participants, with 1-2 teachers, counsellors, youth workers or community leaders as facilitators
- A talking piece will be used
 - The person holding the talking piece is the only one talking while everyone else listens.
 - The talking piece may be passed around the circle in order, or may be passed on to the person who wishes to speak next.
 - Everyone has the chance to speak, but is not obligated to.

Recommended Process:

- Start with an **open-end** check-in question
 - Facilitator: “I would like to take the time to welcome you here and thank you for taking part in this restorative justice circle on _____.”
- Identify **guidelines** for behaviour.
 - Facilitator: “Let’s identify a set of guidelines we need to feel comfortable today.”
Facilitator can share an example, such as “Be honest.”
 - Check for consensus on each guideline from the group. Take the time to discuss and debrief each guideline if there is not consensus.
- Use the **inquiry format** to discuss the issue.
 - Define the issue - “What is happening in the community?”
 - “How does this make you feel?”
 - “Who is being harmed by this? How are they affected?”
 - “What can you do as an individual to address this issue?”
 - “What do you need to help you do it?”
 - “How do you feel about this now after talking it out?”
- Include a **closing** statement that thank the participants for coming together.
 - Facilitator: “Thank you all for participating today. How did you feel about the process?”