



The 6 Methods of Intervention

Restorative practice is a strategy that seeks to repair relationships that have been damaged, including those damaged through bullying.

It does this by bringing about a sense of remorse and restorative action on the part of the offender and forgiveness by the victim.

Rationale

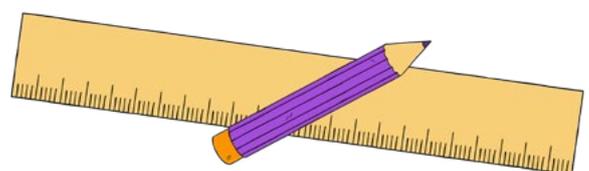
The rationale behind this approach is that when offenders reflect upon their harm to victims:

- they become remorseful and act restoratively.
- practitioners can focus on the unacceptable behaviour of offenders rather than their moral character.
- this can lead to healthier interpersonal relations among members of the school community and more effective learning.

Application

1. Restorative practices can be undertaken in a variety of forums. It may be conducted with varying degrees of formality and may include just those students most directly involved in bullying or in some circumstances a whole class. 'Community Conferences' include supportive third parties such as friends, families and possibly a community figure such as a police community liaison officer. This forum is used to address concerns of both individuals and the wider community.

2. The work in schools with cases of bullying is commonly guided by flashcards or an agreed script which direct practitioners to ask the bully to describe what happened and to reflect on what harm it has done. The victim is asked to say how she or he has been affected and what needs to be done to put things right.
3. Feelings of shame that are elicited need to lead to re-integration into the community rather than a sense of being alienated and stigmatised.
4. In the spirit of personal responsibility, forgiveness and commitment to positive future behaviour, both the target and the bully express their acceptance of the proposed solution/s and discuss what can be done to prevent a recurrence.
5. The situation is then monitored by school staff and further intervention occurs if the situation does not improve.
6. In some cases considerable work is done behind the scenes to prepare the participants including bystanders and others to ensure a positive outcome.



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Limitations

- Inadequately trained practitioners or badly executed procedures may make matters worse. Any perceived personal hostility on the part of the practitioner can result in the offender feeling resentment rather than contrition and incline him or her to act anti-socially. This must be avoided.
- Strong support in the school community for this approach may sometimes be lacking.
- Some offenders may pretend to be remorseful and deceive the practitioner into thinking the matter has been resolved.
- Being integrated into the school community may have little appeal to some children who bully, especially when their own social network provides them with more attractive support.

Conclusion

Used appropriately by trained practitioners, restorative practices can produce excellent results, especially if its use is supported by the entire school community. It is particularly effective when the offender can be induced, without undue pressure, to experience genuine remorse to the satisfaction of those offended. The most detailed evaluation of its effectiveness in schools in England indicates that it is successful in stopping cases of bullying from continuing in about two cases in three.

References

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