

Restorative Thinking and Anti-Bullying Week 2018

How can restorative practice help teachers and pupils
to choose a respectful, considered approach to conflict
resolution and anti-bullying?

~~choose
bullying~~
respect

#ANTIBULLYINGWEEK



**Anti-Bullying
Alliance**

Restorative Thinking Limited is an official partner
with the Anti-Bullying Alliance.

How can restorative practice help teachers and pupils to choose a respectful, considered approach to conflict resolution and anti-bullying?

"
Say sorry, you two!
Right, off you go."
"

How often do you, or those around you, step in to resolve disputes between pupils this way? It's a quick, easy fix for school staff, especially when we have a number of other things that need our immediate attention, or we are rushing to deliver a lesson. So how well does this response respectfully resolve an incident and how likely is it that there will be a repeat incident following this kind of closure?

To answer the latter, I think you'll agree it's a fairly sure bet that the children/young people involved may well repeat the behaviour with each other or other pupils.

This could be because the incident hasn't been fully explored. **The teacher has asked a question to elicit the response that he/she wants to hear, rather than ask the question/s that will tell her/him what he/she needs to know** in order to fully understand what's happened and to facilitate a meaningful resolution.

Let's presume that the teacher who dealt with this incident in this way was late for a lesson and simply didn't have time to stop and do any more at that given time. How could she/he return to the incident, with the pupils, later that day/the following day to challenge and support pupils towards a more respectful way of resolving the incident?

Restorative practice encompasses a suite of principles and skills that guide the way we act in all our dealings. When teachers model these principles and skills at school, pupils pick them up; when restorative practice becomes a whole school approach, the school culture creates an environment in which pupils (and teachers) learn to reach a shared understanding and/or to **respectfully disagree**.

Respect

What do we mean by respect? For children and young people, respect can be a tricky concept and a definition can include:

1. How you feel about someone, and;
2. How you treat her/him.

As adults, we might define respect as, "...due regard for the feelings, wishes, or rights of others." (Oxford Dictionary)

Or "...the feeling you show when you accept that different customs or cultures are different from your own and behave towards them in a way that would not cause offence." (Cambridge English Dictionary)

Restorative practice offers a number of strategies that can be drawn on to find out about others' feelings and wishes and to behave in ways that – whilst able to address uncomfortable and/or sensitive issues - do not cause offence.



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Fortnite Case Study

Here's a Case Study that throws light on what restorative practice looks and feels like.



Scenario

Year 7 boys have been playing the X-box game of 'Fortnite', a survival game with weapons and combat. The aim of the game is to be the last man standing and the winner often does a celebratory dance over his/her victim. These dances, in 2018, are being performed in many playgrounds around the country.

At X High School, Year 7 boys have been teasing one particular boy, Simon, by circling him in the playground and performing the Fortnite dance 'to' him. On the outside, this might look like a game and wouldn't necessarily draw the attention of adult playground supervisors. However, although Simon didn't mind being the focus of the dance at first, he's now not enjoying it at all and has started to feel that the other boys are ganging up on him; he feels vulnerable and unpopular and that the boys are not his friends. It's been going on for some time and he is fed up.

At home, Simon has become withdrawn and seems unhappy. His parents have been asking how he feels but he hasn't really explained what's happening at school to make him feel sad and anxious.

After a few weeks, Simon tells his parents that he doesn't want to go to school and explains that he is being teased every playtime by his group of friends and that they don't understand how much it's upsetting him.

At this point, his dad contacts the Head Teacher and arranges a meeting.



What happened?

There were a multitude of ways the Head Teacher could have tried to resolve this incident, including gathering the group of Year 7 boys and asking them to apologise to Simon.

In this scenario the Head Teacher chose to draw on the restorative strategies that were in place through the school's restorative culture and Behaviour Policy.

This is what she did:



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1. Met with Simon's dad to hear his side of things to help build a picture of what had been happening and to find out how Simon was feeling at home. Provided reassurance to Simon's dad that she would be meeting with all the boys involved, and Simon, to develop a shared understanding of the impact on Simon and to find ways of resolving the issue with all the boys. Simon's dad said he was happy with this approach.
2. Met with Simon and talked through his thoughts and feelings using the restorative line of questioning (see below). Simon was used to these questions as they were regularly used in school to help resolve conflict. He was able to explain to the Head Teacher that he was feeling targeted, unpopular, lonely and that he felt he didn't fit in.
3. Based on the information given by Simon and his dad, the Head Teacher decided to invite the group of boys to meet with herself and Simon one by one, giving Simon the opportunity to explain how the teasing was making him feel at school and at home; the other boys also had an opportunity individually to explain their own feelings and actions and it became apparent that in most cases the boys weren't aware how far the dancing/teasing was affecting Simon. These meetings developed a shared understanding between the boys of what had been taking place and enabled Simon to agree, with each of the boys, how they would both behave towards each other going forward. This became a 'spoken contract' between each of the boys and Simon, with the Head Teacher clarifying and confirming each agreement.

1. There were 7 boys involved in the incident.
 - With four of them, Simon accepted an apology, and a promise that there would be no more teasing/dancing aimed at Simon.
 - Two of the boys also chose to tell Simon that they really liked him and wanted to be good friends and they offered to meet up with Simon at playtimes to play together; Simon was pleased and agreed to this.
 - One of the boys had been quietly teasing Simon through primary school and now into Year 7; the two boys had little in common and Simon had no inclination to pursue a friendship. He explained that the two boys had never really got along and shared few common interests and suggested that they didn't need to speak to each other or play with each other, but rather they could perhaps acknowledge each other with the odd 'hello' and leave it at that. The other boy said he would have preferred to continue to play together sometimes and that, having heard Simon's feelings and thoughts, agreed to Simon's wishes.
2. The Head Teacher spoke again with Simon on his own and invited his Form Teacher Mr. Jackson into the room. It was agreed that Simon would speak with Mr. Jackson if there were any repeat incidents of the behaviour and also if Simon felt the need to talk about anything else that was making him unhappy at school. It was further agreed that circle time in form time would more regularly enquire about pupils' feelings to help all pupils to develop confidence in emotional literacy and to better understand others' feelings.
3. The Head Teacher phoned Simon's dad, to let him know what had happened and the outcomes.

This restorative strategy gave every pupil involved in the incident the opportunity to hear what others had to say and to be heard, to explore the implications of the incident and to find solutions that were meaningful. The word 'sorry' was used in some of the meetings with Simon, but not all, and that was OK. The way the Head Teacher managed the incident facilitated the forum in which Simon and the other Year 7 boys could respectfully disagree; in practice, this happened with only one of the boys.



An introduction to Restorative Practice skills

Here are a few key skills, by way of introduction to restorative practice:



Active listening

Fully concentrating on what is being said rather than passively 'hearing' the message of the speaker.



Restorative questions

Explore everyone's thoughts and feelings and take an incident from the past/present towards a future solution.



Behaviour as communication

What is a pupil's behaviour telling us about their thoughts and feelings at any given time?

How can a better understanding of a pupil's thoughts and feelings change/influence my response to their behaviour?



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Restorative Questions

The following questions are asked to each person in turn, usually starting with the harmer...

- What happened?
- What were you thinking/feeling at the time?
- What are you thinking/feeling now?
- Who's been affected by what happened and how?
- What do you/they need?
- What needs to happen to make things right?



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Want to know more?

Restorative Thinking recommends that any school wishing to adopt restorative practice in any way, shape or form should do so with the input from a recognised training provider and the Restorative Justice Council (RJC) provides a list of trainers that are signed up to the Trainers' Code of Practice:

<https://restorativejustice.org.uk/trainers-register>

All training organisations signed up to the RJC's Code of Practice can also apply for the Training Provider Quality Mark (TPQM) and the Restorative Service Quality Mark (RSQM).

Resources

The RJC has a range of resources for schools:

<https://restorativejustice.org.uk/resources>

Restorative Thinking Limited has a suite of short videos developed with primary and secondary schools in Liverpool to help introduce restorative practice in schools and these are freely available for schools to use as part of their CPD:

<http://www.restorativethinking.co.uk/schools/resources/>

The Anti-Bullying Alliance has free CPD online training about anti-bullying:

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/onlinetraining



Anti-Bullying Week 2018 – Choose Respect

Anti-Bullying Week is happening from Monday 12th – Friday 16th November 2018 and has the theme 'Choose Respect'. This resource was written by Restorative Thinking to compliment the suit of resources available for Anti-Bullying Week and to support schools to help pupils understand how to 'respectfully disagree.' You can find out more about Anti-Bullying Week at:

www.anti-bullyingalliance.org.uk/antibullyingweek

