



## PREPARING FOR YOUR RESTORATIVE JUSTICE CONFERENCE

*"How you send people away from our community is how they will come back. Send them away in anger, they come back angry; send them away with love, they come back with love in their hearts."*

-Peacemaking Circles,  
Pranis, Stuart and Wedge



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## Restorative Justice 101 – How does it work?

This booklet is intended to help someone who has created harm understand the process of restorative justice and the conference he/she will be attending. Please be sure to call your facilitator if you have any questions or concerns before the conference.

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### Restorative Justice is:

An opportunity to be accountable and take responsibility for your actions.

Heal the harm created by your actions. This may be harm to you, your family, friends and your community.

A process that acknowledges that an offense harms relationships; it is an effort to repair those relationships and restore the community. It is an alternative to the traditional court system which establishes blame and enforces punishment.

## How do I prepare for the victim/offender conference?

*Take some time and think about the following questions. Jot down a few thoughts and answers to help you in the process.*

1. What did I do? What was I charged with?
2. What happened before, during and after the incident? What is the complete picture?
3. Who was harmed and how do I think they might feel?
4. How did my choice affect my parents, siblings, any other family members?
5. How do i think my choices might have affected my community?(This could be your workplace, school, neighborhood, city, etc.)
6. Do I feel remorse? (Bad about what happened?)
7. How might I repair the harm to:

The harmed party?

Your family members?

The community?

Yourself?



## Who will be attending your conference?

**Responsible party:** This is you, the person that committed the offense. Your job in the conference is to be honest in describing your offense and your feelings about what happened. You will also be asked to be accountable for your choices and be willing to repair the harm. You may bring friends or family with you who may assist in supporting you through the process and afterwards.

**Harmed party- support person:** This is the person harmed by your offense. They can decide whether or not they want to be a part of the conference or if they wish to have someone else represent them (a victim advocate). They also have the right to bring supporters with them, if they choose.

**Facilitator(s):** Your conference will have one or two trained facilitators. They will guide you through the process and ensure that the process goes as smoothly as possible. It is their job to make sure all parties are heard during the conference and that everyone is able to provide input throughout the conference.

**Community members:** The conference will include a few members of your community. They are volunteers who will help you to understand how your actions affected your community. They may ask questions and provide input throughout the process.



## What will help me in preparing for my conference?

- **Be a good listener:**
  - Listen attentively
  - Do not interrupt
  - Maintain eye contact
  - Ask questions if you don't understand something
  - Allow the speaker to express their feelings
- **Be compassionate**
  - Put yourself in the other person's shoes (empathy)
  - Think about what the other person may be feeling as a result of your choices
- **Use "I" statements:** Avoid blaming, pointing fingers, etc. Begin statements with: "I feel" or "I did"
- **Be completely honest about your offense**
- **Be respectful of all of the participants in your conference**
- **Be willing to follow through with any terms/consequences set out during your conference.**

## A few thoughts about taking responsibility:

Know that mistakes that are illegal and/or cause harm to others are NOT OK, even though they may just be mistakes. Often, we make choices that are not well thought out, or end up having consequences or causing harm that we did not anticipate. Even if your actions were not meant to cause harm, it is important that you acknowledge what you did, how the victim feels and be willing to repair the harm.

## WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF RESTORATIVE JUSTICE?

**E**very restorative justice conference has a different outcome, so we cannot anticipate exactly how your conference will turn out, but most often some or all of the following results from restorative justice conferences:

**R**esponsible party – You have the opportunity to face the individual(s) you harmed and make amends. You will have the opportunity to put this offense behind you and learn how to refrain from this type of behavior in the future.

**H**armed party – Has the opportunity to express the pain, fear, anger and loss suffered as a result of your actions and the opportunity to hear acceptance of responsibility, apology and willingness to repair the harm, which allows the victim to let go of fear, anger, resentment and the need for revenge.

**C**ommunity – The community is restored and becomes a safer place for everyone. The community members feel a sense of responsibility for both in a conference. There is a shared sense that justice has been done and a larger sense of community among the participants.

*“Humanity survives and thrives on relationships. Restorative Justice is about restoring relationships between families and communities.”*

## Requirements for participating in a Restorative Justice conference include:

A willingness to accept responsibility for your actions.

Empathy – the ability to imagine what it would be like to be in the victim’s situation.

A willingness to play an active role in the conference, adhere to the ground rules and follow through with the terms set out in the conference agreement.

### What to bring to the conference with you:

If you are 17 years of age or younger, you must be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian, both during the pre-conference and the restorative justice conference.

An attitude that includes: openness and a willingness to accept responsibility for your actions, empathy for others, and a sincere desire to repair the harm.

