



**CSJ** Counsel to  
Secure Justice

# **BEING RESTORATIVE AT HOME A PRIMER**

**A short guide to help make  
relationships at home restorative.**



# **BEING RESTORATIVE AT HOME**

**A PRIMER**

**RJ Week 2021**

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Each one of us has, and will, experience conflict in different situations including with the people closest to us – relatives, people we stay with, friends, caregivers, or community of care. In any situation when there is more than one person, there is bound to be conflict. While learning to navigate conflict is a lifelong process, **restorative tools can equip us in begin better navigating conflict in our interpersonal relationships.**

**Restorative tools focus on strengthening relationships and having honest, heart-to-heart conversations to address concerns that arise.**

Please note that this toolkit has not been intended to be used for situations of abuse/gaslighting/power/control/manipulation or violence. In such situations, please reach out for appropriate external support.

## Conflict / Disagreements / Hurt

A direct one-on-one conversation with the person you are experiencing dissonance with may be a helpful first step.

### Starting the conversation

- It is often hard to start talking about conflict with others, especially because quite a few people are socialised to believe that suppressing conflict and emotions to "maintain peace" is more important than getting into an argument. However, in the long run, engaging in conversation around conflict can **create space for genuinely addressing both parties' needs** allowing them to move towards a shared understanding, and even a strengthening of the bond.
- **Take time to think through** how you can start a conversation on conflict in your context.
  - Here are some examples that may be helpful:
    - i. "This morning when you did \_\_\_\_ (specific behaviour), I felt hurt and I was wondering if we could talk about it?"
    - ii. "I was wondering what you meant when you said \_\_\_\_ (specific words)."
    - iii. "This morning felt tough. How are you feeling about it?"

- Think about your cultural context and whether there are barriers that prevent you from having such conversations, for instance, hierarchy or a need of elders to be respected (often seen as synonymous with not being questioned), or a strong focus on not starting conflict.
  - In that situation, how can you start a conversation keeping in mind the other person's cultural needs while also staying true to your own needs? What does that language look like?

## Listening

- Whether you initiated the conversation or the other person did, listen from a place of genuinely wanting to listen to understand and not to immediately share your perspective/experience or offer advice.

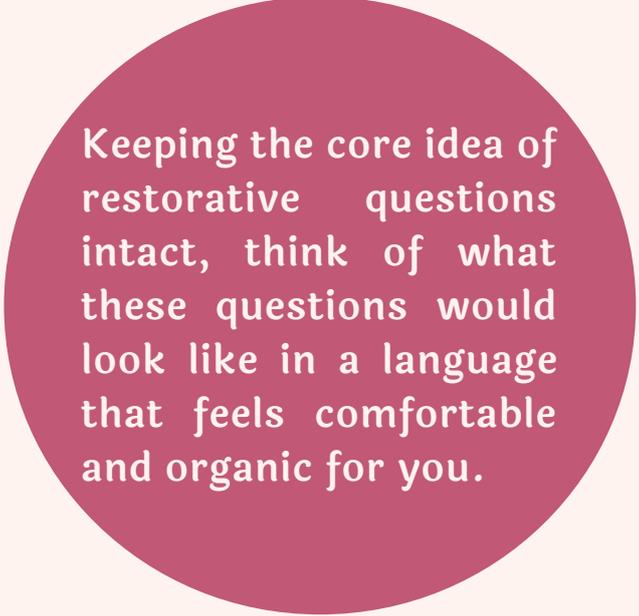
Unhelpful listening - minimising, unsolicited advice-giving, sharing one's own experience	Helpful listening - validating, asking questions around what the other person is feeling/needs or offering support
Why are you so upset about it...	Thank you for sharing
The same thing happened to my uncle...	I am here with you
You should try doing...	How are you feeling about it?
Its not a big deal...	What do you need?
Things could have been worse...	I am here if you'd like to share more.

## Questions to guide the conversation

- Offer space to the other person to talk about their experience of the situation.
- Instead of asking "Why" questions, ask "What happened." The latter is a non-blaming question that allows people to share their lived experience of the situation, whereas a 'why' question may elicit defensiveness, justifying or minimising.

- Gradually, go on to ask a series of questions that help us walk through what happened, how it impacted us, and what we need. The idea of using these questions is that we allow sharing without blaming or attacking either of the persons.

- a. What happened?
- b. What were you thinking at the time?
- c. How have you been affected? / What does this conflict bring up for you?
- d. In what way? What's been the hardest part?
- e. What do you need to make this right?
- f. How can we make sure this doesn't happen again?



Keeping the core idea of restorative questions intact, think of what these questions would look like in a language that feels comfortable and organic for you.

## Communicating our feelings, perspectives and needs

- We are responsible to share our own feelings and needs, while taking care to ensure that we are acknowledging that ours is only one perspective and the other person can have experienced the same situation very differently from us.
  - One way to do this is to use a tool called "**I statements**" which equip us to speak in ways that promote honest communication without blaming or attacking the other person. As a result, the other person is likely to be more open to listening to our perspective and less defensive.

Statements that are blaming, judgmental or attacking	I statements - "When [specific action/thought], I felt [...] because I need/value [...]"
You were very harsh.	When you raised your voice, I felt scared.
You are inconsiderate.	I was hoping for you to remember our plans for this weekend, and when I didn't hear from you, I felt disappointed and hurt. I was looking forward to spending time with you.
Your right-wing politics is sickening.	I have different viewpoints and I strongly believe that not acknowledging the needs of any minority can cause a lot of individual and social harm. I value people's right to self-determination and equality.

- "I statements" give us an opportunity to name our feelings and needs. However, we may not have the tools to express our emotions or needs verbally. Online tools such as, emotion charts and a list of needs, can be helpful in this regard. For example, see this list of [feelings](#) and [needs](#) by the Centre for NonViolent Communication.
  - Alternatively, you can conduct an online search for pictorial images which are also helpful with children/people for whom the written list may not be accessible.
  - You can also map out the different emotions you experience and keep the list ready.



Emoticons / emotion charts are an easy way to learn ways to identify and express our emotions.

What will "I Statements" look like in your context and your language of choice?

What feels comfortable for you to say?

- "I statements" can often be experienced as clumsy and hard to say, especially initially. However, with time and practice, these can become one of the most helpful tools to navigate conflict as they create space for both persons' lived reality, needs and experience.
- Think of what "I statements" would look like in your context and how you'll be comfortable sharing your needs and feelings .

## Apologising for having caused harm

Each one of us has the potential to hurt the people around us, sometimes even unknowingly. When we become aware of having harmed others, it is important that we offer a genuine apology.

- **State what happened and what went wrong.**
- **Acknowledge your role in it without minimising, justifying or defending**
  - ~~I did not mean it~~
  - ~~But you also did... / But it wasn't very bad~~
  - ~~It's not a big deal~~
  - ~~That was not my intention~~
- **Acknowledge the impact on the other person; if not clear seek an explanation from them**
  - ~~I am sorry IF I hurt you~~
- **Express genuine remorse**
  - I have been feeling guilty ever since
  - I regret doing what I did
- **Ask them what they need**
- **Don't expect forgiveness**

Think of a time you hurt someone...

If you had a chance to apologise, what would you say?

“Conflict often has the ability to make us zero in or hyper focus on the moment. We can lose sight of our relationship with the other person(s), their history or even attempts in the moment to rectify or resolve issues.” (Hemphill, 2021)

# When can we use these tools?

- Please take care of your safety and wellbeing and use these tools only when you are certain you will be physically and emotionally safe if you have the conversation.
- All of these tools require some level of openness from all involved and a commitment to respect. If that is not possible, alternative solutions may be needed if you seek to have a conversation, including seeking outside support.
- If the other person shows openness to having the conversation but isn't equipped with the tools to go through all the restorative questions, you can still use "I statements" to verbalise your experience of the situation and your need.
- Even if the other person is not ready to have a conversation with you, you can use the restorative questions to reflect on a situation that impacted you.

## Key Reminders

- We have to feel our way through it, there are no easy shortcuts.
- Multiple truths exist. We must learn that things are not black and white and multiple perspectives and duality can, and do exist.
- Each one of us has feelings and feelings influence our behaviour.
- We all have needs.
- Practice over perfection. Know that it takes time and effort to practice communicating in a restorative manner. Take your time, and approach the practice with patience and compassion for yourself and those around you.

## How Can I Begin?

### Reflect on your values

When we reflect on our values, we are equipped to share with others why we believe in certain viewpoints or why certain behaviours are important to us.

What values are important to you?

What values do you keep coming back to?

## Reflect on your conflict style

Here is a set of reflective questions to get you started:

Think of times when you are in conflict.  
How do you respond?  
What do you do?

- Do I blame?
- Do I shut down and not want to talk?
- Do I engage in harsh words towards myself?
- Do I collaborate?
- Do I feel anxious?
- Do I try to de-escalate?

Building awareness of our conflict styles can be helpful in becoming more self-aware and in turn, engaging in more helpful behaviour in the future.

## Reflect on your experience of conflict

Think of a time you engaged in conflict and it helped you.  
What did you do/say/think?  
What did the other person do/say/think?

## Engage with identifying your experiences and emotions

Try practicing setting dedicated time on identifying your emotions and experiences. When done over time, this builds self-awareness and helps communicate feelings in ways that can help resolve the conflict, instead of attacking the other person.

What helps you pause and feel grounded?

## Take out time to slow down

Try gifting yourself some time each day to engage in a practice that helps you slow down and become more intentional. For instance, mindfulness or meditation can help to feel more grounded and also to be more in control of our emotional experiences.

# Resources

Hemphill, P. (2021). Tools for Addressing Chapter Conflict. BLM Healing Justice Working Group. Retrieved from [Black Lives Matter](#).

## Resources for practicing "I statements" and non-violent communication:

Practicing non-violent communication and/or affective statements can be a helpful tool to communicate in ways that are authentic and respectful. Here are some resources that may help.

1. Rosenberg, M. (2005). The surprising purpose of anger.
2. Rosenberg, M. B., & Chopra, D. (2015). Nonviolent communication: A language of life: Life-changing tools for healthy relationships. PuddleDancer Press.
3. Rosenberg, M. (2012). Living nonviolent communication: Practical tools to connect and communicate skillfully in every situation. Sounds True.
4. [Restorative Resources \(2020\). Affective Statements.](#)

**Please note:** This document is a compilation of research and tools from different sources, including conversations with restorative practitioners. You can also find some reflections and lived experiences on being restorative at home at [this Instagram Live chat](#) among CSJ Team members.

As is the nature of this subject, this is a living document and we seek to keep updating and adding to it. Please share your ideas and lived experiences with us at [engage@csjindia.org](mailto:engage@csjindia.org)

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Additionally, this primer is a brief compilation of ways of building a restorative environment at home. We also released a [primer](#) on creating restorative workplaces. If you found resonance with this resource or the one on restorative workplaces, and want our support in implementing restorative tools, please feel free to get in touch with us at [engage@csjindia.org](mailto:engage@csjindia.org)

