Dear Parents and Members of our School Community

Thank you to everyone involved in helping to make the Sacramental enrolments over the weekend such a positive experience. It was terrific to see so many young families together at mass. We wish all our 2016 Sacramental Candidates the very best as they begin their journey towards the next Sacrament that will help them to grow in understanding and love of God.

Yesterday morning our year 4/5/6 students took part in a Lenten Reconciliation liturgy that was lead by Father Phillip and organised by Mr Will. It was terrific to take part in this liturgy with the students and take time to reflect on the times when we need to be better and to continue to work towards this.

This Sunday marks the beginning of Holy Week. Palm Sunday denotes the beginning of Holy Week and is a celebration of Jesus coming into Jerusalem. We will be having liturgies all throughout Holy Week to make it real for our students. Monday morning at 9.00am in the church will be Palm Sunday.

Wednesday afternoon at 2.30pm will be the liturgy of the Last Supper and Thursday afternoon at 2.30pm will be Stations of the Cross. All parents are welcome to attend these liturgical celebrations.

Last week our year 6 students were enriched by their experiences on School Camp. I was so proud of them the way they collaborated, displayed leadership and followed instructions. They are a credit to our school. Thank you to Mr Fonseca for organising such a terrific experience for our students and to the other staff and parents who played supporting roles here.

Today our year 1/2 students took part in a Splash Carnival at Beatty Park. Assisted by the year 6 students they took part in water based games and relays in their faction groups. Such a terrific time was had by all. Thank you to Mrs Sampson who, as usual, had everything exceptionally well organised and to all the class teachers for their help.

Don’t forget there is a P&F meeting tonight. Our P&F do so much hard work for the students of this school and it never ceases to amaze me how much they achieve.

Leadership is a topic I would like to discuss briefly. It takes many different forms it ranges from the Prime Minister, State Leaders, community leaders and even school leaders. In our school we have many different people in leadership roles. Staff have a variety of roles that they lead in, class teachers lead a class every day. Parents on the School Board and the P&F show leadership in their roles. Student councillors have leadership roles.

Being a leader is never easy, it takes courage because no matter what you do you can’t please everyone. Being a leader you have to make tough calls which are never going to suit everyone. So I am asking you to keep this in the front of your mind for a while and think about how the many different leaders in our school at many different levels can be supported. This type of approach is really important for communities to function positively.

Enrol in the footy tipping folks and don’t forget to buy tickets for Afternoon on the Green. Two great P&F initiatives running at the moment.

Please take time to read the article pertaining to restorative practice later in the newsletter.

Until next week
God Bless

Darren McDonald
Principal
Dear Families and Friends,

This week I would like to share with you my experience of Year 6 camp. From Tuesday to Friday last week, the Year 6 students travelled down to Woodman Point Camp site for a week of adventure and team building activities. Camp is always a highlight for me each year, as it shows students in a different light, sometimes in situations that are challenging or confronting, we often speak to the children about how we act and display Christ like qualities in these circumstances. So to be offered this opportunity first hand, is a great pleasure.

Some of the activities the students participated in included, rock-climbing, archery, raft building, orienteering and racing down the 10 metre flying fox. In each example all the students performed excellently and overcame their fears to participate.

One sticking point for many groups on camp, is working together effectively in teams. This year’s group however was able to participate effectively and even build some new friendships along the way.

I would like to extend my thanks to the many parents and teachers that volunteered their services, your time and energy are greatly appreciated. Camp is a wonderful experience for our students, which builds lifelong skills and lasting memories. If you would like further information about our camp program, please feel free to contact me at the school.

Kind regards,
Ben Will

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**Choices We Make**

God made us special and gave us the gifts to be able to make choices, as we grow and change the choices we make change also. Here is a list of choices we made at different times in our lives.

**Toddlers**

When I was little I had a choice to play with my brother. I chose to suck my thumb. I chose to be quiet when mum was working. I didn’t like pasta and I had to try it then I made a choice to eat it or not, now pasta is my favourite food ever. When I was little I was naughty, I threw my food away.

**Kindy**

When I was a girl at Pre-school I choose to be clever. When we did work in Pre-school we always drew pictures I once had to make a choice which colours to use. I chose red, pink and purple. I chose to play with kids who didn’t have anyone to play with and drawing happy faces to people. I chose to help others and be nice.

**Now**

I choose to listen very hard and work very hard. I choose to play with Year 6’s or go up to the library. I choose to help little kids when they are hurt and be good when people ask me to. I had to make a choice what dance I was going to do, so you will see at our Assembly what my choice was.

Thank you to the students in Year 2 White for their honest reflections and words of wisdom.

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**Yr 2 White - Religious News**

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**Important Dates to Diarise**

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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td>16 Mar</td>
<td>P &amp; F Meeting @ 7pm</td>
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<td>17 Mar</td>
<td>St Patrick’s Day</td>
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<td>18 Mar</td>
<td>Swimming Training Merit Award Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>19 Mar</td>
<td>P &amp; F - Afternoon on the Green</td>
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<td>20 Mar</td>
<td>Palm Sunday</td>
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<td>21 Mar</td>
<td>Palm Sunday Liturgy 9am in the church</td>
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<td>23 Mar</td>
<td>Last Supper Liturgy of the Word in the church @ 2.30pm</td>
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<td>24 Mar</td>
<td>Stations of the Cross Liturgy Of the Word in the church @2.30pm</td>
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<td>25 Mar</td>
<td>Good Friday</td>
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<td>27 Mar</td>
<td>Easter Sunday</td>
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**Uniform Shop News**

**Opening time**

Every Thursdays from 8.30am to 9.30am.

For all uniform enquiries please contact Jacqui Covella, Uniform Shop Manager, directly at the following email address:

uniformshop@stbenedicts.wa.edu.au

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**School Website**

Our website address is:

www.stbenedictswa.com

Our website is complex and operates best on the Chrome search engine.

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**Assistant Principal**

The Assistant Principal’s office is located in the Music Room. Thursdays from 8am. Students from years 3 - 6 welcome.
Sports News         Crunch on Vegetables

Recent research shows that primary school aged children are getting better at eating vegetables; however, less than one-half (42%) are currently eating their recommended daily intake.

Crunchy vegetables are a great food for ‘Crunch&Sip’. They contain plenty of vitamins and minerals, are low in sugar and high in fibre.

Have you tried filling your child’s lunch box with cut up capsicum, celery, cucumber, carrot and cherry tomatoes?

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<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Event Date</th>
<th>Registration Close Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Perth</td>
<td>Sun, 10 April 2016</td>
<td>3 April 2016</td>
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To find out more, visit: try.weetbix.com.au

Sanitarium Weet-Bix Kids TRYathlon (SWKT) is in its 18th year. We’re proud of the fact that it's the biggest event series of its kind in the world and even more so that it helps our own kids stay active and healthy.

The greatest challenges facing our kids today are obesity and mental health issues. Every year the research we do with parents confirms that around 91% of all kids' self-esteem is improved as a result of participating in a Kids TRY event. My fellow TRY Hero ambassadors and I particularly enjoy giving every child a gold medal and seeing the big smiles on their faces.

Inters Swimming

We are one week into our training for the ASCS inter-school swimming carnival on April 6th, at Fremantle Leisure Centre.

Thank you to the many parents who have offered to assist with the training sessions. We ask that you make yourselves known to the allocated coaches/staff and then move to a lane to watch children in that lane.

Our Aqua-Fun carnival was held today at Beatty Park Aquatic Centre. It was a very enjoyable day and we thank the Year Six students for the special assistance they gave the junior school at this event.

Uniform Shop News

The Uniform Shop will have additional opening hours for Year One students to be fitted for their Winter Uniform.

Monday, 21st March from 9.30 to 11.30
Tuesday, 22nd March from 8.30 to 10.30

Bookings of appointments can be made via email on uniformshop@stbenedicts.wa.edu.au

Our winter pants are made in Fiji. Due to the recent cyclone & its devastating effects on Fiji our winter pants will arrive later than anticipated. They are now due to be delivered at the beginning of next term. As a result we have limited stock of grey trousers. If you are unable to purchase long pants your child can continue to wear his grey shorts until stock arrives.

Our suppliers have over the last few years experienced increasing production costs and have passed these increases onto St Benedict's. The Uniform Shop unfortunately now have to increase prices of some stock items. We sincerely regret these changes. In response the Uniform Shop has actively made every effort to source new, more cost effective suppliers, who are able to supply items in a far more timely manner.

Winter Uniforms are now available for purchase from the Uniform Shops on Thursdays form 8.30am to 9.30am.

Kind Regards,
Jaqui Covella
Uniform Shop Manager
Our Little Bennies have been busy cooking again! We learnt that we must follow a recipe carefully so that our lovely biscuits will be just right and delicious.

We brainstormed things around us that are orange and our list was quite impressive. We glued various orange materials to make an orange collage and we played with bright orange play dough!

The classroom was filled with princesses, batmans and supermans as the children had a wonderful time with our inside dress-up clothes - conversation was flowing and imaginations were delightful.

Together we will grow and learn,
Kindy White

This week at Kindy we have revised our rhyming skills and the children have brought in some very tricky rhyming items. The children are learning to ‘tune in’ and listen carefully to the words and their sounds.

Our numeracy focus was on patterning - we are trying to remember that a pattern always repeats itself. Here are some of the beautiful patterns on our Easter egg shapes that we traced and cut out all by ourselves!

The children learnt about St. Patrick's Day and our activities were rather green. We learnt about the shamrock and that it represents The Father, The Son and The Holy Spirit and that was the symbol that St. Patrick used to teach the people about God.

Together we will grow and learn,
Kindy White

Just a reminder that all orders for Issue 2 of book club must be completed by Friday 18th March.

If you wish to order online you may use the LOOP system. Please note that if you do use LOOP DO NOT send the order form to school as this will result in a doubling up of orders.

If you do not wish to order on line please send your completed order form with correct money or cheque made out to Scholastic Australia to the class teacher by the due date.

Thank you.
Mrs Noonan

Dear Parents and Families,

I would just like to introduce myself. My name is Michael and I am the new co-ordinator for the St Benedict’s service here. If you are looking for some excellent before and after school care for your children, feel free to drop by and have a chat with me about what we offer here at Camp Australia. Alternatively, you can logon to www.campaustralia.com.au for further information.

For the autumn holidays, the theme for our program is Jungle Quest. The program runs from Monday 11th April and ends on Friday 22nd April and is open from 7am-6pm. A more detailed program will be made available closer to the time but you are able to log on to www.campaustralia.com.au for information or to enrol/register.

I hope I will meet many of you over the coming weeks.

Regards, Michael
1. Tickets for our Afternoon on the Green on Saturday 19th March are now on sale. Please go to www.trybooking.com/187034 to purchase. Kindly, purchase your tickets by Wednesday so that we can firm up numbers.

We have a great afternoon of entertainment planned beginning with the Fremantle Jazz Band. We look forward to seeing our St Bennies families enjoying our new green!

2. Please ensure all tickets and monies for the Easter Raffle are handed into your child’s class teacher by March 18th. Prizes will not be drawn on Monday 21st as initially advertised, as there is an Palm Sunday Liturgy but instead will be drawn on ….........................

3. If you have not done so yet, it’s time to register for our Footy Tipping competition! Registrations are $50 and are due by Friday 18th March. There are weekly prizes of $20 and fantastic overall prizes. Please refer to the attached flyer for registration details.

Our P&F meeting is this evening, in the school library, from 7pm. All are welcome to attend.

Kind regards
Tanya Douse-Kerr
P&F President

ST BENEDICT’S COMMUNITY FOOTY TIPPING

ST BENEDICT’S P & F presents:
An afternoon on the Green

Sat 19 March
3 - 7 pm
$20 per St Benedict’s Family
Alness Street entry only
BYO picnic
Cash bar only - Beer & Wine
Strickly NO BYO pls

To purchase tickets go to:
www.trybooking.com/187034

Extended family and friends welcome at $10 each

Wristbands will come home with your eldest child
Pupil Free Day!  
Tuesday 29th March 2016

Come and join the fun with us at our upcoming Pupil Free Day

**When:** Tuesday 29th March 2016

**Time:** 07:00 to 18:00

**Where:** The Before and After School Care Room at St Benedict's School

**Fees:** $53.88*

**Out of Pocket guide (with rebates)**: $8.29 to $26.94

**Bookings:** Must be made by Tuesday 22nd March 2016

There's lots to do and lots of fun to be had with your friends and the Camp Australia Team at the upcoming St Benedict's School.


We look forward to seeing you soon!

St Benedict's School Camp Australia Team.

*Notes on fees:
1. The Child Care Benefit (CCB) is income tested and scaled, resulting in payments of between 0% and 85% of the fees.
2. The Child Care Rebate (CCR) is non-income tested and is available to almost all Australian families. It provides a rebate of 50% of fees after the CCB has been calculated and applied. Out of pocket expenses to be used as a guide only and are subject to change. Individual circumstances will vary.*
Restorative Justice in Everyday Life: Beyond the Formal Ritual

By Ted Wachtel, President
International Institute for Restorative Practices, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

The Australian National University, Canberra, February 16-18, 1999

Punishment in response to crime and other wrongdoing is the prevailing practice, not just in criminal justice systems but throughout most modern societies. Punishment is usually seen as the most appropriate response to crime and to wrongdoing in schools, families, and workplaces. Those who fail to punish naughty children and offending youths and adults are often labelled as “permissive.”

This punitive-permissive continuum (Figure 1) reflects the current popular view, but offers a very confined perspective and limited choice—to punish or not to punish. The only other variable is the severity of the punishment, such as the amount of the fine or the length of the sentence. However, we can construct a more useful view of social discipline by looking at the interplay of two more comprehensive variables, control and support.

We define “control” as discipline or limit-setting and “support” as encouragement or nurturing. Now we can combine a high or low level of control with a high or low level of support to identify four general approaches to social discipline: neglectful, permissive, punitive (or retributive) and restorative.1

We subsume the traditional punitive-permissive continuum within this more inclusive framework. The permissive approach (lower left of Figure 2) is comprised of low control and high support, a scarcity of limit-setting and an abundance of nurturing. Opposite permissive (upper left of Figure 2) is the punitive (or retributive) approach, high on control and low on support. Sadly, schools and courts in the United States and other countries have increasingly embraced the punitive approach, suspending and expelling more students and imprisoning more citizens than ever before. The third approach, when there is an absence of both limit-setting and nurturing, is neglectful (lower left of Figure 2).

The fourth possibility is restorative (upper right of Figure 2), the approach to social discipline that brings us all together at this conference. Employing both high control and high support, the restorative approach confronts and disapproves of wrongdoing while supporting and valuing the intrinsic worth of the wrongdoer.

In using the term “control” we are advocating high control of wrongdoing, not control of human beings in general. Our ultimate goal is freedom from the kind of control that wrongdoers impose on others.

This social discipline window can be used to represent parenting styles. For example, there are neglectful parents who are absent or abusive and permissive parents who are ineffectual or enabling. The term “authoritarian” has been used to describe the punitive parent while the restorative parent has been called “authoritative.”2 Further, we can apply John Braithwaite’s terms to the window: “stigmatizing” responses to wrongdoing are punitive while “reintegrative” responses are restorative.3

A few key words—NOT, FOR, TO and WITH—have helped clarify these approaches for our staff at the Community Service Foundation’s schools and group homes. If we were neglectful toward the troubled youth in our agency’s programs, we would NOT do anything in response to their inappropriate behavior. If permissive, we would do everything FOR them and ask little in return. If punitive, we would respond by doing things TO them.

Figure 1: Punitive-Permissive Continuum

Figure 2: Social Discipline Window
But responding in a restorative manner, we do things WITH them and involve them directly in the process. A critical element of the restorative approach is that, whenever possible, WITH also includes victims, family, friends and community—those who have been affected by the offender’s behavior.

Although the restorative approach to social discipline expands our options beyond the traditional punitive-permissive continuum, the implementation of restorative justice to date has been narrowly restricted. Our concept of restorative justice is confined to a few programs like community service projects designed to reintegrate offenders and formal rituals such as victim-offender mediation, sentencing circles and family group or community accountability conferences.

John Braithwaite, in his keynote address at the first North American Conference on Conferenceing, asserted that “restorative justice will never become a mainstream alternative to retributive justice unless long-term R[esearch] and D[evelopment] programs show that it does have the capacity to reduce crime.” If that is so, then I fear that restorative justice is doomed to a peripheral role at the fringes of criminal justice and school disciplinary systems. We have all sorts of evidence that victims, offenders and their respective supporters find restorative justice rituals satisfying and just, but we have yet to conclusively demonstrate that any restorative justice ritual significantly reduces reoffense rates or otherwise prevents crime.

Although a conferencing advocate, I would be naive to think that a single restorative intervention can change the behavior and mindset of the delinquent and high-risk youths who participate in our agency’s counseling, educational and residential programs. Yet we do experience significant positive behavior change from these young people when they attend our programs. This is because, as Terry O’Connell, the police officer who developed the scripted model of conferencing, remarked when he first visited one of our schools in 1995, “You are running a conference all day long.” It has taken me several years to fully appreciate his comment. Although we had never used the term “restorative justice,” we now recognize that we have created an environment characterized by the everyday use of a wide range of informal and formal restorative practices.

The term “restorative practice” includes any response to wrongdoing which falls within the parameters defined by our social discipline window as both supportive and limit-setting. Once we examine the possibilities, we see that they are virtually unlimited. To illustrate, we offer examples from everyday life in our schools and group homes and place them along the restorative practices continuum (Figure 3). Moving from the left end of the continuum to the right, the restorative interventions become increasingly formal, involve more people, more planning, more time, are more complete in dealing with the offense, more structured, and due to all of the factors, may have more impact on the offender.

On the far left of the continuum is a simple affective response in which the wronged person lets the offender know how he or she feels about the incident. For example, one of our staff might say, “Jason, you really hurt my feelings when you act like that. And it surprises me, because I don’t think you want to hurt anyone on purpose.” And that’s all that is said. If a similar behavior happens again, we might repeat the response or try a different restorative intervention, perhaps asking, “How do you think Mark felt when you did that?” and then waiting patiently for an answer.

In the middle of the continuum is the small impromptu conference. I was with our residential program director a few weeks ago, awaiting a court hearing about placing a 14-year-old boy in one of our group homes. His grandmother told us how on Christmas Eve, several days before, he had gone over to a cousin’s house without permission and without letting her know. He did not come back until the next morning, just barely in time for them to catch a bus to her sister’s house for Christmas dinner. The program director got the grandmother talking about how that incident had affected her and how worried she was about her grandson. The boy was surprised by how deeply his behavior had affected his grandmother. He readily apologized.

Close to the far right of the continuum is a larger, more formal group process, still short of the formal conference. Two boys got into a fistfight recently, an unusual event at our schools. After the fight was stopped, their parents were called to come and pick them up. If the boys wanted to return to our school, each boy had to phone and ask for an opportunity to converse the staff and his fellow students that he should be allowed back. Both boys called and came to school. One refused to take responsibility and had a defiant attitude. He was not re-admitted. The other was humble, even tearful. He listened attentively while staff and students told him how he had affected them, willingly took responsibility for his behavior, and got a lot of compliments about how he handled the meeting. He was re-admitted and no further action was taken. The other boy was put in the juvenile detention center by his probation officer. Ideally, he will be a candidate for a formal family group conference.

We often create informal restorative interventions simply by asking offenders questions from the scripted formal conference. “What happened?” “What were
you thinking about at the time?“Who do you think has been affected?” “How have they been affected?” Whenever possible, we provide those who have been affected with an opportunity to express their feelings to the offenders. The cumulative result of all of this affective exchange in a school is far more productive than lecturing, scolding, threatening or handing out detentions, suspensions and expulsions. Our teachers tell us classroom decorum in our schools for troubled youth is better than in the local public schools. But interestingly, we rarely hold formal conferences. We have found that the more we rely on informal restorative practices in everyday life, the less we need formal restorative rituals.

Restorative justice is a philosophy, not a model, and ought to guide the way we act in all of our dealings. In that spirit the Community Service Foundation uses restorative practices in dealing of its own staff issues. As director, I strive for an atmosphere in which staff can comfortably express concerns and criticisms of me and other supervisors. I also take ownership for inappropriate behavior on my part and address problems with staff in a restorative way.

Last year several employees became engaged in a squabble that was disrupting our workplace. I felt removed enough from the situation to act as facilitator in a conference to deal with the spiraling conflict. In this conference there was no clearly identified wrongdoer. Rather, when I invited the participants to the conference, I asked each of them to take as much responsibility as possible for their part in the problem and assured them that I was asking everyone else to do the same. I was pleased to find a lot of self-disclosure and honesty in my preliminary discussion with each participant and felt confident that the conference would go well. In fact, it exceeded my expectations. Not only did a great deal of healing taking place while we met, but several individuals made plans to get together one-to-one to further resolve their differences. To the best of my knowledge the conflict is now ancient history and no longer a factor in our workplace.

Restorative practices are contagious, spreading from our workplace to our homes. A new staff member recently told me how she, her husband and her younger son restoratively confronted her young adult son, who had just entered the world of work. They told him how annoyed they were with his failure to get himself up on time in the morning. Mom and Dad expressed their embarrassment that their son had been late to work at a company where they knew a lot of his co-workers. They insisted that they were stepping back. If their son lost his job, it was not their problem, but his. As a result of the informal family group conference, the young man now sets three alarm clocks and gets to work on time.

A police officer who was trained in conferencing shared how he confronted his little boy, who had torn off a piece of new wallpaper, with questions from the conference. The youngster became very remorseful and acknowledged that he had hurt his mother, who loved the new wallpaper, and the workman he had watched put up the new wallpaper. Dad felt satisfied that the intervention was far more effective than an old-fashioned scolding or punishment.

A police officer ran a variation on a family group conference with a dispute between neighbors about a barking dog; another held an impromptu conference on the front porch between a homeowner and an adolescent prankster who stole a lawn ornament. Still another police officer held a conference for the families of two runaways, helping the teenagers’ understanding of how hurtful their actions were, although they had not committed a criminal offense that would typically require the officer’s involvement. An assistant principal made two teenagers, on the verge of a fight, tell each other how they were feeling and brought them to quick resolution. A corrections officer addressed an inmate’s angry outburst with a conference. A social worker got family members talking to each other in a real way about a teenager’s persistent truancy and got the youth to start going to school. Beyond the formal criminal justice ritual, there are an infinite number of opportunities for restorative interventions.

For restorative practices to be effective in changing offender behavior, we try to do the following:

1. Foster awareness. In the most basic intervention we may simply ask a few questions of the offender which foster awareness of how others have been affected by the wrongdoing. Or we may express our own feelings to the offender. In more elaborate interventions we provide an opportunity for others to express their feelings to the offenders.

2. Avoid scolding or lecturing. When offenders are exposed to other people’s feelings and discover how victims and others have been affected by their behavior, they feel empathy for others. When scolded or lectured, they react defensively. They see themselves as victims and are distracted from noticing other people’s feelings.

3. Involve offenders actively. All too often we try to hold offenders accountable by simply doing out punishment. But in a punitive intervention, offenders are completely passive. They just sit quietly and act like victims. In a restorative intervention, offenders are usually asked to speak. They face and listen to victims and others whom they have affected. They help decide how to repair the harm and must then keep their commitments. Offenders have an active role in a restorative process and are truly held accountable.

4. Accept ambiguity. Sometimes, as in a fight between two people, fault is unclear. In those cases we may have to accept ambiguity. Privately, before the con
ference, we encourage individuals to take as much responsibility as possible for their part in the conflict. Even when offenders do not fully accept responsibility, victims often want to proceed. As long as everyone is fully informed of the ambiguous situation in advance, the decision to proceed with a restorative intervention belongs to the participants.

5. Separate the deed from the doer. In an informal intervention, either privately with the offenders or publicly after the victims are feeling some resolution, we may express that we assume that the offenders did not mean to harm anyone or that we are surprised that they would do something like that. When appropriate, we may want to cite some of their virtues or accomplishments. We want to signal that we recognize the offenders’ worth and disapprove only of their wrongdoing.

6. See every instance of wrongdoing and conflict as an opportunity for learning. The teacher in the classroom, the police officer in the community, the probation officer with his caseload, the corrections officer in the prison all have opportunities to model and teach. We can turn negative incidents into constructive events—building empathy and a sense of community that reduce the likelihood of negative incidents in the future.

I am not speaking theoretically or hopefully. I am speaking about my direct experience with our schools and group homes. Juvenile courts and schools from four counties send us 250 of their more troublesome young people at any one time. Thanks to restorative practices, they change their behaviors, cooperate, take positive leadership roles and confront each other about inappropriate behavior.

I lacked an adequate way of expressing why these changes occur until I encountered the concept of restorative justice. We are currently undertaking a research project to evaluate more specifically how our agency’s restorative practices impact young people, what specifically changes and to what extent those changes are sustained after our students and clients leave us. But I can assure you that something positive is happening as a result of systematic implementation of restorative practices in what might otherwise be a very negative and challenging environment.

The Community Service Foundation is the sponsoring agency for the Real Justice program internationally and has subsidized its efforts for the last four years. Having trained more than 3,000 people in conferencing, we find that many trainees never actually conduct conferences. Many hesitate to facilitate a formal conference because they are afraid. Many do not have the authority to bypass existing procedures and sanctions, like zero tolerance policies in schools. So a large number of people have implemented restorative practices informally in the ways I have described above.

In recent months Real Justice has added the concept of restorative practices to its trainings, specifically encouraging people to try less formal interventions when they cannot do conferences. The idea has been well received. For example, educators who claim that they do not have time to pull together a full-blown conference are enthusiastic about more spontaneous restorative strategies. Real Justice is also working directly with a local school district to train teachers in informal restorative practices that they might use with daily classroom disciplinary problems.

We all know that the world will change only very slowly and very imperfectly. We cannot afford to be unrealistic or utopian. We must be flexible and experimental.

Some people think that police officers should not be facilitating conferences as part of their professional role and others believe that volunteers are the only ones neutral enough to facilitate criminal justice conferences or mediations. Surely these people hold such views for what they believe are the best of reasons, but our experience with restorative justice has been too brief to adopt such fixed boundaries. We must allow ourselves to move beyond the limited framework of the formal ritual and recognize the wider possibilities, allowing everyone to use restorative practices freely in their work.

If systems are not innately restorative, then they cannot hope to affect change simply by providing an occasional restorative intervention. Restorative practices must be systemic, not situational. You can’t just have a few people running conferences and everybody else doing business as usual. You can’t be restorative with students but retributive with faculty. You can’t have punitive police and restorative courts. To reduce the growing negative subculture among youth, to successfully prevent crime and to accomplish meaningful and lasting change, restorative justice must be perceived as a social movement dedicated to making restorative practices integral to everyday life.

Endnotes

For more information visit
www.realjustice.org
www.restorativepractices.org