

# RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS

Restorative Conflict Resolution



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## ABOUT RIGHTS RESPECTING SCHOOLS (RRS)

Rights Respecting Schools (RRS) is an initiative of UNICEF Canada's Global Classroom program. This initiative uses the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (the Convention) as the basis for enhancing an inclusive, participatory and respectful school culture for children and adults.

As a framework for educational improvement, the initiative helps schools address the whole learning environment through a consistent, rights-based approach. It is premised on the understanding that in order for children to want to achieve, they have to feel included, that they belong and that they matter. It brings children into early contact with the universal ideals of respect for oneself and for others, in the school community and in an interdependent world.

[rightsrespectingschools.ca](https://rightsrespectingschools.ca)

## REBUILDING RELATIONSHIPS

### Curriculum Themes

- Conflict and conflict resolution
- Problem solving
- Critical-thinking skills

### Grades

- 1 to 8

### Objectives

- Examine situations where children's rights come into conflict.
- Practice problem-solving skills.
- Explore the process of restorative practice after conflict occurs.

### Materials

- Refer to the *Classroom Scenario* (page 3), *Schoolyard Scenario* (page 3), *Which Resolution Works Best* (page 4), *Conflict Timeline* (page 5), *Using Restorative Practice* (page 6) and *Five Questions to Rebuild Relationships* (page 7).
- Copies of *Five Questions to Rebuild Relationships* – one per group of three students.

### Global Themes

- Conflict and Conflict Resolution
- Social Justice

### Timing

Will vary with grade level

### Activity

- Discuss the fact that every day we all deal with a certain amount of conflict. Whatever the situation, conflict doesn't feel good, and we all want to find a solution that makes us feel better.
- Explain that the best solutions to conflict are those where no one loses and everyone's needs are met. To reach these types of solutions, we often have to compromise. We have to share, we have to be generous and we have to be kind and respectful.
- Sometimes when conflict occurs there is a clash between the rights of one child and the rights of another. This happens often in school and between siblings. For example, one child might want to exercise their right to rest and have a nap at the same time that their sibling in the next room wants to exercise their right to play while they practice their trumpet solo. While we exercise our rights it is our rights-respecting responsibility to respect the rights of others. So where rights conflict, we need to come to a resolution.
- Explain that the students will now learn some techniques for resolving situations where rights are in conflict.
- Use the adaptations below with the different grades to build an increasing understanding of problem solving, conflict resolution and restorative practice.
- **Grade 1** – Discuss the *Classroom Scenario* with students. Identify which children's rights are in conflict. Discuss possible resolutions to the problem with students. Help them see that there are many possible solutions, but the best ones are those that meet the needs of both people.
- **Grade 2** – Discuss the *Schoolyard Scenario* with students. Help students identify which children's rights are in conflict. Use the strategy *Which Resolution Works Best* to identify possible solutions to the problem.
- **Grade 3** – Ask students to brainstorm possible scenarios where children's rights come into conflict with one another, at home, at school or in the community. Record the ideas on the board. Choose one scenario and have volunteers act it out at the front of the room. Model how to use the *Five Questions to Rebuild Relationships* by asking them to the student volunteers.

## REBUILDING RELATIONSHIPS (CONTINUED)

### Activity (continued)

- **Grade 3 (continued)** –Propose that these five questions become a common practice for dealing with conflicts in the classroom. Have students create and decorate a pocket-size card with the questions that they can keep with them at their desk and in their locker. Post a classroom poster with the questions for all students to see.
- **Grade 4** – Organize students into groups of three. Hand out one copy of *Five Questions to Rebuild Relationships* to each group. Suggest a conflict scenario and then have each group practice using the *Five Questions to Rebuild Relationships*, where two students model the conflict while the other student models the role of mediator/negotiator.
- **Grades 5 to 8** - Organize students into groups of three. Hand out one copy of *Five Questions of Restorative* to each group. Brainstorm conflict scenarios between students at school where at least one student is being denied their rights. Record student's ideas on the front board. Have each group choose one of the scenarios from the board and then practice using the *Five Questions of Restorative Practice*, where two students model the conflict while the other student models the role of mediator/negotiator.
- Give students time to act out their scenario and practice using the tools.
- Conduct a class discussion about the process.

### Discussion

Note: Choose which questions work best with each grade level.

- How did you decide which solution would work best? Was it difficult to decide?
- Were all parties satisfied with how the situation was resolved?
- How do the five *rebuilding relationships* questions help to repair relationships after conflict occurs?
- Are 'win/win' solutions always possible?
- How does this approach to solving conflicts support children's rights?

## REBUILDING RELATIONSHIPS SCENARIOS

Read the instructions in the activity *Rebuilding Relationships* for how to use the following scenarios.

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### Classroom scenario

#### Grade 1

Gabriella's teacher is talking about her favourite subject in school – science. Gabriella loves to learn about science, and she is trying her best to concentrate on the day's lesson. But Gabriella's best friend, Kerry, continues to whisper in her ear. Kerry wants to tell Gabriella a secret that is only meant for her best friend to know. The teacher has grown tired of the disruption to the class, and she insists on knowing what is so important that it needs to be discussed during the lesson. Gabriella is not sure she should share her friend's secret with the whole class, but she does so to avoid getting in trouble with the teacher.

#### Rights in conflict:

Gabriella's right to an education is being impacted by Kerry's disruptive behaviour.  
Kerry's right to privacy is challenged when Gabriella reveals her secret to the class.

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### Schoolyard scenario

#### Grade 2

On the schoolyard a group of friends is playing freeze tag with one another. Another child, Abdul, comes up to the group and asks to join them. One of the children in the group, Brent, decides he doesn't want Abdul to play, saying that Abdul can't join them because he isn't able to run fast enough. Upset by Brent's comments, Abdul pushes Brent. Brent falls to the ground scraping his knee. The teacher on duty sees the conflict and brings the boys inside to discuss what happened.

#### Rights in conflict:

Abdul's right to play is compromised when Brent doesn't let him participate.  
Brent's right to protection from harm is compromised when Abdul pushes him to the ground.

## TEACHING CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Conflict is an inevitable aspect of everyday life. Whether we quarrel with a sibling over a beloved toy or put our foot down when asked to finish our chores, managing conflict and resolving disputes is a necessary skill for every child to learn. There are effective ways to deal with conflict and there are ineffective ways. Use this simple activity to introduce the idea of conflict resolution to young children.

### Which Resolution Works Best? (Grades K to 4)

Ask two students to briefly role play a conflict situation, such as two children wanting to play with the same toy. Have them perform the conflict in front of the class, but not to the point of a resolution.

Then have the rest of the students brainstorm several possible solutions to the conflict. Record all suggested solutions at the front of the room – every idea is a good idea.

When a good number of solutions have been suggested, draw the following chart on the board at the front of the room.

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Ask the children to help classify each solution into one of the three categories:

- Solutions that result in each child getting what they want/need (two happy faces). For example, one child uses the toy for 10 minutes and then the other child uses it for 10 minutes.
- Solutions that result in one child getting what they want/need, while the other does not (one happy face, one sad face). For example, one child tells an adult, who gives the ball to one child and tells the other to find something else to do.
- Solutions that result in neither child getting what they want/need (two sad faces). For example, an adult takes the ball away and tells them both to find something else to do.

### Discussion

- Which solutions seem to be the best?
- Think of some conflicts you have been involved in. Do both parties typically get their needs met? What were the children's rights that were in conflict?
- Are solutions in which both parties get their needs met always possible? Are they always preferable?
- When we choose solutions that meet the needs of all involved parties, are we being rights respecting?
- Can violence ever result in a solution where both parties' needs are met? Violence can never result in an acceptable solution. Every person – adult or child – has the right to be protected from harm.

Source: Fountain, S., *Faces in Education for Peace and Conflict Resolution: A Training and Curriculum Support Manual*, UNICEF Canada (1997).

## TEACHING CONFLICT RESOLUTION (CONTINUED)

Use this activity to teach conflict resolution to children in grades 5 to 8.

### Conflict Timeline (Grades 5 to 8)

Explain that the activity will examine how conflicts develop and what steps can be taken to avoid or de-escalate them.

Read aloud a conflict story found in a book, traditional story or the news, or have a student share one from personal experience.

Have the children plot the sequence of events from the beginning to the end (or to the current situation) along a timeline.

Have students find a partner and discuss the following questions:

- Where did the conflict begin?
- What made it grow larger over time?
- What could have been done differently along the timeline to achieve a more positive result?

Have students work with their partner to draw a new timeline, showing the things they would do differently along the timeline to change the outcome of the conflict for the better.

The pairs hang their timelines around the room. The students circulate throughout the room to see how others handled the conflict.

### Discussion

- What did you learn from this activity?
- Have you ever been involved in a conflict where you or someone else helped to resolve the problem? Tell us about it.
- Can you think of a way to reach a more positive result for a conflict in your own life?
- What did you think of the ways in which other pairs chose to deal with the conflict? Did anything surprise you? Which solutions did you prefer?
- Why is it important for us to learn ways to resolve conflict?
- Make the point: Every child has the right to be free from harm and maltreatment. And they have the right to have an opinion, and have it heard and taken seriously. When we consider conflicts and how they are resolved, it is important that we emphasize strategies that allow for all the involved parties to have their needs or rights met. Resolutions that deny children their rights are unacceptable.

Source: Fountain, S., *Conflict Time Line* in Education for Peace and Conflict Resolution: A Training and Curriculum Support Manual, UNICEF (1997).

## USING RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

### What is Restorative Practice?

Restorative practices enable people to restore and build community in an increasingly disconnected world. The most important function of restorative practices is to restore and rebuild relationships after conflict, disagreement and harm.

In the context of education, contemporary disciplinary measures often rely on punishment to change behaviour. In contrast, restorative practices refer to the idea of persons of authority (i.e. administrative and school staff, teachers, parent volunteers) doing things *with* students rather than doing things *to* or *for* them. Implementing restorative practices in schools creates opportunities for meaningful student participation in the decision-making processes that directly affect them. Students that participate in restorative practices are successfully exercising Article 12 of the Convention – the right to participate.



#### Video Resource

#### The Forum: Conflict Resolution in a Circle

[creducation.org/cre/homebase/content\\_video/2397/](https://creducation.org/cre/homebase/content_video/2397/)

### Implementing Restorative Practices in the Classroom

The restorative approach assumes that the best people suited for resolving a conflict, are those who are directly involved. Solutions imposed by an outside party are understood to be less effective, less educative and less likely to be honoured. Engaging *with* students to resolve disputes and determine appropriate outcomes can take many forms. But central to all restorative practices is the free expression of emotion and affect.

Restorative practices can take the form of:	By:	In response to:
<b>Restorative Enquiry:</b> the starting point for restorative practices. Involves non-judgemental listening to help one person find a way forward for themselves.	Peer mentors, Teachers	Minor student worries, Classroom disruptions
<b>Restorative Discussion:</b> used in a challenging situation. Involves the expression of feelings and needs to understand why each has acted the way they have.	Often between a more and less powerful person	Disruption, Inter-personal conflict, Challenging situations
<b>Mediation:</b> used when both parties believe the other is the problem. The mediator is impartial and helps broker a joint solution.	Peer mediators, Teachers	Student conflict, Staff–student conflict
<b>Circles or Forums:</b> useful for solving problems that involve a group of people. Enables the group to express feelings and determine way forward.	Members of classroom community, Class groups	Class issues/harm within class, Problems affecting students

Source: This table was adapted with permission from: Transforming Conflict, *Restorative Approaches*, available at: [transformingconflict.org/Restorative\\_Approaches\\_and\\_Practices.htm](https://transformingconflict.org/Restorative_Approaches_and_Practices.htm).

## FIVE QUESTIONS TO REBUILD RELATIONSHIPS

When a fight or disagreement happens, people and things can be hurt. Afterwards the focus needs to be on how to repair and rebuild the relationship.

The five questions below help people work through problems together. It is best to have someone ask these questions of the people involved. At school, this extra person might be another student or a teacher. At home, it may be your brother, sister, parent or guardian.

The extra person can be called a 'mediator'. Their role is to listen carefully, ask the questions below and make sure that each person gets an equal chance to talk about their feelings and how they were affected by the conflict.

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. Who was affected and how were their rights impacted?
4. What can you do to help those who were affected?
5. How can everyone better respect the rights of others in the future?

### Talking with Respect

The mediator can also ask each person to speak respectfully. For example, they might suggest that each person use 'I' statements to talk about their feelings. 'I' statements help the other person understand why you were hurt and what you need to feel better.

#### 'I' Statements

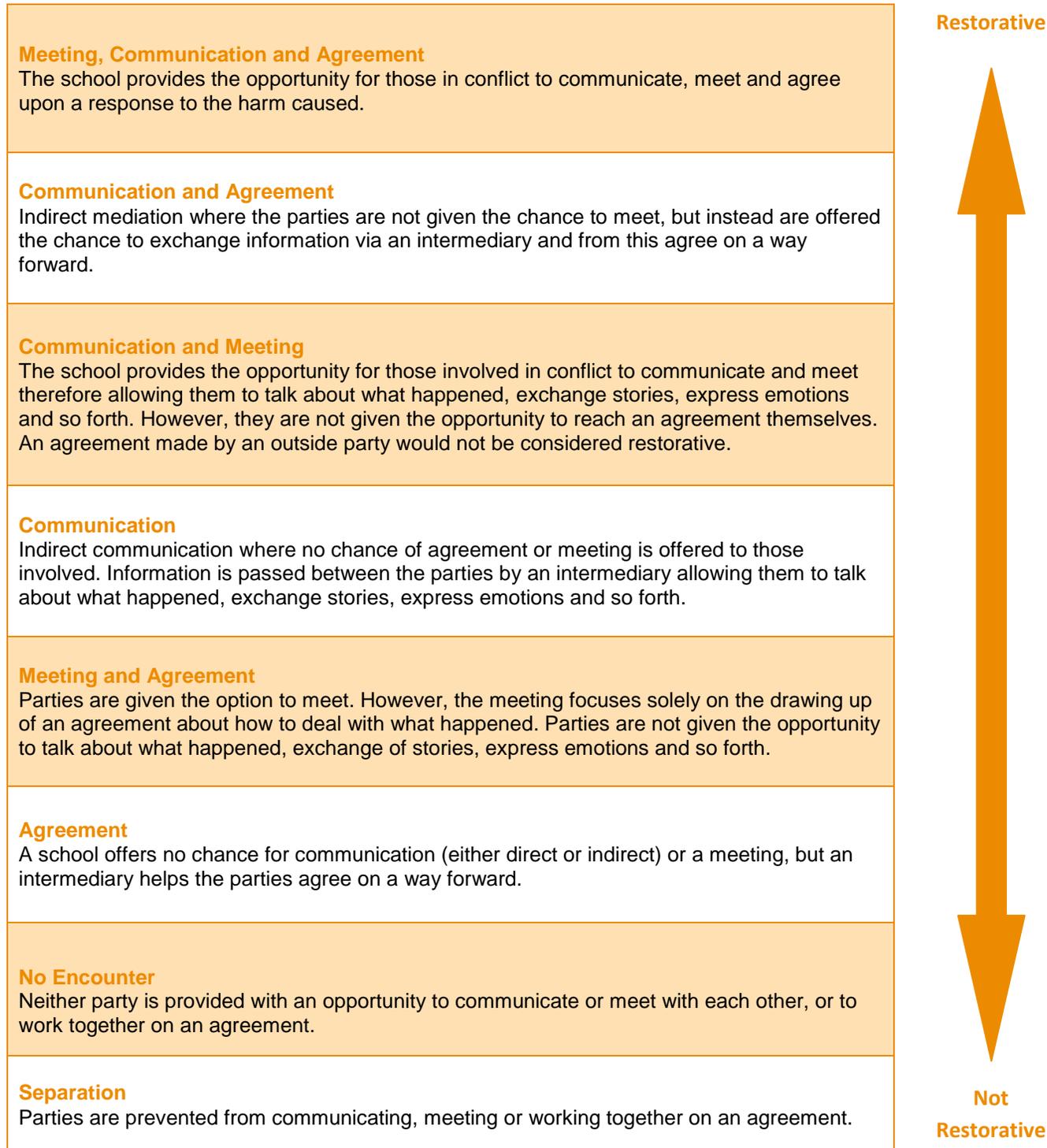
1. I felt...
2. When...
3. Because...
4. Now I need...

#### Example

I felt hurt,  
when you yelled at me,  
because I didn't feel like I had done anything wrong.  
Now I need to know that you feel sorry for yelling.

## HOW RESTORATIVE IS YOUR SCHOOL?

Gauge your school's restorative practices using the chart below.



Source: This chart was reprinted with permission from: Restorative Justice Council, Statement of Restorative Justice Principles: As applied in a school setting, 2nd Edition (2005).

Available at: [creducation.org/resources/RJ\\_Principles\\_for\\_Schools\\_UK\\_2005\\_2nd\\_ed.pdf](http://creducation.org/resources/RJ_Principles_for_Schools_UK_2005_2nd_ed.pdf). The chart was originally adapted from Daniel W. Van Ness and Karen Strong, Restoring Justice 2nd edition, (2002), Anderson Publishing, Cincinnati, OH.