
Epilogue

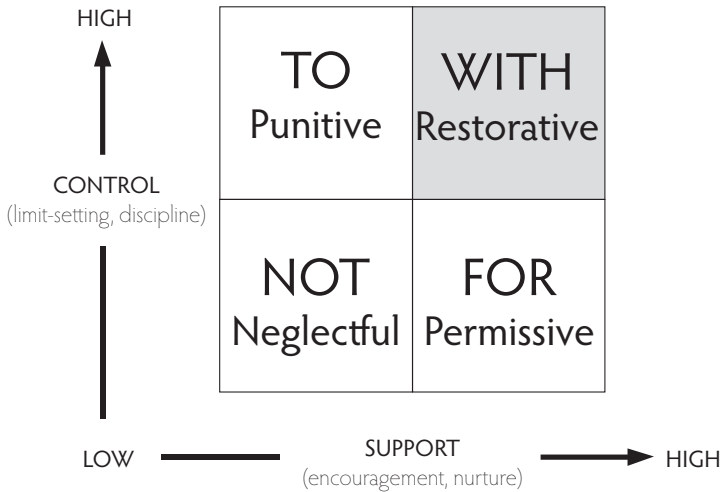
Much has happened since 1997 when I wrote the book, “Real Justice.” Many tens of thousands of people around the world have been trained to facilitate restorative conferences. Schools, community agencies, youth programs, police, courts, prisons and businesses have used the formal restorative conference to respond to crime and wrongdoing.

We have been challenged by the sobering fact that meaningful change is difficult to achieve and even harder to sustain. Nonetheless, restorative conferences and related restorative practices, such as family group conferences or family group decision making (FGDM) to protect children and guard against family violence, are gradually spreading. Importantly, we began to realize that restorative justice could readily be incorporated informally into people’s daily lives, beyond the use of formal processes. In the surveys conducted by the Real Justice program following our early trainings, we learned that while most of our trainees had not facilitated a formal conference, many were using the language and underlying principles of restorative conferencing. Educators who had been trained, instead of handing out punishments, began to address incidents of school misbehavior by getting students to think about what they had done, whom they had affected and how they might repair the harm they had caused. Real Justice trainees, in parenting their own children, were conducting informal restorative conferences. Terry O’Connell lifted the “restorative questions” from his conference script and made them more accessible by putting them on business cards that teachers or parents often carry in their wallets.

We developed the “social discipline window” (see Figure 3) to describe our new understanding of “restorative” strategies. Those who use only high control in response to wrongdoing, but provide little support, are “punitive.” Their leadership style is “authoritarian” because they primarily do things TO people. Those who only respond with high support and little control are “permissive.” Their leadership style is “paternalistic” because they primarily do things FOR people. The neglectful leader who does NOT do anything in response to wrongdoing is simply “irresponsible.”

THE SOCIAL DISCIPLINE WINDOW

Figure 3



Adapted by Paul McCold and Ted Wachtel

Those who respond with both high control and high support are “restorative.” Their leadership style is “authoritative” because

they do things WITH people. Although they have authority, they engage and empower people, allowing them to be heard and to have a say in the outcome.

We developed the “restorative practices continuum” (see Figure 4) to describe the range of possible restorative approaches. Beginning with the most informal practices on the left side of the continuum, the affective statement simply expresses emotion, telling wrongdoers how their behavior has affected the speaker. The affective question asks them to reflect on how their behavior has affected others. The small impromptu conversations are spontaneous, without the preparation associated with the formal conference. Circles and groups are somewhat more formal but still less structured than the restorative conference itself.

THE RESTORATIVE PRACTICES CONTINUUM

Figure 4

INFORMAL		FORMAL		
affective statements	affective questions	small impromptu conversations	circle	formal conference

As restorative practices move from informal to formal, they tend to involve more people, take more time to carry out, require more preparation and are more structured. They also tend to have more impact.

We began to use the term “restorative practices” because we realized that restorative justice is only one of many areas of human activity that can benefit from a restorative approach. It is also relevant to education, social work, psychology, counseling, parenting, organizational leadership — anything that involves the management and motivation of human beings and the need to establish social discipline.

The fundamental thesis underlying restorative practices is that people are happier, more productive, more cooperative and more likely to make positive changes when those in authority do things with them, rather than to them or for them.

We also began to think in terms of proactive and responsive restorative practices. Not only can restorative practices be used to respond to wrongdoing, but they can be used routinely to foster emotional bonds and build relationships. Using circles, for example, in classroom or business settings, encourages people to express their feelings and personal stories, allowing them to get to know each other and creating a sense of community.

In 1999 I founded the International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP), a non-profit educational organization, to take over the ongoing Real Justice program and new programs which were created to spread restorative practices. Its SaferSanerSchoolsTM program has brought restorative practices to education, in private and public schools, from rural to urban. Columbia University Teachers College has incorporated restorative practices in its prestigious summer program for school administrators, and the city of Pittsburgh has implemented restorative practices in all of its schools as part of a federally-funded research project, one of several empirical studies that have demonstrated its efficacy. The IIRP's model programs, Community Service Foundation and Buxmont Academy, provide educational, counseling and residential services for delinquent and at-risk youth in southeastern Pennsylvania (www.csfbuxmont.org) and serve as demonstration programs for the use of restorative practices with the most challenging young people.

The international conferences about restorative practices that began under the auspices of the Real Justice program in 1998 in North America are now run by the IIRP and are held on several continents at more frequent intervals. IIRP affiliates include IIRP Canada, IIRP Europe and IIRP Latin America. Having retired as president of the IIRP in 2015, I was pleased to learn that the IIRP

trained more than 17,500 professionals in 2018 alone.

The IIRP has been approved as a degree-granting graduate school and accredited by the Middle States Commission on Higher Education. By combining face-to-face professional development and attendance at its international conferences with online courses, the IIRP has attracted certificate and master's degree students from around the globe.

In my own efforts since retirement, I have established the BuildingANewReality.com website to popularize restorative practices beyond education and criminal justice, especially in governance. Doing things WITH people, rather than TO them or FOR them is a fundamental to authentic democracy. I am happy to report that the IIRP at its 2019 conference in Kortrijk, Belgium, added the theme of “deliberative democracy” to its ongoing efforts to restore community.

What began as Real Justice more than two decades ago has become a burgeoning social movement. We invite you to join us.

— Ted Wachtel, 2019