



Cultivating Relationships; Restoring Community

Training in Restorative Justice Practices (RJP)

Certificate of Initial Mastery requires the Initial Tools Overview plus **4** Practice/Booster sessions – total 12½ hours.

Basic Restorative Practices Tools certification requires the Initial Tools Overview and **2** Practice/Booster sessions – total 7½ hours.

[Click here for Training Schedule](#)

Our objective:

We work to help every participant become a capable Restorative Practitioner, with the social-emotional skills to build relationships, reduce and manage conflict and engage creative cooperation. Practitioners gain confidence in their ability to face situations restoratively, get to the bottom of issues, make sure all relevant voices are heard, and develop options that work for everyone.

Our long-term goal is to implement Restorative Practices in all institutions that serve Rhode Island's children, families and communities. Changing our institutional cultures depends on each person's ability to interact with other people with a restorative mindset, and to encourage others to do the same. Well-handled conflict creates opportunities to bring important issues to light and to find productive, inventive solutions. Using the Practices builds a sense of belonging and community responsibility, so we've designed our training sessions to be mini-communities where participants practice the use of the skills and concepts in a friendly environment, even in dealing with the tough subjects of Restorative Justice and interpersonal conflict. We want participants to feel able to take personal risks, and appreciate connecting with others engaged in this effort.

The Initial Tools Overview training:

The first session covers the philosophy and history of the international Restorative movement, contrasting its approach to the retributive mindset of our current justice, legal and disciplinary systems. We present three foundational concepts and three basic tools, routinely using one tool – circling – to spark interaction, emphasize the diversity of viewpoints in the group, and demonstrate the broad applicability of these techniques. The Overview and hand-outs give participants all they need to start using the basic tools that day.

While RJP are simple "sandbox" skills, they're surprisingly hard to integrate into our daily lives. Improving the culture of the institutions where we work is an even more daunting challenge. Getting Restorative Practices into our heads is easy; teaching our hands and hearts takes time and practice. But learning and practicing the subtleties of asking good questions, for example, gradually demonstrate how the Practices foster relationships, community and accountability.



Youth Restoration Project

The Practice/Booster sessions:

At the Initial Overview training, participants get “homework” -- instructions on trying out the basic restorative tools at work, home and play. Since using the tools in our daily life is critical to learning them, the Practice/Booster sessions include each participant sharing a story about their use of a tool, and how well it worked for them. These real-life scenarios illustrate the challenges and pleasures of developing Restorative habits. We help participants collaborate and coach each other on improving their skills to prepare them for building restorative communities of their own after the training.

Besides checking in on the homework, each Practice/Booster session includes an hour and a half of new material and Restorative activities focused on a particular topic. These are:

- **The Art of Questioning** – We use games to practice shifting declarative statements into curious and restorative questions that allow the other person room to give an account of what they were thinking – true accountability – and to improve the quality of information received in the answers.
- **Using “I” Statements** – While “you” statements invite defensiveness and head-butting, learning how to say how it is for me, from my own point of view, gives the other person room to speak for themselves, encouraging the exchange of high-quality dialogue.
- **Community Building** – This session focuses on techniques that help groups – classrooms, colleagues, teams – establish collective values and develop useful guidelines for working, learning or playing together. These protocols help all parties, adults and kids alike, become personally invested in sustaining a high-functioning group.
- **Teams that Work** – This session gives participants protocols, confidence and a sense of their own agency when tackling a problem or project that needs a working team. We guide participants through ways of identifying and assembling a team that accomplishes its goals.
- **Trauma / Basic Brain Science** – Everyone has lived through some sort of trauma, but some recover more easily than others. We teach simple, proactive techniques that avoid triggering or escalating a trauma-driven response that shuts down communication.
- **Self-Care and Self-Circling** – What are you bringing to the table yourself, when you try to help with other people’s problems? This session gently guides participants to question, restoratively, their own strengths and weaknesses as they apply Restoration to daily life.
- **Restorative Justice** – RJ is the back-to-the-future revival of the ways in which traditional cultures respond to crime and violations of community norms. We examine the evolution of our modern professionally-driven justice system, contrasting its focus on guilt and punishment with Restoration’s goals of personal accountability and healing.
- **Identifying Triggers** – Each of us is sometimes triggered by other people's behavior. We’re far more effective in our interpersonal relationships when we understand our triggers and what triggers others. Here we discuss strategies for handling situations that could ignite difficult emotions, clouding our thinking and inflaming our behavior.