

The Ice Breaker

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Restorative Justice: An exercise in empathy

Andy, fourteen, is participating in the Restorative Justice program in his county. He and a friend were caught spray-painting profanities on the outside wall of a local supermarket, a place that had recently had an acquaintance arrested for shoplifting. Andy's parents will also be participating in the program, having gratefully accepted the invitation as an alternative to jail or probation for their son. They know almost nothing about the program, but they have high hopes that it will help to get their son back on the right track.

Restorative justice is a philosophy that emphasizes repairing the harm caused by crime. Victims, offenders and community members are brought together for a respectful dialog to discuss the impact of a crime and its aftermath. The premise is that human beings are more likely to make positive changes in their behavior when others work *with* them, rather than doing things *for* them or *to* them. In other words, it is found that the punitive and authoritarian *to* method and the permissive and paternalistic *for* method are not as effective as the *restorative, participatory, engaging-with* manner.

In criminal justice, restorative circles and conferences allow victims, offenders and their respective family members and friends to come together to explore how everyone has been affected by an offense and, when possible, to decide how to repair the harm and meet their own needs. In social work, family group decision-making (FGDM) or family group conferencing (FGC) processes empower extended families to meet privately, without professionals in the room, to make a plan to protect children in their own families from further violence and neglect. In education, circles and groups provide opportunities for students to share their feelings, build relationships and problem-solve, and when there is wrongdoing, to play an active role in addressing the wrong and making things right.

At the RJ meeting, the facilitator introduces himself and introduces each of the other participants, he then outlines the goals of the conference.

"This conference will focus on an incident which happened July 23, 2010 at Johnson's Market. It is important to understand that we will focus on what Andy did and how that unacceptable behavior has affected others. We are not here to decide whether Andy is good or bad. We want to

explore in what way people have been affected and hopefully work toward repairing the harm that has resulted. Does everyone understand this?"

"Now, Andy has admitted to his part in the incident, and he understands that his participation here is voluntary. Is this true, Andy?" Andy nods. "You may choose to leave this meeting at any time, but be advised that if you fail to help resolve this issue, it may be referred to the courts. Do you understand?" Andy nods again.

"This matter may be finalized right here if you participate in a positive manner and comply with the conference agreement." Andy looks at his parents and nods to the facilitator.

"Good. Now, I'm going to ask you some questions and I want you to think carefully and answer them truthfully." The facilitator then poses the following questions to Andy:

• ***"What happened?"***

"Me and my buddy, Joe, were mad at the store for busting Eli. I mean, I hardly know the guy, but he told us he never stole nothin' before, and why did they have to get the police after him? So Joe and I found this spray paint in his garage and we just decided to show them, the store, I mean."

• ***"What were you thinking about at the time?"***

"I wasn't really thinking about what we were doing." He glances toward his parents. "I mean, it didn't seem like we were gonna get in trouble. Lots of people hate Johnson's, so we were thinkin' we'd be like heroes or something."

• ***"What have you thought about since the incident?"***

"That I wish we didn't do it. That it was dumb. That my parents are embarrassed and that makes me feel like I'm a bad kid or something."

• ***"Who do you think has been affected by your actions?"***

"I dunno. I guess the guy that had to paint over the stuff we wrote. . . Um, my parents, too. Maybe the owner or the manager?"

• ***"How have they been affected?"***

"Well, I guess somebody had to pay for the paint to cover up what we wrote. My mom said the people who had to see it were affected, because a lot of people don't like swearing. I didn't think about those people, I just wanted the store to pay somehow, for, like, wrecking Eli's life, or something. I guess if the store manager had to explain to people what happened, that might have been not so good. I don't know, maybe it made people not want to go to the store?"

Restorative Justice might be best understood looking at three questions. The court system of justice asks: "1. What laws have been broken?, 2. Who did it?, 3. What do they deserve?" Restorative justice asks, "1. Who has been hurt?, 2. What are their needs?, 3. Whose obligations are these?"

RJ is largely based on the principles of justice systems found in aboriginal societies, such as the First Nation tribes in Canada, and Native American tribes in the U.S. Seen as a positive way to deal with a negative situation, RJ programs are being implemented worldwide as alternatives to more conventional crime deterrents.

The typical RJ cases involve adult and juvenile cases ranging from property crimes, such as petty theft and vandalism, to more serious theft and assault. For the most part, RJ has been found to be unsuitable for drug offenses, sexual assault, and domestic violence.

The Restorative Justice program in St. Croix and Pierce counties in Wisconsin has been in operation since 2001.

Services offered in these counties include Victim-Offender Conferencing, Victim empathy seminars, Community Conferencing, Underage Consumption Panels, Safe Teen Driving Circles, Restorative Justice Circles, Trainings/Workshops.

The Restorative Justice now turns to Mr. Johnson, the victim.

• **“What was your reaction at the time of the incident?”**

“I was angry when I drove up to the store the next morning and saw what some punks had done. We’ve had graffiti problems before, but nothing as disgusting as what I saw there. I couldn’t get it cleaned up quickly enough. I had to put two employees to work on it, trying to scrub it off, and finally, I ended up having to pay to have that whole side of the building painted.”

• **“How do you feel about what happened?”**

“I just don’t understand how someone could do that. Now that I hear why they did it, well, it makes me mad all over again. Why shouldn’t we turn in shoplifters? There’s signs all over the store telling people that we will prosecute, and if they choose to steal, they’re going to pay for it. Theft shouldn’t be a part of the cost of doing business.”

• **“What has been the hardest thing for you?”**

Mr. Johnson glances toward Andy and his family. “Trust. I’ve seen Andy and his folks in my store for years, I always thought he was a good kid, but now . . .” The facilitator reminds Mr. Johnson that he must adhere to the rules: no personal attacks on the perpetrator or his family. “Well, I just meant that it’s going to be hard to trust people, my own customers, after this.”

• **“How did your family and friends react when they heard about the incident?”**

“Oh, I’ve gotten a lot of support from my family and friends, and even people in the neighborhood. Everybody felt bad about what happened.”

A victim-centered response to crime, restorative justice emphasizes repairing the harm caused by crime. When victims, offenders and community members meet to decide how to do that, the results can be transformational.

The facilitator turns to the victim supporters and asks them similar questions about their feelings about the offense. Then he turns to Andy’s parents to question them.

“This has been difficult for you, hasn’t it? Would you like to tell us about it?”

• **“What did you think when you heard about the incident?”**

“I couldn’t believe it, at first” answers Andy’s mother. “I thought they had the wrong kid. Then I got angry.”

• **“How do you feel about what happened?”**

“We’re embarrassed, of course,” says Andy’s father. “We’ve got trust issues with Andy, now, too,” he nods toward Mr. Johnson.

• **“What has been the hardest thing for you?”**

“Obviously, that we have to be here today,” says Andy’s father. “We wonder what is going to happen to Andy, now. Will he do something like this again? We’re worried about him.”

• **“What do you think are the main issues?”**

“Well,” answers Andy’s mother. “He did something wrong and he should have to make amends in some way.”

Research has found restorative justice programs to have high levels of victim and offender satisfaction with the

process and outcome, better likelihood of successful restitution by the offender, more comfort and security for victims, and reduced chance of re-offending.

The facilitator now asks participants what they wish to accomplish as a result of the proceedings. Victim and offender are then asked what they think of what the other has said.

The goal is to get a written agreement of reparation from everyone in attendance at the meeting. After each item is discussed, the offender is asked what he thinks about the proposal. In this way, all participants have a chance to be heard and be a part of the reparation.

Before closing the conference, the facilitator asks if anyone has anything more to say. After that, participants are invited to refreshments while conference agreement is put into writing.

The written agreement in Andy’s case dictates that he will volunteer two hours a week for the next three months at Johnson’s Market, cleaning or stocking shelves; he will research and write a paper on the effects of vandalism and graffiti on neighborhoods and individuals; and he will pay, out of his own funds, the cost of repainting the store wall he damaged. Both Andy and his parents agree that the outcome is much better than what they had feared, and Andy avers that he has learned a valuable lesson. Mr. Johnson is also pleased with the results and is glad he took part in the program.

Restorative Justice Signposts

We are working toward restorative justice when we

I. ...focus on the harms of wrongdoing more than the rules that have been broken,

II. ...show equal concern and commitment to victims and offenders, involving both in the process of justice,

III. ...work toward the restoration of victims, empowering them and responding to their needs as they see them,

IV. ...support offenders while encouraging them to understand, accept and carry out their obligations,

V. ...recognize that while obligations may be difficult for offenders, they should not be intended as harms and they must be achievable,

VI. ...provide opportunities for dialogue,

direct Or indirect, between victims and offenders as appropriate,

VII. ...involve and empower the affected community through the justice process, and increase their capacity to recognize and respond to community bases of crime.

VIII. ...encourage collaboration and reintegration rather than coercion and isolation

IX. ...give attention to the unintended consequences of our actions and programs,

X. ...show respect to all parties including victims, offenders, justice colleagues.

Crime wounds...Justice heals

Harry Mika and Howard Zehr 5/8/97

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T.O.A.D.
(Think Over And Discuss)
Topics

What does “humility” mean in recovery?

"If you are humble nothing can touch you, neither praise nor disgrace, because you know who you are."
—Mother Theresa

Step Seven—We humbly asked Him to remove our shortcomings—can get lost in translation for many people. Addicts and alcoholics often develop a façade of arrogance in defense of their behavior, so humbly doing anything may be a foreign concept, besides which, some take it to mean that they must humiliate themselves. Perhaps it would help to look up the dictionary definition of humility:

- hu-mil-i-ty** (hyue mil'i tee; often yue-) n.
the quality or state of being humble; modest opinion of one's own importance or rank; meekness.
- hum-ble** (hum'buhl, um'-) adj. <-bler, -blest> v. <-bled, -bling> adj.
 1. not proud or arrogant; modest.
 2. low in importance, status, or condition; lowly: a humble home.
 3. courteously respectful: in my humble opinion.

Humility is not to lower oneself, but to understand oneself as a being in the process of being better. If ever

there was a humbling process, it is certainly the work taken on in Step 4 (made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves) and Step 5 (admitted to God, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs)!

Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it is thinking of yourself less.

Active addiction is an ego-centered universe. The addict focuses on her own needs and desires, and disregards the needs of everyone else in her life. She may feel martyred, misunderstood, resentful, and judgmental, so she turns to her best friend, self-pity, to justify her use of drugs and alcohol. Developing a sense of humility in recovery helps her to recognize that she is not set apart from her fellow humans, but is a part of the human race.

Humility is taking a job that may have seemed “beneath you” when you were using drugs or drinking, because you have realized that you simply need a job. Humility is showing up early for the AA meeting to make coffee and set up chairs. Humility is opening up at meetings and sharing your flaws as well as your gifts. Humility is buying the car you can afford, not the one you think should be afforded to you. Humility is recognizing that you don't have all the answers and that you need to continue to learn and grow throughout your life. Humility is understanding that life lived one day at a time is the only way that you can stay alive.

Dr. Bob, co-founder of AA kept a plaque on his desk that read:

"Humility is perpetual quietness of heart. It is to have no trouble. It is never to be fretted or vexed, or irritable, to wonder at nothing that is done to me, to feel nothing that is done against me. It is to be at rest when nobody praises me, and when I am blamed or despised. It is to have a blessed home in myself where I can go in and shut the door and kneel to my Father in secret and be at peace, as in a deep sea of calmness, when all around and about is seeming trouble."

Thus, we see that to have humility is to gain the peace and serenity of knowing oneself, of accepting oneself (warts and all), and of knowing one's place in the world. That sense of belonging in the world can help to dispel the addict's disconnect with others; the feeling of belonging she once got from drugs is replaced by an awareness of being a part of something greater than herself.

Gratitude is the recovery attitude.

Humility also has much to do with gratitude. In active addiction, the impulse is to focus on all the wrongs (real and imagined) that have been suffered, to dig down into a sense of resentment and discontent, a quagmire that can only be navigated with more drugs and alcohol. In that frame of mind, the addict can only see the negative aspects of her life: the missed opportunities (usually someone else's fault), the social snubs, and the rejections. That feeds into the vicious circle of addiction: resentment, anger, using drugs or alcohol to alleviate those emotions, a sense of shame and remorse, and then the resentment and anger begin again. The circle can only be broken by a major change in the thought process.

If a person in recovery can find even one thing to be grateful for, more will follow. When we allow ourselves to feel grateful, we allow ourselves to connect to a sense of

them you only go to bars to dance or shoot pool. This works every time. And be sure to keep all of your using friends. They will protect you from change.

Step Seven: Maintain a despondent and gloomy attitude at all times.

Feel sorry for yourself. Pity yourself. Constantly re-hash all of the terrible things that have happened to you, through no fault of your own, of course. Tell yourself that nothing will ever change. . . that no matter what comes your way, you will always be the one, the only one, to suffer.

Step Eight: Neglect your physical health.

Do not get any fresh air or exercise. Don't eat right or get enough sleep at night. Drink coffee all day and chain smoke (this should be done in a dark room whenever possible) If you don't like coffee, try Mountain Dew, Pepsi or Red Bull. In some cases, this is better because sugar can actually increase your irritability. The important thing to remember here is that it's tough to stay depressed when you feel good physically. Try to stay focused on any health problems you may be experiencing. If you're in good health, worry about all the diseases and illnesses you could possibly contract. After all, it's not impossible that a brain tumor could be growing inside your head right now as you are reading these words.

Step Nine: Practice Cross-addiction.

Even if you've been sober for awhile, you can still spin the wheel of cross-addiction. Start gambling, overeating, or shopping compulsively. Create a real negative self-image and as much financial stress as possible. If you do these things long enough, you will eventually develop enough shame that you'll just have to have another drink . . . and who could blame you? After all, you tried to stay sober and you still have problems! Go figure

Step Ten: Continually be in and out of unhealthy sexual relationships.

If you currently don't have a relationship, get one immediately. Fall in love in a treatment program, preferably. If that's not possible, just pick someone out of the crowd. In your state of mind, it's not going to matter much who it is. On the other hand, if you're in a relationship, get out of it and get a new one. There's nothing like a good crisis to stir up a little sickness. The first thing you should do after meeting someone is to sleep with them. Then you can decide that you really don't like them, and move onto someone else. Really getting to know someone prior to having sex with them can lead to friendship.

Step Eleven: Blame everyone else for your problems.

No matter what the situation, or how much you may be at fault, blame someone else. If you start taking personal responsibility for your own actions, it will only lead to growth and maturity, which in turn will lead to heightened consciousness, etc. . . . I'm sure you can see where this is going to get you. In order to stay sick, you must avoid all forms of responsibility. Once you start taking responsibility, you lose all of your rights to whine. And once that's going, staying sick just becomes harder and harder.

It takes a lot of hard work to continually cast blame on others, but if you're creative enough, you can keep this going for years. For example, that DWI you got last year, let's examine that event a little more closely. Now, if your parents had borrowed you the month to get your car fixed, you would never have gotten pulled over for missing such a small item as a muffler in the first place. So what if you still haven't paid them back the ka-zillion dollars you already owe them. You're their child and it's their responsibility to help you out. And let's talk about that relationship you were in. If that miserable person hadn't treated you so badly, you wouldn't have gotten so angry that you had to go out and have a few drinks to cool off, now would you? And while we're on the subject, what about that cop? If he hadn't selfishly decided to attend the police academy and become a patrolman, he wouldn't have been on that road. Just think about it. When you really look at the facts, you'll see that the DWI really had nothing to do with blowing a 3.0 on the breathalyzer test. It was the cop, the relationship, and your parents who really screwed things up. Make a point to share this with these thoughtless individuals. Maybe it will teach them to think things through a little more carefully before intruding in other people's lives. Besides, it's a golden opportunity for an angry confrontation. You'll probably get so upset—you'll have to drive down to the local bar to have a few.

Step Twelve: Keep spirituality out of your life.

If you start letting little intrusive thoughts like "maybe I'm not the center of the universe" or "maybe not everything is about my personal desires and wants," invade your thinking, you may find yourself on the road to recovery without even knowing how you got there. Close your mind to all concepts that do not have you as the central focal point.

Hopefully, you have seen through the sarcasm and realize that these steps are meant to be humorous. The intention was to get you to honestly look at the ways that you have kept yourself sick. Being born predisposed to addiction is not your fault. Staying sick does not have to be a part of the deal. Take a look at your lifestyle, and in most cases, I think you'll find that you need to do the opposite of what you have been doing.

If you don't go to meetings—GO!
If you don't have a sponsor—GET ONE!
If you stay isolated and alone—FIND SOMEONE TO TALK TO!
If you are currently using—STOP!
If you're scared—that's okay. We're all scared. We should be scared.
We bury thousands of addicts each year because they never learned to stop staying sick.
And if you continue to stay sick—WE WILL BURY YOU ALSO.

THERE IS A SOLUTION!
THERE IS A CHOICE!
WISHING YOU STRENGTH FOR TODAY AND HOPE FOR TOMORROW . . .

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The A.A. Ten Commandments

1. Avoid being manipulative or controlling.
 2. Think less of yourself and more of others (humility).
 3. Be careful not to drift into worry, remorse, or morbid reflection.
 4. Keep your thinking from self-seeking, self-pity, and dishonest behavior.
 5. Relax and take it easy. Let go and let God.
 6. Humbly ask God, throughout the day, that His will be done.
 7. Seek to comfort rather than be comforted.
 8. Diminish self and lift up others.
 9. Avoid self-pity, self-centeredness, and "what ifs" or "if onlys".
 10. Do the best you can with what you have. Be satisfied in the moment.
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Butterfly House Mission Statement

Our mission is to provide a safe, sober residence for women in recovery from alcohol or other drug dependency while introducing sober living skills, peer-to-peer fellowship and support and educational experiences that will aid them in the transition back into their families and/or communities.

Summer 2010 was a busy one at Butterfly House

As if attending 90 recovery meetings in 90 days and having jobs and community service obligations weren't enough to keep our residents busy, this summer was filled with many ways to explore the sober life.

The Wednesday night cookouts at the house resumed in the spring. It's a chance for residents to learn skills such as meal-planning, preparation, and serving as hostesses. Board member Jim serves as the grill chef, while residents and house staff provide snacks and side dishes. Sometimes, it was a last-minute scramble to pull a meal together, other times, residents surprised even themselves by preparing in advance.

A group of residents challenged themselves with a canoe trip down the St. Croix River. The trip was long and tiring, but everyone enjoyed the exercise and laughs along the way.

A trip to Wild Mountain water park in Taylors Falls resulted in sunburn, but they all agreed that it was worth it for the chance to spend a hot summer day on the cool water slides.

In July, residents who attend CenterPoint Church in St.

Croix Falls were baptized in a full-emersion service at Sand Lake. The service was lovely, the weather fairly cooperative, and the tears of joy plentiful.

Some of our quiet summer nights were disturbed with screams erupting from the upstairs. A bat found its way into the house, and the residents reacted predictably, by screaming and running for help. Pictured above is one of the braver residents. The bats in question were caught and set free amid squeals of horror.

Editor's Corner

"Relapse is not an option."

That's it for this time, look for our winter issue for more great advice and words to live by.

... Oh, all right, I'm kidding. I heard these words recently and they struck a chord, possibly because the person who uttered them was most definitely in the midst of a relapse (oh, what a pesky demon denial can be), and mostly because I think it's not a true statement.

I believe that most recovering alcoholics and addicts will agree that relapse certainly IS an option, but it's not a good one. Living one day at a time means that every minute of every day presents challenges in the form of options, or choices. Get up and go to work or stay in a comfy bed? Try to maintain a cheerful attitude or let your inner curmudgeon out? Read and absorb a daily meditation or skip it in favor of your horoscope? Call your sponsor or an old drinking buddy? Go to your meeting or go to the bar? Speak about your struggle at the meeting or hold it in and hope it goes away?

The word *option* is often defined as an *opportunity*. What we have, in allowing ourselves options, both good and bad, is an opportunity to make a choice. Human beings like that. We don't like feeling that we are cornered, fenced in, or forced into a behavior. We like to feel that we are capable of deciding our fate, and we like having the autonomy to do just that. It feels good to make a good choice and carry it out.

Every day that an alcoholic/addict sticks to the routine that got her sober is a day that she chose the right option. Every day is filled with opportunities to prove to herself that she is capable of making clear choices, that she can be happy with the choices she makes, and that she can gain much joy just by choosing to stay sober.

If you think about, even our Higher Power allows options: it's called "free will". We are free to do good or bad, without bolts of lightning and a booming voice coming down from heaven to warn us of impending doom. The tricky part of free will is that if we choose the behavior, we also choose the consequences. The quiet voice of our Higher Power may be urging us to do the right thing, but with free will, we can ignore that and jump right into whatever old mess we want . . . and pay the cost for it afterwards. It puts the burden of choosing an option on ourselves, and it makes it so much harder to blame God and the unfairness of it all, when it was our own bad choices that got us where we are.

Maybe it would be better if people said "Relapse is not an option I will choose."
