

# RESTORATIVE JUSTICE:

HEALING COMMUNITIES FOR A BETTER WORLD



Center for  
Justice Reform

VERMONT LAW & GRADUATE SCHOOL

## What Is Restorative Justice?

Restorative justice is a process to address harm that centers reflection, learning, and healing, rather than punishment. Anyone can use restorative justice practices to resolve conflict, including teachers, police, organizational leaders, social workers, and correctional officers. Restorative justice also includes proactive processes, where practitioners create collaborative, equitable, and listening-focused relationships so conflict doesn't occur in the first place.

These approaches are gaining ground in schools and criminal justice processes, and can be used to improve workplace interactions between team members, as well as interactions with constituents in the community. Restorative justice approaches can even be used with family and friends.



## What Are Restorative Practices?

Restorative practices relate to how we plan our work, conduct ourselves with others, build relationships, respond to conflict, and address harms. These practices focus on listening, collaboration, healing, and nonviolence. Restorative practices can occur both at the individual level—such as how you interact with your co-worker or neighbor—and the community level—such as how local government interacts with the community.

These practices can occur at the national level, as well. For example, South Africa is known for its restorative work as it attempted to unify the nation following apartheid. Canada is currently conducting restorative processes to acknowledge past harms done to Indigenous people. Many restorative practices, such as circles where everyone shares and listens, have roots in Indigenous cultures.

## How Can a Restorative Frame of Mind Make a Difference in the World?

A restorative frame of mind allows us to see each other as humans who make mistakes and learn, rather than pitting us against each other in conflict. A restorative mindset helps us to peacefully resolve conflict. It also helps people who have both caused harm and received harm to get more of what they need out of a situation. Many people question whether the ways we currently run systems like criminal justice or education are working. A restorative frame of mind offers a different approach that will yield happier, healthier futures, both for individuals and communities.



**“Umuntu, ngumuntu, ngabantu” is a Nguni proverb that translates to “I am because we are and we are because I am.” This concept is also known as “ubuntu” in Indigenous traditions of southern Africa.**

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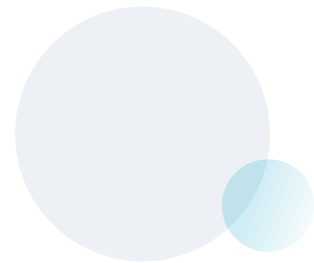
**“This proverb emphasizes humans’ interidentity and interrelationality with all dimensions of existence—other people, places, land, animals, waters, air, and so on.”**

**- “The Little Book of Race and Restorative Justice” by Fania E. Davis**

## How Do Restorative Approaches Work?

There are many ways to address harm once a crime or hurtful act has been committed. We commonly address harm through punishment, like school detention or jail. More extreme ways include violence, such as acts of retribution and revenge, or in extreme cases, even the death penalty. Restorative justice takes a different approach to addressing harm by allowing the person who committed a harmful act to speak with the harmed person(s), identifying solutions together that will help remedy wrongs and offer healing.

This allows the person who created harm to reflect on their actions, make amends, and learn not to do such acts in the future. The process also helps the harmed person determine what they need to address their harm to increase understanding, restore balance, repair relationships, and heal or find peace.



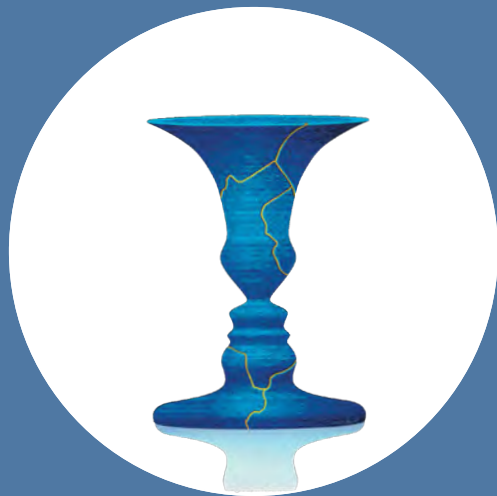
## What Are Possible Careers in Restorative Justice?

Many different career sectors are bringing restorative practices into their work. These include nonprofits, police departments, universities, schools, social work agencies, jails, and prisons.

Organizations and businesses are increasingly interested in making restorative practices part of their human resources policies and office culture. Gaining expertise in restorative justice can also help you in your current role. For example:

- Police departments can weave restorative justice into their community policing strategies.
- Nonprofits can use restorative justice approaches when engaging with their local communities.
- Teachers can use restorative justice as a disciplinary strategy or a way for peers to resolve conflict.

Restorative justice is particularly helpful in working with people who have experienced trauma in their lives.



## Common Career Pathways in Restorative Justice

### Criminal Justice Reform

- Court Systems
- Diversion Programs
- Corrections Departments
- Post-Conviction and Post-Release Services

### Social Sector

- Community Justice Centers
- Community Service Organizations
- Mental Health and Substance Use Case Management
- Domestic and Sexual Violence Assistance Groups
- Nonprofits and Government Agencies

### Organizational Management

- Human Resources
- Organizational Leadership

### Education and Youth

- School Teachers and Administrators
- Community Resource Officers
- Social Workers
- Youth Program Leaders

### Conflict Resolution and Facilitation

- Community Dialogue Facilitation
- Mediation Services
- Relationship Management

### Environmentalism

- Environmental Health and Crisis Preparedness
- Disaster Relief Professionals

## What Does Studying Restorative Justice Look Like?

**At VLGS, we have several offerings, including:**

- Master of Arts in Restorative Justice
- Graduate Certificate in Restorative Justice
- Joint degrees, such as a juris doctor (JD) combined with a Master of Arts in Restorative Justice
- Restorative justice tracks through our other graduate programs, such as a Master of Public Policy with a restorative justice concentration
- Professional credential: Restorative justice badge

## Sample Course Topics

- Facilitating restorative justice circles
- Expungement and clemency
- Reimagining the juvenile justice system
- Global healing in policy and action



## Learn More

Call 802-831-1239 or email [admiss@vermontlaw.edu](mailto:admiss@vermontlaw.edu) to connect with a member of our admissions team.





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