

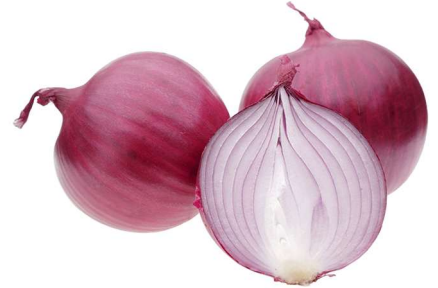
# Youth Restorative Justice Process

## Four Step – Onion Approach

Restorative Justice shifts the focus from punishment to repairing harm, rebuilding trust, and practicing mutual accountability. Instead of asking "What rule was broken and who do we punish?", restorative practices ask: What happened, who was affected, and how do we make things right?

### Peeling Back the Conflict Onion Leaves:

To understand how restorative justice works, imagine an onion where each leaf represents a progressive step in peeling back defensive layers to move from surface reactions to genuine healing.



### What You Can Expect

- Voluntary: Participation is a personal choice at every stage for everyone involved.
- Supported: Youth are encouraged to have parents, caregivers, or trusted adults present at every meeting.
- Safe & Structured: Meetings are planned so there are no surprises or ambushes.
- Focused on Solutions: The goal is not to shame or lecture, but to address root impacts and co-create practical solutions.
- Clear Follow-Through: If an agreement cannot be reached or commitments are not met, the matter returns to school administration or the referring team to determine next steps.

**Step 1: intake & readiness check screens referrals for voluntary consent, accountability, emotional safety, and willingness to participate in a constructive, non-coercive conversation.**

- Person Harmed:
  - Do you choose to participate in this process voluntarily?
  - What are your primary hopes and goals for resolving this situation?
  - What safety worries or concerns do you have about sitting down together?
  - What would feel like the safest next step for you right now?
- Person Who Caused Harm:
  - Do you choose to participate in this process voluntarily?
  - What part of the incident do you take responsibility for?
  - What are your goals or hopes for resolving this situation?
  - If anger or defensiveness is present right now, what do you need before entering dialogue?



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**Step 2: 1-on-1 pre-meetings with each participant and their caregivers to hear their perspective, unpack underlying needs, and prepare for a joint conversation.**

- **Person Harmed:**
  - What happened from your perspective, starting from the beginning?
  - How has this impacted your day-to-day life, trust, and sense of safety?
  - What has been the hardest part of this experience for you and your family?
  - What do you need to repair the harm?
  - How can we ensure your voice stays central while making sure caregivers feel supported and heard?
- **Person Who Caused Harm:**
  - What happened from your perspective, starting from the beginning?
  - What was going on for you internally (thoughts, feelings, pressures) at the time?
  - Looking past immediate anger or frustration, what was the main worry or pressure you were reacting to?
  - What do you suggest can be done to repair the harm?
  - How can we ensure your voice stays central while making sure caregivers feel supported and heard?

**Step 3: the restorative dialogue circle - a structured joint dialogue using agreed ground rules to explore direct impact, build mutual understanding, and separate personal worth from harmful choices.**  
(Note: Speaking order in the circle is guided by the facilitator based on pre-meeting preparation so everyone feels safe and supported.)



- Opening Check-in (All Participants):
    - What shared ground rules or agreements will help you feel safe, calm, and respected during our conversation today?
  - Person Harmed:
    - In your own words, what happened during the incident?
    - How has this impacted your sense of safety, trust, and well-being?
    - Who else has been affected by what happened (family, peers, school), and in what specific ways?
    - What do you need to repair the harm?
    - What direct question or statement would you like to share with them right now?
  - Person Who Caused Harm:
    - In your own words, what happened during the incident?
    - Hearing what has been shared, what stands out to you about the impact on others?
    - Looking back, what could have been done differently in that moment?
    - What can you do to repair the harm you caused?
    - What direct statement or acknowledgement would you like to offer right now?
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**Step 4: realistic action plan & follow-through co-designs a concrete, written agreement by consensus that outlines practical repair actions, supportive adult guidance, and milestone check-ins.**

- Person Harmed:
  - Does this proposed plan address what you need to feel safe, respected, and confident moving forward?
  - What clear expectations or boundaries need to be put in writing?
  - How will you know that this matter has been genuinely resolved and that your boundaries will be respected?
  - When will we meet again to check in on progress and ensure the plan is working?
- Person Who Caused Harm:
  - What concrete, realistic action can you commit to that directly repairs the harm and rebuilds trust?
  - What specific timeline or milestones will we set to ensure this agreement is achievable?
  - What practical support will parents, school staff, or mentors provide to help you succeed?
  - When will we meet again to check in on progress and ensure the plan is working?

Learning to navigate conflict with empathy and curiosity is like building a muscle, it takes time, patience, and repetition. You don't have to get every conversation right, but simply choosing to pause, listen, and peel back the layers instead of defending your position makes all the difference. Ask these questions next time you are implementing restorative justice. See what happens when you ask a curious question instead of making an assumption. Whether you're in the classroom, the staffroom, or at home with family and friends, these skills have the power to genuinely change your life and relationships.

