

## **Restorative Practices & Peacebuilding Fundamentals**

Collective Voices offers a facilitator training that focuses on developing and implementing restorative practices curriculum for:

- Wilderness programs
- First Nations tribes
- Schools
- Agencies
- Businesses

Collective Voices provides guidance in creating the vision and application for a restorative practices curriculum as well as concrete tools for: creating and maintaining a positive culture; effective, timely, and honest communication within your group; and responding to and transforming conflict.

The outcomes of this training allow for groups to have a sustainable format and set of tools to use in order to build trust and community as well as to address even serious conflicts and harm.

### **Collective Voices offers a training/consulting package that explores:**

- The theory and fundamentals of Peacebuilding and the definition and application of a “Restorative Framework.”
- How to effectively facilitate various types of Peacemaking Circles.

***The length of engagement with Collective Voices varies based on your needs and will be determined during the needs assessment call.***

### **I. What are Restorative Practices?**

Restorative practices are based in a *restorative framework* and are the set of *actionables* taken. In short, restorative-based services have been found to be better and more successful for healing and redirection than their counterparts.

Restorative practices use a restorative framework as an approach to building and maintaining relationships, communication, empathy, and wrongdoing or ‘harm.’ Restorative practices consist of tools used to both build trust and safety as well as to repair relationships and to begin dialogue between individuals, families, and communities in order to address behaviors and actions that have harmed, negatively impacted, and damaged relationships. Restorative practices are used to open, re-open, and maintain lines of communication, and are where true healing, respect, and understanding begins.

With so much present-day divisiveness, we can ask ourselves, *how was caring unlearned?* Peace isn't simply the absence of hostilities. True peace often requires a change of heart and attitude. A restorative framework asks of us to be open to understanding the life, context, experiences, and suffering of one another, and to demonstrate a willingness to see the humanity in others' situations and experiences. Empathy and compassion are the natural states of humans. Compassion cannot exist without an empathetic orientation and lens.

## **II. What is a Restorative Framework?**

In this context, a *framework* refers to the attitudes and values with which one engages in relationships, communication, and conflict. It is important to understand the definitions of both a restorative and a dominant framework.

A restorative framework is a methodology, a set of tools, an attitude, and a practice. It is a foundational set of values that yields positive peace between individuals and within families and communities when behaviors and actions have harmed and damaged relationships. It allows for people to open, re-open, and maintain lines of communication and is vital for true healing, respect, and understanding begins.

Although retribution and/or consequences can still be used for wrongdoings, the focus of a restorative framework shifts us from *what rules are broken and what punishment is deserved*, to *what harm was done and who/what needs to be done to repair that harm*. A restorative framework explores impact, not blame.

A restorative framework encompasses an attitude and language of connection (vs. disconnection) even when there is disagreement. It explores and stands for moving from a blaming and "either/or" "right/wrong" framework as it relates to issues of empathy, understanding, responsibility, harm, and repair. Both/all parties can both give and receive empathy and understanding while maintaining their own opinions, values, and viewpoints. This framework humanizes and involves responsibility from all parties.

The questions to ask ourselves: *How can we shift from punishing or shaming people with whom we don't agree or whom offended us, to tuning into the feelings and needs of others and speaking to our own feelings and needs. How can we help to dismantle a culture of blame and hurt while still acknowledging the hurt we each experience? Why does it seem that it is a contest for who has been hurt the most? Why does it seem that there isn't room for everyone's pain, hurt, and/or being misunderstood and only some people's? What are the roots of this? What blocks understanding? Why are people often threatened by differing points of view? What actually is empathy (and what is it not) and how can we respond with it even when we disagree?*

## **III. What is a Dominant Framework?**

The opposite of a restorative framework is a *dominant framework*. This is a framework built on a system of oppression and colonization. It is based in an individualistic value system (vs. collectivist), it is blame and shame based.

The values guiding this framework imply that someone else is responsible for your feelings. When harm or hurt occurs, in the dominant framework, only one person gets empathy, a voice, understanding, gets to be the most wounded.....therefore the other “side” must be guilty and “at fault.” It sends the message that only certain people/one person is worthy of understanding and empathy because in order for things to work, someone MUST be at fault.

A dominant (blaming) framework can create resistance. In the same way that when we lift weights, we are adding resistance. That resistance serves to strengthen the muscle, not weaken it (unless the amount of weight is. Essentially, the resisting protest serves to strengthen the domination structure. Blame doesn't inspire people to be kind, to listen, or to change.

#### **IV. Peacemaking Circles.**

This training/consulting also covers the history and applications of Peacemaking Circles. It delves into how to incorporate various types of Peacemaking Circles to address a community's needs and also outlines the development and implementation of a sustainable community-based Peace Program. Also covered are techniques of effective listening, facilitation basics, and effective Circle Keeping,

Peacemaking is everything in our lives. It is in our minds, physical bodies, and the voice in our hearts. Circles bring us together to share who we are beyond our appearances. Peacemaking Circles draw directly from Indigenous traditions around the world. They are not just for conflict - they are used both proactively for community building, celebrating, and honoring, and as a response to crime, harm, violence, and negative impacts. Circles are described as “Peacemaking” because the process builds a foundation of understanding and trust as well as a commitment to share values that people need in order to work things out in a peaceful way. The ultimate question of justice is “how can we live together in a good way.” In that regard, Circles are also about justice. The justice of being heard, valued, and respected. Circles are a force of transformation that is greater than the sum of the individual that make it up.

Circles have been around for thousands of years as a way to be in community with one another. What sets Circles apart lies in the process – the real force comes from the values the Circle embodies. Most of the spaces we experience daily are about power and values of control. Circles affirm a social order based on inclusiveness, equality, and respect for all members. Circles work to create a space to discuss, share, improve and strengthen relationships, remove barriers to effective communication, and respect differences. Circles assume a universal human wish to be connected to others in a good way. Circles are a philosophy, a method of relating, and a healing intervention that can support people taking responsibility for how they have had a negative impact on others. Circles involve people of all ages and backgrounds and across lines of serious conflict and division and varying perspectives. Circles are a forum where people can come together to be seen and heard - both a right and a vital form of social and racial justice that is currently missing from many spaces.

Circles have the power to rebuild the three qualities shattered by violence: safety, compassion, and dignity. In Circles, we practice seeing with our heart, speaking from the heart, and listening from the heart. Circles challenge us to shift our mental and emotional framework. Peacemaking Circles use a restorative framework and involve two or more participants. By engaging in the Circle process, we learn how to create a sacred space where we are able to lift barriers and open ourselves up to fresh possibilities for connection, collaboration, creativity, and mutual understanding. Circles promote equality. Everyone is given an equal chance to participate. The belief is different points of view are needed to fully understand what is going on, the full picture that is leading to a compromised and harmonious dynamic. Circles promote 2 important skills – reflection (being aware of ourselves and how we are perceived) and practice (following the agreed upon guidelines which are about how one thinks and behaves.) In a Circle, reasons for your point of view and perspective are welcomed and not seen as excuses, as is the common assumption and narrative in Western society.

Violence is protected by silence and Circles offer the possibility of reconnecting, repairing, and breaking the silence. Violence is the opposite of dialogue. Violence is an act of disconnection. Dialogue allows people to express themselves and their view of reality, to be heard, and to have their views and feelings respected. A functional community is made up of individuals who have the ability to empathize. Circles promote empathy by helping people to understand another's words, feelings, and attitudes.

**The Peacemaking Circle is a container strong enough to hold:**

- Anger, frustration, joy, pain, truth, conflict, diverse worldviews, intense feelings, silence, and paradox.
- It is a space in which participants are safe to be their most authentic selves.
- It is a structure to create possibilities for freedom to speak our truth, freedom to drop masks and protections, freedom to be present as whole human beings, freedom to reveal our deepest longings, freedom to acknowledge mistakes and fears, freedom to act in accord without core values.
- The physical format symbolizes shared leadership, equality, connection, and inclusion.

**Types of Peacemaking Circles** include (but are not limited to): Talking, Understanding, Grief & Healing, Sentencing, Support, Community-Building, Entry/Re-Entry, Conflict & Repair, Celebration or Honoring Circles, Family Circles.