Images of Restorative Justice
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A kaleidoscope intrigued us with bright colors in shifting images, always different, always new, but still created from the same pieces. The images of restorative justice, like the kaleidoscope, are never exactly the same, but are always created from the same essential pieces - the core elements of restorative justice. Restorative justice is sharing pain, seeking a path of healing and moving toward hope through inclusion, respect, shared decision making and mutual responsibility for one another’s well being.

Looking into the kaleidoscope of restorative justice we see:

- With the support of a community circle, a young man, who stole his father’s credit card and charged over $1,000 in goods, apologizes to his father, turns over his federal and state income tax refunds to his dad and does community service at a local church. His dad says, “I got my son back.”
- Inmates from a woman’s prison help build a Habitat for Humanity home for a family.
- An employee who sent an anonymous letter with accusations against the employer based on rumors to local legislators identifies himself as the author and apologizes to all the staff.
- An elementary school class holds a healing circle for a classmate whose infant sister died.
- Members of an immigrant community struggling with conflicts between the “old way” and the “new way,” between men and women, and between young and old come together and listen respectfully to one another’s anger, pain and hope.
- A dozen adolescents do home repairs worth $12,000 on a house they vandalized. The victim stops by to observe their work and they share the excitement of their accomplishments with him.
- A woman in her 70’s, whose daughter was raped and murdered over twenty years ago, travels hundreds of miles to speak to groups of inmates in adult and juvenile prisons and offers hope that they can change.
- A victim of senseless vandalism by youth organizes faith communities, the school, the police department, local corrections and youth to create a community process for resolving the harms and healing the wounds of crime.
- Women inmates listen to a panel of adolescents describe the impact on their lives of having Mom in prison.
- After sharing stories of pain, connecting to one another and to a sense of common fate, neighborhood residents become involved in establishing a transitional house for sex offenders in their neighborhood and defend it from an attempt by the city to close it.
- Surviving family members of a victim provide input at a parole hearing, express their concerns and are provided with support that was not available at the time of the crime many years earlier.
- A suburban financial consultant, arrested for soliciting a prostitute in an inner city neighborhood, provides service to the neighborhood by conducting financial classes and counseling for inner city residents and continues to offer free classes after his required community service hours are completed.
- The stepfather of two juveniles arrested for attacking him discloses for the first time to the mediator his own childhood sexual victimization after a victim offender mediation session reveals that the adolescents' behavior was triggered by memories of earlier victimization by their biological father.

The task of restorative justice is to create spaces in which people can experience one another through heart and spirit and can access their own capacity for wisdom and healing through their relationships with others. The way of restorative justice is an old way, a way familiar to women – a path of healing, of love and of forgiveness of self and others. Like the kaleidoscope, its exact pattern can never be predicted but its beauty is constant.

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