

Restorative Practices Whanganui

Towards a Restorative City:
Honoa Ki A Rongo Ki Whanganui



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in New Zealand and

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE

“have managed to break down the barriers/conflict amongst two of my team members”

“what could have turned into a major performance investigation is now going to be a meeting with the staff member concerned and the head of that department, and the approach is going to be one of support and actual commitment to repairing and restoring”

2014



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Over 2.3 million New Zealanders are employed either in full or part time capacity. Workplaces are communities where individuals engage in numerous relational interactions.

Employers' Duties in New Zealand

Employers in New Zealand must comply with the following Acts:

- Employment Relations Act 2000 (ERA)
- Health and Safety in Employment Act 1992 (HSE Act)
- Human Rights Act 1993 (HRA)
- Harassment Act 1997 (HA)
- Health and Safety At Work Act (effective from 1 April 2015)

Within the above Acts employers are responsible for (amongst other duties):

- ensuring the safety of employees
- ensuring workplaces are healthy and safe

In addition, the 2014 WorkSafe NZ Guideline advises employers to:

- build good relationships in a respectful work environment

Workplace Conflict / Bullying in New Zealand

- *"Conflict is an inevitable part of the work environment. It emerges wherever there is potential for disagreement."* ('Conflict in NZ Workplaces Study' by FairWay Resolution, Aug 14.)
- *"Workplace bullying is a significant hazard in New Zealand. Not only does it affect people physically and mentally, it can disrupt workplaces and reduce productivity."* (www.business.govt.nz/worksafe/tools-resources/bullying-prevention-tools, Mar 14)
- *"Bullying is a workplace hazard, affects personal health, affects business productivity, behaviours are specific and have a range of solutions, is prevalent in NZ and needs to be addressed."* (Preventing and Responding to Workplace Bullying by WorkSafe & MBIE, Feb 14)
- *"Workplace bullying is costing Kiwi businesses tens of millions of dollars and pressure is being put on the Government to address the problem with 'more teeth'."* (NZ Herald, 13.10.12)

Costs of Workplace Conflict / Bullying

Workplace conflict and bullying costs \$250 million New Zealand dollars every year. These costs affect a private enterprise's bottom line and arise from:

- | | |
|--|----------------------------------|
| - Absenteeism | - Industrial action |
| - Low Attrition / High Recruitment Costs | - Consumer's negative perception |

Implementing a restorative approach provides both employers and employees the knowledge and tools to transform conflict and eradicate bullying. It also complies with the above Acts.



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What is Restorative Practice?

Restorative Practice is a philosophy, in action, that places respectful relationships at the heart of every interaction. This relational approach is grounded in beliefs about the equality, dignity and potential of all people and about the just structures and systems that enable people to thrive and succeed together.

Restorative work therefore includes building and maintaining inclusive networks of positive relationships among workplace staff, including managers and 'stakeholders'. Its relational approach helps transform the ways staff engage in the workplace and the ways management exercise authority. A relational approach recognises that interpersonal connections and just structures create community: that people and organisations flourish when relationships are strong and supportive. A relational approach values inclusion, respect, co-operation, equality and democracy.

A restorative approach to problem solving recognises that misconduct harms people and relationships, and that those involved in the problem are needed in the problem solving. This philosophy-in-action means workplaces use restorative problem solving tools to restore relationships where harm has occurred. Those who harm others are held accountable within a community of care, and have obligations to repair the harm done. Even when serious harm has been done, the workplace community can be strengthened and future problems can be prevented.

The Restorative Practice Tools help workplaces use formal and evidence based ways to respond to incidents of serious harm, to problem-solve effectively and to build community.

While the tools are effective in their own right, their primary aim is to help the workplace community think, act and live relationally. In this way, restorative work transforms the whole culture of a workplace; influencing what we choose to value and why. Restorative practice is a strengths based and hope filled approach to working and wider community life. A relational approach is therefore not just about "implementing" the restorative practices in the model. The practices are a means to an end. The end is the workplace's vision of a thriving and relational workplace community.

For many, a "restorative" approach to serious harm implies restoring relationships to how they were before an incident. While this might often be true, a restorative approach has a "forward" focus - an intervention must restore the dignity, humanity and mana of the people involved. It must restore the just relationships that enable people to thrive and succeed in their community, even when there is no ongoing relationship between those involved in an incident. It must restore the systems and supports needed to live out the vision of a respectful and inclusive workplace.

Restorative Practice in the New Zealand context

Workplace-based restorative practice has been informed by ideas from modern restorative justice and from kaupapa Māori. In strong Māori whanau, hapu, and iwi, connections and common interests are built and reiterated. Leadership is exercised through collaborative relationships, mana and influence. Members of the community are invested in each other's success. Problems are therefore solved relationally, with a focus on the safety and strength of the whanau or collective – the common good. Restorative work in workplaces is also part of a wider strengths-based relational approach to community development, education, justice, health and social work.



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What we know about Individuals and Workplaces

- Individuals are emotional beings and are driven by their emotions.
- All really effective workplaces are communities of individuals.
- Individuals have an innate need to interact with others.
- The emotional / relational aspect is often overlooked in workplaces.
- There is an indisputable correlation between high levels of emotional engagement, high levels of 'community indicators' and high levels of performance and productivity.
- Individuals / Organisations can be hesitant to ask for help (ie may look weak)

Why would a Workplace adopt a Restorative Approach?

One of the benefits of a restorative approach in the workplace is the demonstration of social responsibility and investment in human and social capital.

Perhaps the main benefit for workplaces is the reduction of costs associated with conflict and bullying, thus improving a workplace's bottom line. Increased profits of a restorative workplace would be due to:

- lower employee costs (attrition, loss of knowledge/expertise, HR costs)
- increased productivity
- avoid use of industrial action
- 'stakeholder' perception of a "good employer"

Mediation vs Restorative Practice

A restorative approach is not mediation:

- in mediation all parties are assumed to be on a level moral playing field
- in a restorative approach the wrongdoer must acknowledge and accept responsibility

Restorative Workplace Culture

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|---------------------------------|--|
| - values can be modelled | - enables equality – diminishes power imbalances |
| - clarity of roles | - fosters positive and productive participation |
| - less confrontation | - demonstrates fair process (engagement, explanation, expectation clarity) |
| - effective at all levels | - issues addressed early to prevent major employment issues |
| - reduction in absenteeism | |
| - full employee engagement | |
| - is complementary to HR policy | |

Measurement of a Restorative Approach

With any culture change there must be measurement to ensure its success and to promote reiterative learning. Some key indicators for measuring restorative practice in a workplace are:

- HR: recruitment / retention / absenteeism
- staff survey: morale, loyalty, commitment
- public profile: employer of choice



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Implementing a Restorative Approach

To successfully implement restorative practice in any workplace there needs to be:

- understanding of philosophy in action
- understanding of practice
- competence
- readiness of staff to acknowledge harm, responsibility, accountability

The following are the necessary steps for successful implementation:

1. get management support and right people on board
2. find out what's happening now and measure what the relational issues are for the organisation and employee
3. identify relational areas for improvement, eg relational culture, problem solving methods
4. implement a restorative approach
5. measure and maintain progress

Limitations of a Restorative Approach

As with any culture change there are limitations:

- resources (site champions, funding)
- time – changing mindset needs repeated application over period of time
- management commitment
- not a “cheap fix” – not a “one off” approach

Acknowledgements

- Department of Labour website
- *“The Big Issues in Employment: HR Management and Employment Relations in NZ”*, (Parker et al, Apr 13)
- *‘World’s First “Restorative City”: Hull, UK, Improves Outcomes of All Interventions with Young People, Saves Resources’* (Wachtel, 19.1.12)
- *‘Little Book of Restorative Justice’* (Zehr, 2002)
- Mark Corrigan, Whanganui
- WorkSafe NZ website

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