# WHAT DID I NEED?

RestorativeTeachingTools.com

## OBJECTIVE

Learners (or your presentation audience) will reflect on the needs they experienced after hearing about a crime in their community, being harmed by another person, and causing harm to another person. This internal reflection provides a springboard for understanding what makes the restorative approach to justice-making distinct and powerful.

## MATERIALS

This activity was designed to be delivered in an online context and makes use of the Chat feature in Zoom.

## INSTRUCTIONS

This activity is best placed at the beginning of an online presentation or workshop on restorative justice and can be run with a group of any size.

Explain to participants that they will be using the Chat function to respond to a series of questions. (Check to make sure everyone is familiar with how to find and use Chat!) You may wish to have the questions written on slides that you share or posted in the Chat for participants who are visual learners.

Explain that you are going to start with a couple relationship building questions to help the group get to know each other. This serves a dual purpose of generating a sense of connection in the group (like opening with a circle) while also building participants' comfort using the Chat feature to respond to questions. If you dive right into the deeper, more difficult questions, you will likely find that fewer people will engage. It is best to first build comfort with a scaffolded approach by starting with a few simple relationship building questions.

Here are some examples of relationship building questions you may want to ask in the Chat. Feel free to be as creative as you wish!

- How many siblings do you have?
- What is the most interesting form of transportation you've used?
- What is the strangest job you've had?
- If you could have one thing, floating next to you in the air at all times, so that you could access it any time you wanted, what would it be?

Ask each question one at a time and read out loud some of the responses as they appear in the Chat. You may also wish to share your own response to each question.

Thank everyone for taking the time to answer the relationship building questions and explain that next the questions will shift to be related to the topic of the day: restorative justice.

**1** Reflect on a time that, as a member of your community, you became aware of a crime having been committed. What were your needs as a community member? Share some of the needs you experienced in the chat box.

As responses appear in the chat box, read them out loud and note points of overlap. You may also want to share some of the needs you've experienced as a community member. For example, "For me, a primary need I have as a community member is for safety. I want to know that this won't happen again, that I can regain trust with others in my community.

**2** Think back on a time that you experienced significant harm. Maybe you were the victim of a crime or maybe it was an instance in your personal life where you were wronged by another person. What were your needs? Please share in the chat box.

As responses appear in the chat box, read them out loud and note points of commonality. You may also want to share some of the needs you've experienced as a harmed party. For example "I needed the person who harmed me to know how it had impacted my life. I needed to know that he wouldn't do it again to me or anyone else. I wanted to know that he understood what he had done and that he was sorry." or "I needed someone to fix the damage to my property." or, "I needed validation of how painful it was." or "I needed to get my questions answered."

**3** Finally, think back on a time that you caused harm to another person. Maybe you committed a crime, or maybe you hurt someone, intentionally or not, through your words or actions. What were your needs?

As responses appear in the chat box, read them out loud and note points of overlap. You may also want to share some of the needs you've experienced as someone who caused harm. For example, "I needed to take responsibility and be able to apologize and do something to try to make it right. I also needed to know that this one incident wouldn't define me. That I would be seen as a whole person outside this one harmful behavior." Or "I needed to share with the person I hurt about what was going through my mind at that time. I wanted to be understood."

Thank everyone for sharing. Explain that it is helpful to start a conversation on restorative justice by reflecting on the needs that emerge following crime or wrongdoing because the concept of addressing needs has been central in the emergence of restorative approaches.

Restorative justice has its roots in indigenous justice-making processes around the world; this work isn't new. However, the modern iteration of the restorative justice movement began in part as an effort to better address the needs of individuals affected by crime, needs that were not being met by standard criminal justice procedures. Restorative justice is an effort to better meet the needs of all involved: responsible parties, harmed parties, and the broader community.

## DEBRIEF

You may choose to ask participants to respond to debrief questions in the chat box or you can ask for a couple volunteers to speak up to share their reflections or observations from the activity. Asking participants to speak up at this point creates a nice change of pace.

What insight did you gain from reflecting on the needs that you experienced in various roles following incidents of harm? How did this impact your understanding of restorative justice?

## LESSON

One of the defining features of restorative justice is how it creates a space for the needs of all individuals following incidents of harm including the harmed party, responsible party, and broader community. Taking time to reflect on our own experiences helps to cultivate empathy for the participants in restorative processes and to understand the central importance of identifying, validating, and responding to individual needs.