

WHAT DID I NEED?

IN-PERSON VERSION

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OBJECTIVE

Learners will reflect on the needs they experienced after hearing about an incident of harm (or 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

Space for the group to gather in smaller circles of 4-6 people. You may also want to have slides with the question prompts for visual learners.

INSTRUCTIONS

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

Ask participants to form small groups of 4-6 people and to sit or stand in a circle with their small group. They will be briefly responding to a series of questions in circle format in their small group. Explain that this is not a full-length circle and that participants should endeavor to be brief (a few words to a sentence) in their responses. The purpose in this case is not to share deeply about our experiences, but rather to see what core needs emerge from the group members' experiences. You may wish to have the questions written on slides that you share 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 while also building participants' comfort responding briefly in circle order. If you dive right into the deeper, more personal questions, you will likely find that fewer people 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. Feel free to be as creative as you wish, but make sure the responses can be brief! Ask one question at a time, giving the groups enough time that each person can share their answer with their small group before moving on to the next question.

- How many siblings do you have?
- What is the most interesting form of transportation you've used?
- What is the most unusual 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?

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.



Reflect on a time that, as a member of a community, you became aware of an incident of harm or crime that affected your community. What were your needs as a community member? Share some of the needs you experienced in your small circle.

After all small groups finish their quick circles on this question, ask the groups to share out a few common needs that were named. Reflect back what you hear and help to identify themes. For example, "I'm hearing that a primary need we have experienced as community members is for safety. We want to know that this won't happen again. We have a need for trust."



Think back on a time when 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 some of the needs you experienced in your small circle.

After all small groups finish their quick circles on this question, ask the groups to share out a few common needs they named. Reflect back themes. As the facilitator, you may also want to add some of the needs you've experienced as a harmed party, especially if some key needs weren't mentioned. For example, "I needed understanding, for the person who harmed me to know how it had impacted my life. I wanted to know that he wouldn't do it again to me or anyone else." "I needed communication, so I could understand what he was thinking at the time." "I needed repair, for someone to fix the damage to my property." "I needed validation of how painful it was." "I needed information, to get my questions answered."



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 after the incident of harm?

After all small groups finish their quick circles on this question, ask the groups to share out a few common needs they named. You may also want to share some of the needs you've experienced as someone who has caused harm. For example, "I needed to communicate, to take responsibility, apologize, and do something to try to make it right." "I 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." "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 incidents of harm and crime because the priority of addressing needs is central in 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 and communities affected by crime, needs that were not being met by standard criminal justice procedures. Restorative justice endeavors to better meet the needs of all involved: responsible parties, harmed parties, and the broader community.

OPTION FOR SMALLER GROUPS

If you have a smaller group size with fewer than 12 people, you may want to explore a different format for this activity. Instead of breaking up the larger group into small groups as instructed above, you can keep the whole group together. You will still run through the steps described above. After asking each question, you will ask the group to call out their responses. In this format, you can record people's responses by typing them into a slide that you are presenting, so people can read and track responses as they are participating. (See an example of how to set up a slide at the end of these instructions.)

DEBRIEF

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.

