

Restorative Conversations: Repairing Harm and Building Understanding

Transform challenges into opportunities for growth and connection through intentional dialogue.

What Are Restorative Conversations?

Restorative conversations are purposeful dialogues that promote empathy, accountability, and solutions by addressing the root causes of conflicts. As a Tier 1 strategy, they quickly and effectively address minor disruptions while encouraging students to reflect on the impact of their actions. At Tier 2, these conversations offer a deeper opportunity for students to work through patterns of recurring behavior in a supportive, structured way. For Tier 3, restorative conversations are integrated into intensive plans, providing a safe space to address more serious challenges and foster meaningful growth.

Why Use Restorative Conversations?

Promotes Accountability & Empathy: Addresses the root causes of conflicts through open dialogue.

Safe & Supportive Space: Encourages honest sharing of emotions and perspectives.

Reduces Repeat Issues: Helps prevent recurring behaviors by collaboratively finding solutions.

Strengthens Relationships: Builds trust through non-punitive resolution strategies.

Enhances Classroom Culture: Fosters an environment of respect and mutual understanding.



The Research Says:

- » **Hattie's Visible Learning:** Feedback has an effect size of 0.70, emphasizing meaningful, timely interactions.
- » Restorative conversations strengthen emotional regulation and lead to a measurable decline in repeated behavioral issues.

Steps for Restorative Conversation

1. Create a Safe Space:

- » Find a private, neutral setting.
- » Use affective statements to set a respectful tone (e.g., "I feel disappointed when...").

2. Ask Open-Ended Questions:

- » "What happened from your perspective?"
- » "How do you think your actions affected others?"
- » "What can we do to make things right?"

3. Listen Actively:

- » Validate emotions using reflective listening (e.g., "What I hear you saying is...").
- » Avoid judgment or interruption.

4. Collaborate on Solutions:

- » Brainstorm actionable steps to repair harm and prevent recurrence.
- » Agree on specific actions and timelines.

5. Close Positively:

- » Summarize what was discussed and express optimism (e.g., "I'm confident we can move forward together.").

Signs of Effective Restorative Conversations

- » Students participate actively and reflect on their actions.
- » Agreements are respected and upheld by all parties.
- » Future conflicts decrease, and relationships improve.
- » Students feel supported, heard, and accountable.

Questions for Reflection

- » How can restorative conversations fit into your current behavior management approach?
- » What barriers might you encounter, and how can you overcome them?
- » How can these conversations improve classroom culture and relationships?