

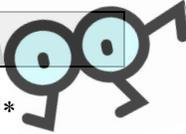
# Monthly Restorative Justice in Education DIALOGUE

Volume 2: Issue 6

March 2011

Spring has arrived, or has it? Today I sit at home enjoying a raging snowstorm outside my window. In a few hours I will go out snowshoeing. A rj experience can be like that—a promise of new life, a hint that healing is possible, but first we must walk *through* the storm, acknowledging the reality of what has happened, my role in it, and my willingness to contribute to healing. This month's DIALOGUE continues with stories and resources that show that the process of implementing rj in our schools and organizations are full of hope. Thank you to our contributors. [This issue comes with a short play attached at the end. Be sure to scroll down to the end for that wonderful resource.]

## Focussed Lenses



*“Community is not a place, but a relationship”\*\**

In the early days of rj, this phrase was presented to highlight the need to rethink how the relational component of community, if not lost, is very weak. Consider your school or organization. We often speak of these as communities. What in your community reminds you that people within are nurturing relationships? What hints can you identify that demonstrate it is a place of disconnected people?

\*\*Boyes-Watson, C. (2005) *Community is not a place but a relationship: Lessons for organizational development*. Public Organization Review, Vol 5:4

## Bullfrogs and Butterflies

### A Few Thoughts on Circles and Staff Meetings

The Shalem Mental Health Network includes in its mandate services for educating communities about rj and facilitating circles. Shalem's staff meetings are conducted in a restorative manner as described in last month's RJ Monthly DIALOGUE. At each staff meeting the questions used are:

- 1) Celebrate a Success
- 2) A Lesson Learned
- 3) What's Coming Up

Then a planning/discussion session on one topic or need within the organization is presented for brainstorming or problem-solving.

- 4) Check-out Circle

The planning/discussion time is done as an open discussion (no talking piece). Everything else is done with a talking piece. Michelle, an art therapist at Shalem, reflects on her experience....

Monthly I'm experiencing a different sort of staff meeting. At the Shalem Mental Health Network, where I

work, there are practices of restorative justice at work at staff meetings, the restorative circle approach applied to the process – resulting in an unpredictable change to the flow of the meetings. There's a unique and wonderfully strange sense of newness, a beautiful coming together of community in the most unexpected way during what most would consider routine, mundane even.

Sitting around the oval table brings a unique approach immediately, just because of the set up of the room. Eye contact is easy to make with each participant. Adding in a talking piece, that object that holds meaning for the facilitator and adds significance to what, in essence, holds the participants to taking turns, brings order and regimen in a nonthreatening, unrestricting way. In a subtle way participants are encouraged to reign in their thoughts, make them precise and present to others in a fairly time-efficient method.

Knowing that I get my turn to speak, uninterrupted, makes those few minutes valuably predictable: there's no back-and-forth repetition of similar thoughts or opinions because the only one speaking is the one who holds the talking piece. There's no unexpected banter, “two cents”, or side comments because there's a respect for the process. Once everyone has had his or her opportunity to speak, there's an opportunity for discussion, questions, clarification, more details, etc. This open time doesn't require the speaker to have the talking piece.

There's a notion of community, team building perhaps, in the process of using a talking piece at our monthly staff meetings. This approach to the necessity of business brings with it components that include respect for the speaker, respect for the round table, and respect for what each other brings to the whole, a piece of the puzzle in which we're all contributing to create.

Were I to be critical of the approach at all, it would be one thing. There are times when the passing of an object from one hand to another reminds me that we are not only sharing in community and ideas but also in each

other's germs. We spread from one hand to the next whatever it is we've been eating, whatever we last touched, rubbed a nose unknowingly and we've touched the talking piece, only to pass it on to the next person to speak. So while there's beauty in the structure, meaning to the object, there's this subtle and underlying voice reminding me to bring my Purell.

Michelle De Boer

[editorial quip: in reality could it be that we're actually building up each other's immunity to disease?]

## RJ, Curriculum and Pedagogy

### A Play About Not Killing

[See appendix attached. The author requests that you contact him for permission to use it in your setting.]

At Beacon Christian School, we have doing monthly chapels about the Ten Commandments. I have been adding to the resources by creating a play for the particular commandment that we are focusing on for that month. Last month we talked about the commandment 'Do Not Kill'.

The approach suggested was to focus on ways to love each other. I decided to see what Jesus said about "Do Not Kill". His response is found in Matthew 5: 21-22. He doesn't let anyone off the hook. That perspective lent itself to the play's approach challenging the audience to see the different ways that people can be harmed. I hope it also encouraged those who have been harmed to voice ways that they may have been harmed.

My student actors created the scenes that we presented. If you present this play, I would encourage you to have your students explore what each of the "Sometimes" statements means to them. All my actors acknowledged that it was not difficult to create the scenarios. Unfortunately children do not understand how people hurt each other, as they are familiar with this through personal experience or media.

The performance went well. The audience was interested. We don't make the plays too long so that they are more powerful in making the point clearly and quickly. The only reaction during the performance I remember was when a kindergarten child laughed when we showed someone in the act of hitting another person. The solo

laugh in the middle of the play was noticed by others as well.

Next time I do something like this, I would have a small group of audience members reflect with cast members about what was presented.

Ron Vandenburg [rvandenburg@beaconchristian.org](mailto:rvandenburg@beaconchristian.org)  
[Ron has two other plays completed in this series—  
1. Lying; 2. Stealing. Contact him for copies of these plays done in a similar format.]

## Resources

### Restorative practices resources for school communities

<http://www.vnc.qld.edu.au/rpsite/Default.htm>

This website is packed full of articles, video clips, organizational materials, ideas intended to help other schools in their engagement with rj practices.

### Restorative practices school-study trip blog:

<http://rcrp.blogspot.com/> An incredible blog describing one school team's experience exploring rj programs across Australia in preparation for their own school program.

## You are invited!

International Institute for Restorative Practices (IIRP) 14<sup>th</sup> World Conference is coming to Canada in June. Send a delegation from your school or district to Halifax, Nova Scotia and engage in the global dialogue that is growing. You will return amazed and motivated. See [www.iirp.org](http://www.iirp.org) for more information.

Do you have a story to share, a question to ask, a great idea for integrating rj into your curriculum and pedagogy? If you do, email it to: [dvaandering@mun.ca](mailto:dvaandering@mun.ca) Remember this is a 'comfy chair' DIALOGUE. Don't fret too much about format or style ... just get your thoughts down in writing and send it my way.

*\*\*THE RJ MONTHLY DIALOGUE IS BROUGHT TO YOU THROUGH A COLLABORATION BETWEEN SHALEM MENTAL HEALTH NETWORK (SHALEMNETWORK.ORG) AND DOROTHY VAANDERING (MEMORIAL UNIVERSITY OF NEWFOUNDLAND)\*\**

*Rj acknowledges justice as honouring the inherent worth of all and is enacted through relationship. When something occurs that undermines the well-being of some, a space is provided for dialogue whereby the dignity of all involved and affected can be restored so that each can once again become a fully contributing member of the community of which they are a part.*  
(D. Vaandering, 2009)

*As the readership of the RJ DIALOGUE grows, for those new to it, a note explaining its origins and original audience is warranted. The first issue of RJ DIALOGUE came out in October 2009 for those who had taken rj training workshops through the Ontario Alliance of Christian Schools and Shalem Mental Health Network in Ontario, Canada. Set in the context of a faith-based independent school system, the connection of rj to indigenous and spiritual traditions was made with a particular focus on the Judeo-Christian perspective. This focus is also the context of the RJ DIALOGUE. If you are receiving this e-newsletter, your contact information was provided by yourself or someone who thought you might be interested. **If you wish to be removed from the list, please reply to this email with a subject line stating: Remove me from e-list.** If you are enjoying the newsletter be sure to contribute your questions, stories and resources. And if you know of others who might benefit from it, by all means pass it on and/or send me their email address to add to the mailing list.*

Appendix: **Sticks and Stones: A Play about Not Killing** by Ron Vandenburg (Contact Ron at [rvandenburg@beaconchristian.org](mailto:rvandenburg@beaconchristian.org) for performance permission)

All: (said together) You all know me. I am a person who has been harmed.

All: (This line is said multiple times, by individuals or small groups until everyone on stage has said the line. Actors may overlap their line with another person or group) I am a person who has been harmed.

A1: Sometimes I am that person all by herself in a room full of people.

A2: Sometimes I am the boy with a black eye.

A3: Sometimes I am the girl who knows that I am not allowed to stand in your circle of friends.

A4: Sometimes I am in your class.

A5: Sometimes I sit beside you.

A6: Sometimes I am you.

(For each sentence that follows, actors create mimes, tableaux or verbally act out what each sentence will look like. Each scene should be less than 10 seconds. Each scenario's descriptive sentence is stated by one actor before the scenario is presented.)

Sometimes you call me names.

Sometimes you say nasty things about me.

Sometimes you post mean things about me on facebook.

Sometimes you don't invite me to your parties on purpose.

Sometimes you threaten me.

Sometimes you make me scared or uncomfortable around you.

Sometimes you take or damage my things.

Sometimes you hit me or kick me.

Sometimes you make do things that I don't want to do.

(All actors stand across the stage facing the audience.)

A1: In Matthew 5, Jesus talked about the six commandment 'Do not murder.'

A2: He said, "I'm telling you that anyone who is so much as angry with a brother or sister is guilty of murder."

A3: He said that if you carelessly call a brother 'idiot!', you just might find yourself hauled into court.

A4: He said that if you thoughtlessly yell 'stupid!' at a sister, you are on the brink of hellfire.

A5: The simple moral fact is that words kill.

A6: I say, (joined by the group) "Sticks and stones may break my bones but words will never hurt me."

Group 1: But you use sticks (freeze into poses of hurt and suffering and loneliness)

Group 2: And you use stones (freeze into poses of hurt and suffering and loneliness)

Group 3: And you use words (freeze into poses of hurt and suffering and loneliness)

A1: And they hurt me. (A1 walks off. Everyone walks off in silence)