

# What is Restorative Justice?\*

Restorative justice is a response to wrongdoing that involves bringing together the interests and needs of the person who has been harmed, the person who has committed the harm, and community stakeholders, to arrive at a place of accountability and reparation.



**The goal of restorative justice is to repair the harm caused by wrongdoing, rather than punish for the rules that have been broken.**

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## Some of the ways RJ differs from the criminal legal response:

- **Accountability, not punishment.** Instead of focusing on the punishment prescribed by law for an action, RJ's focus on accountability requires a wrongdoer to fully acknowledge the harm they have caused and take specific constructive action to repair the resulting damage - emotional, physical, material, or otherwise.
- **Harm, not crime.** Not all crimes are harms, and not all harms are crimes. "Crime" describes wrongdoing by how it violates the state. "Harm" turns our focus to the resulting impact on real people, and begins the process of identifying points of need that can be met.
- **Open dialogue, not constricted testimony.** RJ is not an adversarial process restrained by the evidentiary rules used in a courtroom. RJ emphasizes the value of all parties sharing their story and giving a complete picture of the impacts on their lives.

## What does accountability look like?

Deciding what actions or measures should be performed to demonstrate accountability for a harm is a collaborative effort among the stakeholders involved, and should be tailored to address the unresolved problems or needs left by the harm.

## Accountability may include:

- Fully acknowledging the experiences of the persons harmed
- Making an open apology
- Performing prescribed community service
- Enrolling in therapy or treatment programs to address underlying causes of harmful behavior
- Committing to ongoing accountability measures and check-ins

## What does the restorative process look like?

Some of the ways RJ is practiced include:

- circles
- conferencing
- face-to-face dialogue

There is no singular blueprint or mold for facilitating RJ. A restorative process is responsive to the particular needs of the context in which it is developed and tailored to be most effective within that environment and community.

## Who are stakeholders?

1. The person who was harmed.
2. The person who caused the harm.
3. Members of the community.