

How to communicate Restorative Justice effectively

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Why me?

Transforming lives through
Restorative Justice



Restorative Justice is a powerful tool that can transform the lives of people who take part. However, under 10% of people affected by crime recall being told about it. In order to support these people to access the resources they need, we must find ways of communicating Restorative Justice to them effectively. But how do we do that?

Why me? have commissioned research on how to communicate Restorative Justice effectively, reframing the way we talk about it to help ensure that people understand what it is. The research focused specifically on criminal justice professionals who are in contact with people affected by crime. It's crucial that they understand Restorative Justice and its benefits so they feel confident enough to offer it to the people that they work with.

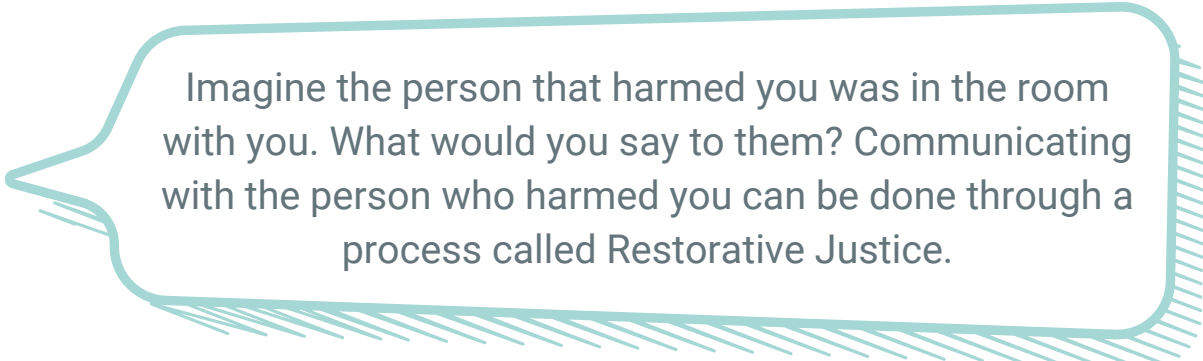
This guide explores some top tips, based on Why me?'s existing reframing expertise and the research, for getting the message about Restorative Justice across effectively.

Terminology

One crucial thing to consider when talking about Restorative Justice is the terminology we use to describe it.

Take the phrase **Restorative Justice** itself - the word restorative is unfamiliar to most people and could be confusing whilst the word justice can trigger thoughts about the Police, the Criminal Justice System and injustice. Instead of using the phrase Restorative Justice, consider how you could introduce the concept without leading with those words.

For example you could introduce Restorative Justice by saying:



Imagine the person that harmed you was in the room with you. What would you say to them? Communicating with the person who harmed you can be done through a process called Restorative Justice.

How do we refer to the people who take part in Restorative Justice? They are often referred to as 'victim and offender' or 'harmed and harmer' in the restorative field. The issue with these terms is they're binary and don't consider the crossover between 'victim' and 'offender'. Often people who have committed a crime have also been the victim of many crimes themselves. These terms also imply that the crime they were affected by is their entire identity.

Instead, we suggest considering...



Structuring your point

"Always tell a story starting with explaining why it matters, then what the problem/issue is, and what we can do about it" - Transform Justice

Vision

A universal statement of how we want to see the world

Problem

What is preventing us from reaching this vision?

Solution

How can we overcome this problem?

For example:

We all want people affected by crime to get the support they need to recover.



But many are left with unanswered questions and unable to cope.



Giving them the opportunity to have their say, explain the impact the crime had on their lives and ask questions can help them to recover and move on. This is called Restorative Justice.

Vision

Problem

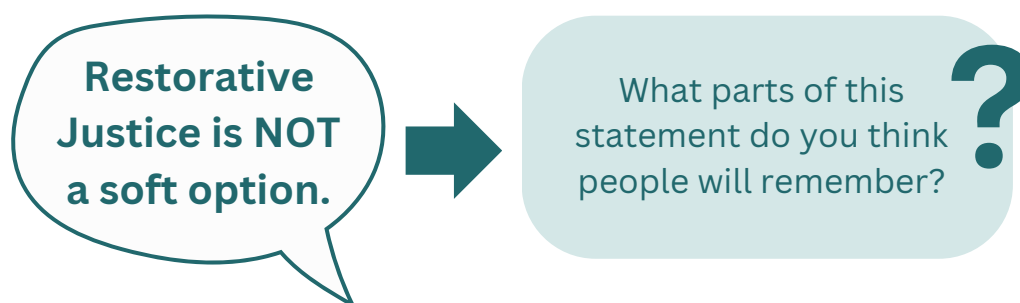
Solution

Top tips for communicating Restorative Justice

Top tip	How to use it
Use first person	When talking about Restorative Justice, use first person instead of third person to better connect with your audience. E.g. "Restorative Justice could help you get the answers you need".
Avoid jargon and technical terms	Try and avoid words that will be unfamiliar for anyone outside of the restorative field. E.g. conference, facilitator,
Don't rely on the words 'Restorative Justice'	Introduce the concept or the reasons someone might take part before you call it 'Restorative Justice'. E.g. "How would you feel about asking the person who harmed you that question directly?"
Mention aftercare & support	Make sure information about risk assessment, support from facilitators and the ability to withdraw at any point is clear and readily available.

Mythbusting

Busting myths about Restorative Justice is tempting considering how many misconceptions there are about it. However, we must avoid mythbusting in a way that just reinforces these myths.



By repeating the myth, even if you go on to explain why it is wrong, reinforces it in people's minds. Instead, make your point without mentioning the myth at all. For example, instead of saying it is not a soft option, you could say "Restorative Justice works alongside the conventional Criminal Justice System and does not affect sentencing."

What *should* I talk about?

It is important to remember that when we raise Restorative Justice, people may already have existing perceptions of what it is, or views about the wider Criminal Justice System that could affect their understanding. We want to avoid triggering unhelpful beliefs, ensuring that people stay open-minded to what we say. So, rather than talking about values such as punishment, cost-benefit, retribution etc., our research found that the values below will make your messaging more effective.

Justice <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Equality- Tolerance- Interdependence	Choice <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Freedom to choose- Rehabilitation
Purpose of Restorative Justice <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Social justice- Inner harmony- Human potential	Efficacy of Restorative Justice <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Efficacy- Professionalism- Training

For example, let's take 'Freedom to choose'. You could say, "It's important that people affected by crime are empowered to make their own decisions about their recovery. By referring them to a Restorative Justice service, we give them the opportunity to explore their options and decide for themselves."

How can I make my information accessible?

One important aspect of communicating Restorative Justice is making sure everyone in your audience can access the information you share. Our animation video below demonstrates what Restorative Justice is, without relying on any words or language. This means that people with varying proficiency in English, young people, people with learning disabilities or neurodivergence or those with a visual learning style can see how it works in a way that suits them.



Why me? also have an Easy Read style document that covers the basics of Restorative Justice. Feel free to use and share these resources with your audiences to help widen access to Restorative Justice. Please credit Why me? when you share.



How can I find out more?

We plan to continue this reframing work by creating key messages that can be used across the sector. We will be working with colleagues in the restorative field to align and amplify messaging about Restorative Justice and seeking to extend the research. [Sign up to our newsletter](#) to find out about our next steps in this area. You can also visit our website and social media channels to see how we use these tips in practice.

