

Restorative Guidelines for HSM

We've put together this primer for those interested in learning more about the Restorative work we've been engaging in this past year. Here we will outline the perspectives, uses, tools, and guidelines of Restorative circles and the Restorative mindset.

Restorative practices are not about sorting through our own psychology. They are about understanding impact, taking responsibility, and being accountable. They are about learning how to live with other human beings in a life-positive, sustainable way. They are about repair, healing and building.

Restorative processes are meant to provide members with ways to communicate, make decisions, and restore relationships when harm occurs. They also help members develop self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, relationship skills, and responsible decision-making.

Restorative practices and processes include communication principles and agreements, restorative mindsets, meeting structures and procedures such as circle work, processes and guidelines for relationship care and repair (such as restorative sessions), means of working with interpersonal and group conflict (listening and restorative circles), and guidelines for addressing harm and wrongdoing.

The Roots of Restorative Processes

The philosophy behind restorative processes has its roots in indigenous cultures and is based on the idea that the well-being of a community and its members is preserved through communication, emotional connection, understanding, and meaningful relationships. This philosophy rests on the assumption that individuals are not separate from the whole system. When harm or wrongdoing have occurred, making things right requires repairing the harm and restoring the relationships that were affected by it, bringing the system back into balance and health.

Why do we need restorative processes?

It is only when we stand up, with all our failings and sufferings, and try to support others rather than withdraw into ourselves, that we can fully live the life of community. — Jean Vanier, Community And Growth

We are social beings designed to live in relationship with one another. While we, as a sangha, continue to hold a focus and context of relationship to the divine via our lineage and our guru, there is also a need to take care of the relationships we have with one another. Taking care of this relationship includes honoring basic human needs for belonging and connection. These needs are as crucial to our wellbeing as water, food, and shelter.

Many of us are currently working to address issues of relationship and communication that we have not addressed before. After working together for a year with Devi Cavitt Razo, Magan Arthur and the Aurum Leadership team, we have discovered the power and effectiveness of restorative processes to help us address these issues by healing wounds, restoring relationships, developing new communication skills, building trust, and cultivating sustainable structures/systems/protocols to take care of our communal needs for healthy relationship, belonging, and connection.

Restorative Mindsets

A restorative mindset is a way of viewing one's role in the sangha or any family or community as being an inseparable part of a system of relationships. Knowing this, one is never exempt from being responsible for or being affected by what happens in the system (positively or negatively). Therefore, these principles are held by the group and all participants, rather than just a leader; everyone is accountable.

Examples of restorative mindsets:

- Relationships and trust are at the center of community.
- All members of a community are responsible to and for one another.
- Multiple perspectives are crucial, natural, and healthy; all voices are equally important.

- Healing is essential to restoring and sustaining a resilient community.



- When harm and relational breakdown occur, accountability and taking an active role in the repair are essential.
- Conflict is a necessary and creative part of a community; it is solved through honest dialogue and collaborative problem-solving that address root causes and the needs of those involved.

Communication Principles

Restorative communication establishes respect, trust, openness, acceptance, and awareness (of self, other, and space); this makes room for honesty, vulnerability, empathy, risk-taking, collaborative problem-solving, relationship repair, playfulness, and creativity.

Throughout our work together in the last year, we've been using the following communication principles:

Listening to Understand

Truly listening to the thoughts, feelings, and needs of another person; making an effort to comprehend the other person's point of view; making sure the other person feels heard, understood, and valued without judgment.

Using "I" Statements

Express your own feelings and how you were affected; acknowledge and own your own experience, thoughts, feelings, and needs. This form of speaking is essential for people to understand each other and how they affect others in the community.

Restorative Questions

These are non-judgmental questions that encourage self-reflection, exploration, and vulnerability. These questions allow for participants to consider other points of view, hear and understand the feelings of others, the impact of their actions, and what can be done to make things right; they allow for learning from the incident and problem solving rather than blame.

Curiosity

Truly being curious about differences, seeking to understand, collaborate, and problem solve.



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Equal Time

Making sure each voice is heard; some people process externally and find it easy to speak while others process internally and require more space and time to find their expression.

Saying Enough but Not Too Much

Paying attention to being clear and honest, not dominating the conversation, speaking simply and authentically.

Generous Trust

This is a context or attitude of being able to *grant* our trust rather than expecting or standing back and waiting for others to “earn” our trust. This principle invokes a mood of generosity, curiosity and kindness, and assumes the best in those around us.

Examples of what shuts communication down Note: this list was generated organically from the Sangha group that came to the last weekend we had together.

Judgment	Eye-rolling	Shutting-out
Violence		
Sarcasm	Interrupting	Dismissive
Advice	Belittling	Harsh tone
Spacing out	Competing	Whispering
Complaining	“Experting”	Domination
Fixing	“Other people agree with	Triangulating
“Lee said”	me”	Planting Toxic Seeds
Contempt	Withdrawing	Gossip
	Criticizing	Rescuing

Guidelines for Relationship Care and Repair, Working with Interpersonal and Group Conflict

Restorative circles, listening circles, and restorative sessions between individuals are resources for taking care of and repairing relationships that break down, working through conflict, and addressing harm or wrongdoing to bring the system back to balance. These are all things that arise naturally between human beings, in families, between friends and couples, in businesses (such as Hohm Press), between families and in parenting situations,



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etc. From a restorative perspective, conflict is not seen as an anomaly but as an opportunity to learn, grow, and deepen relationships.

Restorative Circles

(The following is excerpted and paraphrased from Kay Pranis, Heart of Hope)

A restorative circle is a structured process for organizing effective group communication, relationship building, decision making, and conflict resolution. A restorative circle brings people together as equals to have honest exchanges about difficult issues and experiences in an atmosphere of respect and concern for all. A restorative circle is a container strong enough to hold anger, frustration, disagreement, joy, truth, conflict, diverse world views, paradox, silence.

A restorative circle has structure and specific rituals that support a group in cultivating respectful communication based on what they value, holding space for a diverse set of perspectives, and navigating intensity. A circle creates a distinct, intentional space.

A restorative circle supports participants to:

- Bring forward their “true self” and help them conduct themselves based on who they are when at their best.
- Make visible our interconnectedness even in the face of serious differences.
- Recognize and access the gifts of every participant.
- Elicit individual and collective wisdom.
- Practice values-based behavior in the circle, strengthen these habits, and carry them into other parts of their lives.

The Guiding Principles of Circles

1. We are profoundly interconnected.
2. Basic Goodness: The True Self in each person is good, wise, powerful.
3. Human beings have a deep desire to be in right relationship with one another.
4. All human beings have gifts and everyone is needed for what they uniquely bring.
5. Everything we need to make positive change exists here.
6. Human beings are holistic.
7. We need practices to build habits of living from the True Self with one another.



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Circle Structures and Rituals

- Participants are seated in a circle, preferably with no furniture in the middle.
- A centerpiece creates a central focus for participants.
- An opening ritual marks the beginning of the space of the circle.
- An intentional object serves as a talking piece that is passed from person to person to regulate the flow of dialogue (who speaks when).
- The group determines the values and guidelines by which communication will happen.
- The “circle keeper” uses guiding questions to facilitate discussion. Communication happens in rounds, with each person having time to share without interruption.
- The circle is held by one or more “circle keepers” who are also participants in the process.
- A closing ceremony marks the end of the space of the circle.

Communication Agreements in Circles:

- No cross talk
- No advice or teaching
- Respectful communication
- Equal time

Other Communication Suggestions:

- Mood of generous trust
- Awareness of oneself, others, and the space
 - Listening to understand
 - Sharing just enough and not more
 - Using “I” statements
- Honesty
- Spaciousness and Patience
- Kindness

Types of Circles

