



# Restorative conversations to repair relationships

Restorative Conversations or “chats” may be formal or informal discussions that use restorative dialogue and questions and empathetic listening to guide people through reflection, problem solving, and repairing harm. As opposed to traditional methods of conflict resolution which focus on laying blame for rules broken and administering consequences, restorative conversations help identify the impact of the behaviour and support the mistake-maker to take steps to make things better. They also create space for the person harmed to be central to the process.

In general, always approach a restorative conversation in a calm and respectful manner and consider your body language. Make attempts to put everyone at ease by either introducing yourself, having everyone present introduce themselves and invite others into the conversation with you perhaps by simply saying, 'Hi everyone, I'm Mr Black and I notice some people do not seem happy here. Can I help you at all?'



*For one-one conversations you can ask:*

What happened? Or what did you hope would happen when you...?

What are you thinking about that now that we are chatting?

Who gets affected by this kind of behavior?

How does this affect people?

What will fix this?

Would you like my help to do that?

What's a fair way to deal with it if this happens again?

Thank the student for the chat, offer positive feedback where appropriate

*For conversations involving more than one person, try this:*

1. **Ask the mistake-maker:**
  - What happened?
2. **Ask the harmed:**
  - Does that sound right? Was there anything different from your perspective?
3. **Ask the mistake-maker:**
  - What were you thinking/feeling when you?
  - What do you think/feel about your choice now?
  - Who here has been affected/harmed/upset by what's happened?
  - How do you think ... has been affected?
4. **Ask the harmed:**
  - What did you think when this happened?
  - How was it/has it been for you?
  - What's been the worst thing?\* optional
  - What needs to be done to make things better?



**Before you begin:**

- Ensure all participants are emotionally & physically ready to engage in the chat (i.e. not visibly angry/distressed, not hungry, needing first aid)
- Ensure everyone knows each other's name
- Create the space (clear the area of bystanders, friends, move the chat to an appropriate space)
- Think about whether a participant has any special needs that require you to modify the chat



5. **Ask the mistake-maker:**
  - What do you think of (harmed person's) idea?
  - Does that sound fair?
6. **Ask both:**
  - What is a fair way to deal with it if (mistake-maker) doesn't do what they have agreed to here?
  - We have an agreement. Is this ok to be verbal or should it be documented?
7. **Closing (ask both):**
  - Is there anything else someone needs to say before we finish?
  - Well done on handling this so maturely
  - I'll catch up with you both to see how things are (give a time)

*Scripts adapted from:  
Hansberry, B. A practical guide to  
restorative practice. 2016.*

[kristy@restorativepathways.com.au](mailto:kristy@restorativepathways.com.au)

