

Overview

- Conversations about violence are often oversimplified to instances when individuals have personally caused harm or been impacted by harm. To interrupt violence, it is essential to increase our understanding of direct, structural, and cultural elements of violence.
- Restorative practices offer a set of practices that are easy to understand, adapt, and engage with the intention of restoring the potential to engage meaningfully with each other.
- It is useful and necessary to have some awareness of how typical adolescent development interacts with this topic.

Definitions

Youth violence is the intentional use of physical force or power to threaten or harm others by young people ages 10-24. Young people are likely to become involved with violence as victims, offenders, and/or witnesses.

Read further:

- [Preventing Youth Violence | CDC](#)
- [Youth Violence | WHO](#)
- [Youth Violence | OJP](#)

Violence is a force intended to hurt, damage, or kill someone or something. For our purposes today:

- Lower-case violence: a dimension of Violence (direct, structural, or cultural)
- Upper-case Violence: considering how the 3 elements of violence work together across direct, structural, and cultural dimensions

Direct violence Behavior involving intentional and targeted harm of other individuals is direct violence; direct violence is often the scope of our conversations about violence and conflict

Structural violence Often perpetrated unintentionally, referring to social systems and institutions that dehumanize, exploit, and cause harm

Cultural violence The least concrete dimension of violence, including intentional or unintentional justification(s) of direct and structural violence

Our Positions Responding to Conflict

Our response to conflict combines our awareness and sense of empowerment (Weingarten, 2003). Awareness comes from our understanding and perception of what is going on, and what needs to happen as a result. Our awareness is typically filtered through biases (conscious or unconscious), so it is important to intentionally deepen our understanding and acknowledge the limits of our blind spots.

RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE ALONGSIDE YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS

A sense of empowerment results from our ability to act/respond with skill - in other words, we are empowered when our skill/ability matches the needs that arise from a situation. In the matrix below, four positions reflect the intersections of awareness and empowerment. Intentional/unintentional movement up, down, and across is constant.

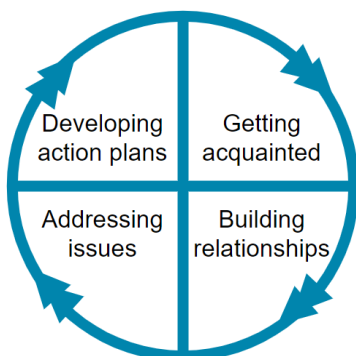
	AWARE	UNAWARE
EMPOWERED	Aware + Empowered Effective, competent approach	Unaware + Empowered Misguided, possibly harmful/unsupportive approach
DISEMPOWERED	Aware + Disempowered Ineffective, stressed approach	Unaware + Disempowered Misplaced/abandoning, possibly harmful/unsupportive approach

Adapted from K. Weingarten, 2003

Restorative Practices

Restorative practices (RP) have been around for a long time. Different communities engage with them in unique ways through art, tradition/culture, nature, and meaningful connections. Most RP are easy to explain, easy to adapt, and easy to participate in. In their most simplified form, RP restore the potential for meaningful re/connection. Restorative practices are less about the what and more about the how.

Restorative practices prioritize doing with, rather than to, for, or at. RP include a spectrum of practices focused on restoring the potential for meaningful connection/engagement. While restorative justice (RJ) receives increased attention due to its potential to transform how we respond to and repair harm, the spectrum of RP includes easily adaptable tools beyond RJ.



Examples from least to most formal:

- Affective statements
- Affective questions
- Impromptu conferences
- Group, circle, or liberating structures
- Formal conferences

RESPONDING TO VIOLENCE ALONGSIDE YOUTH AND YOUNG ADULTS



Read further:

- [Restorative Practices: Explained](#)
- [Heart of Hope - Living Justice Press](#)
- [Little Books of Justice and Peacebuilding](#)
- [Hiding in Plain Sight, documentary screening facilitation guide](#)

Tools for Practice

- The [Relational Care Ladder](#): breaking down an approach through a trauma-responsive, restorative, and developmental framework.
- [Restorative inquiry/affective questions](#): a practical set of questions to respond when harm happens or challenging behavior comes up.
- A Skeleton for a [community panel](#): exploring violence that centers the voices of parents, local leaders, and youth.

About Youth Collaboratory

Youth Collaboratory harnesses the power of the youth services community to innovate, evaluate, and drive effective strategies that assure the safety and well-being of youth and young adults, unlocking their limitless potential. [Learn more about our work.](#)



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412-366-6562 | www.youthcollaboratory.org | info@youthcollaboratory.org

Disclaimer: This information is compiled for training and technical assistance engagement and is not formal guidance from the Federal Youth Service Bureau (FYSB) or the Administration for Children and Families (ACF)

The Relational Care Ladder

The [Relational Care Ladder](#) is a trauma-responsive structure that guides youth-serving professionals and youth/young adults through safety into awareness, awareness into feelings, and feelings into empowerment. The relational care ladder builds on four chronological rungs, but it should be noted that you can move up and down the ladder at different times in your life and even within a single day.

FIGURE 2: THE RELATIONAL CARE LADDER, RUNDELL (2017)

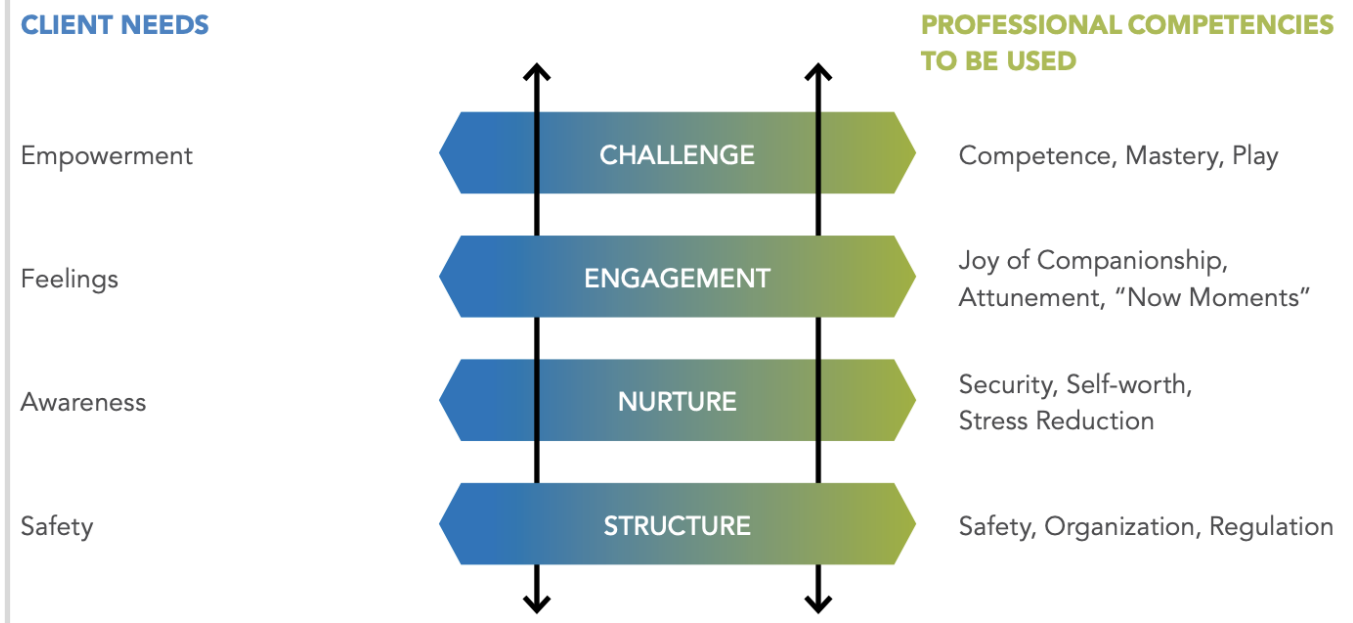


Image from [Relational Care Ladder](#), pg. 4

Restorative Inquiry/Affective Questions

It is recommended these questions are asked with minimal edits until you are comfortable asking them verbatim. These questions aim at externalizing all affect and processing negative affect into positive or neutral affect. If you need to use a small post-it to reference and remember the sequence, that's fair.

Responding to Harm

1. What happened?
2. What did you think when you realized what happened?
3. What impact did it have on you and others?
4. What has been the hardest thing for you?
5. What needs to happen to make things right?

Responding to Challenging Behavior

1. What happened?
2. What were you thinking at the time?
3. What have you thought about since?
4. Who was impacted? How?
5. What needs to happen to make things right?

Discussing Community Violence, a Community Panel

Panelists:

- 2 local leaders
- 2 youth/young adults/students
- 1 parent

Other key roles:

- Moderator
- Community partners

Statement of intent and purpose:

Our communities are resilient. Beyond the last 2.5 years of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, racial uprisings, and economic unpredictability, our communities consistently find ways of getting through difficult situations (for generations!). Many of us believe that our most powerful resource is to find and move through solutions *in community*.

Guided by the energy and power of youth and young adults, and leveraging the expertise and wisdom of elders dedicated to this work, this panel discussion focuses on community building (within a context of ongoing community violence) using a restorative lens. This dialog is grounded in the awareness that repairing harm and addressing community violence is something people can do for/with themselves. Folks are ready to act together - unified by the vision of creating an environment where young people can thrive.

Suggested intro/context:

Johan Galtung, a pioneer in the field of peace and conflict studies, differentiates between **three dimensions of violence. Violence includes direct, structural, and cultural dimensions.** The argument is that how we talk about trauma and violence remains empty to the point of being unethical if it fails to convey the relational and political context of traumatic suffering (direct, cultural, structural). It also remains empty and unethical if it fails to convey local stories of endurance and survival. ([Stephen Madigan](#))

As we hear today's conversation, consider that we truly need much more than talk and that as we prepare to act and engage, our coordinated efforts will get more complicated, not less. That is why building community is critical/essential - specifically, building communities that can tolerate and navigate through conflict - because being in community gives the space, structure, and support that we often need to share the weight of addressing violent conditions AND to convey our stories of endurance and survival. It just so happens that restorative practices offer tools to do this - so let's get started.

Questions for event/panelists: Healing through a restorative approach

Getting acquainted:

- Full-self introduction, including important identifying info that you want people to know. Ex, name, pronouns, favorite holiday dish, who are your people, and more.
- When have you felt most in community and what did you value from it?

Past, present, future:

- Past: to set the stage, what forms of violence have you seen consistently throughout your lived experience and how do people around you typically respond?
- Present: much of restorative practice is about restoring our ability to re/connect (with ourselves and each other). In the aftermath of loss and violence, grief is often a necessary process to heal and re/connect. If at all, how do you make space for your own grief? How do you make space for others to grieve? If you don't, and you're comfortable sharing, why not?
- Future: what elements of your culture (whether they're currently present in the community or not) can play a role in responding to and preventing violence? In what ways?

Exploring the issues:

- Questions for everyone:
 - What is a healing community?
 - What are its unique needs, strengths, and blind spots?
- Question for YYA:
 - What do you wish adults and your peers understood or knew about, specifically in how young people play a role in building community?
- Questions for families (starting with parent(s), but open to everyone after):
 - What resources were most helpful when you were directly impacted by community violence?
 - What resources weren't easily available?
- Question for community leaders:
 - What are some tangible practices that apply to everyday settings where conflict is likely to exist?

Closing question:

- We can't be everything, to everyone, all the time; building community and addressing violence takes a coordinated effort. Please share a practical way in which people can contribute to a community that is well prepared to navigate conflict AND convey stories of endurance and survival. Feel free to offer ideas for direct, cultural, and structural action steps.