

# WELCOME

## Margaret Armstrong

Promoting positive relationships for safer school communities



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# Building & Repairing Relationships the Restorative Way

“Placing relationships at the heart of problem solving”

National Coalition Against  
Bullying Conference - 2007

# Restorative Vs Traditional

- Restorative practices focuses on repairing the harm done to people and relationships rather than on punishing offenders. The process involves all parties affected and all have a say. Its focus is on community, relationships & healing.
- Traditional responses focus on what rule has been broken, who is to blame and making the wrongdoers accountable by punishing them. Often the victim is not included in this process.

# Accountability

- For many, accountability means the wrongdoer gets what they deserve (they are punished)
- i.e. for every action there is a consequence. The victims see that justice has been done and a strong message has been sent to the community.
- So... how effective is this? Does punishment alter behaviour and repair the harm caused? Does it meet everyone's needs?

# Case Study

- Young 10 year old girl (Phoebe) recently arrived into the school has tolerated being picked on, called names, excluded from games and teased continually by a small group of girls.
- Her mother has complained to the school that her daughter is being bullied, but as none of the girls have reported anything, the school has no evidence.
- The situation escalates when Phoebe refuses to go to school and cries continually.
- Phoebe's mum demands the school deals with the problem.

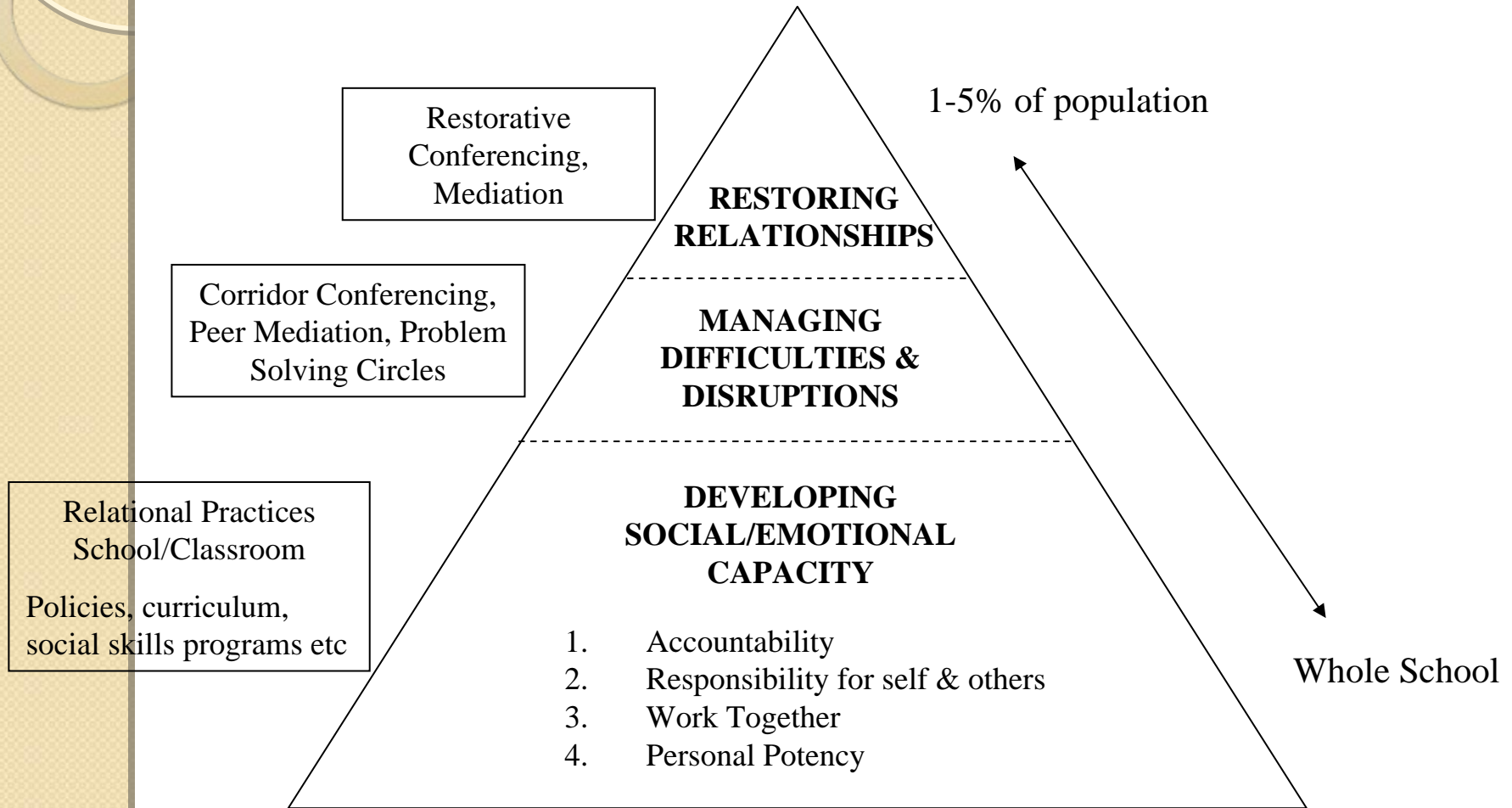
# Needs of People in Conflict

Victims and wrongdoers have the same needs...

- ▶ A chance to talk about what has happened
- ▶ A chance to explain how it made you feel
- ▶ A chance to explain what made you say/do that
- ▶ An opportunity to understand
- ▶ A chance to apologise and to accept an apology
- ▶ A chance to make up for things
- ▶ A need to move on and put it behind you

Restorative Practices provides this – does  
punishment?

# Restorative Practices Building Social Capital



Blood, 2004

## Continuum of Restorative Practices

Less serious

More serious

Restorative dialogue  
between several  
students

Conference with a  
small group of  
students

Classroom conference  
with a whole class

Community  
conference with  
students, parents  
and teachers

“Continuum of strategies that is proactive – immersing the school community in a pedagogy that values relationships and a curriculum that values social & emotional learning”

# Restorative Practices in Schools

- Daily circle time
- Informal chat in corridor, yard, etc..
- Classroom conferences – *problem solving circles, no-blame conferences, starting a new topic, evaluating a topic, reflecting on work or progress, planning tool, etc..*
- Restorative meetings for bullying, damage to property, continued disruption to learning of others, etc..
- Community conferences – very formal

# a restorative school....


- ▶ Young people become used to relational language and are honest about their behaviour
- ▶ All are accountable to those they have hurt and seek ways to make things right
- ▶ Emotional literacy and social curriculum is explicit.
- ▶ Everyone is taught to manage their emotions, articulate their needs and resolve their conflict
- ▶ The classroom and whole school becomes a truly safe, supportive learning environment.

# Restorative Approach - Advantages

- ▶ Offers much for the interpersonal development domain of VELS with its clear emphasis on the value of building positive relationships, working & learning in teams, and managing and resolving conflict.
- ▶ Effective student management tool
- ▶ Vehicle for culture change in schools
- ▶ Assists in a move towards a more democratic, collaborative classroom, where negotiation and cooperation are key components.
- ▶ Explicitly teaches EI, civics & citizenships skills, values
- ▶ Builds positive relationships and gives young people connections to classmates and teachers.
- ▶ Effective way of dealing with bullying
- ▶ Effective way of working out “major” issues or situations within the school and community context
- ▶ Restores relationships and meets the needs of both the victim and the wrongdoer

# Challenges...

- ▶ Major change in thinking regarding student management, consequences, “consistency” – major challenge is staff understanding and willingness to consider a different approach that probably goes against the way they were raised and the way they “manage” students.
- ▶ Time – *time to develop relationships, train and mentor staff, to facilitate conferences & provide feedback, provide ongoing professional development of staff*
- ▶ School community perception – *some will believe it is a “soft option” until they have been involved in a conference.*



*“So teaching children to do as they’re told is not a good enough aim for behaviour management. Instead what I’d like children to learn to do is to think for themselves ... not to think what would happen to me if I get caught ... but what effect would my behaviour have on other people”*

*(Porter 2002)*

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