



## Restorative Justice in the Classroom Lesson 3 The Justice Circle

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### Lesson Objective

Through role-play, students examine the Justice Circle as a way of developing a system of support for both the victim and offender. They learn roles of the participants in a Justice Circle and develop respect for the perspectives and feelings of everyone involved. This includes an overview of who should be involved and what participants might be experiencing/feeling—setting the ground rules for using this strategy to resolve conflict.

### Subject(s) and Level

 **Time** 40-45 minutes

### **Materials**

- Justice Circle Script -1
- Student Handout 1 “Role Card”

### Getting Started

#### Knowledge Now

- Review with students what occurs in a classroom meeting. Introduce the term Justice Circle and how it is very similar to the classroom meeting, but is more of a place for victims and the guilty parties to be able to obtain a better understanding of one another.
- Provide students with a true definition of the Justice Circle. The Justice Circle is not about finding a quick solution to a problem, but rather as a place for the troubled person who committed an act to build a long-term network of support which will help him/her to work through difficulties as they occur. The Justice Circle is about resolving conflict while maintaining respect for all involved and is a way to approach conflict in a way to avoid aggression.

#### Engaging Interest

Have students think about a situation when they have been bullied or know of someone who has been bullied. Have students share their ideas with the class. Discuss how the situations were resolved and how the victim felt after something was done to correct the behaviour of the bully, or if anything was done at all.

## Procedure

1. Explain to students of what is needed in order to carry out a justice circle.
  - a) A justice circle should have willing participation of the offender.
  - b) A teacher, administrator or counselor to debrief the person who committed the offence as to who will be in attendance and the agenda of the justice circle.
  - c) Peers of the student who committed that offence, some chosen for their guidance qualities and others who are close to the student.
  - d) Person who the offence was committed “the victim”.
  - e) Parents of both parties may be invited to participate.
  - f) A teacher, administrator or counselor to debrief volunteers, peers, “victim” and parents as to the situation and what is hoped to come out of the justice circle.
  - g) Confidentiality
2. Explain to students that the best way for them to understand how “the offender” and “the victim” discuss matters with the circle and how the volunteers help counsel “the offender” they are to role play by following a script.
3. Students are provided with script and role play incident.
4. Students are then to recap what occurred in the role play and are given Student Handout 1 in which they are to analyze a character from the role play and write a description of the character and answer the questions on the worksheet.
5. The class then discusses each of the roles of the people involved in the justice circle and how “the victim” may feel upon leaving the justice circle and how “the offender” will feel. Answers to the questions may also be discussed.

## Assessment/Analysis

- The role card may be submitted for marks and allow the teacher to assess whether or not students grasped the roles of individuals involved in the justice circle.
- Students may be marked on participation with the activity based on their involvement in role playing and becoming actively involved in the class discussion.

## Activities for Extension and/or Integration

- As a journal entry students could be asked to write about a bully situation in which they were the bully or were the victim of a bullying incident. Students could then write about how the Justice Circle might have been effective in handling their own situation.

## Subject and Level Learner Outcomes for Subject and Level

- Health 6: R-6.1 recognize that individuals can choose their own emotional reactions to events and thoughts.
- R 6.4 identify, analyze and develop strategies to overcome barriers to communication.
- R-6.7 apply a variety of strategies for resolving conflict; e.g., practice treating differences of opinion as opportunities to explore alternatives.
- R- 6.9 make decisions cooperatively; e.g., apply a consensus-building process in group decision making.

L-6.3 analyze influences on decision making; e.g., family, peers, values, cultural beliefs, quality of information gathered.

Health 7: R-7.2 analyze the need for short-term and long-term support for emotional concerns; e.g., family, friends, schools, professional.

R-7.3 identify sources of stress in relationships, and describe positive methods of dealing with such stressors; e.g., change, loss, discrimination, rejection.

L-7.7 determine and use knowledge and skills of the class to promote school and community health.

Health 8: R-8.7 develop and demonstrate strategies for promoting peaceful relationships; e.g., find common ground in conflicts.

L-8.8 investigate the characteristics of a mentor, and practice mentorship in a group setting.

Health 9: R-9.2 analyze why individuals choose not to express or manage feelings in situations; e.g., using anger to manipulate others, avoid others, feel powerful.

R-9.7 refine personal conflict management skills; e.g., negotiation, mediation strategies.

## Safe and Caring Topics and Concepts

### Living Respectfully

- Taking responsibility for our choices, our actions and for the consequences of our actions.
- Exploring punishment and problem solving as approaches to inappropriate behaviour.

### Resolving Conflict Peacefully

- Describe and demonstrate a process that helps resolve conflict in a way both sides can accept.
- Helping classmates establish ground rules for resolving conflict.

## Teaching Strategies

	Cooperative Learning	Inquiry Learning	Direct Instruction
Go to <a href="http://www.sacsc.ca">www.sacsc.ca</a> Click on Resources, Strategies for strategy descriptions		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Problem Solving</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lecture</li> </ul>

Generalization and Transfer	Peer Teaching	Empathy/Affective Education	General Teaching Activities/Ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Role Play</li> </ul>			Brainstorming

## Supplementary Resources

- Gauthier, Gene. 1999. *Class Meeting for Safe and Caring Schools*.
- Pranis, Kay and Barry Stuart and Mark Wedge. 2003. *Peacemaking Circles: From Crime to Community*.
- Teresa Elder Hanlon. Accessed April 11, 2007. *Circle Justice in Canada: Building and Breaking Community*. > <http://www.cejamericas.org/doc/documentos/teresa-hanlon.pdf><

## **Restorative Justice**

**Characters:** Mrs. Walters (principal), Miss Singer (teacher Tom trusts), Bill (guilty party), Tom (victim), Fred (Bill's friend), Student Volunteer 1, Student Volunteer 2, Bill's mother, Tom's mother

### **Scenario:**

Bill and Tom are two students at Eastern Hills Middle School. Bill is considered by his peers to be part of the "in crowd". He plays sports, volunteers his home as the best place to hang out after school and has plenty of friends. Tom's peers often label him as a "nerd". He is a bit shy in large groups of people and is often seen working on homework assignments during lunchtime. He achieves excellent grades and only has a few friends in which he enjoys hanging out with after school.

One day Bill thought it would be funny to play a prank on Tom. Bill breaks into Tom's locker and steals all of his text books and his backpack. Afterwards, he paints the words "Nerd Boy" on Tom's locker. When the bell rings for the break all of the students in Tom's hallway see what is written on his locker. Bill hides around the corner and waits for Tom to react to his prank. Tom pushes through the crowd of people laughing at his locker and sees what has happened to him. Tom quickly opens his locker and notices that his backpack with his textbooks is missing. He starts asking who did this to him. The crowd of students continues to stand around. Some students are laughing, others not sure how to react. Tom starts to panic and unsure what to do, runs off to tell Miss Singer (a teacher he trusts). Miss Singer helps break up the crowd and in doing so asks others if they know of anyone who may have vandalised Tom's locker.

After school Bill's friends start laughing about what happened to Tom. They think the prank was funny. Bill laughs and tells his friends that he was the one who vandalized Tom's locker. Bill's friend Fred admits the prank was funny, but says he felt sad for Tom because everyone was laughing at him. Fred shows empathy for Tom saying that it'll be really hard for him to pass the Math unit test if he doesn't have his textbook. He was concerned over how upset Tom seemed.

Bill now realising that what he did may have been wrong, becomes defensive and says that Tom was a nerd and was asking for something to happen to him. Fred disagrees and the next day Fred comes forward and tells Miss Singer that he knows who vandalized Tom's locker.

Miss Singer along with the school principal Mrs. Walters confronts Bill in the office and asks Bill if he was the one who committed the act. Bill admits to playing the prank on Tom.

Tom, not feeling safe or wanted at school, starts skipping school, he doesn't want to be laughed at or called "Nerd Boy" every time he walks past someone in his school.

Mrs. Walters calls Tom's parents and discusses the incident that occurred and invites Tom and his parents to take part in a Justice Circle. She assures both Tom and his mother that their feelings about the situation will be taken into consideration as Bill is confronted with the incident in which he initiated. Bill's parents are also contacted and told what their son has done and that a Justice Circle with witnesses to the event, the "victim", herself and Miss Singer will be present at the meeting.

Prior to the meeting Mrs. Walters brings Bill into her office and discusses the purpose of the meeting with him.

**Mrs. Walters:** (sitting in a chair across from Bill) Bill, we decided that just imposing a punishment on you really isn't going to solve the problem between you and Tom. Tom feels very hurt by the situation and we want to make sure that a situation like this will not happen again. You are going to confront Tom and his mother, as well as your friend Fred, 2 other students from our school who have trained to take part in counselling sessions, Miss Singer and your mother. The purpose of this Justice Circle meeting is not to punish you, or make you feel bad about yourself or attack you. Each person will have a chance to talk about what happened and why this occurred. You will not be yelled at and in the end it is our hope that you will understand the consequences of your actions and seek a solution to correct what you did to Tom. Everything that is said in this circle will be confidential. Bill, do you agree to participate in this Justice Circle?

**Bill:** (sits uneasily in his chair) Are you sure nobody is going to yell at me? If you can promise that nobody will be allowed to yell at me, I promise to participate in the circle.

**Mrs. Walters:** I promise. Thank you. . I am confident a solution will be reached.

(Mrs. Walters and Bill walk to a meeting room where the 2 student volunteers, Miss Singer, Tom, Tom's mom, Bill's mom and Fred are sitting in a circle. Bill and Mrs. Walter take a seat)

**Mrs. Walters:** I would like to thank everyone for attending this circle today. The reason why we are here is because Bill has admitted to vandalizing Tom's locker by painting the door with the words "Nerd Boy". Bill also has admitted to taking Tom's backpack with his textbooks. Bill, is this correct?

**Bill:** (hangs head) Yes.

**Mrs. Walters:** (holds up a bean bag) The person who holds this beanbag will be allowed to speak. We must take turns in speaking so that each person present may have a chance to be heard. Interruptions and yelling are not acceptable as we are all to show respect to all those who are present. Tom, I would like you to go first and tell Bill how what he did affected you (Mrs. Walters passes the beanbag to Tom).

**Tom:** When I came out of my class during break I saw a bunch of kids standing in front of my locker. I heard a lot of kids laughing and I was hoping something had happened to a different kid, and not to me. I find it hard to fit in sometimes because I don't feel very comfortable around lots of people. I like just having 1 or 2 friends with me. Anyways, when I walked to my locker and saw what was written on it and that my bag with my textbooks was missing I just felt like I wanted to cry. A lot of kids were laughing at me and calling me "nerd boy". I hate being called nerd boy. I really like school and I am tired of being made fun of because I like Science and Math. I thought we were supposed to study and get good grades. The way the kids were all pointing and laughing at me, I just wanted to cry. I knew if I cried the situation would become worse so I ran down the hall and told Miss Singer what had happened. She let me stay in her

room and calm down while she made the other kids go to their next class and try to find out who did this to me.

**Tom's mother:** (Tom's mother asks for the bean bag) Bill Tom has been so upset about what happened that he hasn't wanted to come to school for the last 3 days. Yesterday he was walking to the store and some kid shouted across the alley "Nerd Boy". Is it really fair to Tom that he has to be harassed like this? What did Tom do to deserve this?

**Bill:** (Tom's mother passes the beanbag back to Bill) The thing is I only thought about looking cool to my friends. I didn't consider how Tom would feel and I didn't know kids would take what I did so seriously. Thanks to Fred for telling on me. Some friend you are.

**Fred:** (Puts his hands out indicating he wants the bean bag in order to talk) Bill I am your friend, but what kind of friend would I be if I said nothing and let you pick on other kids. One day you are going to take your pranks too far and get into trouble. I care about you, that is why I am here. I don't want you to get into trouble; I just want you to stop making bad choices.

**Bill's Mom:** (Fred passes the beanbag to her) Fred I think you are a very good influence for my son. Tom I am really sorry for what my son has done to you. This sort of behaviour is not tolerated and I guarantee it will never happen again.

**Volunteer 1:** (bean bag is passed to her) I witnessed Tom's reaction when he saw what was done to his locker. He was pretty upset and a lot of kids are laughing about what happened. Some kids are even joking about doing something similar to other kids at our school. I think that before we make any decisions we need to think about the consequences. How will my choice affect others? How will my choice affect me?

**Bill:** (asks for the beanbag) I know what I did was wrong, but I think you are all blowing this out of proportion. Tom you need to be tougher. Maybe don't do your homework at lunch and other kids won't tease you so much.

**Miss Singer:** (catches beanbag) Bill is it fair to try and blame what happened on Tom? Before this incident Tom said he didn't even know you. He knew who you were, but he didn't ever really talk to you. How would you feel if someone told you to quit playing basketball at lunch so that other kids won't bully you?

**Bill:** (catches beanbag) not so good.

**Volunteer 2:** Bill I think what everyone is trying to say is that you made a bad choice and it seems like you just didn't think about Tom at all. You thought more about yourself and situations like this probably will happen again until you can learn to think about how your actions affect other kids at our school. It doesn't matter if the kid is popular or unpopular, we all have rights to go to school safely, to feel like we belong, to leave our property in our locker and not have it taken.

**Miss Singer:** (catches beanbag) Right. Tom is his own person and we need to respect who he is. We need to respect who you are Bill. By taking Tom's backpack and painting a not so nice name on his locker you showed a great deal of disrespect to Tom.

**Tom:** (asks for beanbag and catches it) Bill I don't hate you, I just am afraid of you. I don't want to come to school and be picked on anymore. When you make fun of me other kids want to make fun of me too. Do you know what it feels like to come to school and not feel like you belong? Its not fun.

**Bill:** (catches beanbag) Tom I know what I did was a bad thing. I'm sorry.

Mrs. Walters: (catches beanbag) Thank you for apologizing Bill, I think it is very brave of you to come to this justice circle and let everyone discuss what has happened. However, sometimes just saying sorry just isn't enough. What can you do to make what you did right?

**Bill:** (catches beanbag) I don't know what to do, stay home for 3 days?

**Miss Singer:** (catches beanbag) How will staying home for 3 days help Tom feel respected?

**Bill:** (shrugs) I don't know.

**Volunteer 1:** (asks for beanbag) Can I make a suggestion?

**Mrs. Walters:** Go ahead.

**Volunteer 1:** (beanbag in hand) Bill, see the biggest problem of what happened is that Tom felt humiliated and he doesn't feel safe at school. You were able to make many students laugh at Tom and make fun of him; maybe you can do something to encourage students not to make fun of Tom anymore and to show him respect.

**Volunteer 2:** (asks for beanbag) Right, what if you were to write a report on bullying and use what you did as an example of a bullying situation. What do you think Bill.

**Bill:** I don't know, I don't want all of my friends to make fun of me.

**Miss Singer:** Well Bill, when I came to see what had happened I noticed a lot of other students laughing at Tom and taking part in the bullying behaviour. What if the class is given an assignment on bullying, this way everyone can share an experience.

**Bill:** Yeah, I think that might work.

**Mrs. Walters:** Tom, what do you think?

**Tom:** I think it would be ok as long as I could read Bill's report before he read it to the class.

**Miss Singer:** Bill, will you let Tom edit your report prior to presenting it.

**Bill:** Sure. I'll also start asking kids not to call you "Nerd Boy" and if I heard anyone calling you nerd boy I'll report them to Mrs. Walters or Miss Singer.

**Mrs. Walters:** Bill is there someone you can go to if you have an urge to do something like this again?

**Bill:** Yeah, Fred seems to be the right guy to go to . Sure he told on me, but he was looking out for me like he said.

**Fred:** Bill, I just couldn't feel good about myself if I didn't tell someone that you did this to Tom. I don't like seeing kids get hurt and I don't want my friends to be in trouble.

**Mrs. Walters:** Fred, we can trust you to be the “go-to person” for Fred?

**Fred:** Sure Mrs. Walters.

**Mrs. Walters:** Tom's mom? What do you think about the consequence of writing a report about bullying and using this situation as an example to be read in front of the class?

**Tom's mom:** I'm quite pleased, especially if Tom feels safer because of it.

**Mrs. Walters:** Tom will you feel safer?

**Tom:** Yes, I will.

**Mrs. Walters:** Bill's mom? Are you OK with Bill presenting his report to the class.

**Bill's mom:** Yes, I think it is a good idea and I am glad the two boys could sort this mess out.

**Mrs. Walters:** I am pleased that everyone was willing to participate in this meeting and that we were able to reach a solution as to how Bill can correct his poor choice. I am also pleased that when we leave this room everyone will not feel burdened by the incident. Thank you for coming and we look forward to hearing and reading your report Bill.

(Everyone leaves the room)

## Restorative Justice

Name \_\_\_\_\_

From the role play choose one character and write a description of the character and their involvement in the Justice Circle.

Character Name \_\_\_\_\_

Description of Character and Their Involvement in the Justice Circle.

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A. What effect did this character have in the process of helping Bill see the consequences to his actions?

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**Questions:**

1. Do you think the Justice Circle was more effective than just having the principal tell Bill to write an apology letter to Tom? Explain.

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2. What point in the Justice Circle scenario did Bill start taking more responsibility for his actions?

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3. Do you think that once Bill presents his report to the class, admits that he has been a bully and regrets what he did Tom that Tom will not be teased anymore? Why or why not?

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4. If you were Tom, would you forgive Bill? Explain.

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