


# 2022 PAUMCS Annual Conference

## *An Introduction to the Restorative Approach to Conflict Transformation and Reconciliation*



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# INTRODUCTION

- Gratitude
- Objective
- **Content**
  - What is the difference?
  - Pillars of the restorative process
    - Inclusion,
    - Encounter,
    - Transformative dialogue,
    - Apology and changed behavior
    - Reparation, and
    - Generosity
  - Conclusion and invitation



## **Gratitude:**

To the organizers, especially Bev Amperse and Amy Johnson, for their kindness.


## **Objective:**

To appreciate the different patterns of thinking used in conflict transformation approaches in comparison to conflict resolution models, and discover the pillars of the restorative approach.



## Conflict Transformation or Conflict Resolution

- Aren't these two names for the same approach?



# What is the difference?

## Focus and goal

### **Conflict Resolution**

- ▶ The focus is the conflict, which is perceived as a problem to be solved.
- ▶ The conflict is perceived as something negative, something we need to fix or get rid of.

### **Conflict Transformation**

- ▶ The focus is the relationship.
- ▶ Seeks to end cycles of hostility and violence and build healthier relationships and more equitable societies.
- ▶ Disagreement is not necessarily bad. Conflict is not inherently “a problem to solve,” it is a natural part of being human and having different perspectives.
- ▶ Disagreement and even conflict can be an opportunity to learn and grow.
- ▶ Non-violent resistance and other creative approaches actually create conflict (although they may be wrongly perceived as “passive.”)



# What is the difference? Process

## Conflict Resolution

- It tends to have a transactional approach.
- At its best, it focuses on the needs of parties (but it is still transactional).
- At its worst, its emphasis on “resolution,” can lead us to miss important steps that could facilitate the healing of relationships, and even addressing the root-causes of the conflict.

## Conflict Transformation

- Instead of rushing to resolve the “problem” (the conflict) or attempting to contain damage, this approach invites the parties to consider the systemic power imbalances that exist, and address that as they are working on repairing broken relationships.
- This approach invites the parties (individuals or groups) to see one another, and create alternatives together.



# Who is “the other”?

## Conflict Resolution

- At best: my opponent
- At worst: my enemy
- Someone to be persuaded so we can agree and get along
- Our most pressing matter is
  - solving a conflict (our “problem”).

## Conflict Transformation

- My fellow human
- My brother or sister, my opportunity co-creator, my collaborator
- Someone with whom create healthier ways of interacting
- Our most pressing matter is
  - understanding each other,
  - Identifying the root causes of the conflict(s)
  - So that we can cultivate trust and build a stronger relationship



# Dynamics



## Conflict Resolution

- ▶ At its best, there is no anxiety but time is limited in the negotiation or mediation
- ▶ At its worse, when a party feels anxious (or more anxious than the other),
  - ▶ One gives in.
- ▶ Ambiguity is a sign of failure.
- ▶ At best, there can be a sort of “Win-Win” situation and result (Harvard Negotiation Model)
- ▶ At worst: no resolution until there is a clear winner.

## Conflict Transformation


- ▶ It is likely that people WILL feel uncomfortable and even anxious.
- ▶ Learning to talk about and work through hard feelings IS conducive to healing, IF this is done with respect for the others.
- ▶ Ambiguity is part of life, there are many perspectives on things, so many voices deserve to be heard.
- ▶ Success: a new/renewed relationship, a collaborative plan of action to prevent mistakes from the past.
- ▶ Healing nature



# In what kinds of cases is the Conflict Transformation approach appropriate?


- Inter-personal conflict
  - Family conflict
  - Community conflict
  - Inter-group conflict
  - Inter-ethnic conflict
  - International conflict
- **Not appropriate** when there is a risk of imminent harm against one of the parties
  - Harm may be physical or psychological
  - Especially when there is a **threat of irreparable harm**
  - Why?
  - There is a **duty of care**, this approach takes time, we must not allow a party to take advantage and cause irreparable harm





# The Restorative Approach to Conflict Transformation

- ▶ Restorative Practices in contexts of conflict (or Restorative Justice, specifically in contexts dealing with crime and incarceration), draws from wisdom traditions around the world, especially from the Americas, Africa, Australia, New Zealand, and Ancient Israel, among others.
- ▶ Shalom & Tsedakah, Ubuntu, Native American Circles, etc.
- ▶ These various traditions value and emphasize restoring relationships and dealing with conflict/crime as a community, instead of focusing on simply punishing the wrongdoer.

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- When using a restorative approach, conflict transformation seeks to make space for understanding:
    - power dynamics and how larger systems must be addressed
    - so that interpersonal and intergroup relationships can be mended or, or at least improved, and individuals and communities can flourish.

So, how can we pursue conflict transformation when a person or a group has done something terrible?

I know it is hard to believe but in situations of chronic turbulence and violence, conflict transformation might be quite promising, as long as the parties are willing to hold a ceasefire or truce.



# Pillars of the restorative process

Everyone	Everyone	Everyone	Wrongdoer/ Perpetrator/ Privileged party (sometimes everyone)	Wrongdoer/ Perpetrator/ Privileged party (sometimes everyone)	Victim / Survivor (sometimes everyone)	Privileged party (sometimes everyone)
<b>Inclusion</b>	<b>Encounter</b>	<b>Transformative Dialogue</b>	<b>Accountability</b>	<b>Acknowled- gement/ Repentance, Apology, Changed Behavior, Reparations</b>	<b>Forgiveness</b>	<b>Generosity</b>
All parties affected must be active participants. The key is active involvement: To listen To speak To decide To act	There is nothing like being in person	An effort to co-create a process that supports substantial change in the quality of interaction between the parties. Silenced voices must be heard. Listening is most times more important than speaking.	Even when it is painful, there should consequences to wrongdoing. They should be proportional. They should make sense and connect with what a person has done.	It is not enough to say I'm sorry, but it is important to say it. The best apology is specific, frank and from the heart. It is supported by action (changed behavior, new healthier habits, restitution, etc.)	Never imposed or even required but truly transforming	Going beyond agreed or required by community decision. It is not because "I owe you" but because I want to contribute to your wellbeing



# Conclusion and Invitation

- What questions, comments and maybe even conclusions would you like to share today?

- **Summer Institute for Reconciliation**

- May 11-13, 2022

- DDS Campus

- <https://divinity.duke.edu/events/summer-institute-reconciliation>