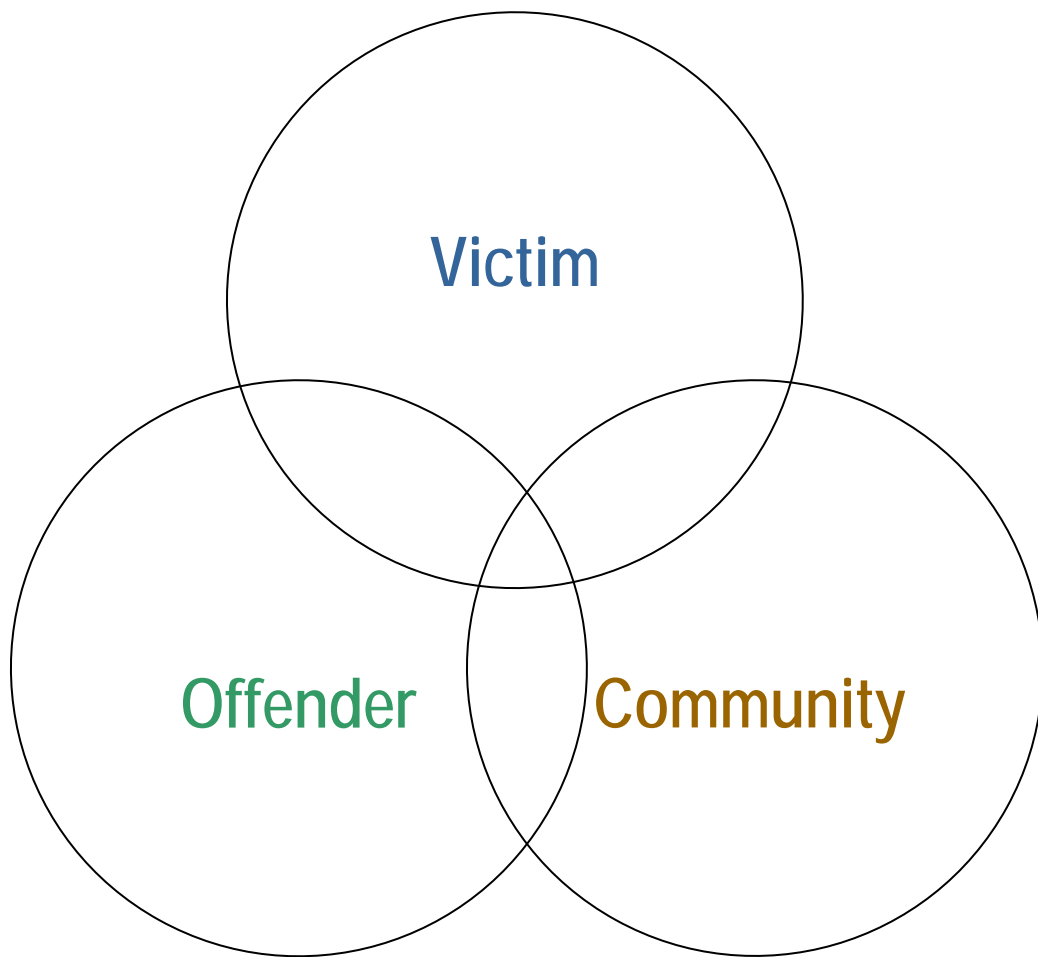


*In order to address crime, we have to admit and fully understand that crime not only harms the victim, but the community, and the offender as well.*

*Restorative Justice asks how we might seek to repair the harm.*

Therese Bartholomew

**Restorative Justice**  
a victim perspective



# What Restorative Justice is:

*Restorative justice emphasizes the importance of elevating the role of crime victims and community members through more active involvement in the justice process, holding offenders directly accountable to the people and communities they have violated, restoring the emotional and material losses of victims, and providing a range of opportunities for dialogue, negotiation, and problem solving, whenever possible, which can lead to a greater sense of community safety, social harmony, and peace for all involved.* Mark Umbreit, U. of Minnesota

*The roots of what has come to be called restorative justice run deep into our history and into the strengths of diverse cultures from around the world. As articulated by Howard Zehr (1990), Daniel Van Ness and Karen Heetderks Strong (1997), Kay Pranis (1998), and others, restorative justice requires that we look at crime as causing harm and injury to the relationships that bind our families, neighborhoods, and communities together. Van Ness and Heetderks Strong specifically suggested that if crime causes injury, justice ought to be about repairing that harm. Therefore, the process of justice must become one in which the following things happen:*

- *Victims and the community (those harmed by crime) play a much greater role in response to crime.*
- *The resources of the system are focused on determining who was harmed (vs. what law was broken), who is responsible for repairing the harm (vs. placing blame), and what steps need to be taken to repair the harm (vs. inflicting punishment).*
- *The strategies of justice are aimed at “re-weaving the fabric” of the family, community, and relationships that ultimately form the best crime-prevention strategy in the first place.*

Mooser, J. P.

Our current system is retributive: crime committed against the state = Punishment imposed by the state. The state “owns” the crime while the victim’s voice and the needs of the victim go unaddressed.

A restorative justice lens: crime committed against victim and community = Accountability. Victim-centered questions: What do *you* need? What will help *you* heal? RJ encourages dialogue to repair the harm.

What Restorative Justice is **NOT**:

**New.** Restorative justice programs are operating successfully throughout the world and are, in the West, rooted in programs started in Mennonite communities in the early 1970’s. Earlier models of restorative justice can be found in Native American cultures and across New Zealand.

**A “soft on crime” approach.** It does not take away punishment, but it does encourage accountability. It creates opportunities for offenders to understand the impact of the crime he/she committed. RJ allows space for conversation and human connection while respecting all who are involved.

**Forgiveness.** Although forgiveness may be a part of some victims’ paths, a restorative justice approach does not seek to “sway” victims to forgive if that is not his/her path.

**A replacement for our current system** rather it can be used in conjunction with our criminal justice system.

\*\* Restorative Justice involves numerous practices and principles which can hardly be fully addressed in a one page document. This page is intended to give a very brief synopsis and is hardly a full picture of what restorative justice looks like. Here are two helpful websites that I would strongly encourage you to look at:

<http://www.emu.edu/cjp/restorative-justice/>

<http://www.restorativejustice.org/>