

# RESTORATIVE CIRCLES



126 SOCIAL EMOTIONAL  
QUESTIONS FOR THE  
RESTORATIVE CLASSROOM

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# Restorative Circles

## QUESTION GUIDE FOR CLASS MEETINGS

Restorative practices are an effective way to improve class and school culture, decrease negative behaviors, and develop successful citizens of the school and world. There are many different restorative practices, but one is the use of circles – frequently facilitating discussions of all types while students are sitting in a circle. In circles, power and responsibility are shared and equal among all members.

### CIRCLE FORMATIONS

**Sequential Circles:** A question or topic is posed and then a talking piece is sent around the circle with each student being given the opportunity to respond when it's their turn. Sequential circles work best when the answers to a question are very short, or when you are generating a list of ideas.

**Nonsequential Circles:** After a question is asked, students volunteer to respond. The talking piece is still often used, but talking jumps to different parts of the circle as students volunteer. Nonsequential circles are a better option when responses to the question may be longer than a sentence and/or when not every student is going to respond.

**Inside-Outside Circles:** The class is split into two groups and they form two concentric circles (one inside and one outside), with the members of the outer circle facing inward and the members of the inner circle facing outward. After a question is asked, students facing one another discuss and answer as a pair. Then one of the circles rotates one person over, giving everyone a new partner for the next question. A nonsequential circle often follows using inside-outside circles for a

final debrief.

# CIRCLE PROMPTS/QUESTIONS

Within restorative practices, there are three types of questions that are often used in class meetings.

“Get to Know You”/Warm Ups: These questions aren’t overly personal or sensitive. They serve to help students feel comfortable with one another and practice the basics of circles (sitting in a circle, taking turns speaking, listening to one another). These questions are not included in this resource, though I have a set of these types of questions [here](#) and it is easy to find other ones online as well.

Problem-Solving/“Formal” Circles and Reparative Action: These questions and prompts are used when there is already a problem or issue going on that needs to be processed and repaired. They are usually specific to whatever is going on and who is involved. A one-page list of several different restorative/problem-solving questions is included in this resource. They cover ways of uncovering and discussing the following:

- What is the problem?
- How is it making people feel/impacting others?
- What can we do about it?

I recommend placing this list in a sheet protector or dry erase pocket. Before beginning a problem solving restorative circle, use a dry erase marker to mark the questions most applicable to the issue you need to handle together.

## Social Emotional Skill and Classroom Community Development:

Restorative practices are incredibly meaningful but for students to engage with them, they often need to already have some social emotional skills. For students to focus on restoring relationships and reconciliation, they need to understand responsibilities, perspectives, and empathy. Circles are a perfect way to help students develop these skills while also fostering classroom community.

(CONTINUED →)



Even more importantly, when students have these skills, they are less likely to need a reparative circle because students are making better choices for themselves and the class. Skill development questions, which is what this resource includes, cover the following areas:

- **Identifying Feelings** – Recognizing the physical sensations, body language, and facial expressions in different emotions. Respecting the range of feelings that others may have in different situations.
- **Expressing and Regulating Feelings** – Sharing when one experiences different emotions, identifying helpful vs. unhelpful ways to express feelings, and practicing and planning coping strategies.
- **Responsibilities** – Identifying the different things that students are responsible for in the classroom and in the school.
- **My Own Actions** – Recognizing the need to take responsibility for one's own choices and actions.
- **Choices and Consequences** – Identifying the connection between positive and negative choices with positive and negative consequences.
- **Conflict Resolution** – Identifying and defining different peaceful conflict resolution strategies, including I-statements.
- **Apologies and Forgiveness** – Discussing the positives to choosing forgiveness and practicing generating genuine apologies.
- **Perspective Taking and Empathy** – Practicing thinking about the perspective and feelings of others plus showing that you care.

These question cards can be printed single or double sided (without or with card backs). I recommend punching a hole in the upper left corner and putting on a binder ring. Question categories are in the same order as above – I recommend using this order if you're not sure where to start.



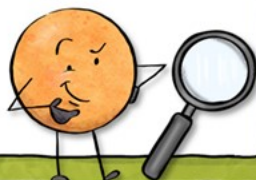
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# Optional Card Backs Included

## RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

Identifying  
Feelings



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## RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

Choices +  
Consequences



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## RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

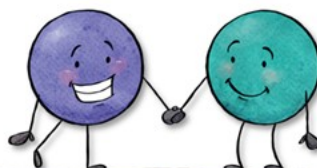
Expressing and Regulating  
Feelings



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## RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

Conflict Resolution



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## RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

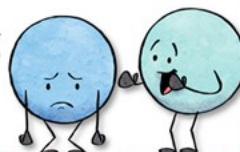
Responsibilities



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## RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

Forgiveness +  
Apologies



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## RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

My Own  
Actions



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## RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

Perspective Taking +  
Empathy



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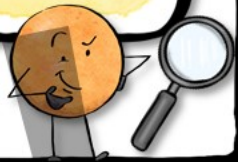
## IDENTIFYING FEELINGS

What does excitement feel like in your body?



## IDENTIFYING FEELINGS

What does worry feel like in your body?



## IDENTIFYING FEELINGS

What does sadness feel like in your body?



## IDENTIFYING FEELINGS

How does anger feel in your body?



## IDENTIFYING FEELINGS

How does your body feel when you are calm?



## IDENTIFYING FEELINGS

What things might make someone feel angry at school?



126 Questions TOTAL



EXPRESSING + REGULATING FEELINGS

Finish this sentence:  
"I feel angry at  
school when..."



EXPRESSING + REGULATING FEELINGS

Finish this sentence:  
"I feel worried at  
school when..."



EXPRESSING + REGULATING FEELINGS

Finish this sentence:  
"I feel happy at  
school when..."



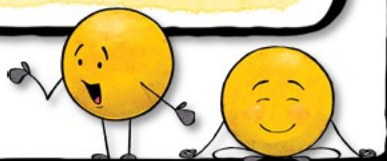
EXPRESSING + REGULATING FEELINGS

Finish this sentence:  
"I feel sad or  
disappointed at  
school when..."



EXPRESSING + REGULATING FEELINGS

Finish this sentence:  
"I feel excited at  
school when..."



EXPRESSING + REGULATING FEELINGS

Who is 1 adult at  
school you can talk  
to about your  
feelings?

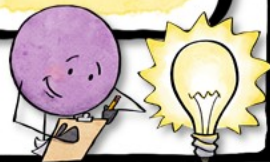


126 Qs TOTAL



## OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

What rule or expectation in our class is the easiest for you to follow? Why?



## OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

What rule or expectation in our class is the hardest for you to follow? Why?



## OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

Some people say a classroom is like a community. What is a community? How is a class like a community? How is our school like a community?



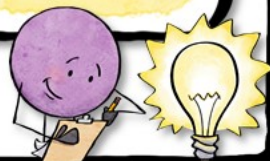
## OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

What if you're really angry – are you still responsible for what you do? Why or why not?



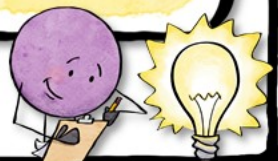
## OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

You have some responsibility in getting yourself to school on time. What are some steps to take to make that happen?



## OUR RESPONSIBILITIES

You are responsible for getting your homework done. What are some of the things you have to do to make that happen?





## MY OWN ACTIONS

Why can it be hard to admit when you've done something wrong?



## MY OWN ACTIONS

Instead of saying "but it's not my fault!", what *can* you say when you're taking responsibility for your actions?



## MY OWN ACTIONS

Can you share an example of a time when you took responsibility for something you did wrong?



## MY OWN ACTIONS

Why is "they started it!" a bad excuse? What could you say or do instead?



## MY OWN ACTIONS

When you've done something wrong, what are some things you can do to make it better?



## MY OWN ACTIONS

If you say something that hurts someone's feelings, what could you do to take responsibility for it and make it better?





## CHOICES + CONSEQUENCES

What are some  
GOOD consequences  
that can happen when  
we make GOOD  
choices?



## CHOICES + CONSEQUENCES

What are some BAD  
consequences that  
can happen if we  
make BAD choices?



## CHOICES + CONSEQUENCES

What are the  
consequences if you  
say something hurtful  
to someone else?



## CHOICES + CONSEQUENCES

What are the  
consequences of not  
doing your classwork?  
What happens?



## CHOICES + CONSEQUENCES

What are the  
consequences of doing  
and saying kind things  
to your classmates?



## CHOICES + CONSEQUENCES

What are the  
consequences of  
giving your best  
effort in class?

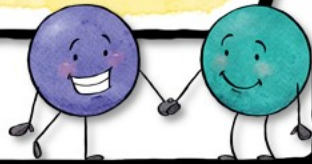


126 Qs TOTAL



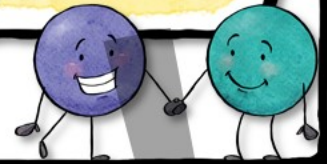
## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

When do you have to share or take turns with something at school?



## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

What is something that kids disagree about at school? Is it ok to disagree? Why or why not?



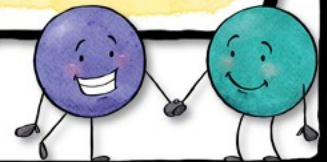
## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

What does it mean to ignore someone when they're bothering you? What does it look like?



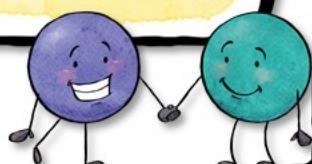
## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

When should you ignore someone when they're being annoying and when should you talk to them about it?



## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

What are some conflicts you can solve on your own?



## CONFLICT RESOLUTION

What are some conflicts you would need adult help with?

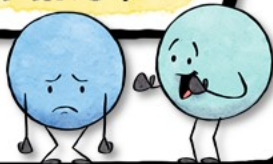


126 Qs TOTAL



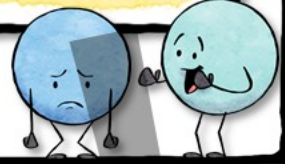
## APOLOGIES + FORGIVENESS

What does forgiveness mean? What does it mean to forgive someone? What does it look and feel like?



## APOLOGIES + FORGIVENESS

What is revenge? Why do some people try to solve problems by getting back at someone? What would happen if we all did that?



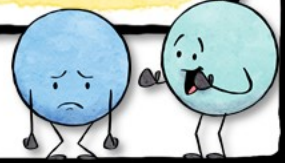
## APOLOGIES + FORGIVENESS

Why do you think apologizing is hard for some people?



## APOLOGIES + FORGIVENESS

Has anyone ever gave you an apology? How did it make you feel and why?



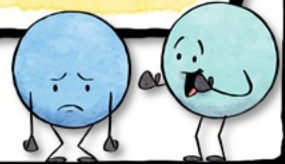
## APOLOGIES + FORGIVENESS

Apologizing means saying more than the word "sorry". What else should we say? *How* should we say it?



## APOLOGIES + FORGIVENESS

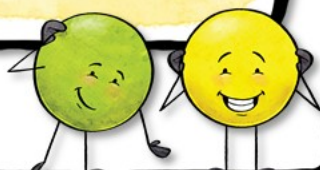
Some people think apologizing is more than just using our words. How can we apologize with our actions?





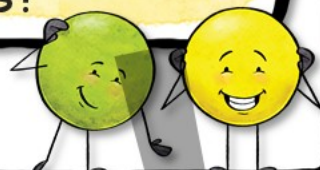
## PERSPECTIVE TAKING + EMPATHY

Does everyone have the same thoughts and ideas about things?  
Why not?



## PERSPECTIVE TAKING + EMPATHY

What sort of things might people have different thoughts or opinions about?  
When do people have different perspectives on things?



## PERSPECTIVE TAKING + EMPATHY

Why is it important for us to think about other peoples' thoughts and opinions?



## PERSPECTIVE TAKING + EMPATHY

Two kids are walking home from school and a dog starts walking towards them. One kid shrieks and runs away, the other smiles and keeps walking towards the dog. What are each of the kids thinking about this situation?



## PERSPECTIVE TAKING + EMPATHY

One student tells the other student "I think you're doing that math worksheet wrong."  
What is each student's perspective, what might each person be thinking?



## PERSPECTIVE TAKING + EMPATHY

Two students are sitting by each other in the cafeteria. One student accidentally bumps the other and they spill some of their milk. The student who spilled their milk says "I hate you". What are they thinking? What are their perspectives?





# Restorative Circles

## Classwide Problem Solving Questions

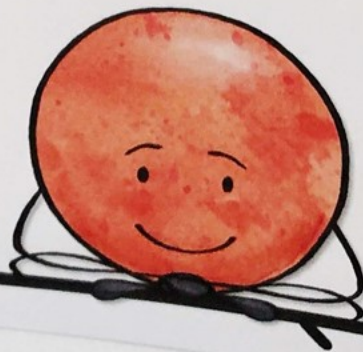
- What is a problem our class is having?
- Why is this a problem?
- Who is or was hurt by this problem?
- How does this problem make our class less safe?
- How does it make it harder for us to be at school?
- What have each of us done that was part of the problem? (that caused the problem to be worse)
- How does this problem make us feel?
- What has been the hardest part of the problem for you?
- What are some ideas for how we can make it better?
- How can we move forward from here?





# In Our Circles ↗

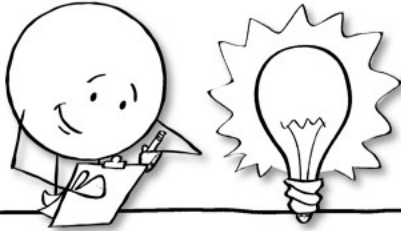
- Speak honestly and from your heart.
- Listen respectfully with your whole body.
- Expect, accept, and respect different ideas.
- Honor confidentiality.
- Share the air.



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# RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

## Responsibilities

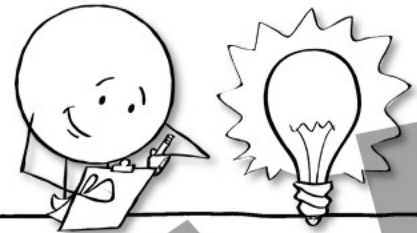


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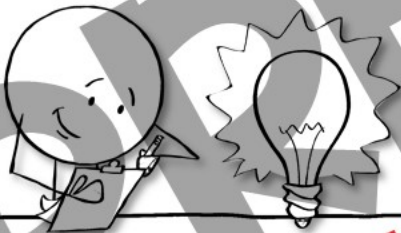
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## Responsibilities



# RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

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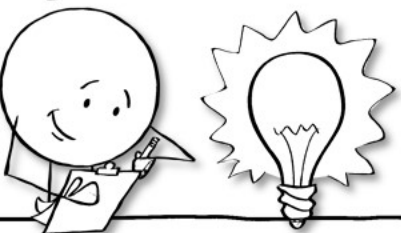
# RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

## Responsibilities



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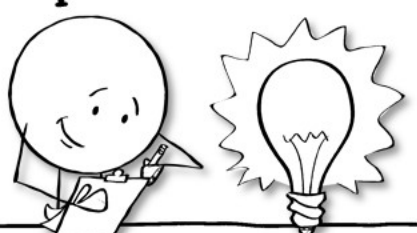


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# RESTORATIVE CIRCLES

## Responsibilities





# the RESPONSIVE counselor



Hi, I'm Sara! I create resources for elementary students, counselors, and teachers that improve social emotional learning and help students be their best selves. My focus is creating resources that are *effective* (using research-based best practices) and *engaging* (through collaborative learning and relevant scenarios) for all types of learners and populations.



## Education

B.A. from Michigan State University  
Psychology and Anthropology

M.S. from Vanderbilt University  
Community, Research, and Action

M.Ed. From Vanderbilt University  
Human Development Counseling:  
School Counseling and  
Clinical Mental Health

## Experience

I'm a school counselor from a large southeastern school district with a wonderfully diverse group of students. I created and implemented a data-based comprehensive school counseling program while helping classroom teachers and administrators implement schoolwide SEL and restorative practices. Now, I also share my ideas and resources to reach students and help educators across the world!

Let's  
Connect:

