

THE LITTLE BOOK OF

Restorative Justice



A bestselling book by one
of the founders of the movement

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THE LITTLE BOOKS OF JUSTICE & PEACEBUILDING

- ***Restorative justice is not mediation.***

Like mediation programs, many restorative justice programs are designed around the possibility of a facilitated meeting or an encounter between victims, offenders, and perhaps community members. However, an encounter is not always chosen or appropriate. Moreover, restorative approaches are important even when an offender has not been apprehended or when a party is unwilling or unable to meet. So restorative approaches are not limited to an encounter.

Even when an encounter occurs, the term “mediation” is not a fitting description of what could happen. In a mediated conflict or dispute, parties are assumed to be on a level moral playing field, often with responsibilities that may need to be shared on all sides. While this sense of shared blame may be true in some criminal cases, in many cases it is not. Victims of rapes or even burglaries do not want to be known as “disputants.” In fact, they may well be struggling to overcome a tendency to blame themselves.

At any rate, to participate in most restorative justice encounters, a wrongdoer must admit to some level of responsibility for the offense, and an important component of such programs is to name and acknowledge the wrongdoing. The neutral language of mediation may be misleading and even offensive in many cases.