



### History of Workplace Tensions Erupt

In a workplace experiencing a revolving door of ineffective Team Leaders over 10 years, it's no wonder the team culture was increasingly toxic. Staff roles became blurred causing confusion, miscommunication, information holding and broken trust leading to a dysfunctional and unproductive team. Some staff left and replacement staff didn't last long. Tension between two of the remaining staff became more obvious resulting in a number of physical eruptions. In response to formal complaints, the acting Department Manager and HR Manager commenced a formal investigation.

The long investigation revealed a number of issues and subsequent actions of performance improvement plans, mediation and others attempted to resolve the tension. After some time, it was acknowledged the relationship between the two staff hadn't been addressed and also wasn't improving. This is where restorative practice provides a positive approach to transforming the harm caused so that staff can continue working together in an improved way.

A restorative approach to serious breakdown in relationships, always involves two trained Facilitators who talk confidentially with each person involved and asks questions in relation to the impact on them, what their part in the harm is, and what they can offer to start to repair the harm.

Participants are also asked what their outcomes are from taking this approach and usually the outcomes are the same for all participants. Facilitators also assess participants' safety in bringing all parties together, identify support people and consider who else may need to be involved.

*“You are the first ones, since the formal investigation started, to ask how I feel about this situation. It's been so cathartic - thank you.”*

In addition to the two staff members and their respective support people, the acting Department Manager and HR Manager were included. They were able to bring an organisational perspective to the team's work and also hear first-hand the issues leading to the dysfunction.

A Restorative Workplace Meeting provides a safe environment for participants to voice their perspective on the difficulties and to really listen to each other face to face. When participants gain an understanding of each other and acknowledge their own part in the problem, they are more likely to take responsibility in resolving the issues.

*“Restorative practice is new to me. It was difficult to begin with but I'm pleased I took part. I could finally see what made him do what he did and I could finally tell him how it [bugged] me!”*



## Restorative Practices Whanganui

---

### Towards a Restorative City: Honoa ki a Rongo ki Whanganui

In this case, following the exploration of various perspectives and the harm caused, the participants were able to discuss and agree the actions they felt were needed to start to repair their working relationship. As the acting Department Manager was present, they were able to receive immediate organisational support.

The actions were many and ranged from learning general communication skills, understanding each other's communication needs, attending employer assisted counselling sessions through to learning anger management skills.

As always, Restorative Practice Facilitators follow up with participants 6-8 weeks after bringing them all together. There were some actions that needed more time to complete and others had been completed leading to some progress in improving their working relationship. The participants were still willing to ensure all actions would be completed and this gave everyone the confidence of future progress.

*“We’re not best buddies, and never will be, but we understand each other better now.”*

After many years of dysfunction with staff either “avoiding” issues or “attacking” others, restorative practice provided an opportunity for the staff in conflict to understand each other and therefore elicit the willingness to work better together.

**Restorative Practices Whanganui**

T: 06 343 3648

E: [info@restorativepracticeswhanganui.co.nz](mailto:info@restorativepracticeswhanganui.co.nz)

W: [restorativepracticeswhanganui.co.nz](http://restorativepracticeswhanganui.co.nz)

---