

## **Restorative justice can balance system**

Crime and punishment: these two concepts seem to go hand in hand - one seems to demand the other. After all this fits our idea of justice, doesn't it?

As usual, however, things are not always that simple, that cut and dried. There is currently a somewhat new and promising way of dealing with the offender, the victim and society as a whole. The crime brings about a connectedness between the individuals involved and also creates a ripple effect among many others.

We obviously would like everything to be the way it was before the offense occurred. This however is impossible. Therefore the concept of restorative justice is intended to wed punishment with an attempt to re-establish the previous harmony.

Several things have to happen in order to effect this.

First, the offender has to own up or take responsibility for the crime. Secondly, there must be some type of remorse and empathy shown toward the victim and all others affected by this misdeed. A long-range plan to rectify the situation and to do something positive to build up the community has to be put in place.

There are many victims when a crime occurs because harmony has been disrupted. But the immediate victim must feel that the offender feels some sort of compassion and intent to change.

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