

# WHAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN RETRIBUTIVE AND RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

**Retributive Justice is what we have now. Restorative Justice is what we could have.**

---

## RETRIBUTIVE JUSTICE

Blame-fixing central  
Focus on the past  
Needs are secondary  
Battle model: adversarial  
Emphasizes differences  
Imposition of pain considered normative  
One social injury added to another  
Harm by offender balanced by harm to offender  
Focus on offender; victim ignored  
State and offender are key elements  
Victims lack information  
Restitution rare  
Victims' "truth" secondary  
Victims' suffering ignored  
Action from state to offender; offender passive  
State monopoly on response to wrong-doing  
Offender has no responsibility for resolution  
Outcomes encourage offender irresponsibility  
Offender denounced  
Offender's ties to community weakened  
Offender seen in fragments, offense being central  
Sense of balance through retribution  
Balance righted by lowering offender  
Justice as right rules  
Victim-offender relationships ignored  
Process alienates  
Response based on offender's past behavior  
Repentance and forgiveness discouraged  
Proxy professionals are the key actors  
Competitive, individualistic values encouraged  
Ignores social, economic and moral context of behavior  
Assumes win-lose outcomes

## RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Problem-solving central  
Focus on the future  
Needs are primary  
Dialogue normative  
Searches for commonalities  
Restoration and reparation considered normative  
Emphasis on repair of social injuries  
Harm by offender balanced by making right  
Victims' needs central  
Victim and offender are key elements  
Information provided to victims  
Restitution normal  
Victims given chance to "tell the truth"  
Victims' suffering lamented and acknowledged  
Offender given role in solution  
Victim/offender/community roles recognized  
Offender has responsibility in resolution  
Responsible behavior encouraged  
Harmful act denounced  
Offender's integration into community increased  
Offender viewed holistically  
Sense of balance through restitution  
Balance righted by raising both victim and offender  
Justice as right relationships  
Victim-offender relationships central  
Process aims at reconciliation  
Response based on consequences of offender's behavior  
Repentance and forgiveness encouraged  
Victim and offender central; professional help available  
Mutuality and cooperation encouraged  
Total context relevant  
Makes possible win-win outcomes