

RESTORATIVE ESSENTIALS

Effective communication skills
Restorative Conversations

TIME REQUIRED

20 minutes minimum

FORMAT

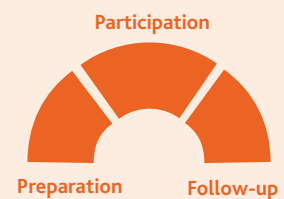
Pairs

RESTORATIVE PRACTICE LEVEL

Levels 1, 2, and 3

OBJECTIVES

- To explore and discuss strengths-focused conversations through affirmation, listening, and questioning.
- To give feedback on one another's practice.

PROCESS PHASE COVERED**COMMENT: THE IMPORTANCE OF AFFIRMATION IN BEHAVIOUR CHANGE**

In strengths-focused conversations we actively listen for a student's strengths, values, aspirations, and positive qualities, and then summarise those qualities back to them. It is easy to look at what a student is **not** doing right, to identify problems, or notice the absence of some quality. The most important part of affirming to bring about change is to notice the positives.

Affirmations often involve reframing behaviours or concerns as evidence of positive qualities. They build rapport and help students to see themselves in a different, more positive light. To be effective, they must be genuine and match the student's qualities. Affirmations can help students feel that change is possible even when their previous efforts have been unsuccessful.

Example of an affirmation

A student discusses their many previous efforts to change a particular behaviour, clearly feeling like a failure or that it is hopeless. The teacher can reframe this to a positive perspective, saying: "What I'm picking up is that you really want to get on top of this behaviour. You've made lots of effort over a long period of time. It seems that you have just not found the way that works for you. What further support do you need from me/us to help you make those changes?"

ACTIVITY

In pairs, role-play one of the following scenarios, one person taking the role of the staff member and the other that of the student. As the staff member, listen for the important indicators and attitudes in what the student is saying. Use strengths-focused comments and questions to elicit how the student is feeling and possible solutions or next steps.

The scenarios are:

- A highly truant student is starting to make an effort and getting to some classes, but feels hugely picked on when she gets impositions for lateness and absenteeism.
- A student who is a reluctant participant in class finally speaks up and gets laughed at by others.

- A rugby player has been practising his sideline goal kicks for weeks with no success and is feeling like a failure.
- A student comes to you with a personal problem and asks for help to resolve it.

When you have finished the role play, discuss the staff member's communication techniques and use of strengths-focused comments and questions.

How effective have they been in getting the student to open up? Has the conversation finished on a more positive note for the student?

Role-play another scenario, this time switching roles.

