

Let's Circle Up

RJ Quotes from Howard Zehr's *The Little Book of Restorative Justice*

The Western legal system's approach to justice has some important strengths. Yet there is also a growing acknowledgment of this system's limits and failures. Those who have been harmed, those who have caused harm, and community members in general often feel that the criminal justice process shaped by this legal system does not adequately meet their needs. Justice professionals—law enforcement officers, judges, lawyers, prosecutors, probation and parole officers, prison staff—frequently express a sense of frustration as well. Many feel that the criminal justice process deepens societal wounds and conflicts rather than contributing to healing or peace. (pp. 5–6)

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In short, the legal or criminal justice system centers on offenders and deserts—making sure those who offend get what they deserve. Restorative justice is more focused on needs: the needs of those harmed, of those causing harm, and of the communities in which these situations arise. (p. 27)

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Central to restorative justice is the idea of making things right or, to use a more active phrase often used in British English, “putting right.” It is the opportunity and encouragement for those who have caused harm to do right by those they have harmed. (p. 38)