

S8 Epi 3 Why can't we talk to each other anymore?

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Hi there. I'm Stan baker, one of the hosts of circle forum, along with Shelley steel and Steve young. In this episode, we talk about why we can't talk about it. And now the, it here is the highly polarized and politicized educational system and society in general, which is highly judgmental of opinions that don't match our own.

It's really important to be able to create safe spaces for conversations in schools. Now, if you're currently dealing with highly charged individuals who don't appear to be listening. Then this episode is for you because it can help you create those safe spaces for talking with others.

In this episode, we talk about listening more and talking less. And we talk about teaching students and adults, the how to have respectful conversations using restorative practices. At the end of this episode, be sure to visit our website [00:01:00] www.restorative.ca, where you can find free restorative resources. If you enjoy this episode.

Be sure to subscribe on YouTube. Now let's talk with Shelley Steven, me, Stan.

Stan: Why can't we talk to each other anymore is the title of an article that really gets at a lot of things about communication that gets out a lot of things that we're wrestling with as societies, but also within our schools, that idea of not being able to talk because people have formed opinions.

Shelley: It's human nature to seek out supporting information for what our belief system is that's human nature. The difference I think what we're experiencing in the last 5 to 10 years is the flow of information, and that everything is deemed to be expert based or to be true.

And so that is just flowing into all of us at any point. And if we're not, if we [00:02:00] haven't been taught or given the opportunity. To talk about the gray areas to say maybe part of that's right. But I have this question about it. Don't

have that. We're not going to seek out other information or seek out understanding otherwise.

Steve: Yeah, it's those gray areas that when we grew up in school, I, when I went to school, I was on a debating team. Debating is all about exploring opposite opinions of things. And so you would get caught in that gray area. But in debating, you force yourself to see the other side of an argument and then put that argument forth.

So it's a great way to really explore an issue. We don't do that kind of stuff anymore. We don't give kids opportunities. And that's. So when we talk about restorative practices and implementing restorative practices in schools, we say we want to give children and adults an opportunity to have discussions.

And we create a forum, a circle in your classroom, and a structure to that circle so that you can put forth a [00:03:00] topic. For discussion and everybody can have their say and listen attentively and respectfully so that opposite opinions can be put out there. And then we can talk about the gray.

But you're right, Shelly, that it's where people get their, Evidence to support their, belief, and if you're finding it on social media, it may not be true. In fact, it's probably couldn't be true because there are people out there who are purposely putting. negative things and untruths onto social media simply because it's fun to do.

And so when somebody picks that up and says, hey, look, it says here that bananas will cause cancer. I know to be true that bananas cause cancer because I saw it on an article and it was written by a doctor. So therefore bananas cause cancer and you can't prove to me otherwise. That's unfortunately where we're

Stan: at.

One of the things the article does suggest is we dial back a little bit on our media, that we just not cut it off completely, but that we slow it down and just [00:04:00] take a little bit less of that in because there's so much coming at us, like you said, so quickly that we really need to just slow it down and have a little less of it.

Shelley: Restorative practice really encourages our, brains to slow down and to think about a situation differently or ask questions differently. And it really is. This is a skill that we need to learn and or and be taught and we certainly need it as we move into adulthood.

I mean I can remember my, daughter as we're moving through some concern or issue she had, and I'm posing questions to her to get her to try and think about things she's just tell me the answer. That would be much easier and much faster and in many ways, people have gotten used to that, just tell me the answer and then I can make my move.

But that isn't. teaching any skills when you're out there in the world that you actually have to discern some information and make an informed decision. But our key restorative practices allows you or [00:05:00] encourages you to be curious and slow down and ask some questions.

Steve: In media literacy, in language, we've been teaching media literacy for years.

And media literacy is basically, let's look at an article, let's look at a concept, a story. And that's with a critical eye. Where did that come from? And is it true? It's we have to look at, the stories in whatever form of media with a bit of a critical eye.

And that's fine. I can do that at home and I can dismiss it. But when I'm in a room with my colleagues if I'm a student in a room with 25 of my classmates, And they've seen the same thing, but they have a different take on it. That's when I'm going to start to discover those gray areas and learn how to with more criticism, look at stories and come along and say maybe that isn't true.

Because somebody who's directing that conversation will say everybody on this side of the room thinks it's this, and everybody on this side of the room thinks it's this. Can you both be right? How can you both be right? And then direct that conversation, open it [00:06:00] up. We have to teach kids how to have those conversations in a respectful way, not just shouting down the other side, whoever's loudest is right kind of thing.

And that's unfortunately where a lot of public discourse is going these days. So maybe we need to do things a little differently in our schools.

Stan: And it's not just with the kids, it's us adult to adult, and I think the, biggest suggestion, which sounds like this is not rocket science, folks, it's just listen more and talk less.

That's what the article says, and if you think about it, that's really. part of the essence of restorative practices, that sense of building connection and voice in particular, that I'll listen to your story because it's worthwhile and you are

worthwhile. And then you'll listen to my story. And that's how we build that connection

Shelley: The article wraps up with saying, students are more open to having discussions. Having [00:07:00] having these kind of discussions, if we've taught them the skills how to do this, then they're more willing when really tough stuff comes up.

They've learned how to have these discussions and that we can listen about something else and we can still have a voice. You've really taught them a skill set about how to have difficult conversations.

Stan: And I think the example that the author gives of his own son. Engaging in a debate and having to argue against the position that he held simply opened up his thinking to another way of looking at things.

Shelley: I guess I would just say we really need to be mindful to create a culture that allows it to be safe because it has become quite unsafe in many circumstances to having an opposing point of view that especially if there's a very loud group that has this point of view. So we need to make sure that we've got a culture that's created that is safe.

It's safe to have a kind of a curious point of view or I'm not understanding where you're coming, where you're coming from with [00:08:00] that information. So that's a key piece. It has to be feel safe to, to put the other ideas forward.

Stan: And,

Steve: building on that safe aspect and you look at our society now if you do hold a dissenting opinion, all of a sudden you're vilified.

And so you don't feel safe in even expressing it, but also it's almost come to a point that if, I believe something and you are opposite, I have to now denigrate you and tear you down as a person to show that I'm at my, idea is better. So I have to make fun of you. I have to call you names. I have to say that you're just a terrible person because that.

It takes away some of the power of your argument and makes my argument sound better. And unfortunately, that's happening a lot in adult society, and we're seeing it in kids as well.

The author of the education week article that we're looking at this week. Rightly suggests that we listen [00:09:00] more and talk less that we scale back on social media. And that we provide for opportunities, which challenges our thinking in a safe environment. This takes time and practice and a commitment to a process of restorative talks with one another, not to each other.

Find out more about our work with creating safe spaces, using restorative practices at www.Restorative.ca. Send me an email to stan@restorative.ca. And I know, I know we talked a lot and we're committed to listening more.