



CDI Restorative Practices

Case Study 3

How Restorative Practices help vulnerable people to tell their story and be listened to





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Tracy is a Development and Implementation Officer for a partnership in West Dublin. She works with people who are looking to get back to education, change jobs or get a job or are seeking a suitable training course.

From unconscious to conscious practice

Tracy trained formally in Restorative Practices in 2018 and became a trainer the following year. RP had already been part of her life *“as a natural way to seek to resolve conflict”*. She had three children in four years who became teenagers all together and, intuitively, she knew she had to find meaningful ways to help them resolve their conflicts without resorting to violence. She set about practising RP, although she didn't know that's what she was doing. *“When there was a conflict between them, I would sit them down and ask them ‘what happened?’, ‘what were you thinking at the time?’, ‘what would you do differently?’ and I had never heard of RP, but it was, to me, a natural way to seek to resolve conflict. And it worked. From the age of about ten, neither of my sons ever raises a hand to each other, they all resolved things, they would have their arguments and their words, it would be resolved that way. It definitely made a huge impact on my personal life and in my now adult children's lives.”*

Training also helped Tracy to implement RP in her daily work and she uses them all the time: *“Day to day, I use it with all my clients ... it's part of my daily job.”*

Supporting vulnerable people

Tracy emphasises how much RP help her to deal with vulnerable people in difficult situations, who sometimes come to her very triggered and angry. The RP questions give her clients the opportunity to tell their story and to feel listened to. To illustrate that, she recalls one specific case of a man who was threatened with having his Social Protection money cut. RP helped her to provide the support her client needed. She recalls that *“I was asked to come and speak to him. I was very aware that he was shouting and that there were other people in the room and I knew I needed to get him to lower his voice very quickly because, if I didn't, he would have been asked to leave the building and nothing would have been resolved. So, I started RP straight away with him. First question I asked was ‘what*

happened?' and it gave him an opportunity to tell me his side. As we go through the story, as I go through the questions, and he reveals more of the story, it becomes clear that he is under tremendous pressure. He is a carer for his wife who is depressed at home, he is trying to look after his children, he is frightened to tell Social Welfare in case they cut his money and they need the money to live on. As he goes through his story, it becomes clear that his anger is coming from fear. We worked through it, gave him advice, and when he left, he shook my hand and felt that he wasn't maybe as stuck as he originally thought. He apologised for being angry and has since sorted out his situation.'