



# CDI Restorative Practices

## Case Study 7

Using RP to share experiences in creative arts





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Tim Noonan works for several organisations in Limerick in the field of art and creativity, with youth and young adults, and people experiencing homelessness and mental health and drug issues. His work is about creativity, through art and horticulture, in his words to *“bring people into touch with a part of themselves they have either let go or cannot recognise at the moment.”*

Tim got started with RP a few years prior to being interviewed in Céim ar Chéim in Limerick. It's a training centre providing programmes for young people from 15–25 years who may be at risk of offending. The centre offers a safe environment for participants to explore their potential and provides appropriate training for their lives and future education. The staff of the centre were trained in RP and it's where Tim was introduced to the RP questions and the circles experience.

### *Grounding*

Tim uses RP in day-to-day life and in the classroom, but mostly informally. For him, RP are a mindful process.

*“We were introduced to circles, asking questions about how we are, who we are, how do we feel at the moment. That was bringing me into a space of now, whereas before I was always probably looking at what is the day ahead, what I am going to plan, what I am going to do. Circles grounded me down to what's actually happening now and the people involved.”*

### *Shared experiences*

He attested that RP have made a difference in his life and work. He explained that *“It's a contemplative one, I think. It's not necessarily something I bring to the front every time I work with a group of people. It's something I think about, that informs my practice, as a teacher and as an artist. It's the way I am approaching a relationship I think, not to build barriers, to build some kind of shared experience of the situation we find ourselves in. Maybe we both don't choose to be in this situation but our experiences have brought us together so we have*

*to do something with it. That's where RP can come into it, we can both recognise our different experiences and our situations and, if we can share some of those, that can maybe move forward to a space where we can get on with what we are trying to do."*

For Tim, RP is what helps to build relationships. He recalled when he met a former inmate he had done work with in prison years before. *"It's lovely when you are about shopping and someone comes up on the street and says 'Hi Tim, how are we getting on?' Somebody left prison years ago, but they still remember that experience, in a classroom or in a corridor, where you've shared something, and they are willing to come back to you years later and shake your hand and say 'How are we getting on?' which is a nice, lovely experience, in that case it has worked, you know."*

In his opinion, RP is about sharing. *"You share feelings, you can share experience, and you can come to some common plan where you can move on. We are not that different, nobody is that different. We might all feel we are isolated and we have this huge weight on our shoulders of conflicts and troubles, but nobody is that different, we all have that in some degree, some level, it's about flattening that playing field so we can get on and do things together. ... Conflicts happen, conflicts are going to happen throughout life, and it's how we cope with them. RP have given me a better way of coping, coping skills."*

### *The RP Questions card*

Although Tim always carries the RP Questions card with him, he doesn't use the exact wording. *"I judge each situation as it appears, so I have only ever pulled this card out once and asked questions to a small group of people, and it was good but the questions aren't always appropriate, because then people tend to feel they are in a formalised interview situation. Informally, it tends to come out maybe in different words, still asking the questions, it still has the same meaning behind it: 'What does it mean to you?' 'How do you feel about this situation?' You are still drawing out the same things. I do carry the questions around with me and, every so often, when my wallet falls out of my coat and everything falls out, I can pick it up and read it, I just remind myself... it's not a continual formalised practice, but it's there, I have it."*

### *Art and Restorative Practices*

For Tim, restorative and artistic approaches have similarities. He has an art practice of walking down the street with a group of people. He elaborates *"We discover gold in those streets. There is always a story to be discovered with you personally and with your family, with your friends, a story we love to share, this is an art practice as well as a Restorative Practice."* The stories can be recorded and disseminated through formal art copies or *"informally you can*

*take it with you in your brain, in your head, in your personality, which I think to me is quite useful.*" Tim feels that RP might work in a similar fashion.