

Book Review: Restorative Practice at Work: Six habits for improving relationships in healthcare settings



As Executive Director at Restorative Thinking, Lesley Parkinson supports restorative education for all (including pupils, children, parents and carers, workforce professionals, young and adult offenders), promoting key life skills in restorative practice via training programmes and consultation.

In her new publication, 'Restorative Practice at Work', Lesley Parkinson provides an insightful introduction to how restorative practice can be introduced to healthcare settings. Based on her work with University Hospitals of Morecambe Bay NHS Foundation Trust (UHMBT), this book provides its readers with practical and realistic tools which have been carefully designed to enable restorative practice to develop and thrive within healthcare settings.

Let me start by saying this book really sparked my interest from the outset. For sometime I've had a great interest in the role that restorative practice can have within healthcare settings and, indeed, it's a significant part of the standards work currently being undertaken by the Restorative Justice Council. I also have great personal and professional interest in how restorative practice can be better embedded within our workplaces. So when I agreed to review this book, I had high expectations. It was apparent within the first few pages that I wasn't going to be disappointed.

One important point I want to make is that this book has been written specifically for those working in healthcare settings, however the six habits for improving relationships described throughout the book could equally apply to any workplace setting. If you're interested in restorative practice within any workplace setting, this book will be of value to you.

I'm an avid reader but can find 'theory' based books don't always hold my interest

If, like me, you are interested in the theory and its practical application to the real world then do not fear!

Lesley has skilfully combined restorative theory with engaging case studies, practical activities and, most importantly, practical examples of how to implement theory into your daily life.

I liked this approach and it certainly made the material contained within

the book far more accessible for those who might have little or no experience of restorative practice.

The book has been written in two sections. The first part provides the reader with a comprehensive background to restorative practice and carefully sets out the rationale for why healthcare settings should consider introducing restorative practice within their setting.

This is supported by a detailed summary of the current evidence base. Whilst Lesley has referenced a wide range of health based research, she also recognised that restorative practice within healthcare is still within its infancy which does mean the evidence base is still somewhat limited. What I found useful was the way in which Lesley has referenced research evidence from other sectors where restorative justice is more embedded. She has taken the time to draw out the relevant information from this evidence and makes clear conclusions as to how this applies within a healthcare context.

For those who do not have the time to source, read and analyse a plethora of research, this section of the book is a fantastic starting point.

The second section of the book really got me hooked. It sets out a clear set of suggestions for how healthcare settings can get started with their restorative practice journey. In my experience, this is probably one of the toughest part of making sustained change. Where do you actually start?

Restorative Practice at Work is designed to help you focus on developing habits that make a genuine difference to your daily workplace experience.

Lesley suggests that by drawing on restorative practice principles to develop a set of core habits to improve relationships for staff at all levels, the potential to transform workplace culture substantially increases.

I'm fully aware that those of us who live and breath everything restorative are not the ones that need to be convinced of the positive benefits of embedding restorative practice within our workplaces. For the sceptics, Lesley recognises within her introduction that making cultural change is of course a massive endeavour which has many moving parts. Committing to embedding restorative practice at the heart of culture change is likely to be one, albeit very important, part of the change process.

Simply reading and applying the learning from this book is not going to make your organisation restorative but by focusing on the 'relational habits' outlined within the book, long-term cultural change can become more realistic.

At the very core of this book are the six habits which underpin Lesley's restorative approach to cultural change. Of course, I don't want to

spoil your reading but to give you a flavour, the six habits described within the book include:

1. Navigating the mountain
2. Recognising needs
3. Engaging brains and behaviours
4. Remembering the relational window
5. Running circle meetings
6. Drawing on restorative enquiry

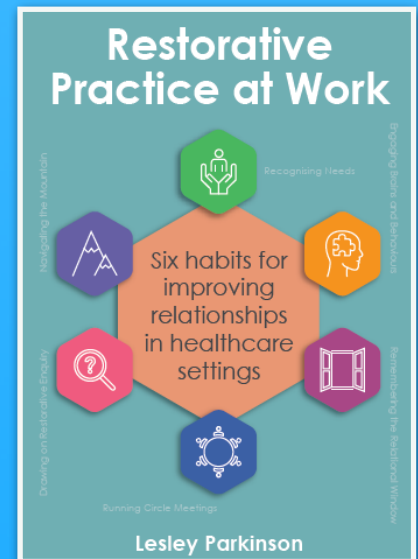
These chapters have been carefully written to support the reader to understand how outward facing behaviours can be considered a form of communication or unmet need. Alongside this, Lesley introduces a range of models and processes which will inform the reader's development as a restorative practitioner.

The contents of this book are not intended to replace the high-quality training needed to successfully implement restorative practice but to inspire staff at all levels to think and act more restoratively. In fact, Lesley has dedicated a chapter to finding the right trainer or training organisation to support the journey.

What you will get from this book is sound understanding of the theoretical base underpinning restorative practice and a set of tried and tested tools which you can apply within your professional and personal lives.

Whether you are a seasoned restorative practitioner or just starting on your restorative journey, this book should be part of your toolkit.

Jim Simon
Chief Executive Officer
 Restorative Justice Council



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