

THE DOOR

# RESTORATIVE PRACTICES



**Working with LGBTQ+  
Homeless Youth**



# Facilitators

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Hello my name is Justin DeMateo and I am the Director of Runaway & Homeless Youth Services at The Door. I currently hold a MSW and have been in social services in an array of systems such as, homeless youth, afterschool programing and child welfare. My true passion is youth development and mental health services to our young people in the community.



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**Lexie Korn,  
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Hello, my name is Lexie and I am the Clinical Supervisor for membership at The Door! I am a highly accomplished Licensed Social Worker and Psychotherapist who is committed to the resistance of all systems of oppression and dedicated to healing communities through an anti-racist and anti-oppressive lens.



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# ✦ At The Door

## Who are we?

The Door is a youth development organization in NYC offering comprehensive services under one roof to support young people as they work toward healthy, independent futures.

We serve young people ages 12–25 through:

- Mental health counseling & crisis support
- Health care, including reproductive & LGBTQ+ affirming services
- Housing and runaway/homeless youth support
- Education & career services
- Legal services, including immigration support
- Arts, recreation, & leadership programming
- Hot meals and basic needs support





# Community Agreements

- Taking accountability for harm: “ouch, oops” tool
- You are the expert of your own experience: speak using “I” statements
- Assess needs: honor your body’s needs while considering the group’s needs (bio breaks, fidgeting/stimming, movement)
- Show respect: “one mic,” active-listening, curiosity not judgment
- Confidentiality and privacy: What’s shared here stays here

# *Why Does this Topic Matter?*

- **LGBTQ+ and homeless youth experience disproportionate harm and marginalization.**
- **Traditional punitive models often compound trauma.**
- **Restorative practices offer a pathway for young people to experience healing, empowerment, and accountability that is rooted in community.**



# *Principles of Restorative Practices*

Restorative care is a relational approach to harm that centers healing, accountability, and community connection over punishment.

Core principles include:

- Repairing harm rather than imposing punishment for LGBTQ+ young people
- Restoring relationships by bringing together those impacted
- Involving community in decision-making and healing




# How a Restorative Approach Supports LGBTQ+ Homeless Youth

Restorative practices can be especially transformative when working with youth who've been historically excluded or marginalized.

- **Validates lived experiences** and the harm of systemic oppression (transphobia, family rejection, housing instability)
- **Centers youth voice:** allows LGBTQ+ homeless youth to name their needs, define safety, and shape repair
- **Reduces retraumatization** by moving away from shaming and toward relationship-building
- **Builds authentic connection**—a key protective factor against isolation, substance use, and self-harm
- **Helps youth practice boundaries** and repair ruptured relationships (with peers, staff, family)





# RESTORATIVE PRACTICES MUST BE GROUNDED IN A TRAUMA-INFORMED, STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH TO BE EFFECTIVE WITH YOUTH.

## **Positive Youth Development (PYD):**

- Views youth as capable and resilient, not broken or “at-risk”
- Emphasizes belonging, contribution, and leadership
- Helps youth build coping skills and self-efficacy

## **Trauma-Informed Care Principles:**

- Safety (physical and emotional)
- Trustworthiness and transparency
- Peer support
- Empowerment and choice
- Cultural humility

## **Why it matters:**

- LGBTQ+ and homeless youth often carry trauma from rejection, discrimination, or instability
- They may respond to perceived threats with flight/freeze/fight, BUT restorative practices offer a path back to connection, not control



# *Strength-Based vs. Deficit-Based Language*

**DEFICIT-BASED LANGUAGE FRAMES YOUTH BY WHAT THEY LACK, STRUGGLE WITH, OR FAIL AT.**

- **"HOMELESS KID"**
- **"A LOW-PERFORMING STUDENT"**
- **"NEEDY"**
- **"UNCOOPERATIVE"**

**STRENGTH-BASED LANGUAGE HIGHLIGHTS YOUTH RESILIENCE, GROWTH, AND AGENCY.**

- **"YOUTH NAVIGATING HOUSING INSTABILITY"**
- **"YP WORKING TO DEVELOP ACADEMIC SKILLS"**
- **"YP SKILLED AT HAVING THEIR NEEDS HEARD"**
- **"YP WORKING ON EMOTIONAL REGULATION"**

Language influences expectation, engagement, and self-worth  
We move from "What's wrong with you?" to "What's happened to you?" and  
"What's strong in you?"

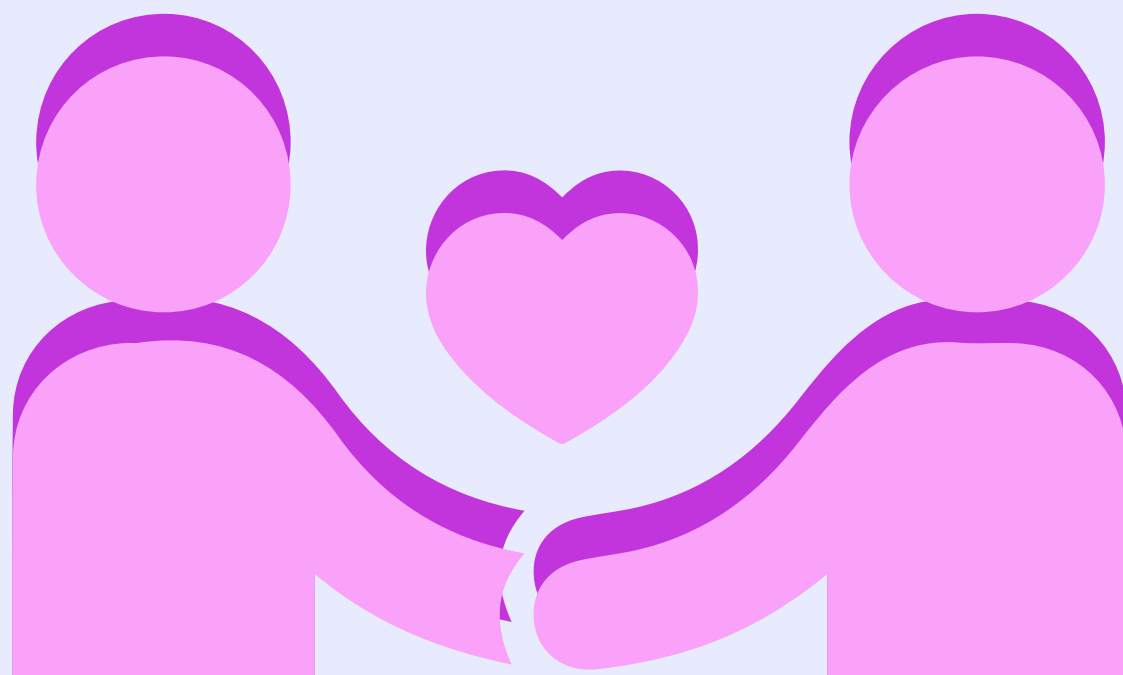
# Building Relationships as a Foundation

Restorative practices are relational—it works only when trust exists.

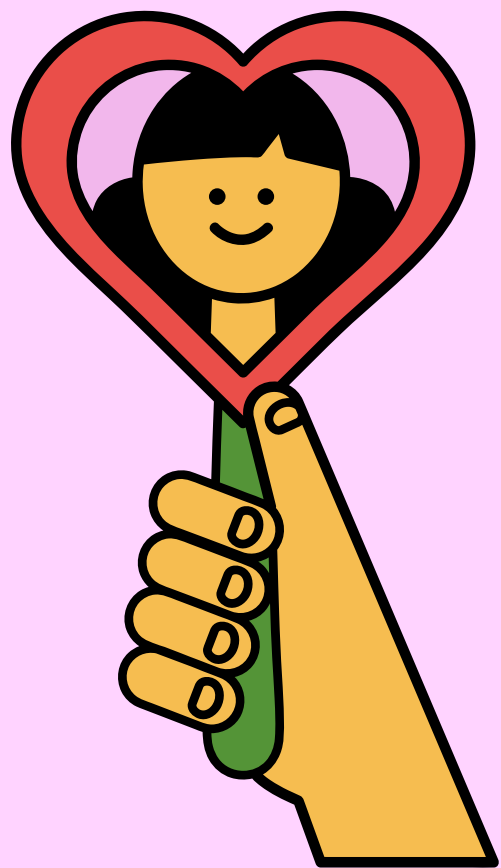
- Relationships allow us to see the full person, not just a moment of harm
- Helps staff identify patterns, emotional triggers, and baseline behaviors
- Trust opens space for meaningful accountability, not just compliance

## Key strategies:

- Be consistent and transparent
- Celebrate small wins
- Offer co-regulation (helping youth return to calm through safe connection)
- Use active listening and reflective statements to demonstrate care







*Take a moment...*

*What did you need as a young person?*



**ACCOUNTABILITY  
≠  
PUNISHMENT**

**Restorative practices invite youth to reflect, repair, and commit to growth. This is especially important for youth who have experienced punitive or judgmental systems in their past**

**It is NOT:**

Forced apologies  
Shame-based lectures  
Exclusion or punitive removal

**Accountability Includes:**

- ✦ Acknowledging the behavior and its impact
- ✦ Listening to how others were harmed
- ✦ Expressing genuine remorse (in one's own language)
- ✦ Making a plan to repair (guided by the harmed party when appropriate)
- ✦ Committing not to repeat the harm





# Examples of using a Restorative Approach



# Creating Inclusive Restorative Spaces

For LGBTQ+ homeless youth, restorative practices must be culturally responsive and identity-affirming.

## Inclusive Practices:

- Always ask and use chosen names/pronouns
- Let youth co-create group norms and circle agreements
- Include prompts that affirm identity, joy, and resilience
- Use trauma-informed circle facilitation (opt-in participation, emotional check-ins)
- Offer multiple forms of expression: talking, drawing, movement

## Make it clear:

- This space sees you.
- Your voice matters.
- We are practicing collective care.





*Questions?*

