

# We Want to Be Like Yoda!



Q: Why would **RJ Working**, a Cornwall-based not-for-profit organisation, dare to aspire to be like one of the greatest movie icons of all time?

A: We recognise that the young people we work with, and the adults who support them, are often everyday heroes, showing courage and determination in the face of huge challenges. In coaching their leadership, we are often privileged to be their trusted guide, as little Yoda is for the heroes in the Star Wars movies.

Restorative Practice aims high and holds the power to equip a whole generation of youngsters with language and principles for creating a fairer, more compassionate world. We know they can collectively develop the confidence to deal well with harm and conflict (which are inevitable) and grow a community culture in which Restorative responses are expected and normal.

To explain: Restorative Justice is achieved through safe, supported and voluntary communication, between the parties involved in a harmful incident or conflict, for the purpose of repair and recovery. Restorative Practice involves building relationships based on mutual respect and shared responsibility for preventing harm and conflict and dealing with these well when they arise.

In the Star Wars movies, Yoda is known for the huge significance of his comments, and also for keeping them brief, which is one of the qualities of a Restorative Practitioner of any age, since their focus is on the people being supported. Here are some of his most important statements, together with a little explanation of connections with Restorative Practice.

Yoda speaks of war to discuss the problems created by a win/lose mentality: **“Wars not make one great”**, **“In war, a danger there is, of losing who we are”**. A master of balance and complex truths, he is interested in self-discipline and a sense of choice – even when situations seem impossible.

Very often, in an incident of harm, people are invited to make a quick judgement about right and wrong; but Yoda says **“So certain were you. Go back and closer you must look”**. Yoda’s challenge to his apprentice **“Control, control, you must learn control!”** applies to many of us reacting too quickly and causing harm whether by accident or deliberately. It also often applies

to the person who has been harmed, who with quality support can learn to step forward and take up their own power to create a new outcome. We find that one of the greatest motivations to participate in a Restorative Justice Meeting is that the outcome so far, does not have to be the end of the story. Yoda says “[Difficult to see. Always in motion is the future...](#)”.

We want to support students to take Restorative Practice forward in their school community. Yoda says “[Mind what you have learned. Save you it can](#)” and “[Always pass on what you have learned](#)”.

For adults working in authoritarian school environments, we would encourage consideration of Yoda’s challenge “[Train yourself to let go of everything you fear to lose](#)”. Restorative Practice is not about staff giving up their authority but is about them using it differently – the subject of our next blog. We know that adults working in schools are faced with huge challenges, including supporting the mental health of their students. Yoda’s insight here is that “[Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to suffering](#)”. Often if students’ fears can be clarified and addressed, more peaceful classroom relationships can be achieved.

Above all, Yoda speaks of commitment to self and others: “[Do or do not, there is no try](#)”.

RJ Working is a small organisation with huge aspirations, and we take heart from Yoda’s question “[Judge me by my size, do you?](#)”. His words are also a great reminder not to judge anyone by their age or size. We are always learning from the children and young people we work with, their curiosity, questions and wisdom: Yoda says, “[Truly wonderful, the mind of a child is](#)”. The field of Restorative Practice stretches back to ancient Maori culture in New Zealand, and we believe has a long future ahead, contributing to international diplomacy as well as playground conflicts. The Yoda comment that fits this long-term path is “[When nine hundred years old you reach, look as good you will not](#)”. Like him, the field of Restorative Practice is looking great at this point in its evolution.