

Restorative practices assessment instrument

A reusable instrument for measuring learning and retention in restorative practices training

This instrument measures what a course or training engagement actually produces in the participants who engaged in it. It is administered at four points: immediately before training begins (pre), immediately after it ends (post), at the close of the three-month follow-up period (3-month), and again six months after training (6-month). The pre and post-tests capture immediate gain; the three-month point captures whether that gain held while follow-up support was still in place; and the six-month point captures whether the practice survived once that support had ended. The instrument has three parts, which can be used together or separately: a knowledge check, a self-rated facilitation-confidence scale, and an observed-facilitation rubric completed by a trainer.

The same instrument is used at all four points so that scores are directly comparable. Bracketed items are adaptable to the specific curriculum. Administer the knowledge and confidence sections to all participants; administer the observation rubric to each participant at least once per point where feasible, or to a representative sample where cohorts are large. The six-month point is the hardest to collect, because participants have dispersed; plan for it at the onset by agreeing on a contact method while the cohort is still together, since a durability measure is among the most valuable figures the program can report.

Part 1. Knowledge Check

A short set of items measuring understanding of restorative concepts and process. Use the same items at all three points. A simple format is a mix of multiple-choice and short-answer; scoring is the number correct, recorded as a percentage. Sample items (adapt to curriculum):

- The concept of Restorative Practices reframes the central question of wrongdoing from “what rule was broken” to which of the following? [multiple choice]
- Name the core elements of a restorative circle and the function of the talking piece. [short answer]
- Distinguish a restorative conference from a circle and give one situation suited to each. [short answer]
- Identify two conditions that must be in place before a restorative process is appropriate. [short answer]
- Explain, in one or two sentences, the difference between addressing an incident and addressing the conditions that produced it. [short answer]

Record each participant’s score at each point:

Participant ID	Pre (%)	Post (%)	3-month (%)	6-month (%)

Participant ID	Pre (%)	Post (%)	3-month (%)	6-month (%)
Cohort mean				-

Part 2. Self-Rated Facilitation Confidence

Participants rate their own confidence on a five-point scale (1 = not at all confident, 5 = highly confident). Self-ratings are subjective but, when tracked across the four points, they reveal a meaningful pattern: confidence often rises at post, dips at three months as participants meet real complexity, and recovers by six months if the practice has taken hold, which is useful information for designing the follow-up support. Use the same statements at all four points.

I am confident that I can...	Pre	Post	3-mo	6-mo
...open and close a restorative circle.				
...hold the space when emotions run high.				
...prepare participants before a conference.				
...decide when a restorative process is not appropriate.				
...adapt a process to my own setting and culture.				

Part 3. Observed-Facilitation Rubric

A trainer observes the participant facilitating a circle or conference (in role-play at the pre and post points, and in a real or simulated setting at the three- and six-month points) and rates each dimension on a four-point scale. This is the most reliable of the three measures because it records demonstrated skill rather than knowledge or self-perception. Scale: 1 = not yet evident, 2 = emerging, 3 = competent, 4 = strong.

Dimension	What strong practice looks like
Opening and framing	Sets purpose and norms clearly; participants understand the process before it begins.

Use of the process	Uses the talking piece, rounds, and sequence with discipline rather than improvising past them.
Holding the space	Manages silence, emotion, and dominance without controlling the outcome.
Questioning	Asks restorative questions that surface harm, need, and obligation rather than blame.
Closing	Brings the process to a clear, agreed close with concrete next steps where appropriate.
Judgment	Reads whether the process is working and adjusts; recognizes when to pause or stop.

Observation score sheet (one row per participant per point):

Participant	Point	Open	Process	Space	Q's	Close
	Pre					
	Post					
	3-month					
	6-month					

Reading the Results

The value of the four-point design is in the differences, not the single scores. Four comparisons matter most:

- Pre to post shows immediate learning gain, the effect of the training event itself. • Post to three months shows whether the gain held while follow-up support was still in place.
- Three months to six months shows whether the practice survived once that support ended, which is the sharpest test of durability.
- Pre to six months shows the durable net effect, which is the figure most worth reporting to partners and funders, since it reflects lasting change rather than a momentary post-training peak.
- Aggregate cohort means tell the program developer whether the training design is working; individual trajectories help identify which participants are ready to move into the facilitator pool and the post-course apprenticeship described in the chapter. A participant whose six-month scores remain strong is a natural candidate to begin co-facilitating.

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