

Beth Yohe: What do you notice in yourself as you're getting angry, right? And where does that hit for you, right? So, are you clenching your hands? Do you feel yourself getting hot? Rumbles in your stomach? Does your vision narrow? And, when you're not in a piece of conflict or argument, ask other people, ask people who know you, how do they know that you're getting really angry, right? And if we, if we know what those signs are, then we can start to work to interrupt ourselves earlier.

Sam Fuqua: That's Beth Yohe, and this is Well, That Went Sideways! A podcast that serves as a resource to help people have healthy, respectful communication. We present a diversity of ideas, tools, and techniques to help you transform conflict in relationships of all kinds. In this episode, Beth Yohe and Mina Bradley-Belcaid share some practical tips for recognizing and managing our responses to conflict. Both of them are staff members at The Conflict Center. A Denver-based nonprofit that provides training to youth and adults for managing everyday conflicts. They'll talk about some of their programs in this conversation.

I'm Sam Fuqua, co-host of the program with Alexis Miles. Hi Alexis.

Alexis Miles: Hi Sam.

Sam Fuqua: And, we're happy to be joined by Mina Bradley-Belcaid and Beth Yohe from The Conflict Center. Thank you both for being with us on Well, That Went Sideways!

Beth Yohe: Thank you for having us.

Sam Fuqua: Regular listeners to the podcast know that at the end of each episode, we credit The Conflict Center as a partner organization, and we repeat your tagline, *Practical solutions to everyday conflicts*. Beth Yohe, how is the work going and has it evolved over the history of the organization?

Beth Yohe: Well, I think the, the underlying foundation, that practical skill building is an important piece of the work that we do has been, um, a part of the work since Liz Loescher founded The Conflict Center over 35 years ago. Like, that piece of, it's not theoretical. We're not just talking about like pie in the sky things, but actual practical skills. What do you do in the moment in your interpersonal relationships? Knowing that conflict is inevitable is an important piece. Now what those skills are certainly, um, evolve and change and, um, in some ways, some remain the same, right? Active listening, whether we call it that or something else is, uh, kind of constant in the skills. But we certainly continue to think about what does this look like in the age of media, social media, right? When, um, you are not actually physically in the room with someone. What does it look like through hybrid work environments and Zoom and polarization politically? There's all the different context that those skills have to apply to, and certainly in that way, we've adjusted and, and broadened how we think about addressing conflict and the types of tools that people might need.

Alexis Miles: Could you talk about the different programs you offer, and then maybe a bit about the tools that each program specializes in?

Mina Bradley-Belcaid: So, I always say our adult programming. Um, and there are essentially two branches to our adult programming. One is a serious class that we offer, um, several times a year, both virtually and in person called *Addressing Conflict and Anger Effectively*. Um, and that's a 12-hour curriculum, so we cover a lot of subject matter there, uh, around, you know, practical tools, um, as mentioned, to approach

conflict, maybe transform the relationship that you have with conflict, um, and approach situations with, um, some, some new tools and, um, a more self-aware kind of mindset, you know, about what your triggers are, what, you know, what, when you're in a certain situation, how are you, how do you tend to approach it, you know, and how can you, sort of, think your way through the process, or advocate for yourself when you needed to step back, or take care of yourself in that way. So, yeah, lots and lots of materials covered in that curriculum.

Um, and then we also have off-the-shelf trainings that we have built, you know, over the years that also cover a wide variety of subject matter. And then, we do take pieces from those trainings and custom build them for organizations who reach out to us and, and feel that some professional develop, and everything from professional development training to, um, they have a specific conflict that they would like to address, or addressing team culture. So, we cover all sorts of practical subject matter from, I think Beth mentioned, you know, active listening to self-awareness of how you're regulating your emotions to, we do like values work and, um, culture, intentional culture building specific to organizations. Um, so really a, a, a pretty wide variety of subject matter. I forgot to mention also that we do have a parenting class, um, through the lens of restorative practices that we offer as well.

Alexis Miles: And, I believe you also have some youth programming?

Beth Yohe: We do. We do. So, the range from adults to, all the way to elementary age. Looking at how we build skills and think about and understand conflict in a more, um, productive way through a variety of different types of programs. So, school-based, we have restorative practices programming that's, um, working with the whole school around the culture and climate that they build and how they address conflict and discipline at their schools. We have a program called *Building Healthy Relationships*, which is based on a social norming model that's looking at how do we have healthy relationships, how do we understand what our peers, uh, know and are doing around healthy relationships, and cultivate, um, positive norms related to that, uh, program called *Hotspot Mapping*, which is looking at, again, large school culture, and where kids feel safe, and how they feel safe, and how we build that intentionally.

And then in the elementary age, we have *Reading for Peace*, which is a volunteer-run program, and multi-generational. And, the volunteers go to schools and read. Usually it's one adult to two, three kids. Um, and reading through literature, exploring the concepts of conflict and bullying prevention and identity and how we navigate the world, um, which is, it's a really great program. It's one of our longest standing ones. And a really, literature and literacy is a great way to address a lot of social emotional issues. And then finally, we have a restorative justice partnership with the Denver District Attorney's Office. So, all of those are under this umbrella of how we reframe conflict and how we build skills and understand conflict differently than most of us were brought up to, to think about conflict. And, it's fun 'cause we get to work with the whole community essentially, um, through all the different programs.

Alexis Miles: Could you talk a little bit about how you reframe it both individually and as an organization?

Beth Yohe: So, reframing, I think, does look in, in lots of different ways, and sometimes it is about relationship re, repair. Sometimes, it's just about reframing how we even understand conflict, right? Um, one, that it's inevitable. So, we know lots of people try to avoid conflict. So, if we can reframe that conflict just is, right, it's just a thing that exists. If you are with other people in the world, you will have conflict.

That's a reframe, right? Reframing how we think about conflict in society, right? Uh, our restorative practices and restorative justice programs are reframing this idea of, sort of, what has been typical punitive ways to address harm, and reframing the idea that we can do that in community, we can center in community, we can repair harm through community and um, and we have better results, right? So, it's reframing even how we look at it. So, I think there's all of those pieces and a lot of our tools specifically that we use, like the idea of Both/And is a reframe, right? From our societal concept of things are either/or, right? Good or bad. Right or wrong. And reframing that to both, Both/And, many things can be true at the same time. That's our theme for The Conflict Center for this year, is the idea of Both/And, and that's an example of a reframe. And I know, Mina in the programs that she oversees, there's lots of ways that we, content and tools that we introduce to folks that really are in this, this concept of reframing.

Sam Fuqua: It's an incredible list of, uh, of trainings and resources. And, having heard all that, uh, it would be great if we could dive into some really practical, uh, examples. For example, uh, Mina, can you give us an example of a typical situation where we might reframe that to Both/And?

Mina Bradley-Belcaid: If I can address this question, like, through the lens of this framework that I've been talking about just this week in a few different trainings. So, a, a framework that I really like, um, that I've built into these trainings recently, um, is called *The Window of Tolerance*. And, it was, uh, developed by a clinical psychologist, a professor at UCLA, um, essentially to examine, like, in any given context or circumstance, what your zone for, like, tolerating a particular intensity of an emotion is so, you know, on some days your window of tolerating a particularly intense emotion might be very wide, and sometimes it might be very narrow depending on the circumstances, depending on the situation itself, depending on how you're feeling, you know, whether you've had a good night's sleep or whatnot. When we're outside of that window of being able to tolerate a certain intensity, like if something is too intense, more than we can tolerate, essentially, um, our coping skills for dealing with, or being able to really think critically through nuance or being able to embrace alternative concepts or, you know, think about things essentially in more than an either/or, sort of, context, um, is limited.

We, it's very, very difficult to not think in extremes when you are pushed outside of that window of tolerance. Um, so that's when you tend to catastrophize, or think, um, you know, oh my gosh, something went wrong, um, let's say at work, and you're feeling very stressed about it, and you start catastrophizing and think, oh my gosh, I'm gonna lose my job as a result of this, right, because of this one mistake. That is in a sense, um, a way of thinking about something in either/or, right? It's like dichotomous thinking. This thing went wrong. I'm gonna lose my job, right? Or, it's gonna be okay. But there's not room for, maybe there's grace for me here. Maybe there's a way for me to correct my mistake. Maybe, you know, I can cobble together some different tools or resources to, you know, sort of, make this thing right. Or, you know, any number of alternative circumstances. So, the way that, that I have been sort of talking about this window of tolerance in the frame of the either/or thinking is really, like, it's about self-awareness and you know, if you find yourself thinking in really extreme terms, like, this is awful, or I always, or I never, or, um, you know, these, this really extreme language, that can be an indication that you're engaging in either/or thinking, and that maybe there's some nuance that's being left out.

Beth Yohe: Yeah, and I would add, so I mean, I even mentioned the idea of, like, making a mistake, right? Like, that's, kind of, framed in either/or versus I did it this way, it didn't turn out exactly how I wanted it to. I can learn from it. It can be an opportunity to do it differently in the future, right? Or, I made a mistake in the sense that it, it had consequences that I didn't intend, and I can repair those things, and also still grow

and learn from it, and do it differently, you know. Even the idea that I'm a good person and it means X, Y, and Z, like, it means I can't make a mistake, or I can't say something that I regret, or those kinds of things, those are all, uh, in that either/or dichotomy, right? So, even embracing the idea that I can be a good person and hurt someone is a reframe in that Both/And. And, we talk about it in, in being able to hold multiple emotions too, right, or multiple ideas about something. So, for example, you can love your job and wish that you had more time with your family or to do hobbies. Or, you can love a family member and be really angry at them about the way that they voted, or really upset with their political views.

It also helps us to think about those situations where we get stuck in, I, Mina and I both experienced something, and I am, I'm just adamant that it went this way, and Mina's like, no, this is how I experienced it, right? Both/And allow, allows us to be like, both things can be true. We, we can have multiple perspectives about the same thing instead of spending time trying to convince the other person that their experience was the same as ours. I think those are all leaning to, as Mina was saying, the difference between either/or and Both/And, and our ability to do that, to be able to reframe, often, um, is contingent on that window of tolerance, right? Our, the capacity to hold multiple things often is related to just our general emotional capacity at the time.

Sam Fuqua: In the context of that Both/And framing, uh, what is the role of, of apologizing, you know, the other person is hurt. Yeah, I'm not agreeing with you. There's, you know, we're both holding these truths, but, uh, I may need acknowledgement that, you know, you hurt me or something like that. How do you handle that part?

Beth Yohe: Well, that, I mean, intent and impact is an example of Both/And, right? Like, I can have an intent, um, with what I was saying or something that I did, and there can be an impact that was different than that, right? Um, so even that concept, so being able to hold this is, this was my experience, or this was where I was going, and I recognize that it hurt you, and I'm sorry for that and I wanna learn from it so that my, those things can be in alignment, or let's explore it more so we can both understand each other. I think that's a piece of it. Apologies certainly can be there. We also know through the restorative justice program that sometimes you can take accountabilities for some pieces, and recognize that someone else has a role in taking accountability as well. Um, and that doesn't lessen your accountability, right? Like, to be able to say, I did these things and I wanna take accountability for that and repair in the best way that I can. Um, those parts of the story. So, Mina, what would you add?

Mina Bradley-Belcaid: Yeah, uh, that, that's a, a really beautiful example, I think. Um, I, I think that really a, a powerful apology does sort of comprise Both/And. Um, you know, you can acknowledge your piece and, you know, that you had, that maybe there was some harm or some hurt that, that was incurred here, and, you know, the other person can hang onto, you know, their belief. You can both hold onto your beliefs, right? I think that it, the, the, the, im, the intent and impacts do certainly matter there. But I think that, you know, you can say, I am taking accountability for this piece and I recognize that hurt you, right? And I'm sorry. Um, and, you know, also the, the receiver of the apology can say, I appreciate and accept your apology, and it's gonna be a minute to sit with this hurt.

Alexis Miles: Well, it seems to me that that requires a, a degree of self-awareness. And I can imagine, well, I'll speak for myself. Often when I'm in a conflict, my emotions are so high that I can't hear what the other person is saying. The only thing I wanna hear is an apology. So, there's not the space there to hear each

other. So, do you teach techniques or skills for people to calm down and be able to hear each other and be more self-aware?

Mina Bradley-Belcaid: Yeah, certainly. I mean, speaking for adult programming at least, um, we do specifically have content about cooling off techniques that has to do with, like, self-talk, um, that's a big one, in addition to, you know, things that you can do when you do have the opportunity to be away from that immediate conflict situation and things, coping techniques for when you can't necessarily get out of that conflict situation. Say you're in a meeting that you can't necessarily leave or what have you. Um, or there are other circumstances that are keeping you, sort of, physically there. But I will say, it, there is truly, I mean, a lot of conflicts can, depending on the context, can feel really immediate and really important and urgent, and I cannot stress enough, like, how important it is to recognize when you have the option to do so. Taking a beat, taking some space, even just for a few moments and returning to the subject matter can make a world of difference.

Alexis Miles: So, for people who are listening right now, what are one or two things they can do today? If they go home today, they have a conflict with their spouse or their child, what are a couple of things they can do immediately in addition to taking a beat or taking a step back for a minute?

Mina Bradley-Belcaid: So, some cooling off thoughts like the, the, sort of, self-talk and the, um, positive self-talk, um, that we offer in our trainings, um, are, you know, it's, it's ways of, sort of, taking a deep breath and talking yourself, sort of, through the moment that feels, sort of, overwhelming, right? Or the conflict that feels pretty overwhelming. So, some examples of some of this positive self-talk is, um, I can handle this. I don't like this, but I'll get through it. I am in control of what I do. I don't have to engage the same way that this other person's engaging if I don't like it. You know, I have the power to make different choices. If somebody's trying to get a rise out of you, maybe say, you know, this person's looking for a reaction and I'm not going to necessarily give them the one they want. Um, that's a specific type of conflict, right? Um, and you know, when thoughts arise, some thoughts that, sort of, exacerbate, um, this sort of internal feelings that arise in conflict are, you know, they're around sort of shoulds and ought tos. Um, those are really to be avoided. Um, you know, saying this person should, or I should, um, that can, you know, do the opposite in a moment of, of conflict retention or overwhelm, just re, really focusing on the things that you do have control over and saying, you know, I'm gonna get through this.

Alexis Miles: And, and how would a person soothe, like, feelings of intense anger? Are there some things like a, a person can do in the moment to calm down, calm the body down?

Mina Bradley-Belcaid: Yeah, I would say, um, you know, box breathing. Um, box breathing is, is one that we talk about a lot, which is, um, essentially you inhale for a count of four, you hold for a count of four, exhale for a count of four, and hold for a count of four. It might be, sort of, awkward to do that in the midst of when somebody is yelling at you, let's say. But if you can get away for just a moment to say, I need to take a few deep breaths, um, that can be really helpful. Um, you know, physical exercise. You know, getting out and taking a walk if that's a possibility, um, is super beneficial. Um, when you need a moment to yourself to think through something, to calm down, I would say sometimes, you know, some, like, progressive muscle relaxation can also help in the moment. Um, especially let's say if, if you can't necessarily get away. If you can, sort of, tense and release your muscles in various areas, like, you know, your hands or um, what have you. Those are all techniques that I think can help you, sort of, stay grounded in the moment and kind of soothe.

Beth Yohe: I know sometimes people will roll their eyes at this idea of breathing, but it really is, if you can do nothing else, like, starting to pay attention to your breaths and slowing your breaths down and taking deeper breaths makes such a difference in all sorts of ways, but certainly in conflict, um, or when you're feeling yourself getting heated, um, from a prevention kind of place. One of the things that we ask people to do is really pay attention to their, uh, thermometer, if you will, of strong emotions. And so, you mentioned Alexis, like, oh, they're feeling really intense, right? Well, there's typically signs that we have along the way before we hit that intensity. Sometimes it'll, people say, it feels like I'm going from zero to ten, just, uh, immediately. But usually there's things along the way, either physiologically or externally, right? And so, part of what we ask people to do is pay attention to, like, what do you notice in yourself as you're getting angry, right? And where does that hit for you, right? So, are you clenching your hands? Do you feel yourself getting hot rumbles in your stomach? Does your vision narrow?

And, when you're not in a piece of conflict or argument, ask other people. Ask people who know you, how do they know that you're getting really angry, right? And if we, if we know what those signs are, then we can start to work to interrupt ourselves earlier, right? Like, oh, I just noticed, like, I'm clenching my fist. I need to, like, start breathing now, right? Um, and that can be really helpful. The other thing is to not assume other people's zero to ten is the same, right? So, sometimes what we do is, you know, I'll think, oh, Alexis might be really angry because she's doing this, she's clenching her fist, and that's a 70 for me on a zero to a hundred. But for you, it's, like, a ten, right? And so that's the other thing, is really being aware that what those signs are are so different for everyone. But that can be a helpful preventative tool. So, in the moment we're more aware of our body.

Sam Fuqua: Maybe coming at this same, uh, idea in a different way, how do each of you decide, uh, when a conflict is maybe "worth it" to address, and when it's something to just, uh, to just let go?

Mina Bradley-Belcaid: Yeah, so I think the context matters a lot. I think it's generally worthwhile to try and maintain relationships that you have with people, you know, to a degree of health, and I think that, um, you know, getting curious about what's going on for the other person. Getting curious about what led to a moment of conflict, um, is super important to determine, like, what's actually happening, and how you maybe need to show up and engage. Um, I do think that, you know, conflict is, you know, as Beth said, conflict is something that happens. It is, and it will, you will encounter it if you are in relationship with somebody. Um, we are all in relationship with people, right? So, um, I, I do think that it's worthwhile to consider how you show up, and how you, sort of, assess the nature of a conflict. I think, you know, asking questions is huge. It can, you know, it serves to deepen understanding, build trust, and also providing you both information, and also deescalate the moment a little bit. Um, if there's a, like, a moment of, sort of, acute conflict, let's say.

Granted they're bad faith actors here and there who just want conflict for its, its own sake, and they don't necessarily have, you know, anybody's best interest in mind. But I think that those situations tend to be pretty rare. And you, you tend to, there tend to be signifiers of when that's happening. You know, you don't necessarily have a relationship with this person, they're just trying to, kind of, get your goat a little bit. Um, and that tends to be fairly clear. But I think in terms of, you know, a relationship that you have, that you, that, you know, is important to preserve, which I think, you know, it's a huge priority for me and I think it's a huge priority for a lot of people. Um, I do think that, yeah, just getting curious about what's happening, clarifying and, um, you know, offering that good faith, sort of, trust building, um, is really important.

Beth Yohe: I think the other thing that you could add into that mix, to your question, Sam, of, like, how do you know when, when it's, you know, I engage or I don't, or I bring this thing up. It involves that self-awareness, but really to pay attention to what's my intention or motivation in engaging here, right? Is it, as Mina was saying to, to provide clarity and have conversation and continue to build the relationship? Or, is it to be right? Or, is it to, um, you know, something that maybe is a less productive intention? Is it to make someone else feel bad? Is it, um, to get even? You know, what, what's the intention or motivation behind the engagement? And for me, when I slow down and I'm thinking about, do I wanna bring this up, or I'm having a reaction and I'm gonna, you know, and I start to think about responding and I'll be like, okay, what am I trying to do here, right? Let me back up. Am I trying to understand where the other person was coming from? Am I trying to get clarity around our communication, or am I just like wanting to, you know, let that other person know I'm pissed and they should apologize, or whatever it is.

I think that can be really important. Um, getting more clear about our intention, um, before we engage around a conflict. And, that we're going to be more successful typically when we're open to understanding where someone else is coming from, as Mina was saying, versus our intention just being, you need to know what I think or what you did or, um, you know, those kinds of things. Um, obviously context matters as Mina was saying, and sometimes that might be the appropriate, or you might be okay with that intention. But I think a lot, a lot of times we engage in conflict without actually thinking through our intention, or we pretend to ourselves that, you know, we have a very neutral or like positive intention and really underneath it something else is going on.

Mina Bradley-Belcaid: Or, we think we know what somebody else's intention is, you know?

Beth Yohe: Absolutely.

Mina Bradley-Belcaid: We come in hot thinking like, oh, this person, you know, is just trying to, you know, this person is, is um, you know, screwing me over on purpose or whatever, and it's, like, we, we don't know.

Beth Yohe: Right. That's, yeah, what story do I have of, and at work, especially when I, when there's miscommunication or I find myself getting frustrated, like, why'd they do it that way? Or, I told, I said to do X or whatever. If, when I interrupt myself getting all righteous or excited and being, like, okay, well, was I clear? Can I start with where, where's my piece in this? And maybe, um, approach it then from a, not a conflict, kind of, tension point, but hey, I think we might have different understandings of this. Can we back up and make sure we're on the same page? That, that, that kind of approach certainly is more effective, and it allows space to recognize that. The conflict may be existing because of me and unstated expectations or unclear miscommunication versus whatever negative intention I put on someone else.

Alexis Miles: So, it sounds like just by slowing down a little bit and asking yourself a couple of questions can make a big difference.

Mina Bradley-Belcaid: Yeah.

Beth Yohe: For sure, for sure.

Mina Bradley-Belcaid: That's like a different version of creating space for yourself, right? You know, if you have, if you, if you can take a beat, in most of these situations, if you can take a beat, you'll come out better on the other side.

Alexis Miles: And not make assumptions about what the other person is thinking. Or, are thinking that you know why they did what they did.

Beth Yohe: We're really good about creating stories about other, like, about situations and other people and having a full story and then telling it to ourselves so much that then it becomes facts, right? Um, it's, it becomes, you get an email, and it's words on a screen, right? And, I decide Mina's mad at me because of the fact, you know, because the way I interpreted the email. And then it's all of these things. And then it's not like, I think Mina's mad at me. It is, Mina's mad at me and she lashed out via email. Like I've created the whole story. That becomes fact in my head, and the whole timing is, like, I have no feelings about that at all. I just was in a hurry and I sent an email. So...

Sam Fuqua: That connects to what I was gonna ask you about, with social media, because walking around in my regular life, I've had a pretty good day and not had that many negative interactions, but I hit social media, and it's just very negative. And, I guess that's partly the anonymity, partly the algorithms that feed the extremes, et cetera. But, is there anything you would add to the helpful advice you've just given when it comes to, uh, the virtual world?

Beth Yohe: I think that, um, all of these tools actually work even better in the virtual environment because nothing has to be immediate, right? Like, you always have time to take a beat if you choose to, right? Um, in person, sometimes it can feel like you, you don't have as much luxury, but when you're looking at your phone or behind a screen, you always have time to pause and think, okay, why am I riled up? Who, you know, does this remind me of something else? How is this, how is my response going to be helpful? Am I showing up the way that I want to, like, and, is this a good representation of myself? I mean, I know I've, I've typed it out, right? I have this response and I type it out, and then I take a minute and I'm like, hmm, is this really what I wanna do? And then I delete it. Delete it all, right? Is this, is this really the space? Um, so I think all of the advice works there. And then, I think Both/And is incredibly useful in social media because social media, as you mentioned, Sam, or alluded to, does not typically use Both/And at all. There's no nuance. There's no possibility of multiple things can be true at the same time. So, being able to use that lens on social media and think, okay, um, where is this person coming from? What piece, you know, can be true? Is there anything that I can understand about them? And, also have these other understandings for myself can be really important and useful. What am I missing? What are they missing? You know, even if you agree with something, checking yourself and checking the content and the source can be really important.

Mina Bradley-Belcaid: Yeah. I think too, like, so much on social media, right, because it's driven by engagement, you, it will, you know, the algorithm will respond to the thing that you give the most attention. And, oftentimes that's the most shocking inflammatory thing. And, so it's important too to consider like, what's the context of this thing? What is, what, what is this, what is this trying to, like, what reaction is this trying to elicit from me? Does that reaction actually belong to me? And, also, like, what is the additional context around why this is the message, right? Like, this person may have beliefs that if I were to meet them in very real life, I would not necessarily agree with, or I might not necessarily take this person's advice if, you know, we were to bump into each other at the store and strike a conversation. Um,

but you, that, that does speak to that anonymity piece where it's like you, you, you don't know. And, it's very difficult to build context for yourself around social media, in general.

Alexis Miles: I know that you have a restorative justice program, and I read that for people who go through the criminal justice system in this state, about 28 percent of them end up back in the criminal justice system. But that people who go through your restorative justice program, only 3.6 percent end up getting in trouble again. What is it that you do differently? What is it that you're teaching people are helping them to experience that makes this big world of difference in their outcomes?

Beth Yohe: Yeah, great question. Um, and that recidivism rate or re-offense rate is such an important piece. And, 28 percent that's with misdemeanors and perhaps, um, probation and things like that, if, if someone's incarcerated, it's even higher, the re-offense rate. And I think there's lots of reasons why, right? There's not just one. But one of the things that makes restorative justice successful in that way is that is rooted in empathy and gaining empathy for, and understanding the impact of our behavior, and having the opportunity to actually take actions that repair that specific incident. So, if you think about the traditional legal system, the way that we tell someone, "Hey, you did something wrong," is punitive and it's not really, it's pretty removed from the actual incident, right? Um, it's often removed from the victim and even what they might want. Um, and it's fines, jail time, imprisonment, probation, whatever. It's this punitive piece, but it's not connected to understanding the why behind. This is why what happened is problematic.

And, restorative justice is rooted in the why, and rooted in saying, let's understand the impact that you had. And the impact is multifold, right? Um, certainly if there's a victim, there's an impact on the victim. People usually can understand that even if they don't truly understand all the ways that someone was impacted. But other people are impacted too. Um, family members, including the family members of the, of what we would refer to as the person who caused harm. The defendant. They're impacted. The general community, right? This idea of, like, this happened, and out in the world, typically, how do other people feel? The neighbors, whoever, as well as the person who caused harm also had an impact, right? There's an impact when you, um, are arrested, or in jail, or see the, see what happens to your family, those kinds of things. All, we can hold all of that, that's the Both/And.

And I know for some people that feels really strange to be, like, you talk about the impact to the person who caused harm? Who cares about the impact to the person who caused harm? That's, that's the reframe, right? We can care about all of it, and still hold the harm to the victim as, sort of, center to that, and then the ripple effects. And we can try to repair harm in all of those ways, and that creates a healthier piece. We also rooted in community and the idea that you are a part of a community, and the community's gonna hold you responsible, but also hold you as a full human, and understand that you are many things, not just the incident that brought you to us. Um, and I think all of that care and all that attention and the opportunity to actually understand that one's impact and try to repair it, um, creates a very different experience, and people come out differently. And, wanting to, um, improve or be better or not, you know, whatever it is, however they frame it for themselves. And, I think that is one of the really important key pieces to restorative justice, and one of the reasons why our success rate is so high.

Alexis Miles: I am very curious and intrigued by the school, the program you do in schools. Social...

Mina Bradley-Belcaid: Norming?

Alexis Miles: Yeah. Social norming. Can you talk just a bit about that? And, as I understand it, you work with kids in schools to create posters?

Mina Bradley-Belcaid: Mm-hmm.

Alexis Miles: And that, that just having those posters out results in some change in the school culture?

Beth Yohe: It can. So, it's, kind of, a, it is an interesting approach. It's based on this idea of social norming, the idea that we take, um, essentially positive peer pressure and, um, it can help to create change in the school, but also, um, to better reflect for students positive behavior in what their peers are doing. So that, it comes out of, um, other risk behaviors, um, colleges, and things around risk behaviors like drinking or drug use, right? So, the idea is you survey the whole population of whoever it is, and ask them about their perceptions of their peers, and then also ask 'em about their own behavior. And then you look at the gaps. 'Cause typically, um, people assume that their peers are all doing X, right? Like, everybody does it. Um, but the data tells us, actually the individuals aren't all doing that, right? So, you take the positive number. It's a, it's a reframe again. Um, 'cause often we look at like, oh, this percentage do this "negative behavior." But instead we say, hey, 90 percent of your peers at X school know that it's important to have friends outside of your romantic relationship, right?

And so, we're, we're putting that positive piece out to folks, and it can re, readjust their sense of, like, oh, not everybody's like doing X or believes Y. And, that's, that's the key to it. So, we do the whole sur, whole school survey. It's all questions related to what we know are healthy relationship behaviors, right? So, we're asking about things like re, you know, expecting your boyfriend or girlfriend to have, you know, give you their password on their phone. Or, withholding things like rides to school if you're in a fight with them. Or, you know, other things that can apply to friendships as well. Consent, the whole, the whole array of things that we know are parts of healthy relationships. And then, um, we use that data and we look where there are gaps between perception and reality. And the students create these posters, these campaigns that reflect the positive information back to the school. And then, they're out usually for just about two weeks. That's what, like, the marketing research shows is after that it, sort of, you stop paying attention.

And then we ask them, what do you remember? They recall the information. And when we're at a school, um, year over year, we see the decrease in negative behaviors or at risky behaviors, but also a decrease in that perception gap. So, there's more sense of the positive culture of the school. So, it's really interesting, different approach, and it's been really successful in the schools that we've been at. And all of that, in addition to, we have a work group of students who learn even more skills and behaviors around healthy relationships, bystander behavior, how to talk to their friends about concerns, those kinds of things. So, it's a, kind of a whole school and, um, smaller group approach.

Alexis Miles: So, young folks get to see, oh, even though it seems like everybody's doing this bad or negative behavior, it's not true.

Beth Yohe: Right.

Alexis Miles: It just seems like it is, it's not actually true.

Beth Yohe: True. Right, right. It's actually, you know? Yeah. And, we all were kids, and, you know, I remember telling my parents, oh, everybody does that. Um, so yeah, it's, uh, it really, it falls under that piece, right, of reframing. How do we think about things differently and approach it differently and understand our world in a, in a more nuanced way?

Sam Fuqua: Well, Beth Yohe and Mina Bradley-Belcaid, a great and very helpful conversation. Thank you for your time and, and thank you for your work and big thanks to The Conflict Center for being our partner in this podcast for the past, uh, five years. We appreciate you and we appreciate that very much.

Beth Yohe: Well, thank you for having us. It's certainly a pleasure being a part of this. And, just a reminder that we have a lot of resources available on our website. And this year's theme is Both/And, and many of the tools and resources and a workshop that Mina has created are all available on the website, so you can check it out.

Sam Fuqua: Beth Yohe and Mina Bradley-Belcaid are with The Conflict Center, a Denver-based nonprofit that provides training to youth and adults for managing everyday conflicts.

Thanks for listening to Well, That Went Sideways! We produce new episodes twice a month. You can find them wherever you get your podcasts, And on our website, sidewayspod.org. Our site has information on our guests, interview transcripts, and links to more conflict resolution resources. And, we encourage you to sign up for our newsletter. That's at sidewayspod.org. Our production team is Mary Zinn, Jes Rau, Norma Johnson, Alexis Miles, Alia Thobani, and me, Sam Fuqua. Our theme music is by Mike Stewart. We produce these programs in Colorado on the traditional lands of the Arapahoe, Cheyenne, and Ute Nations. To learn more about the importance of land acknowledgement, visit our website sidewayspod.org. And this podcast is a partnership with The Conflict Center, a Denver-based nonprofit that provides practical skills and training for addressing everyday conflicts. Find out more at conflictcenter.org.