



Restorative Gloucestershire

Bringing people together to put things right

How Restorative Justice worked for Leonard and Alice

Alice:

I became aware of the burglary when I returned home from work one afternoon.

As I unlocked the front door I noticed some empty bags on the hall floor and the under stairs cupboard door was open. The backdoor was open and the lounge window had been forced open. Both upstairs and downstairs had been searched with discarded items and drawers open. My grandmother's ring had been stolen from its box along with my husband's iPhone. The most upsetting thing was the theft of a large, heavy metal box inlaid with mother of pearl. It didn't contain anything of value but was full of sentimental and irreplaceable items.

This was the item I most wanted back.

My husband was also away on the day of the crime and that added to my distress.

My husband and I were somewhat frustrated that our attempt to attend court was thwarted by Leonard's illness and we were both happy to meet with him to talk about what happened. Therefore when we were approached by a Restorative Justice volunteer we were keen to proceed.

We chatted about the format of the conference with a volunteer and they left their contact details so that a suitable date can be arranged for the conference. I write about children's books and I have also visited the prison library to donate books. I also wanted to give books to Leonard's 3 yr old daughter as part of the repair process.

My husband and I asked several probing questions and also explained how much the burglary had distressed us both; this really hit a chord with Leonard. He apologised sincerely several times and said that he would never carry out a burglary again. He aimed to improve his life for himself and for his three year old daughter.

During the process I felt well-informed and overall the process exceeded my initial expectations. Overall I had positive experience of restorative justice and would recommend it to others.

Leonard:

I spoke to a Restorative Justice facilitator in HMP Gloucester who explained all about the restorative process. After discussing the crime with the facilitator I realised just how many had been affected by my actions; the victims and their family and myself and my family. I thought the householder would feel violated, scared and assume that I might go back. Even though it was hard, I decided that I wanted to participate in a Restorative Justice conference.

I would say I didn't mean to hurt them, cause harm or fear. I would like a chance to try and explain. I could go a little way towards it, but can't repair the harm. At the beginning of the conference I became quite defensive and wanted to know whether these questions were from the facilitator or from the victims. The facilitator assured me that this was the process that we had to go through and had to talk about what had happened.

After this initial tension, I started to open up and explain the day of the burglary. I had recently split up with my girlfriend and had been sleeping rough. I was very unwell with various medical conditions and on morphine and anti-depressants.



Restorative Gloucestershire

Bringing people together to put things right

How Restorative Justice worked for Leonard and Alice

I randomly selected the house, knocked and discovered that no-body was in. I got in through the side gate, using a screwdriver I found in the garden – I didn't go equipped to break into a house.

The victim asked what I had done with a metal inlaid box containing some personal family objects and where I had disposed of the box. Alice gave her thoughts and feelings upon coming across the burglary. Hearing those thoughts and feelings was very hard; I felt genuinely remorseful and I apologised to the victims for what I had done. I didn't mean to hurt them. Emotions were raw as I explained how my chequered background revolved around being brought up in a life of crime.

The victims were very understanding and we agreed that I needed to turn my life around for the sake of my family; especially my young daughter. We even had tea and coffee after the conference and discussed hobbies and interests!

If you would like to know more about us or are interested in volunteering as a restorative justice facilitator, then please contact Restorative Gloucestershire:

Email:
contactus@restorativegloucestershire.co.uk
Telephone:
01452 754542 (answer phone)

You can also visit our website:
www.restorativegloucestershire.co.uk
Or follow us on Twitter:
<https://twitter.com/RJGlos> or @RJGlos

