



Response-Based Practice - Building Resilience and Restoring Dignity

Pages 277-279 of the [PEACE Program Toolkit](#) outline the use of a response-based approach when working with people who have experienced violence as a strategy PEACE Program counsellors can use to draw attention to the ways program participants “have resisted (overtly or covertly) the violence and other forms of oppression in their lives.” (p.277)

Through the act of [listening to and witnessing](#) these stories, PEACE Program counsellors can begin building resilience and restoring a mother’s dignity through an acknowledgement of the courage and strength required to share these stories. Building on this, PEACE Program counsellors can begin to ask questions using a response-based approach to continue to orient mothers towards the resilience and dignity she has shown and continues to show. This section outlines specific response-based practice techniques for supporting mothers on their journey to feel agency, resilience, and dignity in their lives.

Guidelines for working with mothers from a response-based approach:

- **Ask Response-Based Questions:** As noted on page 279 in the [PEACE Program Toolkit](#), framing our questions as response-based questions can result in a positive change in PEACE practice - as illustrated in the following table:

Effects-based Questions	Response-based Questions
Passive	Active, responding
Incapable	Competent
Failed	Did what they could
Went along with it	Opposed it
Re-enacts violence	Re-enacts resistance
Pathological	Natural responses
I am the problem	Violence is the problem
Inner problem	Social problem



- **Self-Analysis:** PEACE Program counsellors must be willing to examine their ideas and practice¹. As a self-reflection practice, PEACE Program counsellors can pay attention to noticing the ways our bodies and thoughts respond to certain stories and experiences. Through this awareness, we can begin the process of understanding our own biases and limiting the ways they may influence our capacity to listen and be fully present with mothers in the PEACE Program.
- **Notice a mother’s resistance to violence.** It has been shown that victims of violence often underrepresent their resistance to violence². PEACE Program counsellors can do this by acknowledging the ways a mother responded to keep her children safe. This is an opportunity to reframe for mothers the ways she parented fiercely during a crisis by pushing back against the violence and minimizing its impacts on her children. Through speaking about a mother’s resistance to violence, we can begin to help her see her own resilience and strength amidst the violence and abuse.
- **Allow mothers to decide what they want to talk about and when they are comfortable talking.** Spending time with mothers allows otherwise challenging conversations to happen naturally. The amount of time this will take with each mother varies. PEACE Program counsellors are supported to take the time needed and to trust that there is no rush to get mothers to talk about their experiences. Some ideas of ways PEACE Programs can invite mothers to share time is through a walk, cooking and eating meals together, colouring, sharing a cup of tea and inviting her to share in a craft with her children.
- **Consider doing sessions with mother and child together.** From the perspective of a response-based practice, inviting mothers to share in PEACE Program sessions with her children can allow for collaborative storytelling³. In addition, this can encourage a feeling of connection between a mother and her child. This simple gesture of keeping mothers and children/youth together for some sessions can help communicate to mothers that PEACE Program counsellors respect, trust and honour this relationship.

¹ Carrier, R & Bonnah, S (2015) A Matter of Justice: Response-Based Practice. (Webinar)

² Richardson Kinewesquao, C & Fast, E (2019) Life Matters: Acknowledging Victim Resistance and The Power of Social Responses. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies*. 10(1) 1-2.

³ Carrier, R & Bonnah, S (2015) A Matter of Justice: Response-Based Practice. (Webinar)



Further Resources

1. BCSTH (2021) *A Holistic View: Including caregivers in our support to Caregivers in the PEACE Program*. [Webinar]. Available in the BCSTH [webinar library](#) as part of the Deepening Our Practice Training Series.
2. Carrier, R. & Bonnah, S. (2015) *A Matter of Justice: Response-Based Practice*. [Webinar]. Slides available [here](#).
3. Reynolds, V (2015) *Vikki Reynolds on Dignity*. Center for Response Based Practice [VanBC]. [Video].
4. Reynolds, V (2018) *Resisting Burnout with Justice-Doing Part 4: Sustainability and Transformation*. AMSSA. [Video].
5. Todd, N. & Wade, A. (2004) *Coming to terms with violence and resistance: From a language of effects to a language of responses*. In T. Strong & D. Pare (Eds.), *Furthering talk: Advances in the discursive therapies*. New York, NY: Kluwer Academic/Plenum.
6. Wade, A. (2002) *From a language of effects to responses: Honouring our clients' resistance to violence and oppression*. New Therapist.
7. Wade, A. (1997) Small acts of living: Everyday resistance to violence and other forms of oppression. *Contemporary Family Therapy*, 19(1), 23-39. Available from: <https://www.responsebasedpractice.com/publications/>
8. Wade, A. (2008) *Honouring Resistance*. Johanna Trimble. [Video].
9. Wade, A (2018) *Video 08 Voices of Resistance – July 2018 | Creating Conversations Event*. Insight Exchange. [Video].

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