

Emotional harm and its transformation to healing

A workshop with Margaret Thorsborne
Wellington

2017

Workshop outcomes

Participants will:

- Understand the nature of emotional harm and the behaviours that result from that harm
- Understand how it is that restorative/CR approaches are more likely to help both those responsible and those harmed

Relational harm

At your tables and in 2 or 3's, discuss a case of conflict/crime you know and draw a sociogram of the web of relationships within the case

Who is in the story?

Indicate where the greatest damage has been done to these people and their relationships

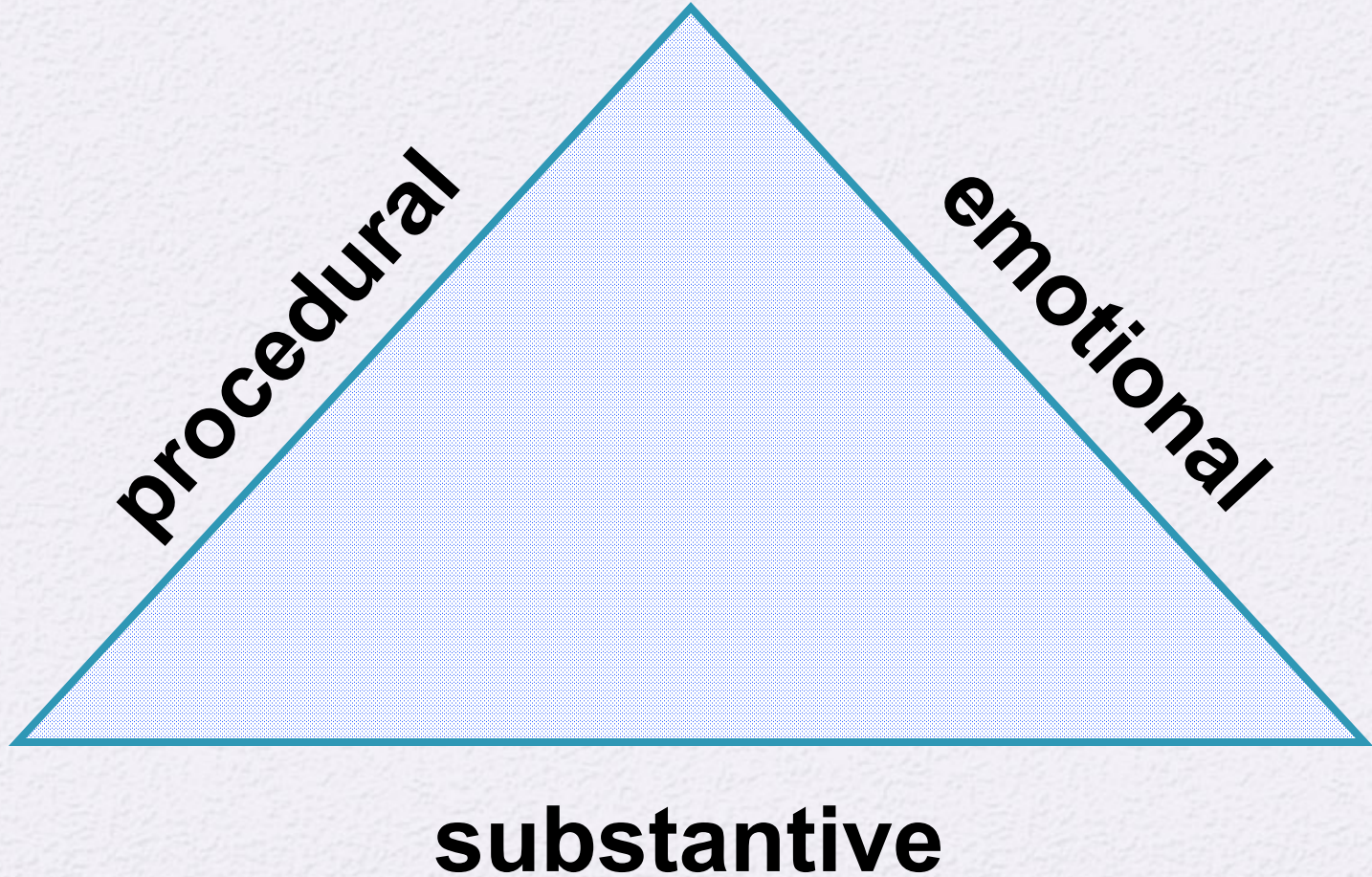
What do those harmed need?

- *To tell their story and explain what it has been like*
- *To be understood*
- To understand why it happened
- To be validated and have harm acknowledged
- To know the person responsible is genuine around apology
- To be relieved of the burden of their shame
- To be reconnected with their community of care
- To be able to heal and let go (forgiveness?)

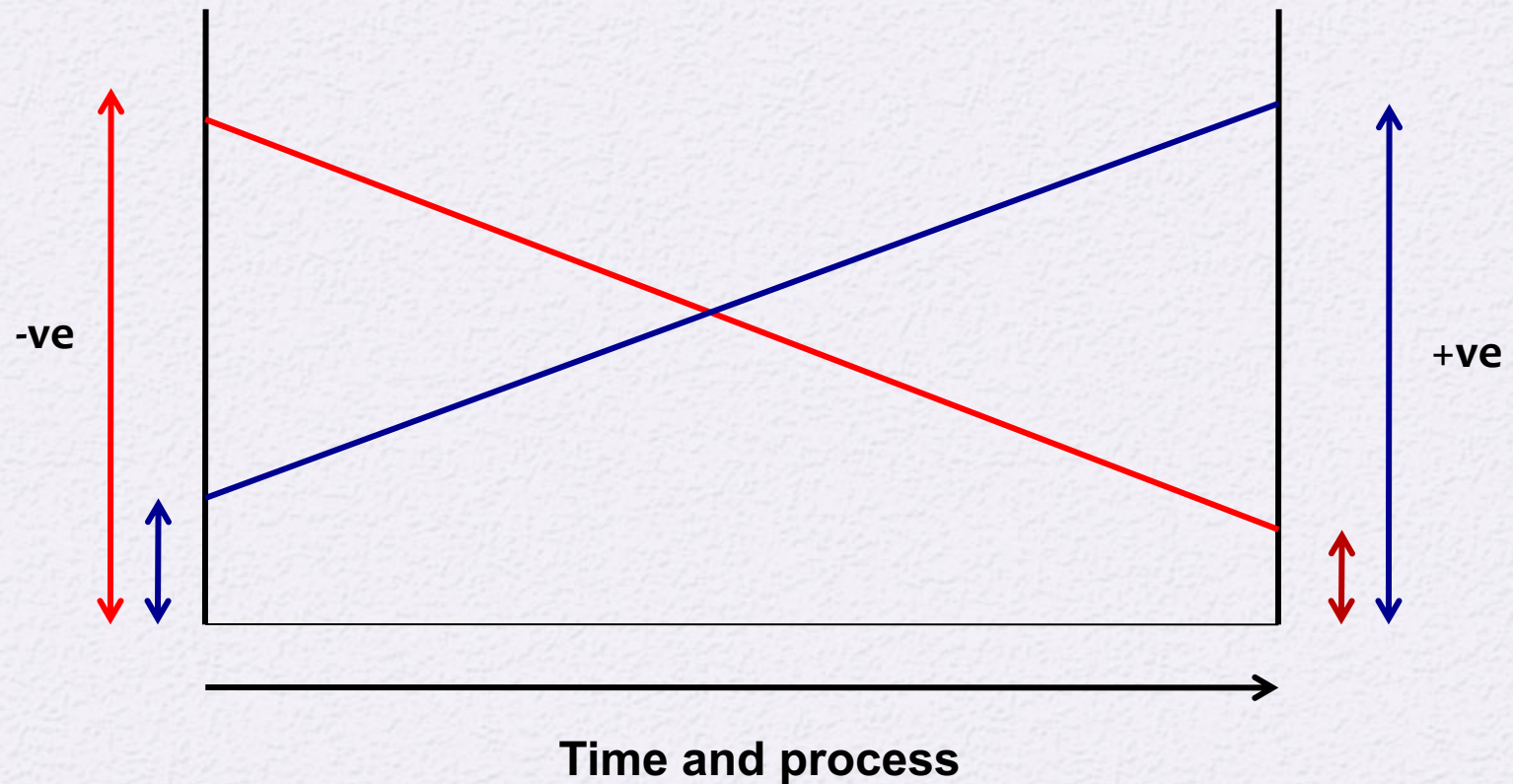
What do those responsible need?

- *A chance to be able to explain themselves*
- *To be understood*
- To be treated with respect
- To be reconnected with their community of care
- To be relieved of their burden of shame
- To be able to participate in deciding what to do
- To have their harms addressed
- To be able to heal and let go (redemption)

Satisfaction



Transformation of emotion



Fraught/toxic relationships

Chronic distress

Chronic shame

Chronic fear

Chronic anger

Chronic disgust

The effect of Harm

- When harm causes shame (as it almost always does), it usually creates further harm. Shame is triggered by any impediment to positive affect *BUT* once triggered it also acts as a further impediment.
- The extreme end product of this process is **TOXIC SHAME** that completely isolates people from self, friends, family, and community.
- Traditional methods of punishment for misdeeds and crimes (especially prisons) increase shame in both perpetrator and victim alike making toxic shame outcomes more likely.

Kelly, 2014

Partial list of shame-based emotions

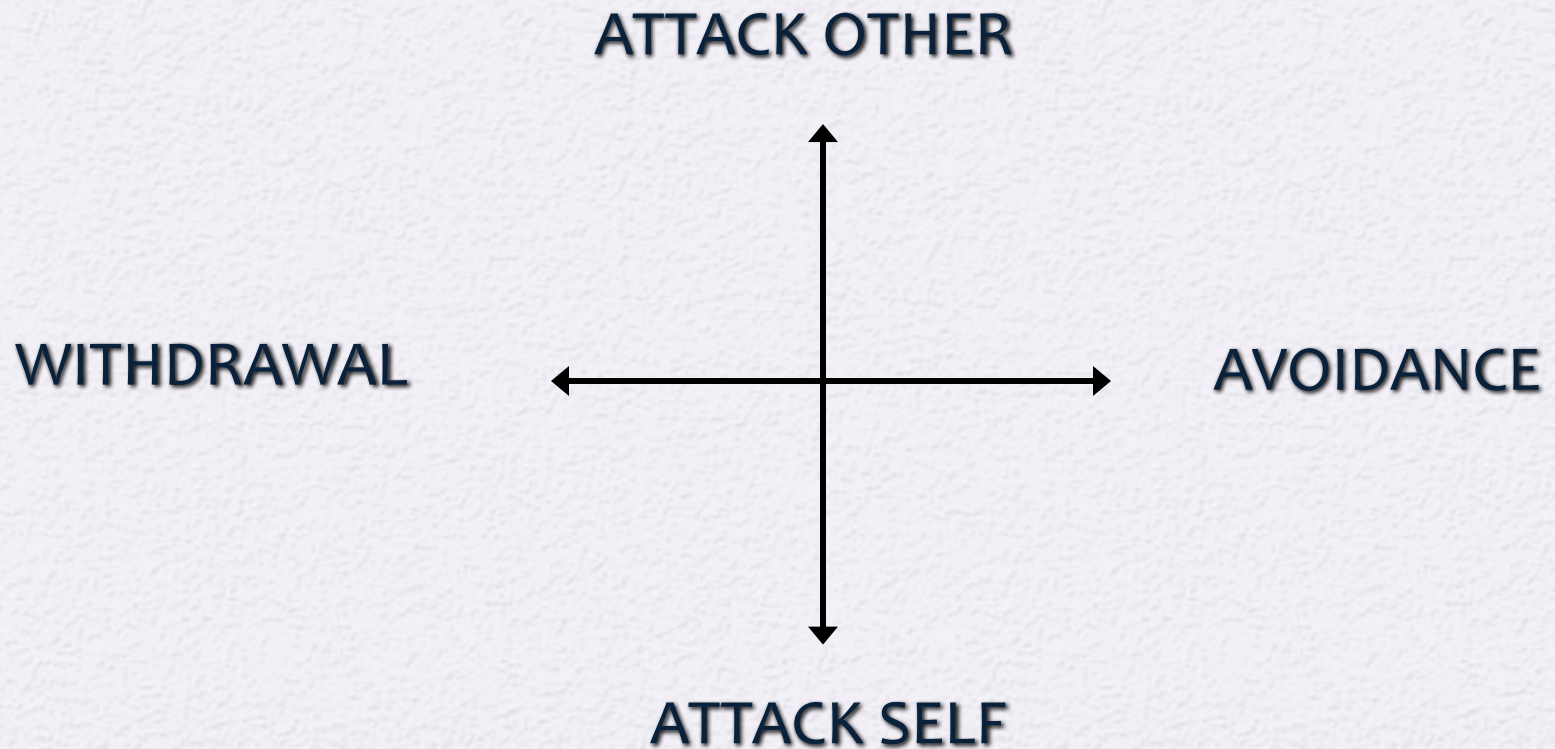
- **Ashamed** of the self
- **Hurt** feelings
- Feeling **Abandoned** or **Rejected**
- Feeling **Distant** from others
- Feelings of **Loneliness**
- **Shyness**
- Feeling **Exposed**
- **Frustration**
- Feeling **Disappointed**.
- Having a sense of **Helplessness** or **Despair**.
- Feeling **Discriminated** against and **Disrespected**.
- Feeling **Weak, Incompetent** and like a **Loser**.
- Feeling **Guilty** about something I did that made me look lesser in the eyes of others and myself.

Kelly, 2014

Defensive Responses to Shame

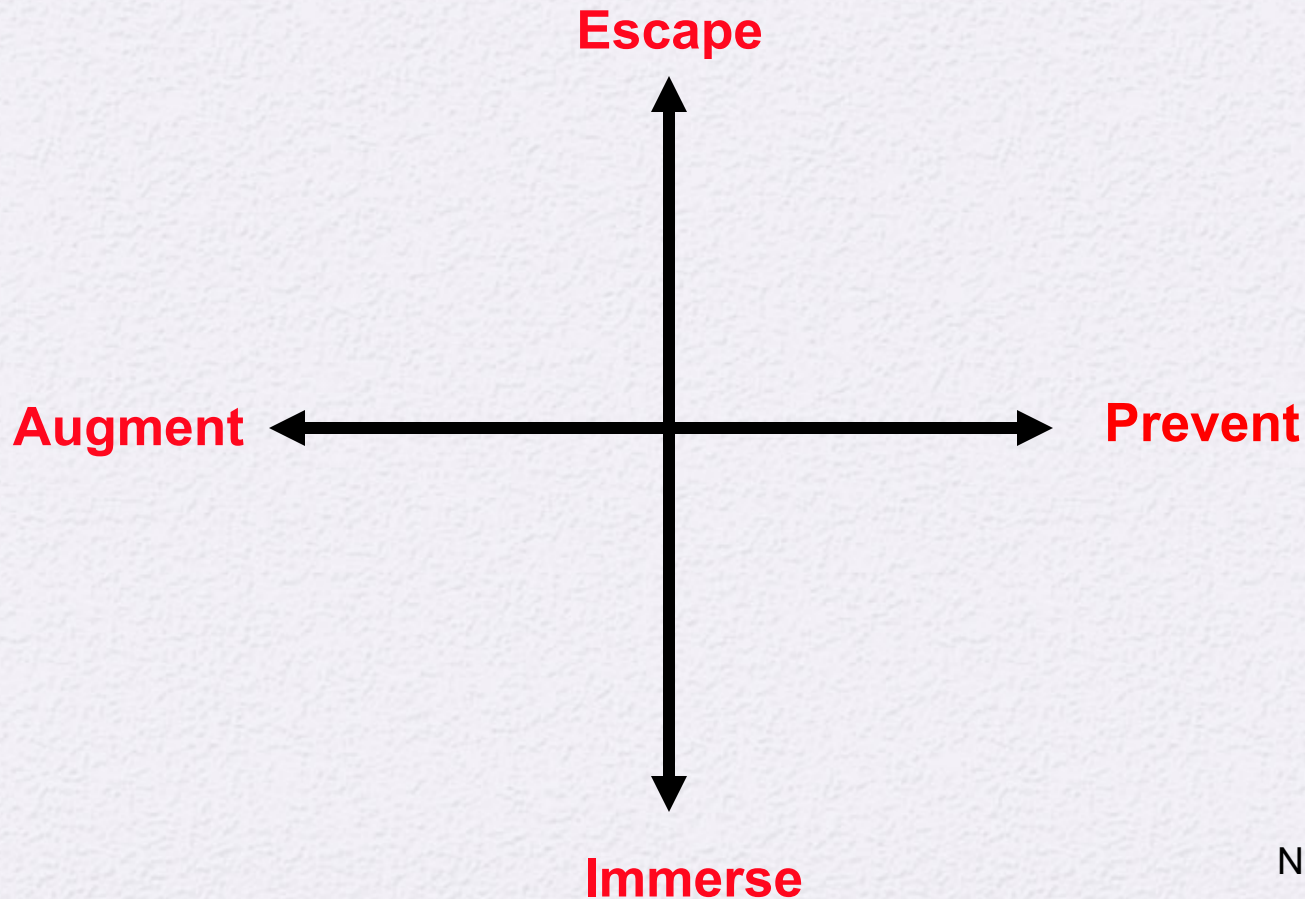
**How do people respond when shame
is triggered and the information
shame provides cannot be used to
constructively remove the
impediment ?**

Defending against shame



Nathanson, 1992

Defending against backed-up distress



Nathanson, 2000

Distress

- The affect triggered when something goes wrong and **stays wrong**
- If disavowed, distress will back up, eventually impacting on long term health outcomes

How can restorative/CR processes help?

Central blueprint rules:

1. Coming together to tell the stories about the incident(s) (mutualising the expression of affect)
2. Listening carefully (with increasing understanding and acknowledgement) to the harm (ie metabolising -ve affect)
3. Making plans for the future and reconnecting of relationships (maximising +ve affect)

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