



Alternative opportunities for transformation and moving forward when justice, demands, or accountability are denied, or a formal process is not possible

Often when we experience harm, those responsible are not willing to take accountability or make amends. Or, our communities and institutions can't provide the justice, closure, or healing we're seeking. Struggling to try to receive justice while in pain and trauma can grow increasingly painful as our needs and dignity are denied. We may reach a point where that struggle stands in the way of our wellbeing. Healing, justice, accountability, or transformation can still be sought through different means, in ways that are healthier for us over the long-term.

Support Pod

When we've experienced harm, we may need more than the usual level of social support. Conflict practitioners typically recommend gathering a support pod that will gather once a month for 6 – 12 months to talk about how things are going, organize for any support needed, and just be there to help move forward in the absence of support from the other parties. A support pod/group/team may also be helpful in debriefing new events that arise, strategizing any obstacles that may come up, and acting as intermediaries between those who harmed us.

- We may form a pod through BATJC's pod-mapping worksheet, to identify support people with specific skills and resources they have to offer (<https://batjc.wordpress.com/pods-and-pod-mapping-worksheet/>). For example, we may want:
 - Someone who is organized and reliable and makes sure we meet regularly and follow through on commitments
 - Someone who likes to cook, grocery shop, or do other things we may need help with
 - Someone who is social and can help us integrate into new or old social circles
 - Someone who is comfortable taking us to doctors appointments, watching our children or animals, or is well connected to people who can do those things
- Creating a list of what is needed from this group can be helpful to clarify boundaries and expectations—for example, what specifically do we (the person harmed) need and want, what does that look like to us, when do we need/want those things, and from whom.
- Setting a schedule of meetings far in advance can help with follow-through; this schedule should be organized and held by a member of the support team, not the supported person—therefore that keeper should be someone with great organizational skills and a reliable character.



Material Support

The harm we experienced may have had material, social, physical, and emotional costs—either directly (loss of housing, jobs, caregivers) or indirectly (because we were responding to the conflict we were unable to keep up with regular obligations or necessities). Community fundraising for immediate material relief can restore lost resources spent on repairing harm done to oneself: housing costs, medical costs, mental health costs, etc. This is not “charity”—material support is about mutual aid and communal responsibility.

- We may struggle with feelings of guilt that we are “taking” resources from others who need those resources “more.” While this is normal, it’s important to ask for the help we need.
- A support person can generate a public or private pool for raising funds that can be anonymous or disclose only the details we would want—we (the harmed person) should dictate all of those details but not be responsible for implementing them
- Funds would be transferred to the person being supported without question or red tape, there should be no required exchanges (such as, “You can have the funds if you go to therapy”). These ultimatums reproduce coercive control common in abusive relationships and oppressive societies and undermine our self-determination.

Narrative Closure

In the absence of receiving validation or acknowledgement from the people/institutions who caused harm, developing and sharing a narrative of what happened from start to present, can help gain a sense of containment and closure. This can happen in writing or verbally, to be shared with close friends and community via secure text, video call, or phone call—this differs from a “call out,” as its primary purpose is to provide catharsis with a close and specific group of community members (and the narrative is not made public). Further benefits are to help grow an understanding of the relational dynamics that led to harm, so that our communities are more equipped to intervene in the future.

- Acknowledgement of harm may not come from those who did the harm, but it can come from community around us—this is not “gossip” or “talking behind others’ backs”—it is the relational support necessary to recover from pain, hurt, or trauma
- Generating a clear narrative of what happened can subvert gaslighting, denial, and refusal from the parties who did harm by internally and externally validating the truth of what happened from our experience
- A narrative can also help us to untangle any internalized blame, shame, or self-doubt
- A narrative can also meet the desire to prevent harm from happening in the future, by sharing the narrative with trusted people who have a stake in our shared communities, with a desire to make them better rather than tear them apart. By sharing our story with



these trusted people, more members of our community are on alert for the signs and signals that harm is happening and enables them to act with awareness in order to prevent or address it

- Clear boundaries should be made about where the details and broad strokes of this narrative are shared—is the story confidential and not to be shared outside the initial circle? Can the gist of the story be shared anonymously in order to advance education? With whom can it be shared and with what intentions?
- Parties should be warned that text shared virtually—via e-mail, text, or docs stored in the cloud—are vulnerable to being shared even if the technology is “secure,” and once a document is shared beyond the circle it may “go viral” or otherwise draw negative or harmful attention to anyone who wrote or spoke the document or anyone named within it.
- We may also find it helpful to project our store into the future, envisioning either an alternative timeline where we received the justice we desire, or a future within our own timeline where we have moved forward and achieve other goals

Educational Prevention

We may have a strong need to prevent the harm that happened to us from happening to someone else. American culture suggests that the way to do this is to punish or control the person who did the harm to us; yet, this is a very individualistic view of harm. The harm that happened to us happens outside our own situation and when the individual or institution who harmed us is unwilling to change, we may be able to prevent harm in a broader sense. Creating stories, art, zines, and/or other public service materials can help educate others about the harms that happened and how to prevent them from happening again.

- We may be able to share unique perspectives about the harm done to us by sharing:
 - Explanations of why the behavior/action/policy is harmful and the impacts they may have
 - Warning signs that the harm is happening
 - Ways that community members and friends can intervene
 - Resources for receiving help and support
 - Resources for better understanding the source or prevalence of the harm
- Education can be created within a support group, on one’s own, or with others who have experienced similar harms. These pieces of education can be circulated anonymously or with credit—whatever the creators feel comfortable with.
- This education can address the root causes of the harm (sources of systemic and structural oppression) that persist beyond individual event(s)



Transformative Prevention

In some cases, we have the power and access to the community where our harm happened to make changes that will prevent harm from happening to someone else in the same place/community it happened to us. Other times, the harm has removed us from that community and engaging with them is too painful or risky. If the former, we can use our access to advocate for changes to policies, procedures, and social relations that will have a direct impact on our own friends and families. If the latter, we can achieve just as much harm prevention by engaging communities similar to the ones in which our harm took place. Even if these are not the communities where we were hurt, chances are that similar harms are happening in similar settings for similar reasons. Finding and transforming policies and structures that caused us harm, can prevent harm from happening again without having to rely on the people who did harm to us specifically.

- Advocates/activists/organizers can approach communities with the knowledge of their experience and send up a warning of the harms that may be happening or may happen in the future, providing resources and ideas for transforming the structures that may deepen harm.
- Organizing is most effective when multiple parties who have experienced similar harms, combine their experiences to create comprehensive strategies for transformation that don't address one specific instance but the underlying causes of the conflict or harm
- Interpersonal transformations are those that identify specific behaviors, responses, and beliefs that produce harmful interactions and provide opportunities for unlearning old habits and learning new ways of being that produce healthier relationships.
- Structural transformations are those that find the root cause of those behaviors (oppression, inequality, injustice, discrimination, neglect) and create alternative ways of organizing institutions, communities, and societies that produce healthier communities.