



Restorative Rhetoric

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What is Restorative Rhetoric?

Restorative Rhetoric is a form of crisis response that attempts to help those affected by a crisis cope physically and emotionally with the situation at hand. Furthermore, Restorative Rhetoric helps to establish conversations between the public and the leaders in a crisis in order for people to make sense of what is occurring around them. It is not concerned with saving face, making excuses, or pretending that the crisis did not occur.



The Five Features of Restorative Rhetoric

Overall, there are five features of Restorative Rhetoric:

1. The *Initial Reaction* defines the situation and the level of control over the damages done, as well as including genuine expressions of sorrow for the situation at hand.
2. The *Assessment of the Crisis* assesses the damage that has been done and states what resources are immediately needed to help manage the situation.
3. The *Issues of Blame* involves addressing the cause of the situation and attempts to make those responsible be held accountable for their actions in some sort of way.



The Five Features of Restorative Rhetoric (Cont...)

4. The process of *Healing and Forgiveness* involves guiding resolution to a point where people can reach absolution and heal from the circumstances at play. There is also a necessity to addressing local issues that are also impacting the victims of the situation within this feature of Restorative Rhetoric.

5. *Corrective Action and Rebuilding through Rhetorical Vision*, otherwise nicknamed as *Rebuilding*, involves making a plan to rebuild what was lost and to help make that plan become a reality.



When is using Restorative Rhetoric Useful/Appropriate?

Restorative Rhetoric is most useful and appropriate during times of crises when:

- The leader at hand does not patronize the citizens.
- The leader is honest with the citizens.
- The leader helps everyone to make sense of the situation that is occurring.
- A sense of hope is created for the citizens that tells them that they can get through whatever they are going through.
- The larger audience of victims are being addressed in all response dialogues.
- The leader is able to relate to the concerns and needs of the public.



A Great Example of Restorative Rhetoric

Rudolph Giuliani after the 9/11 Attacks:

- Giuliani gave a calming and reassuring *Initial Statement* by recommending people leave or stay, depending on their current location, and mentioned how there were many people who were on their way to help those in trouble.
- In his *Assessment of the Crisis*, Giuliani mentioned the death toll was more than what everyone would be able to bear, and *Issued Blame* referring to the terrorists who did this as “cowards”.



A Great Example of Restorative Rhetoric (Cont...)

- In interviews held with Giuliani after the tragic event, he spoke of *Healing and Forgiveness* and *Corrective Action* by mentioning how the people watching had every right to be afraid, but were able to live through this tragedy.
- Giuliani would go on his use of *Rebuilding* by continuing throughout the rest of his term to encourage people to unite together and rebuild their beloved city. He would then spend weeks with his use of *Healing and Forgiveness* by attending the funerals for those unfortunate souls who had died on 9/11.