

Contemporaneous record of a Restorative Justice meeting



Location: Prison in the Midlands

Date: June 2013, commencing at 10am

Present:

Larry	- Victim of crime
John	- Offender
Amina	- Offender Manager
Jasmine	- Facilitator
Edith	- Observer

John burgled Larry's home and stole his car key, phone and rugby season ticket. The harmed person and the facilitator are sitting in circle and the offender is brought in by the offender manager, who remains in the room.

Jasmine the facilitator conducts brief introductions and explains that the meeting pertains to a burglary that took place at xxxx during on xxxx on Larry's property. She reminds those present that the discussion must focus on what happened and not be about the character of the offender or the victim. She says that everyone in the room must respect confidentiality and respect others when they are speaking. She then asks John to explain what happened on xxxx when he burgled Larry's home

John: What happened – I tried this door, it was open. Obviously took your phone and took the car.

Jasmine: Talk us through what happened.

John: About three in the morning. Obviously, I was drunk as well. I don't know what I was thinking...Tried the door.

Jasmine: What thoughts did you have?

John: Previous months and weeks, everything went wrong. I didn't have a care in the world.

Jasmine: What happened next?

John: Went round doing what I could.

Jasmine: Was it the only one that night?

John: Only one that night. Not sure. Yeah, think so.

Jasmine: After burglary, what happened next?

John: Drove down to B- Street. Left it there. Near enough 6am.

Jasmine: What have your thoughts been since?

John: First obvious one is that I should not have done it. I wasn't thinking like that at the time. The total opposite. I did not care.

Jasmine: Did you think about who'd been affected?

John: No.

Larry: I will put the scenario. I am from Bristol. Moved up with job from Bristol to Gloucester. With a lady. We moved in to the house 5 C- Road. After two years, the relationship broke down. She left. I am 30 miles away from family and friends. Emotionally I was alone.

I think I'm quite good at security. I set my alarm for 5am – I have a radio clock by my bed but I use my phone to wake me up – this is important you will see why in a minute. But when I woke up at 5.30am, I thought, 'What the....?' And reached for my phone. No phone, I found the lead, but no phone on lead. I look like this (*looks around him*) and the bedroom door is wide open. Go onto landing and all doors are open. Rush downstairs and everything is still in place – TV and Hifi. I look across and usually see the car at the top of the drive. I was looking for a broken window or door. I go outside and the car's gone.

I could have done without that. My partner left me and keeping down a fulltime job. 5.30am. I'll ring the police, cannot because of mobile; jump in

car? Don't because no car. Don't go banging on neighbours' doors. I'm not that kind of person.

I put on a coat. One mile up to M- Lane and then 1 mile up another road – no payphone. I went home and sat until I heard a neighbour come out and they called on their mobile.

I felt totally devastated by what happened that morning. When the Police arrived, they had picked up where the car was – but it was locked. Apparently this is not unusual because sometimes they do that. The car was taken to the pound. I had to pay for new locks and release fee.

Why did you pick my house?

John: I ran over the grass on the other side.

Larry: Were you on your own?

John: Yes.

Larry: Definitely?

John: Yeah.

Larry: It's done. Can't be undone.

John: I tried handle and it was open. As I went in your back door was locked but the front door was open. Wearing gloves – just tried it.

Hadn't come out of jail long. My girlfriend had a baby while I was in jail and it was good and then broke down after a month or two. I couldn't see my son. I done what I could to try and that was my attitude – I just give up. No money.

Larry: Was that what it was for?

John: Year money. I wasn't thinking about people's feelings at the time.

Larry: Did you try anywhere else?

John: Yeah, I did.

Jasmine (*addressed to Larry*): Explain why you moved and events leading up to the move.

Larry: Because I could not understand why my house had been burgled. I put control alarms on the doors and an ottoman across the bedroom door. I wasn't anxious but I couldn't sleep. I lived like that for a month. I want to ask you, when you came into my bedroom, if I came across someone within six inches of my head, my phone and rugby season ticket.

John: I just didn't care if I got caught. This is not something I've got previous for.

Larry: This is something I can't understand.

John: In some cases I wasn't immune to what I was doing.

Larry: I know you have a little one. Sometimes I have my granddaughter staying. Can you imagine if she had woken up and seen you? It would have freaked her out. You've explained you'd been drinking and did not care. You've been brave enough to do it.

What happened to the phone and rugby ticket? I had people looking out for it on the turnstiles.

John: Gave the phone away. Season ticket was no use to me.

Jasmine: A prompt – is there anything else you want to ask?

Larry: Why did you not take anything else?

John: Not being rude – enough to get a car. A buzz. I'm twenty-three. Been in jail most of my life. Only had 3-4 cars. A buzz.

I've been in and not taken Christmas presents. I knew not to take them. TV is worth money. I didn't even bother to take it.

Larry: Usually people pack up the car and drive off. You seemed to take so little but left a wake of destruction.

Jasmine: What has been the hardest part for you?

Larry: I couldn't stay there, dragging the ottoman across, wondering if someone is going to come down through the ceiling. I've got a room in a shared house. It is a weakness on my part. Anxiety. Bars by my bed. John says

my front door was not open. I have no reason to disbelieve you. Nothing was broken so you must be telling the truth.

John: I was wearing gloves. PVC doors only have one handle, so if unlocked, easy.

Larry: Ironically, I am a Prison Custody Officer at Cheltenham. I got a message that you were admitted under the TiC programme, that you burgled my house and that you have a wee one.

John: My girlfriend and baby live in Stroud.

Larry: Personal matter – your dad died.

John: Yeah, while I was in jail.

Larry: I thought it would be enough to know your name but needed to come and see.

John: I came back on a recall, gave me another 2 years 9 months. Out for September next year.

Larry: Has your outlook changed?

John: I have not been brought up by my parents. I have not had the greatest upbringing. But I chose this life.

Larry: I hear a lot of stories especially about upbringing but that don't excuse it.

John: Obviously I didn't want to do it. I was on run from November 15th and they caught me on December 30th.

Jasmine: Anything else?

John: I am glad I done this. I understand more about you. I am sorry.

Larry: You were brave. I don't like to say it. Could have been a 6 foot 18 stone man.

John: I didn't go in them other rooms.

Larry: You just left them open.

John: I am sorry about it.

Jasmine: Anything that would make things better?

Larry: Time to move on. Relationship finished and moved out. I would like John to think even if he thinks about what he's doing before he's done it.

John: I don't want an excuse just because I was drunk. But....

Jasmine: Do you think there is anything you can do to change things?

John: I can try and change. Think before I act. I've done a TSB Course – Thinking skills programme. Helped me for a while and then went back to same as before.

Larry: Are you a third striker?

John: No.

Larry: You are building up to it!

John: I took someone else car and got in a police chase. I got two years for burglary and chase. You've been at it by the TiCs.

I am lucky just to get that. That was one of the judges I did not want.

Jasmine: Do you see the choices you've made?

John: One thing was the granddaughter that's got me. I know how I would be if it was my son.

Larry: Lots of people have said, 'I would have hit them with a stick.' But they don't know! To be there at 3am and waking....

It was about a week before the car locks were changed. This company called Yates – insurance company forensics said the locks intact. Back seat ripped off and parcel shelf taken off. I think they might have done it themselves as an insurance write off. So the car had to go.

John: I did put a bike in the back and then took it out – did not damage the car.

Larry: Why did you get the bike?

John: Got the car to get the bike.

Larry: I was anticipating that I would see you in the cells. But TiC used a video link.

Jasmine: We are at the stage where we look at outcomes. From our discussions, you wanted answers, have you got them? (*looking at Larry*)

Larry: Yes I have. No windows or doors locked.

John: You should have the right to have your door open. People said, 'why are you doing this?' To be fair, I thought it would help me.

Larry: Please don't expect me to say thank you before I met you. I am grateful – too strong – that you've met me and answered my questions.

John: Just want to say I am very sorry for what I've done. Obviously up to you.

Larry: I think you've got some genuineness from body language that you've meant it.

Jasmine: I am going to write up an outcome agreement that you've said sorry. That you have accepted the apology.

Do you both feel you've had a chance to say what you feel?

Larry: I have got answers.

Jasmine: On your own?

Larry: (*addressed to John*) You are a follower not a leader. Were you on your own?

John: Some of the other situations, the older person gets the blame. I am not a sheep. I done it. I was on my own.

Jasmine: I am going to make a cup of tea and biscuits. Write this up.

The meeting takes a break at 11am. Tea and biscuits are served and Jasmine writes up the contract, which both participants sign. Victim and offender chat to each other about prison, judges and Larry gives John advice about what to do next.

Written up by Why me?, July 2013.