

Results from a study on the experiences of people who participate (or wish to participate) in restorative mediation, conducted by the Netherlands Institute for Crime and Law Enforcement Research

Respondents are positive about their experiences with the mediation process, regardless of their role (victim/survivor, perpetrator/offender, or close relative), the type of impactful event they were involved in, or the outcome of the mediation process.

The positive effects mentioned by the respondents are linked to two key concepts in victimology, namely: *agency* and *communion*.

Agency

a sense of control

Respondents can feel in control of the process and gain a better understanding of their own thoughts, feelings, and needs.

The personalized solutions that Perspectief provides play a key role in these positive evaluations: they give respondents the opportunity to feel more agency.

Communion

a sense of connection

Respondents feel heard by the mediator and the other party involved. Their confidence in the Dutch rule of law also appears to be positively influenced.

The mediator's guidance helps respondents find support and connection within their social circle.

Opportunities for the future

Every step counts

The study shows that the different steps in the mediation process are all important for restoring agency and communion. The value of restorative mediation does not only lie in the actual contact with the other party. Greater awareness of this fact can increase willingness to participate.

After the mediation process

Some respondents indicated that they found it difficult that the mediation process came to an end. In response to this, Perspectief will explore what additional support it can offer after the process is over.

The role of family and friends

The social environment of respondents plays an important role. Perspectief will continue to explore how this can be further developed within its services, such as the restorative circles they offer.

Sustainable recovery

- The study took place between 2022 and 2025
- Assessment moments: before mediation, immediately after mediation, and 6 months after mediation
- Positive effects remain in the long term
- No increase in negative emotions or effects such as secondary victimization

The role of the mediator

Respondents emphasize that the mediator plays a key role in helping them experience these positive effects, as mediators provide the tools and space needed to restore a sense of agency and communion. The intake meeting with the mediator is viewed as positive in and of itself, even if no mediated contact ultimately takes place between the parties.

What if no mediated contact takes place?

Even in such cases, respondents feel more in control and connected. The process, the preparation, and contact with the mediator are key factors here. As a result, they do not experience effects such as secondary victimization.

Is restorative mediation emotionally taxing?

Respondents do find restorative mediation emotionally taxing. However, they indicate that they are prepared for this, they believe it is part of the process and feel that it is still worth going through.