

Key Points

KEY POINT #1

The strongest predictor of criminality is antisocial thinking. As a result, the most effective approaches are cognitive behavioral interventions (CBI) which target antisocial thinking and help high-risk youth learn prosocial skills for handling challenging situations.

KEY POINT #2

Youthful offenders have often never learned the prosocial skills that are necessary to manage social situations without manipulation and/or violence. Cognitive skills instruction teaches skills such as self-control, effective communication, and problem solving through a dynamic process of demonstration and role-playing.

KEY POINT #3

Many at-risk youth use distorted thinking to justify their antisocial choices, avoiding guilt and remorse for hurtful behavior. Cognitive restructuring creates an uncomfortable level of self-awareness in them, bringing thinking to the surface and often motivating behavioral change as well.

For further information about training in classroom-based cognitive behavioral programs, contact:

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Cognitive Behavioral Interventions with Youthful Offenders



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Workshop Description

Special education students are hugely over-represented in the juvenile justice system, and once there, have a strong chance of spending at least a year in the adult correctional system before they reach 21 years of age. Rather than learning from their mistakes however, many slip into thinking and behavioral patterns which actually justify and encourage further criminal behavior. This workshop explores this distorted thinking, and offers two cognitive behavioral strategies for addressing the problem before it is too late.

Prison Slang Quiz

1. What is a Shank?

- a. A piece of meat
- b. Part of a handcuff.
- c. A handmade weapon.
- d. A correctional officer.



2. What happens if a prisoner Clicks Up?

- a. Gets promoted on a prison job.
- b. Is assigned to a better cell.
- c. Joins a prison gang.
- d. Lights a cigarette when smoking is not permitted.

3. Who is Chester?

- a. A prisoner who has spent so much time in prison that he cannot function in the outside world.
- b. An officer who smuggles contraband into the institution.
- c. A prisoner who avoids any hard work.
- d. A child molester.

4. What happens when a prisoner is Riding Leg?

- a. A prisoner forms a homosexual relationship with another.
- b. A prisoner becomes friendly with staff to get a favor.
- c. A prisoner fabricates a story to gain status with other prisoners.
- d. A prisoner who has received contraband and is enjoying life.

5. Who is Sancho?

- a. A correctional officer.
- b. A prisoner who informs on others, a snitch.
- c. A Latino prisoner.
- d. The man having an affair with a prisoner's wife or girlfriend.

Stages of Change

Stage 1 _____

It isn't that we can't find a solution, it's that we don't see the problem. If we DO attempt to make a change in this stage, it's usually because someone has put pressure on us.

Stage 2 _____

We are aware of the problem and its consequences, but haven't made a real commitment to solving it yet.

Stage 3 _____

We intend to make a real change in the next 30 days. We set solid goals and develop plans to reach those goals. We prepare ourselves for the challenges that change will bring.

Stage 4 _____

We actively begin a planned improvement by changing our behavior, our experiences, and/or our environment. We add positive habits to replace our negative habits. This stage encompasses the first 6 months of change.

Stage 5 _____

We've been fairly successful in making change during this period, and new habits have been established for 6 months or more. Often, an identity change has taken place as well, and we may try to help others with similar problems.

A. Nick about his fighting:
"I DO lose my cool from time to time. I know I ought to do something about it, cuz I get in trouble all the time for it, but nothing seems to work for me. I guess I'm just hot-headed by nature."

What Stage?

B. Anna about her drugs use:
"It's a day-by-day thing. I've been clean and sober for nearly a year now, going to NA meetings and all, but there was a time when I thought I wasn't going to make it."



What Stage?

C. Terry about his auto theft:
"Enough is enough. This time I got 60 days in the detention center, and the judge told me the next time I would be tried as an adult. When I get out next week, I'm going to find some new friends, that's all there is to it. There's a

youth center on West Broad Street and the director there is real cool -- he says he needs some help after school. I'm going to try that for a while and see how it goes."



What Stage?

Source: Prochaska, J. O. and C. C. DiClemente (1992). *Stages of Change in the Modification of Problem Behaviors*. Newbury Park, CA, Sage.

Benign Confrontation

Benign confrontation leads youth to an uncomfortable level of self-awareness re self-serving justifications.



1. Listen non-judgmentally to the story to find the distorted reasoning. Encourage the youth to describe both what happened and his underlying reasoning. Avoid any condemnation of his actions or justifications.

2. Summarize the core belief or justification, almost as if agreeing with it. Then change tone, demeanor, body language.

3. Challenge the false logic or self-serving justification with a benign confrontation, leaving the youth with uncertainty.

1. Law of Streets vs Rule of School: Help youth see that what might be acceptable at home or on the streets is NOT acceptable at school.

"I understand that on the streets, you might have to take matters into your own hands. On the streets, there's no one there to protect you, so you have to take care of yourself. But here in this school, things are different. Here, the staff are paid to keep kids safe...."

2. Appeal to Character: Help youth gain empathy for the other person by appealing to their better nature.

"I can see that there's a part of you that thinks Richard deserves what he got. But there's another part of you -- a kinder part of you -- that knows quite well that you went overboard. I remember how you helpful were last year when.... Where was that boy today?"

3. Appeal to Self-Interest: Help the youth see how his choice was not in his own long-term best interest.

"So you're saying that it was worth it all to put that aggravating classmate of yours in his place. I can see where you got some satisfaction by giving him a black eye, but look at all the consequences you have to deal with now! I've always thought you were way too smart to lose your temper this way."

4. Relabeling Behavior: Relabel the youth's antisocial behavior in prosocial terms.

"You can say you were only 'borrowing' those tools from the auto tech shop, but we both know what happened. Mr. Johnson had to leave for a minute, and you took advantage of that moment to walk off with something that wasn't yours. That's not 'borrowing,' it's STEALING... and you know it too."

Predicting Criminality

Is it possible to predict which children and youth are most likely to become habitual offenders later in life? And if so, does that mean we can intervene?

What elements of ENVIRONMENT or PERSONALITY would you guess most accurately predict later criminality?

Research reveals the top six predictors of criminality:

- 6. _____
- 5. _____
- 4. _____
- 3. _____
- 2. _____
- 1. _____



What Works?

<u>APPROACH</u>	<u>IMPACT ON INSTIT'L ADJUSTMENT</u>	<u>IMPACT ON RECIDIVISM</u>
PSYCHOTHERAPY		
BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT		
COGNITIVE BEHAVIORAL INTERVENTION		

Cognitive Skills Instruction

NEW TOOLS: Used when antisocial behavior is due primarily to a lack of prosocial skills. Typical skills taught include emotional self-management, communication, problem solving, etc.



Prosocial skills are taught using a 5-step interactive process.

1. DESCRIBE IT

Break the skill into simple steps. Provide a clear rationale for learning the skill.

2. SHOW IT

Provide a dramatic instructor demonstration in a realistic situation.

3. TRY IT

Guide student skill practice in personally relevant and realistic role plays.

4. COACH IT

Provide feedback and coaching from peers and instructors.

5. PRACTICE IT

Practice the skill in real life situations. Process these attempts in later sessions.

Source: Goldstein, A. P. Glick B. & Gibbs, J. (1986). Aggression Replacement Training: A Comprehensive Intervention for Aggressive Youth. Champaign, IL: Research Press.

Brainstorm 4-5 steps of HANDLING CRITICISM.

Our team says:

Experts say:

- | | |
|----------|-------|
| 1. _____ | _____ |
| 2. _____ | _____ |
| 3. _____ | _____ |
| 4. _____ | _____ |
| 5. _____ | _____ |

Cognitive Restructuring

NEW RULES: Used when antisocial behavior is due primarily to entrenched antisocial beliefs. Typically, distorted thinking is identified and benignly confronted, creating an uncomfortable level of self-awareness.



Common Antisocial Distortions:

Examples:

1. Self-Centeredness: ___ & ___

Seeing your own views, expectations, needs, rights, and immediate feelings as so important that the legitimate needs or views of others are disregarded.

2. Blaming Others: ___ & ___

Putting blame for your harmful actions onto another person, group, or a momentary aberration (in a bad mood). Seeing yourself as the victim of misfortune due to innocent others.

3. Minimizing: ___ & ___

Understating the seriousness of your behavior, or seeing it as acceptable, even admirable. Referring to others to others with belittling or dehumanizing labels.

4. Assuming Worst: ___ & ___

Attributing hostile intent to others, fixating on negative outcomes as if they were inevitable. Assuming that any improvement is impossible in your own or others' behavior.

A. "It wasn't that bad. I could have broken his nose and all I did was push him."

B. "Why should I feel bad? Everyone knows she's nothing but a @#%\$-ing whore."

C. "You have to look out for number one. Nobody else will."

D. "Give me a break! I was having a bad day – what do you want? Actually, this never would have happened if my teacher hand't"

E. "I saw the way she looked at me. She was getting ready to bust on me, make me look bad."

F. "Rules are meant for other people, not for me."

G. "I'll @#%\$ up regardless, so why put in the effort? It's hopeless. I'm just like my father."

H. "It's not my fault he got hurt. He should have been watching where he was going."

Source: Gibbs, J. C., Potter, G. H., & Goldstein, A. P. (1995). The EQUIP Program: Teaching Youth to Think and Act Responsibly Through a Peer Helping Approach. Champaign, IL: Research Press.