

Understanding and Targeting General Criminal Thinking

Adapted from the Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles, developed by Glenn Walters; Walters (2013)

Also adapted from Kroner & Morgan (2013). District of AZ (2015)

Control		Egocentrism	
Power Orientation Asserting Power over Others	Super Optimism Getting Away With Anything	Entitlement Feeling Above the Law	Sentimentality Self-Serving Acts of Kindness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> May have a simplistic world view (strong or weak) They try to control their surroundings by dominating activities and people, to counteract their feelings of impotence or powerlessness. Motivated by immediate gratification and interpersonal control External control - (power) Internal control (self-discipline) they put themselves in an "up" position and feel better about themselves by putting another person down. <p>Intervention: through CBT and problem solving. FOCUS - on the development cognitions and skills related to self-discipline.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Because people get away with the vast majority of their crimes they can engage in a criminal lifestyle for months, sometimes years, before experiencing the negative consequences of their lifestyle. An attitude of invulnerability develops due to escaping the physical, psychological, and legal consequences of habitual criminality. They convince themselves that they will to escape consequences. However, this only makes their eventual fall that much more dramatic. <p>Intervention: through CBT and the use of the Decisional Balance worksheet, explore negative consequences for their actions. Work to raise their awareness about the negative consequences of their criminal thinking. Foster motivation to consider new thinking patterns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Before crime can become a reality the person must grant themselves permission to commit that particular crime. They may tell themselves that they are entitled to commit crime because they have had a hard life, rough week, or bad day. They can be creative in how they go about granting themselves permission to commit crime (manipulate a conflict with a spouse or employer) to justify committing a crime. This often involves a sense of ownership or privilege and frequently entails the misidentification of wants as needs. <p>Intervention: through CBT, help distinguish between true needs versus wants. Develop a personal inventory of values and goals to raise awareness of discrepancies between values and behaviors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> They distort their thinking in order to deny behavior is self-destructive and/or harmful. Rather than making excuses because of perceived injustices (mollification), instead sentimentality involves justifying their actions by taking emphasizing the positive things they have done. Religion, family, and the welfare of strangers are areas they might use to reduce guilt through sentimentality. True caring is concern is focused on another person, sentimentality is a selfish attempt to shine a positive light on oneself by performing one or more "good deeds." <p>Intervention: work to assist them in seeing that good deeds do not erase harmful actions. Raise awareness of how others have been harmed by their criminal actions, whether or not such harm was intended.</p>

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Cognitive Immaturity

Mollification Making Excuses	Cutoff Ignoring Responsible Action	Cognitive Indolence Lazy Thinking	Discontinuity Getting Sidetracked
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They lay blame for their behavior on external sources and use rationalizations and self-justification to avoid responsibility for their actions. • They may talk about inequity and unfairness of life. They try to avoid responsibility for their actions by "proving" to themselves and others that they had no choice but to do crime. • In failing to assume responsibility for their decisions and behavior, they are eliminating potential avenues of change and intervention, which in the end only serves to protect the criminal lifestyle. <p>Intervention: use CBT, help them see that injustices do not excuse, or justify their behavior. Encourage them to stop externalizing blame and start taking responsibility for their actions and decisions. They need to accept responsibility for the consequences of their actions and decisions.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Commitment to a criminal lifestyle requires that the person possess the ability to eliminate common deterrents to crime. Cutoff is used to eliminate deterrents just as a person shuts off a light switch to darken a room. • The phrase: "#uck it" is the most common cutoff observed in inmate populations. • However, other cutoffs are possible. Some people, in fact, use drugs as a cutoff. Alcohol to give yourself false courage, heroin to calm down, or cocaine to pump themselves up prior to committing a crime. <p>Intervention: use CBT tools and strategies to help them identify and challenge their thinking patterns, such as "stop and think". Work to help them develop skills to avoid and cope.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who habitually commit crime are as lazy in their thinking they are in their actions and take the path of least resistance, although this path is fraught with pitfalls and booby traps. • They have probably taken many short-cuts, knowing full well that these short-cuts may eventually lead to disaster. • They are much more interested in pursuing the short-term benefits of crime than worrying about the long-term consequences of a criminal lifestyle. • They take an uncritical view of their plans and ideas. They may also be easily bored, and may pursue excitement to compensate for a shallow and under-stimulating inner world. <p>Intervention: use CBT and problem solving. Develop and reinforce their progress increasing AWARENESS of, EVALUATION of and MANAGEMENT of their thinking.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They are easily sidetracked and distracted by things going on around them. • This lack of consistency in thought and behavior is called discontinuity, and is what often frustrates a person's attempts at long-term change. • They have difficulty maintaining any commitment to change or follow through on commitments and good intentions. • This lack of consistency also gives rise to a "Jekyll and Hyde" pattern in which the person wears two different masks, 1 when committing crime, the other when in non-criminal activities. <p>Intervention: discontinuity is the most difficult of the eight thinking styles to address, because the individual is often oblivious to the inconsistency evident in their thinking. Use frequent feedback on discontinuous actions and skill build around goal setting and SMART planning.</p>