Criminal Thinking

A cognitive-behavioral therapy approach

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Goals of Criminal Thinking Therapy

- To describe and provide examples of common criminal thinking errors in the offender population.
- To help mental health and corrections practitioners and offenders become more aware of thinking errors and thinking distortions.
- To assist change agents in facilitating the criminal thinking change process.
The Criminal Thinking scope is wide

- The module was created with community based programming in mind.
- Individual study or open-ended groups
- A group size of 8 to 12 participants is suggested, but larger groups are effective too
- The module is designed to be used in collaboration with the Criminal Thinking Errors Worksheets
Criminal Thinking works in other programs

- Corrective Thinking, Domestic Violence, AODA and/or Cognitive-Behavioral focus
- Adult male or female offenders
- Batterers and/or drug abusers
- 7th grade reading level is the intended target audience
The History

- Utilizes the theory and principles developed by Stanton Samenow and Yochelson
- Investigation of Criminal Behavior at St. Elizabeths Hospital in Washington, D.C.
- The longest clinical research of offenders in North America
- Three volume publication *The Criminal Personality* (Lanham, Md.: Roman and Littlefield) that he co-authored with Dr. Yochelson.
Question: What is Criminal Thinking?
A simple question
“thinking that says that its alright to violate others or the property of others”

Samuel Yochelson and Stanton Samenow
Why talk about Criminal Thinking?

- Broaden the scope of intervention
- Provide information to help your clients
- To help identify persons where this may be an issue.
- To aid the criminal thinker in developing, expanding and sustaining a moral conscious.
The List: Errors in Thinking

1. Closed Channel Thinking
2. Victim Stance
3. Views Self As A Good Person
4. Lack Of Effort
5. Fear Of Fear
6. Lack Of Interest In Responsible Performance
7. Lack Of Time Perspective
8. Power Thrust
9. Uniqueness
10. Ownership Attitude

Citation: www.criminalthinking.net
1. Closed Channel Thinking

- Not Receptive
- Not Self Critical
- No Disclosure

- Good at pointing out, giving feedback on faults of others
- Lies by omission

Citation: www.criminalthinking.net
2. Victim Stance

- Views self as victim (the criminal will even blame social conditions “I live in the ghetto, what do you expect”)
- Blames others (“the cops just keep messing with me”)

Citation: www.criminalthinking.net
3. Views Self As A Good Person

- Focuses only on his/her positive attributes
- Fails to acknowledge his/her destructive behavior
- Builds self up at others expense

Citation: www.criminalthinking.net
4. Lack Of Effort / Selective Effort

• Unwilling to do anything he/she finds boring or disagreeable
• "I can't" meaning "I won't"
• Doing only the minimum to get by
5. Lack Of Interest In Responsible Performance

- Responsible living viewed as unexciting and unsatisfying
- No sense of obligation
- Will respond only if he/she nets an immediate payoff
6. Lack Of Time Perspective

- Does not use past as a learning tool
- Expects others to act immediately on his/her/demands
- Decisions on assumptions, not facts
7. Fear Of Fear

- Irrational fears (many) but refuses to admit them
- Fundamental fear of injury or death
- Profound fear of put down
- When held accountable experiences "zero state" feels worthless
8. Power Thrust

- Compelling need to be in control of every situation
- Uses manipulation and deceit
- Refuses to be dependant unless he/she can take advantage of the situation
9. Uniqueness

- Different and better than others
- Expects of others that which he/she fails to meet
- Super-Optimisim - cuts fear of failure
- Quits at the first sign of failure
10. Ownership Attitude

- Perceives all things, people, objects to possess
- No concept of ownership, rights of others
- Sex for power and control - not intimacy
- Use drugs/money as a means of controlling people
How do you know?

What are some tactics used by the criminal thinker?
Criminal Thinking Tactics

1. Continuously point out staff inadequacies
2. Building self up by putting others down
3. Telling others what they want to hear
4. Lying, distorting the truth
5. Vagueness
6. Diverts attention
7. Putting others on the defensive
8. Total inattention
9. Accusing others of misunderstanding
10. Attempting to confuse others
11. Minimizes the situation
12. Agrees without meaning it
13. Silence
14. Selective attention
15. Make a big scene about minor issues
16. Putting off doing something by saying I forgot
17. Claiming that they have changed because they did something right, once!
Factors of people’s past that contribute to criminal conduct

- A history of early involvement in deviant or antisocial and criminal conduct;
- Having grown up in a disruptive, abusive and neglectful family where there was lack of parental attention and supervision;
- Failure in school, work and leisure time;
- AOD disorders at an early age
Risk factors contributing to criminal conduct

- Criminogenic need: Dynamic risk factors or attributes of offenders that, when changed, influence the probability of recidivism
Do criminals think differently than normal people?

Researchers believe thought patterns are more important than biology or environment in determining who becomes a criminal. Some major characteristics include:

- master manipulators
- compulsive liars
- people not in control of their own behavior.
Thinking errors or thinking distortions

- A cognitive distortion is a way of thinking that is automatic to the point that we continue to engage in the errors of thinking even though our experiences and the facts do not support the thinking errors.
- The mental process required by the criminal to live his/her kind of life.
The Criminogenic Need Principle

Most offenders have many needs. However, certain needs are directly linked to crime. Criminogenic needs constitute dynamic risk factors or attributes of offenders that, when changed, influence the probability of recidivism.
Criminogenic Needs:

- Self-oriented communication patterns
- Need for family closeness and communication
- Need for primary social unit structures such as family
- Involvement in antisocial and deviant behaviors
- Need to manipulate and to control others
- Receive rewards through criminal conduct
- Participate in environments of high-risk for criminal conduct
Criminogenic Needs: continued

- Blame others for own action and behaviors
- Impaired moral reasoning; hold self-serving/antisocial moral codes
- Overall impaired social and interpersonal skills
- Overt acting out of feelings of anger and resentment
- Thinking in a “black and white” concrete manner
- Need to use substances to support criminal and antisocial conduct
Question: Who are they really hurting?

Injuries Unseen
Injury worksheet
Self & Victim
Families
Neighbors
Community
Quality of Life
“Ripple Effect”
How do you fix this?

Related Self-corrections
Criminal Thinking Scales

- Entitlement
- Justification
- Personal Irresponsibility
- Power Orientation
- Cold Heartedness
- Criminal Rationalization

Steps to undoing Criminal Thinking

- Learning other-directed communication patterns
- Develop ties with family or family-like relationships
- Develop positive social unit and family structures
- Replace antisocial with pro-social behaviors
- Develop self-control and self-confidence
- Shift reward potential to non-criminal conduct
- Develop skills to avoid or cope with high-risk settings
Steps to undoing Criminal Thinking

- Develop responsibility for own behavior and actions
- Develop pro-social and more other-reflective moral codes
- Develop social and coping skills through social skills training
- Learn self-regulation of angry feelings and other emotions
- Develop skills to increase abstract reasoning and thinking
- Develop recreational, vocational, and interpersonal alternatives to AOD use and criminal conduct
Resources

- Texas Christian University (TCU)
  - http://www.ibr.tcu.edu
  - Criminal Thinking Scales
  - Testing Forms

- Criminal Thinking Therapy
  - http://www.criminalthinking.net
  - Workbooks
  - Entire curriculum
Criminal Thinking

“Thinking for a Change”
A cognitive-behavioral therapy approach
About the Presentation

• This presentation is largely taken from the actual curriculum developed by The National Institute of Corrections. The slides will highlight the core elements of the curriculum with resources as to where additional information can be found.
About the curriculum

The Thinking for a Change curriculum uses as its core, a **problem solving** program embellished by both **cognitive restructuring** and **social skills interventions**.
Upon completion of this presentation, participants will:

• Know the three types of skills needed for change
• Know how many lessons are in the curriculum
• Know the basic structure for the lessons
  – Homework, modeling new skills, contract to practice outside of class
About the curriculum

The National Institute of Corrections has offered a training seminar, “Cognitive Approaches to Changing Offender Behavior”, for the last six years at their Academy in Longmont, Colorado, and more recently as cooperative training programs in various locations throughout the country. Essentially, the curriculum which was developed by a panel of experts in cognitive behavioral interventions presented many of the cognitive restructuring and cognitive skills concepts in a generic, yet practical manner.
What you need

• No special credential or level of education is required.
• Trainers should be caring, like to teach, understand group processes and interpersonal interactions, and be able to control an offender group.
• It is strongly recommended that group facilitators be trained in the content and process of *Thinking for a Change*. 
Concepts and Definitions

- **Thinking** is what we say to ourselves inside our head.
- **Internal control** is control of our thinking and feelings.
- **Social skills** are skills we use to deal with situations involving other people.
- **Problem solving** is a skill for dealing with difficult situations.
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So What Now?
By taking charge of our thinking we can take control of our lives.
Three Key Skills #1

• **Cognitive Self-Change** - Paying attention to the thoughts and feelings that go on inside of us to avoid the kinds of thoughts and feelings that lead us to trouble.

• **Social Skills** – Behaviors or abilities we use in situations that involve other people

• **Problem Solving Skills** – Skills to help us make better choices
Showing what goes on in our head
Three Key Skills #2

- **Cognitive Self-Change** - Paying attention to the thoughts and feelings that go on inside of us to avoid the kinds of thoughts and feelings that lead us to trouble

- **Social Skills** – Behaviors or abilities we use in situations that involve other people.

- **Problem Solving Skills** – Skills to help us make better choices
Three Key Skills #3

• **Cognitive Self-Change** - Paying attention to the thoughts and feelings that go on inside of us to avoid the kinds of thoughts and feelings that lead us to trouble

• **Social Skills** – Behaviors or abilities we use in situations that involve other people

• **Problem Solving Skills** – Skills to help us make better choices.
Iceberg Analogy
Thinking for a Change

COGNITIVE SELF CHANGE

PROBLEM SOLVING

SOCIAL SKILLS

THINKING CONTROLS BEHAVIOR

CONFLICT

New Ways to THINK and ACT

AHA!
Thinking For A Change

I Will Decide

I Am My Own Authority
Social Skills

1. Social Skills
2. Active Listening
3. Asking Questions
4. Giving Feedback
5. Knowing Your Feelings
6. Thinking Controls Behavior
Cognitive Self Change

7. Paying Attention to Our Thinking
8. Recognizing Risk
9. Use New Thinking
10. Thinking Check-In
11. Understanding Others Feelings
<table>
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<td>13. Apologizing</td>
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<td>14. Responding to Anger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Negotiating</td>
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## Problem Solving

| 16. Introduction                  | 22. Making a Plan               |
| 17. Stop & Think                  | 23. Do and Evaluate             |
| 18. State the Problem             | 24. Problem Solving Application |
| 19. State the Goal and Gather Information |                     |
| 20. Practice Steps 17-19          | **Total 24 Lessons in T4C**    |
| 21. Think of Choices and Consequences |                              |
Note for Implementation

1. Social Skills
2. Active Listening
3. Asking Questions
4. Giving Feedback
5. Knowing Your Feelings
6. Thinking Controls Behavior

Best suited for orientation phase
Lesson Structure

1. Homework review

2. Learn next social skill
   - Facilitators introduce and model new skill
   - Group members role play new skill and receive feedback

3. Transfer training: Contract to practice new skill outside of class (home work)
Lesson 1 - Social Skills

- Social skills are the skills we use when we deal with other people.

- Good social skills help get us what we want; maximizing positive responses, and minimizing negative responses from other people.
Lesson 2 - Active Listening

• An active way of hearing what the other person is saying to you
Active Listening Skills

1. Look at the person who is talking
2. Think about what is being said
3. Wait your turn to talk
4. Say what you want to say
Lesson Review

• When did you practice the skill? Where? With whom?
• What did you do to follow each step of the skill? Be specific
• Tell us another situation where you will use the skill
Cognitive Restructuring

1. Pay Attention to Our Thinking
2. Recognize Risk
3. Use New Thinking
Parts of the Thinking Report

Part 1 - State what happened (stick with the facts)
Part 2 - List every thought you can remember
   (exact words that were in your mind at the time)
Part 3 - List all the feelings you remember having
Part 4 - List beliefs you held in this situation (beliefs are rules, principles and opinions that you carry into lots of different situations)
# Parts of the Thinking Report

## Part 1

**Situation:**

State the facts of what happened

*Who was involved and what was said and done?*
### Parts of the Thinking Report

<table>
<thead>
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| **Part 2** | **Thoughts:** List every thought you can remember
|           | *Use the exact words that were in your mind at the time* |
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<td>List all the feelings you remember having</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Feelings:</strong></td>
<td>Use words that seem right to you</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><em>Feelings can be either emotions or bodily sensations, or both</em></td>
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# Parts of the Thinking Report

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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Part 4 Attitudes/Beliefs:</strong></td>
<td>List your attitudes and beliefs</td>
</tr>
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**Attitudes and beliefs are rules, principles, values, or ways of thinking that you carry into lots of different situations**
Processing a Thinking Report

Helpful Hints for Staying Objective

• Don’t judge
• Don’t blame
• Don’t make excuses
• Don’t “second guess” (suggestions about how you should have or could have thought)
Problem Solving Skill 1

Step 1: **Stop!**
Pay attention to your warning signs

Step 2: **Think!**
Reduce your risk
State the Problem

Step 1: Identify a warning sign
Step 2: Describe what happened objectively
Step 3: Identify a risk reaction
“\( I \text{ (think/feel)} \) ________________ because _________________, and my risk reaction is ______ __________________.
\)"
Problem Solving Goals

- **Step 1**: Identify a positive and realistic goal

- **Step 2**: Gather Information
  - Facts
  - The other person’s thoughts and feelings
Practice Problem Solving

• Pick one real life problem situation and practice the first 2 problem solving skills
• If you were not able to do the first 2 skills while the problem was actually happening, then you were to write out how you could have done each skill
Problem Solving Goals

• Keep your goal realistic—something you can make happen
• Make it positive—something that doesn’t hurt you or others
• Make a simple goal statement starting with the words, “I want.....” and then describe the goal
• Or “I want..., but I don’t want...”
Summary

- Three core elements to T4C
  - *Social skills, Cognitive Restructuring, Problem Solving*
- 24 lessons that help develop the above skill set
- Objective, systematic approach to identifying thinking, beliefs, attitudes, and values that bring on risk
- Modeling and practicing new thinking and problem solving to reduce risk
Summary

National Institute of Corrections
http://nicic.gov/t4c
Thinking for a Change

New Ways to THINK and ACT

CONFLICT

AHA!

COGNITIVE SELF CHANGE

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