CHALLENGING A CRIMINAL LIFESTYLE

NEW CHALLENGES
A Cognitive based treatment program for men, women and juveniles
Getting stuck in a Criminal Lifestyle

Leaving a criminal lifestyle means that you have to reevaluate your life. Sometimes criminals are told that you just have “get your act together” and that’s all there is to it.

In New Challenges program we claim that it takes more than that to abandon a lifestyle. It may be a part of an identity and changing that identity takes time. The “New Challenges” program can be a starting point.

In the program “New Challenges” we claim that you can get caught up in a criminal lifestyle that you really are fed up with. You keep going in and out of prison even though you would like to quit. But you don’t always have the tools needed to abandon the lifestyle. This program provides you with these tools.
The main reason that people return to crime, often in spite of heavy consequences is the criminal thinking that works like the fuel that drives crime. This thinking styles rationalizes and justifies crime and make it possible to plan a crime, commit a crime and live with the effects and consequences afterwards.

Changing Criminal thinking

To change criminal behaviour you have to change your criminal thinking. The main focus of the program is to challenge criminal thinking. We educate the participants in 8 criminal thinking patterns: We identify each participants thinking through the PICTS (Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles) and challenge these thinking styles throughout the whole program.

Crime is driven by many factors some of which are Fear, Shame, Anger, Greed, Power Seeking, Grief and Drug dependency. In the program we identify the participant’s drives and motives and how they be changed and redirected.

Change is hard but possible. Besides the Thinking Styles and the Motives we discuss values, morals and fear of change. The message is that you are not a victim of your past. We also challenge basic self degrading internal messages of shame. We also discuss how crime can be amended.

Criminal Thinking Styles

Motives and Drives

The message is Hope
The Criminal Lifestyle Theory

The Criminal Lifestyle Theory is developed by Glenn D. Walters, Ph.D. Associate Professor of Criminal Justice, Kutztown University.

The model claims that crime can best be understood as a lifestyle with four components: Irresponsibility, Social Rule Breaking, Self Indulgence and Interpersonal Intrusiveness.

A criminal lifestyle is developed through four stages: Initiation, Transition, Maintenance and Burnout. The process can be interrupted by natural processes in life or through intervention.

The basic drive is fear: fear of life and the tasks of responsibility and also a lack of self-esteem.

Based on earlier works by other scholars, Walters has identified 8 Criminal Thinking Styles and also developed a tool to assess criminal thinking: The Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles.

In the lifestyle model it is claimed that a person in a criminal lifestyle can’t change his or her behaviour unless he (or she) changes her way of thinking. The person also has to alter his/her self image.

The New Challenges program is developed by Gunnar Bergström, Chemical Dependency therapist, based on Walters theory. Some adaptations and revisions of Walters original model have been made.

There is one version of the program for adult men, one for adult women and one for juveniles.

The program consists of 15-25 sessions and can be run in group or individually. For juveniles outpatient group treatment is not recommended. Instead the program has a family component to incorporate the family in the process.

The program is presently being evaluated through research under supervision from Karlstad University. The first published report on the juvenile program showed significantly reduced criminal thinking in the participants. This will be followed up by a rearrest study and the adult study is underway.

The program is used in Sweden, Norway and Denmark in treatment centers and prisons.

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