

Adapting CBT for Justice-Involved Clients: Part 2

# Identifying and Restructuring Criminogenic Thinking

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# Program Outline

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Part 1: Thinking Patterns that Drive Criminal and Antisocial Behavior are Different from Thinking that Heightens Mental Health Symptoms

Part 2: Overview of Criminogenic Thinking

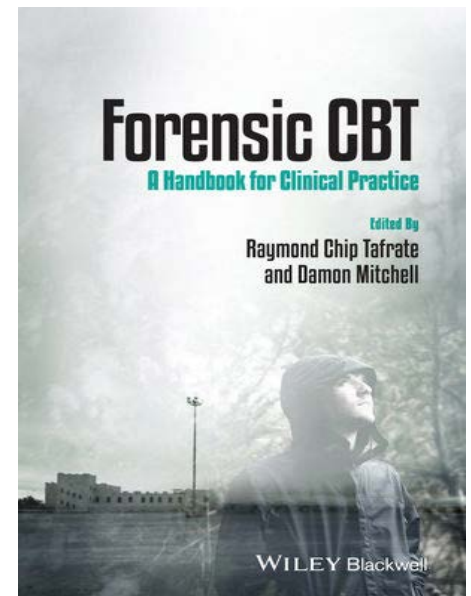
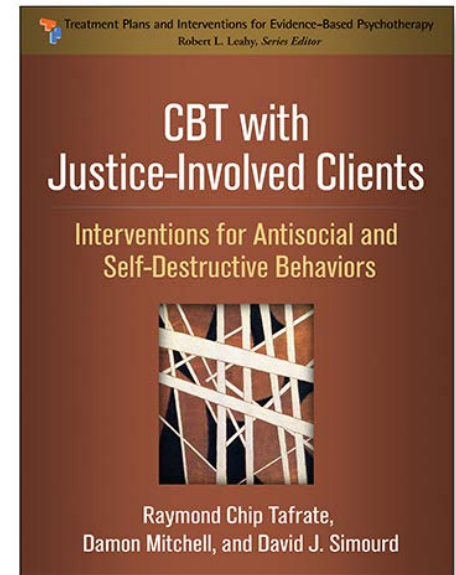
Part 3: A Practical Conversation for Accessing Criminogenic Thinking: Live Practice

Part 4: Techniques for Restructuring Criminogenic Thinking: Live Practice

## Based on:

Tafrate, R.C., Mitchell, D., & Simourd, D.J. (2018). *CBT with justice-involved clients: Interventions for antisocial and self-destructive behaviors*. New York: Guilford Press.

Tafrate, R.C., & Mitchell, D. (Eds.). (2014). *Forensic CBT: A handbook for clinical practice*. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley.



# Traditional CBT has the Wrong Thinking Targets for Criminal Conduct

A story from the trenches of outpatient psychotherapy. . .

**Personalizing:** Attributing a disproportionate amount of the blame to oneself rather than considering other factors. Taking too much responsibility.

**Fortune telling:** Arbitrarily predicting that things will turn out badly.

**Overestimating:** Exaggerating the probability of potential dangers.

**To what extent do the patterns important for anxiety and depression influence the risky and self-destructive behavior of justice-involved clients?**



# **Justice-Involved Clients: A Bewildering Constellation of Beliefs and Cognitions**

Justice-involved clients are unlikely to harshly blame and judge themselves when things turn out poorly or when faced with criticism, as is common in depressed clients.

Will often do the opposite; express little concern for the opinions of others or for how their actions affect others

Justice-involved clients are unlikely to overestimate and exaggerate potential dangers, as is common in clients suffering with anxiety.

Will often do the opposite; display a tendency to underestimate danger, seeking out risky situations precisely for excitement

# What is criminogenic thinking?

Thinking patterns  
associated with antisocial  
and self-destructive  
behaviors



# Forensic Cognitive Theory: Levels of Belief

Our cognitive life is layered

## **Criminogenic Thinking Patterns**

(Stable across time and situations; Operate like rules and assumptions)

## **Criminogenic Thoughts**

(More Automatic; Spring up in response to stimuli)



# Relationship Between Criminogenic Thinking Patterns and Thoughts

**Criminogenic Thinking Patterns**  
Intermediate Beliefs



**Criminogenic Thoughts**  
Automatic Thoughts Related to Decision-Making in  
Criminal Risk Domains



Antisocial  
Companions



Dysfunctional  
Family/ Romantic



Lack of Connection  
School/ Work



Maladaptive Leisure  
Time



Substance Abuse/  
Misuse



Anger Dysregulation

Criminal Thinking Scales	# of subscales
<b>Psychological Inventory of Criminal Thinking Styles</b> (PICTS; Walters, 1995)	8
<b>Criminal Sentiments Scale-Modified</b> (CSS-M; Simourd, 1997)	5
<b>Measure of Criminal Attitudes &amp; Associates</b> (MCAA; Mills, Kroner, & Hemmati, 1999)	4
<b>Texas Christian University Criminal Thinking Scales</b> (TCU CTS; Knight et al., 2006)	6
<b>Measure of Offender Thinking Styles</b> (MOTS; Mandracchia and associates, 2007)	3
<b>Criminogenic Cognitions Scale</b> (CCS; Tangney and associates, 2012)	5
<b>Criminogenic Thinking Profile</b> (CTP; Mitchell & Tafrate, 2012)	8

# Overview of Criminogenic Thinking Patterns

## Beliefs Related to Self and Others

Identifying with Antisocial companions

Disregard for Others

Emotionally Disengaged

Hostility for CJ Personnel

Grandiosity & Entitlement

Power & Control

## Beliefs Related to Interacting with the Environment

Demand for Excitement

Exploit

Hostility for Law and Order

Justifying & Minimizing

Path of Least Resistance

Inability to Cope

Underestimating

\* See Handout for description

# 1) Identifying with Antisocial Companions

View self as being similar to, and can relate best to, antisocial peers; Seeks approval of antisocial peers; See relationships with prosocial peers as unproductive

“I just can’t say no when those guys come around to pick me up. We’ve been through so much together.”

“It seems like I’m doing well, and then I run into him and slip back to the dark side.”

“I just can’t say no when those guys come around to pick me up. We’ve been through so much together.”

## 2) Disregard for Others

Callousness/ cold-heartedness toward others; Lack of empathy and remorse; Needs/rights of others are unimportant

“If others are victimized then they deserve it.”

“There’s no point in worrying about people that you hurt.”

“No one cares about my feelings, so why should I care about anybody else.”

“She was a prostitute. How do you rape a prostitute?”

### **3) Emotionally Disengaged**

Avoiding intimacy and vulnerability; Lack of trust;  
Fears of being taken advantage of

“I don’t share my feelings with anyone, it’s safer.”

“I don’t want to look weak so I don’t let anyone know what’s going on with me, unless I’m pissed.”

“Why should I talk to you? You’re just going to leave anyways.”

## 4) Hostility Toward Criminal Justice Personnel

Adversarial and suspicious attitude toward police, lawyers, judges, case managers, etc.

“Probation officers just want to lock you up. That’s why they always ask about your address -- so they know where to find you when they want to arrest you.”

“Cops create crime. They look for reasons to lock you up. You don’t have to do anything wrong.”

“Your treatment program is just designed to keep people in the system.”

## 5) Grandiosity and Entitlement

Inflated beliefs about oneself; Belief that one is deserving of special treatment

“I won’t go to treatment unless you can find a counselor smarter than me.

“Look at me. Who wouldn’t want to be with me?”

“One of the problems I have in school is that I’m smarter than all the teachers.”

“All women want me, even the ones that haven’t met me.”



## 6) Power and Control

Seeking dominance over others; Seeking to control the behavior of others

“If someone disrespects you, then you have to straighten them out, even if you have to get physical.”

“Nobody tells me what to do. I tell other people what to do.”

“A family is not a democracy. I am the leader of this family. That’s how it is. As long as she cooks what I want, lays me when I want, and respects my authority we won’t have any problems.”

## 7) Demand for Excitement

Thrill seeking; Lack of tolerance for boredom; Impulsive thinking and decision-making

“I felt happiest when I was on the run. It gave me a rush.”

“There is no better feeling than the rush I get when stealing.”

“I like the excitement of always looking over my shoulder.”

“I just can't sit home at night, I need to find action.”

## 8) Exploit

General intent to exploit situations and/or relationships for personal gain when given the opportunity

“Why should I support my baby? His mother has a rich dad who can pay for stuff.”

“I don’t need to work. My family takes care of everything.”

“You said I can miss three sessions and still get the certificate. So why should I come to all the groups if I can miss 3 and still complete successfully?”

## 9) Hostility for Law and Order

Distrust and pessimism regarding laws, rules, and regulations; Reactive and oppositional to authority

“Rules were made to be broken. That’s where I come in.”

“That’s the way I am. If someone tells me to do something, it makes me want to do the opposite.”

“Laws are there to hurt you, not help you.”

# 10) Justifying and Minimizing

Justification, rationalization, and minimization of harmful/  
self-destructive behavior

“The videos had already been made. I wasn’t hurting anybody.”

“If I don’t sell drugs in my neighborhood, somebody else is going to sell them.”

“My drinking doesn’t affect anyone in my family but me. Why are people on my back about it?”

“What I do isn’t as bad as what the those “fat cats” on Wall Street do everyday.”

# 11) Path of Least Resistance

“Path of least resistance” approach to problem solving;  
Lifestyle procrastination

“Everything will take care of itself.”

“I don’t need to worry about finishing school. I’m sure I’ll just find something.”

“I’ve got a couple of months until the baby comes, so I don’t need to stress out about money yet. Let’s get this referral [to an employment program] dropped or moved til later.”

# 12) Inability to Cope

Giving up in the face of adversity; Low frustration tolerance

“I can’t deal with people who want a lot from me.”

“When things get hard at school, I quit.”

“I’d rather get violated than go to all these treatment programs.”

“Everything stresses me out and I just need to get high.”

# 13) Underestimating

Underestimating negative consequences of risky behaviors; Assume decision-making skills are solid

“My boss is always yelling at me for being late. He’s lucky I come to work.”

“She’ll never get pregnant because I pull out.”

“I won’t go to jail for selling drugs. I know all my clients.”

“I’ve been clean for a week. I don’t need to go to treatment.”



# Recognizing Criminogenic Thinking Patterns and Thoughts



# Having Conversations About Thinking



## **Connect Criminogenic Thinking to Decision-Making:**

Make the client aware of the thoughts that drive criminal behavior -- raising awareness of the impact such thoughts have on his or her life

# STD Analysis

Situation ➡ Thoughts ➡ Decision  
(high risk)

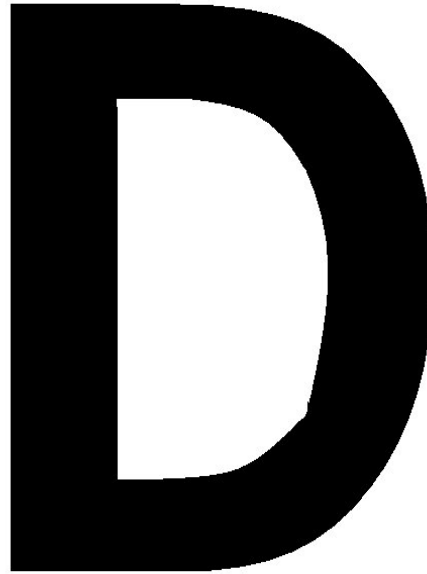
When confronted with a high-risk situation, what does the client typically think when he or she makes poor decisions and engages in risky, self-defeating, or criminal behavior?

When confronted with the same high-risk situation, what does the client think when better choices are made (ones that lead to a more positive outcomes)?

# Explore the Context



# Explore Decisions

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Worst decisions

Best decisions

# Elicit Thoughts



Identifying thinking for two paths: Good and poor decision-making

# What's More Important: Thoughts that Follow or Precede Criminal Behavior?

## A Conundrum for Practitioners

In many forensic programs the focus is on the thoughts that come after behaviors (i.e., justifying, excuse making, neutralizations). We are more focused on thoughts that **precede** specific instances of risky and self-defeating behavior that recently occurred in the client's life.

# Sykes & Matza (1950's)

A model of dysfunctional thinking which has come to be known as neutralization theory

Denial of responsibility: delinquent acts are due to outside forces

Denial of injury: minimizing harm caused by one's actions

Denial of the victim: victim is seen as the wrongdoer deserving retaliation or punishment

Condemnation of condemners: cynicism directed at those responsible for upholding societal norms

Appeal to higher loyalties: loyalties to smaller groups take precedence over larger society



# Talking about thinking



## S-T-D Analysis Situation-Thoughts-Decisions

(a good starting CBT sequence)

### (1) Explore the high risk SITUATION and context

*What is an example of a high risk situation that has come up in the past year or two and that could lead or already has led to a problem with the criminal justice system?*

*What is it about this situation that makes it high risk for you?*

*How might this pose a risk for you now? [get more details]*

### (2) Explore a bad DECISION connected to the situation

*Give me an example of one of the worst decisions you have made in this situation? [get sufficient detail]*

### (3) Explore the THOUGHTS preceding the bad decision

*What were you telling yourself when you... [Insert poor decision]*

### (4) Explore a good DECISION connected to the situation

*Give me an example of one of the best decisions you have made in this situation? [get sufficient detail]*

### (5) Explore the THOUGHTS preceding the good decision

*What were you telling yourself when you... [Insert better decision]*

### (6) Summarize the contrast in THINKING that leads to two decisions

*So, on the one hand, when you're confronted with \_\_\_\_\_ (insert situation) and you think \_\_\_\_\_, it leads to \_\_\_\_\_ (bad decision); on the other hand, when you're in that situation and think \_\_\_\_\_, it leads to \_\_\_\_\_ (better decision). How can you strengthen the better thinking and decisions in the future?*

Note. Use reflections to underline the thinking and any change talk that emerges.

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# Tips for STDs

First, you are always looking for the immediate thought that gives the client permission to do something risky or illegal

Second, you are also looking for the immediate thought that sometimes stops the client from doing something risky or illegal or produces a more prosocial behavior

If you cannot crystalize the two distinct and contrasting thoughts you will not be able to summarize properly or successfully move to the “two voices” role play

# **STD Analysis: Real-Play Practice Exercise**

## **Client role:**

“Talk about something you do or don’t do that you think is not helpful or healthy”

# Risk Domains, Criminogenic Thinking, and Decisions

Risk  
domains



Thoughts



Decisions

(e.g., employment,  
education, family,  
companions,  
substance use,  
leisure)

(criminal thinking)

(destructive)

# Sequences focused on specific risk domains

(Risk-Thoughts-Decisions)

RTD-friends/companions

RTD-leisure

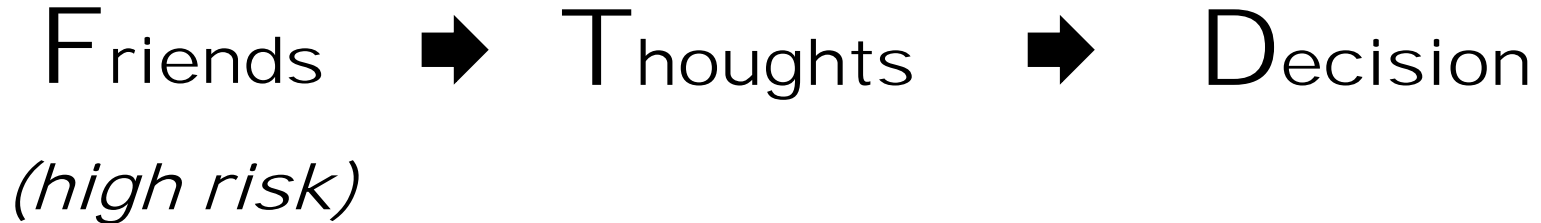
RTD-family/romantic

RTD-substance misuse

RTD-work/school

RTD-anger

# RTD analysis - Companions



What does the client typically think when he or she is influenced by an antisocial friend and makes poor decisions (e.g., engages in risky, self-defeating, or criminal behavior in the presence of this friend)?

What does the client think when better choices are made in regards to this friend?

# RTD Sequence: Friends & Companions



# Restructuring Criminogenic Thinking

## The Two Voices Role-Play

The purpose is to build the client's ability to counter his or her own destructive thinking.





# Benefits of Two Voices Role Play

Enhances the development of healthier self-statements related to risky life areas

Provides a critical exposure-based element to intervention

Is memorable for the client

Provides repeated behavioral practice for countering criminal thinking

# 3 Steps for the Two Voices Role Play

**Step #1:** Summarize the “Two Voices” from one of the STD or RTD sequences

## Step #2: Role-Playing Immediate and Better Thinking

Explain the nature of the role-play using the analogy of the “two voices” to refer to the **Immediate** and **Better Thinking**. Explain that you would like to role-play those voices. You will be the Immediate Thinking voice and will verbalize some destructive thoughts that are consistent with that voice. The client will play the Better Thinking voice and try to counter those thoughts.

## Step #2: Continued

Before starting the role-play, come up with three *Immediate Thinking* examples that are relevant for the client

Start the role-play with the easiest *Immediate Thinking* example

If the client is able to successfully counter the example, affirm the success and go on to a harder example (if unsuccessful, model a more effective response and have the client try again). Always end with a success.

## **Step #3:** Close the role-play by . . .

affirming the client's Better Thinking voice

ask how he or she can strengthen the Better Thinking voice in day-to-day life

# **Two Voices Role-Play Examples**

# Tips for Two Voices Role-Play

Your focus needs to be on the specific thought that came out of the STD or RTD sequence

The “kick it up a notch” thoughts must be related to the same theme of the original STD or RTD thought

Don't overwhelm clients – don't make the example so overpowering or enticing that the risky behavior sounds appealing

The goal is to help clients clarify their own thinking, drawing them out so they hear themselves. Use reflections to help highlight clients' thinking

# Two Voices Role-Play Practice

“Kick it up a notch”





# Thought Pattern #1

“I want to smoke weed, it calms me down and keeps me out of trouble.”

“Kick it up a notch”

## Thought Pattern #2

“I can still hang out with my friends who are getting arrested as long as I don’t do anything wrong.”

“Kick it up a notch”

## Thought Pattern #3

“It is my baby-mama’s fault for me getting arrested because she started it.”

“Kick it up a notch”

## Thought Pattern #4

“I can still sell drugs. I know all my customers and I’m smarter than the police.”

“Kick it up a notch”

Questions, Comments,  
Thoughts...?

