

AGGRESSION MANAGEMENT

**A Program of Communication Skills and Strategies
for Probation and Parole Officers**

**Developed by
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for
The State of Missouri
Department of Corrections
and
The National Institute of Corrections
April 5, 1993**



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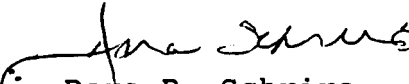
June 24, 1993

Peggy Ritchie-Matsumoto
Technical Assistance Manager
National Institute of Corrections
1960 Industrial Circle, Suite A
Longmont, CO 80501

Dear Ms. Ritchie-Matsumoto:

Persuant to your letter regarding Technical Assistance Request 93-A1010, we gladly provide NIC authorization to release the program information through your information center. If I can be of further assistance please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,


Dora B. Schriro
Director

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INTRODUCTION

The Thinking Behind the Behavior

Offenders who act antisocially also think antisocially. This is not a new discovery. People who work with offenders have long recognized attitudes, beliefs and patterns of thinking that offenders use to justify their disregard for the rights of others. These ways of thinking typically include a powerful resentment of authority and of controls imposed on them by the criminal justice system.

On the other side, correctional staff have their own ways of thinking based on their duty to control the behavior of offenders and their personal philosophy and orientation to their job.

Sometimes these two points of view-offender and correctional staff-get locked into conflict. The result is seldom productive.

A typical scene might go like this:

A parole officer knows that a particular client has a reputation for disregarding rules and conditions of supervision. The officer makes an emphatic point of describing the conditions he expects the offender to follow, and the consequences of failing to do so.

The offender feels provoked by the officer's message and his way of delivering it. He thinks he is being singled out. (He is used to feeling singled out.) He sees the situation as one more outrage of injustice, with himself as the victim. He thinks, "I'm not going to let this S.O.B. get away with this." He lets the officer know how he feels by expressing sarcasm and contempt.

The officer feels both a personal insult and a challenge to his authority. He thinks, "I have to be in control here. I can't let him get away with disrespecting my authority." He repeats his statements with more emotion. He lets the client know in no uncertain terms what will happen to him if he doesn't shape up.

The offender has been here before. In his mind it is one more round in an old battle. He is being threatened by a person in authority. In his mind, it's a very personal power struggle. In his mind, it's a battle he can't afford to lose and doesn't intend to lose.

Whatever happens at this point is not likely to be productive. If the client complies in the face of the threat of direct consequences, he will hold on to his resentment and his righteous feelings of being victimized. Sooner or later these thoughts and feelings will find expression in a hostile action toward authority. Or he may escalate the conflict here and now.

Either way, society loses.

The goal of this training is to divert patterns of interpersonal conflict between client and officer into patterns of cooperation. The techniques and strategies for doing this are based on understanding the thinking patterns that underlie aggressive behavior.

Each offender has their own personal ways of thinking and feeling. It will not help us to stereotype our clients or to try to memorize a set of thinking patterns. (As soon as we do that our next client is likely to present us with something altogether different. And clients will resent it if they feel we are stereotyping them.) It is much more useful if we develop the ability to recognize the individual thinking patterns that control the actions of individual clients.

Given this caveat, we nevertheless discover some common themes and patterns in the thinking of aggressive clients.

Many such clients experience the controls and supervision of corrections as a personal intrusion on their right to live their own life. (The example above displayed some of this thinking.) They hold the attitude that they have the right to live and act as they see fit. Any restriction imposed on that right is, in their mind, automatically unjust and unjustified.

An offender on parole in Vermont was continually being charged with minor, technical violations. He had a long history of simple assault, including assault against officers. He was considered dangerous enough that these violations were threatening his parole status. In a counseling

session he reported these thoughts running through his mind before he committed these violations:

*I know that if I do this I will be going back to jail.
It's really starting to get to me.
I am feeling locked up in my own apartment.
I really resent this.
These rules don't make any sense.
I shouldn't have to follow these rules.
Maybe it would be better to just go back to jail and get my
sentence over with.
I feel like I'm not in charge of my life anymore.
I can't stand it.*

It is easy to see that these thoughts are setting a stage. In his mind, he is justified in defying the rules. More than that, he describes feeling that he has to defy the rules, just to feel in control of his life.

It would be practically impossible for this client to obey all the rules of supervision *as long as he carried and nurtured these kinds of thoughts in his mind*. Perhaps even more importantly, it was essentially this same kind of thinking that had lead in the past to acts of assault against officers.

*Who are you to be telling me this?
I'm not going to take it.*

Another inmate in a maximum security institution described why he assaulted correctional officers, knowing that the consequences would be spending months and even years in segregation. This inmate had committed 6 such assaults in the past 5 years. Officers had learned that whenever this inmate was ordered to do something, there was a risk of assault. They prepared for it, but the assaults continued. The inmate's explanation was brief and simple:

I just can't let them do it to me. I don't have a choice.

In his mind, orders from officers were a challenge to his pride and personal integrity. Punishment in segregation was a small price to pay, as he saw it, for preserving his pride.

Faced with this kind of defiance, it is tempting to up the ante by increasing the punitive consequences. But that can be a very dangerous tactic. We will almost certainly achieve compliance with our orders, provided the punishment is severe enough and authorities are present on the scene to enforce them. The long term consequences, when authorities are not immediately present, is quite another matter. The logic of the client's thinking demands retaliation. Unless that logic changes, increasing the stakes on our side is almost certain to increase them on his. Remember, from the client's point of view, his pride and integrity are at stake. From his point of view, backing down may not be an option.

This attitude of resistance to external control can become the dominant force in an offender's life. It may be displayed not just toward law enforcement and correctional officers, but in all situations in which the individual's behavior is in any way restricted. It can be their dominant attitude in their relationship with their wife, for instance. Or toward their parents or their employers or toward strangers who happen (as they see it) to get in their way.

Offenders are well known for their lack of concern for the consequence of their actions. In many cases this lack of concern is a learned skill: they learn ways of thinking (and ways not to think) that effectively eliminate concern for consequences.

A 35 year old offender described being arrested and detained when he was a child.

I was 11 years. I was being held in a detention center. I was told to quietly stand in the corner. I was so mad and felt so belittled that I began making a lot of noise knowing that I would be punished, further. I ended up getting stripped, cuffed, shackled and thrown into the hot room.

I thought:

Fuck him.

He can't tell me what to do.

I'll show him.

I don't care what he does to me.

Who's he think he is anyway?

*I can do whatever I want.
Fucking assholes.*

*I Felt: Belittled, Embarrassed, Spiteful, Challenged,
Vengeful, and Angry.*

This offender's ability for one brief moment to "not care what he does to me", gave him the license and the power to defy the authority around him. And that moment of defiance was self-rewarding. Even though he was punished, he no longer felt weak or belittled or embarrassed. Instead he felt powerful, even superior. These feelings were, for him, powerful reinforcers. He learned to feel good by defying authority. Some 24 years later (when he took part in a correctional program in Vermont) he was still doing it. Every day of his life under correctional supervision provided more provocation to his sense of integrity, and a new opportunity to bolster his self pride by defying it.

A client on parole who seemed genuinely motivated to change described his ways of thinking that had gotten him into trouble in the past. He was now struggling to control these thinking patterns. This was a violent offender from an inner city neighborhood who had spent several years in maximum security prisons.

When I was on the streets I had a serious complex about my image, and when I felt my image challenged I would immediately feel belittled or put down especially when I was around people. I've also felt this way when I found myself in a heated arguments or pressured situations and my thoughts become lost or confused.

I'd think:

I can't allow anyone to make me look like a punk in the eyes of others.

I have to be ruthless so people know I'm not to be fucked with. I must make them fear me to assure they like and respect me.

Like several of the other examples, this person resorted to intimidation and violence as an antidote to feeling belittled, put down, or inferior. It was a learned behavior that, in a practical and immediate kind of way, worked. Intimidation and violence felt good to him. He was able to pull it

off. But now he was setting out to change. His goal on parole was to live in society without violence and, as he put it, “to feel like I belong out there.” His old habits of thinking gave him lots to unlearn.

There are a whole cluster of antisocial attitudes and thinking patterns that lead to intimidation, defiance, and violence. Most of them are learned responses to feeling belittled, and most of them pay off with a feeling of power and self pride.

Sometimes these patterns are very personal and individual. With offenders who have spent much time in jail-or in gangs-defiance and violence may become a social norm. In the words of one offender, “Where I come from, the more notorious you are the higher up you are.” Defiance and violence pay off with social status and prestige.

This is a tough nut to crack. Change of these behavior patterns and the thinking that supports them cannot be accomplished by punishment and external controls alone. Change must take place at the level of basic attitudes and ways of thinking. Defiance and intimidation must somehow give way to cooperation.

Fortunately, corrections has an array of powerful resources, in the form of time and people, available to the task-provided, of course, that we are willing to apply them wisely.

This manual teaches some foundation skills and strategies for accomplishing this goal. The immediate objective of these skills is to minimize conflict and maximizing cooperation between probation and parole officers and non-compliant offenders under supervision.

SUMMARY OF THE MODULES

Module One: The Cognitive Foundations of Aggression

This lesson introduces the training program and presents the cognitive theory of aggression as described in the Introduction, “The Thinking Behind the Behavior.”

Module Two: Basic Correctional Skill Strategies

The skill strategies taught in this module are derived from three principles:

- 1) our responsibility to provide effective control and supervision of offenders,
- 2) the special characteristics of resistance, defiance and aggression posed by the most difficult correctional clients, and the thinking that supports those characteristics.
- 3) the goal of achieving a relationship with these clients based on cooperation.

The first principle is fundamental to all correctional supervision. Our responsibility to provide control, set limits, and impose consequences cannot be compromised in an effort to achieve cooperation. We do not shrink from or minimize this responsibility. This module teaches ways of communicating this responsibility to offenders, and our own determination to meet this responsibility, so that it is not perceived as a threat or personal power struggle between us and the client.

The second principle entails being sensitive to and conscious of the attitudes and thinking patterns that stand behind aggressive behavior. We need to understand what we are up against. Our understanding of these thinking patterns-not just in general but as they are experienced by individual offenders-provides a focus and target for our own communications and interventions.

The third principle is the specific goal of this manual. It is a premise of this manual that the goal is achievable. This means that even *given* the client's

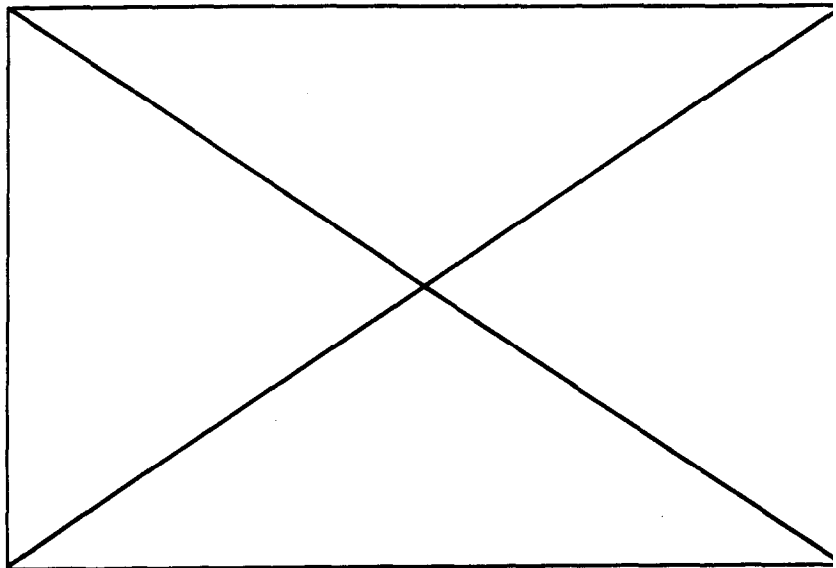
life long attitudes and thinking patterns that support aggression, and even *given* our unwavering responsibility to maintain controls and limits, that we can nevertheless achieve cooperation with these clients.

That this task is achievable at all is perhaps the most radical concept in this manual. One key to the concept is reflected in the choice of words by which we state our goal. That is, the goal is not cooperation *from* these clients, it is cooperation *with* them. We are not seeking compliance, but genuine cooperation. That means, among other things, that we must be willing to cooperate with them to the same extent we are asking them to cooperate with us.

The approach to aggressive offenders that derives from these 3 principles is presented as four distinct skill strategies. These are labeled clear goals, *depersonalize conflict*, *personalize cooperation*, and *choices*. These skill strategies are diagrammed at the 4 corners of a square:

Clear Goals

Personalize Cooperation



Depersonalize Conflict

Choices

The diagram represents the balance between the pairs of skills and the interconnection of all 4. The key to applying them successfully consists of applying them all together and at once.

Clear Goals includes several related elements of communication. It means, first of all, being clear about the goals, conditions, expectations, and consequences that you intend to apply to the client. It means defining clear behavioral limits, not only as conditions of supervision but as conditions of acceptable communication with you as an individual. It means defining clear consequences to the client's failure to meet these conditions, and following through with these consequences. It does not mean to threaten or intimidate. It means being straightforward, not manipulative, in all of your own communications. The ability to make and communicate all these distinctions effectively is part of the skill of Clear Goals.

Depersonalize Conflict means to depersonalize a) your authority, b) the specific controls you impose on the client, and c) the conflicts that may occur between you and the client. Depersonalization is an attitude. It means communicating that, as clear and inflexible as you are about your authority and responsibility, that "it's nothing personal." Your use of authority does not imply either a personal moral judgment or personal domination and control. The ability to convey this depersonalized attitude while at the same time upholding controls and authority requires a very high level of professional skill and discipline. It is a skill special to corrections and the law enforcement professions. This skill is essential if we are to keep our exercise of authority from degenerating into interpersonal conflict and a personal power struggle.

Personalize Cooperation means conveying your personal willingness to enter into a cooperative relationship with the client. It does not imply liking the client or approving of them. It does imply willingness to enter a genuine partnership. Like depersonalization, this skill involves an attitude. Communication of this attitude is a familiar and basic part of almost all prosocial relationships, in business and in life. But it has a unique application in corrections. All of society may choose to put the offender away and forget about them for as long as they can. But it is our role and professional responsibility to create cooperative relationships with these offenders. The ability to do that depends in part on how well we are able to communicate our willingness to do it. Many aggressive offenders have the mind set that all we are interested in is control and punishment. Communicating a contrary meaning demands a high level of professional

skill in communication. We are not being soft hearted. We are being businesslike in the business of corrections.

Choices means to communicate limits and controls in such a way that the client experiences making a choice. If clients are making conscious choices they are not responding automatically and there is less risk of serious conflict. In some cases we can present choices by simply describing what some of their choices are. But it is not always so simple. For one thing we cannot presume to define all of their choices for them. And we must be able to present responsible choices-i.e., the ones we want the client to make-as choices that are realistic options for that client. (Remember the inmate who explained his assaults against officers by saying, "I had no choice.") And this in turn entails understanding the subjective thinking processes of the client. Most of all, presenting choices is a communication strategy aimed at making the client realize that whatever he or she does, that they are choosing to do it and are therefore responsible for doing it. This skill calls for us to impose limits and controls on a client with full understanding of and respect for that client's option to choose, including their option to choose to defy us.

Module Three: Crises and Critical Situations

A critical situation is defined as one in which cooperation has seriously broken down.

The basic skill strategies from Module Two are the foundation for dealing with all correctional clients, in crises as well as routine situations. Nevertheless, crises and critical situations demand special attention and may demand special interventions and responses. All of the intervention skills appropriate to critical situations are compatible with the 4 basic skill strategies of Module Two. The 4 basic steps are to be followed no matter what special interventions may be called for. This includes the use of physical force in those situations which require it.

This module presents two additional strategies for dealing with critical situations, called: 1) *confidence check*, and 2) *imagination*.

In training we will take time to practice each of these strategies, and the steps within each strategy, carefully and deliberately. In life we may not

have the luxury of time. If the lessons of Module 1 are thoroughly learned, the steps of assessment and imagination can be practically automatic. The key to success is to apply a trained mind set to critical situations so that the process of problem solving is as automatic and instinctive as possible.

1. Confidence Check involves answering several questions, e.g., What is the risk in this situation? What are my skills and resources to cope with this risk? Do special steps need to be taken to establish safety and security?

In a serious crisis in which the risks are obvious and your skills and resources are obviously limited relative to the problem, the first question is clearly paramount.

The first principle of crisis intervention is to establish safety and security. Confidence in our ability to cope with, respond to, and control whatever situation a client is likely to present to us is the foundation for making our communication skills work. A corollary of this principle is, If you don't have that confidence, do what you need to do to get it. This may mean asking for training or special resources. It may mean asking for help.

The objective is to put ourselves, as quickly and directly as possible, into a confident position for responding to critical situations. In many cases this will be a simple mental process of recognizing risk, recalling our skills and resources, and applying them. The fact that no physical interventions are required does not mean that it is not important to practice the steps of the Confidence Check. Mental preparation is as critical as physical preparation. The point is to make decisions and take action as efficiently and rationally as possible. If we perform efficiently we can preserve the foundations of cooperation, even when the client presents us with a threatening crisis.

2. Imagination means: don't expect all the answers to be in the book. No skills training can accurately anticipate all the varieties of crisis we may encounter, or all of the specific resources that may be available (or lacking) in specific situations. The ability to apply imagination in critical situations is an important skill. It can be practiced and learned.

Module Four: Thinking Reports

Thinking reports are a cognitive technique for displaying the thinking patterns of clients. The reports of offender thinking in the first section of this Introduction are examples of thinking reports.

Thinking reports are objective reports of what goes on inside a person's mind during a specific situation and a specific period of time.

The power of thinking reports as a counseling technique lies in their capacity to display emotionally charged material in an objective, non-emotional way. For instance, by using thinking reports both offenders and counselors can discuss and examine the attitudes and thoughts behind the client's aggression without being caught up in that aggression.

In conflict situations between clients and officers, the use of thinking reports neutralizes the "us versus them." Whatever conflict is experienced, when that conflict is presented as a thinking report both client and officer can view the report as objective and neutral information. In effect, the use of thinking reports allows us to side step the conflict while observing its content. By practicing a non-judgmental attitude toward the client's thinking we establish a powerful foundation of cooperation.

The thinking displayed in thinking reports can become a target for change. If a client can interrupt, control or change the thinking that supports their antisocial behavior, they intervene in that behavior at its root. This is the principle of "self risk management," described in Module Six. Clients can learn which of their thoughts and feelings are indicators of risk for performing antisocial or other undesirable behaviors (for instance, drinking alcohol-if that is a special problem for them), and then control that risk by controlling that thinking.

Most important of all, the use of thinking reports together with the communication skills taught in this manual can open a clear channel of communication between client and officer. A clear channel of communication is in itself a strong deterrent to criminal behavior. Open and honest communication with a parole officer is incompatible with the deviousness and cognitive distortions which are an inevitable part of

criminal relapse. An offender who is being honest with us is almost certainly being honest with himself.

Module Five: The Follow-Up Interview

Probation and parole supervision has strong leverage for achieving cooperation with individual clients, just because supervision generally extends over a series of contacts and meetings. This means that present communications can build on the past, and the future can build on the present. Every interview with a client can be conceived as a follow up interview to previous 'interviews and contacts. If we use this leverage wisely and systematically, our series of contacts with a client can be a progression toward more and more meaningful cooperation.

This module concentrates on follow-up interviews after a critical situation has occurred.

There are two primary goals of the follow-interview: 1) to re-establish cooperation with the client after it has been lost or threatened, 2) to learn the client's individual thinking patterns and subjective responses in the critical situation.

Use of the follow-up interview is an extremely powerful tool. It has the potential for converting destructive crises into stepping stones toward cooperation.

There are 4 guidelines for follow-up interviews

- 1) Directly address the past critical situation
- 2) Apply the 4 basic skill strategies,
- 3) Emphasize the goal of cooperation.
- 4) Ask for a "thinking report" from the client. (Sharing a thinking report of your own about the same critical situation can be a useful strategy.)

Module Six: Cognitive Counseling Skills

Cognitive counseling--i.e., counseling which focuses on thinking patterns- can range from simple interviews to full fledged cognitive restructuring. The objectives of this module are to apply the skill strategies and cognitive techniques presented in Modules One through Five as a basis for teaching clients “self-risk-management” skills.

The process of cognitive self change and self-risk-management is conceptually quite simple. The client is taught to identify his or her thinking patterns which are most directly connected with their criminal behavior, and then taught simple techniques for controlling or eliminating these thinking patterns. Self-risk-management involves creating a structured plan for applying these controls.

FORMAT OF THE MODULES

Information to be directly presented to participants is written in bold type.

Information and guidelines for trainers is written in plain type, and is generally indented.

Information to be presented on a chart or overhead is written in bold type and enclosed in a box.

MODULE ONE

THE COGNITIVE FOUNDATIONS OF AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOR

Objectives:

1. Introduce the training curriculum.
2. Explain the cognitive theory of aggression.
3. Illustrate how understanding aggressive thinking can help us manage aggressive behavior.

Content:

Introduce yourself, the training schedule, and the overall structure of the training program.

Each participant should have read the introduction to this manual. The first section of that introduction, called, “The Thinking Behind the Behavior,” is the foundation and text for this module.

Lead a review and discussion of the main ideas.

Put the following on a flip chart:

Aggression is a learned behavior.
Thinking is a learned behavior
Thinking shapes and controls behavior.

Discuss each statement in turn.

This is the foundation of the cognitive approach to aggression. There are definite patterns of thinking underlying aggressive behavior.

It is essential that this idea be clearly understood. Note that “aggressive thinking” does not necessarily mean thinking specifically violent thoughts. It can include thoughts of being victimized, etc., which-for the moment-do not involve specific thoughts of committing violence. And not all aggressive offenders have exactly the same patterns of thinking. There are a number of variations of such patterns. But whenever a person has a pattern of aggressive behavior (and he is not psychotic) he is practically certain to practice patterns of thinking which justify and reinforce his aggression in his mind as an effective and appropriate way of coping with the world.

Refer to the examples from the text. Do they present a clear picture to the participants? Ask for comments, questions, and criticisms. Ask for other examples from the participant’s own experience.

What are some patterns of thinking that support aggressive behavior?

Ask them to describe the thinking illustrated in the examples from the text.. Write the group’s answers on a flip chart.

Extend the discussion until a rich variety of thinking is offered. Ask participants to explain how each example of thinking can work, in the mind of an aggressive person, to promote aggressive behavior. The goal here is to convey the idea that there is a “logic” to aggressive thinking.

Let’s consider an example of an aggressive offender. We can imagine that all of the thinking on the chart belonged to this offender.

You could also use an example of offender thinking from the introduction to this manual. The point is to imagine a clear and extreme case.

Consider 2 questions:

1. What kinds of things could we do or say as a probation and parole officer that would be likely to increase this person's aggression?
2. What could we say or do that might decrease his aggression.?

Use 2 flip charts. On one write the actions and words that would probably increase aggression. On the other write the actions and words that might decrease aggression.

Make sure that some of the suggestions are very threatening, controlling and punishing. The group should see that these will probably increase aggression.

Make sure that some of the suggestions are very forgiving, leaning over backwards to let the client have what he wants. The group should see that such strategies are inappropriate in corrections because they don't work. Avoiding aggression by appeasement only invites more threats and manipulation.

Review the main points of this lesson.

Ask participants to review the section of the Introduction on Module Two.

MODULE TWO

4 BASIC SKILL STRATEGIES

Objective:

Explain, illustrate and practice 4 basic skill strategies.

Content:

There are 4 basic skill strategies which form the heart of this training.

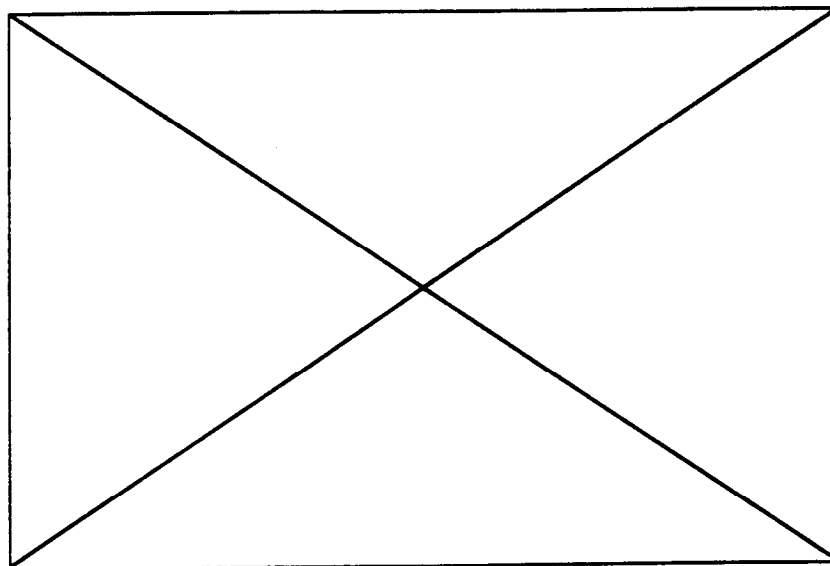
These are broad enough to apply to practically all our clients, whether or not they are particularly aggressive. They are also focused enough to serve as effective tools in dealing with our most aggressive clients. Later lessons will supplement these 4 basic skill strategies for dealing with more extreme forms of aggression.

We give these skill strategies these names: Clear Goals, Depersonalize Conflict, Personalize Cooperation, and Choices.

Display this chart. Keep it displayed throughout the training:

Clear Goals

Personalize Cooperation



Depersonalize Conflict

Choices

The corners of the square represent a balance between opposing skill strategies. The connections between them represent their interdependence. The idea is that all 4 of these skill strategies need to be applied together and all at once.

We will review each of these very briefly. Then we will devote considerable time to understanding and actually applying them.

Clear Goals is a reminder to be clear in our own minds just what our goals are for our clients. These include the limits and conditions, official and unofficial, we intend to impose on them. But they should also include the goal of cooperation (remember, cooperation is the goal of this training). Clarity implies an open and honest channel of communication between us and the offender.

Depersonalize Conflict refers to an attitude of our own, and communication of that attitude to our clients. Briefly, it means that when we use our authority, impose restrictions, or fall into conflict with a client, that these things are “nothing personal.” It means we don’t convey personal judgments or use our authority in a personal power struggle. To be effective, this message must be genuine. (Note: meaning what we say is part of the clear channel of communication.)

Personalize Cooperation is also an attitude and a message. It means that we are personally willing to enter into a cooperative partnership with the client, within the scope of our official relationship. The strategy and skill consists in getting the client to perceive this as a genuine personal communication from us to him. Remember, we are not “accepting him as he is.” We are entering a partnership to help change how he is.

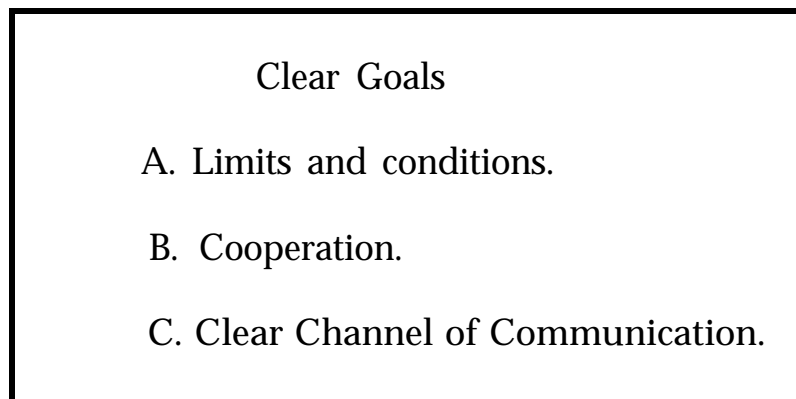
Choices means that we make the client aware that he or she has choices and that we are not going to make those choices for them. By placing choices with the client we avoid some of their resistance to being coerced and controlled. We also place responsibility for what they do on them, not ourselves. As a strategy for de-escalating conflict, forcing the client to make conscious choices breaks the momentum of their automatic (and potentially dangerous) responses.

Ask for responses and discussion on each of these skill strategies.

Participants should understand what they mean in a general way, and should see some surface plausibility in each of them as a strategy for dealing with defiant and aggressive clients. If they question the validity of any one, explain briefly, but not at great length. Ask the participants to suspend judgment until they experience the application of these strategies.

1. Clear Goals

Present this flip chart:



Briefly explain each of the terms:

Limits and conditions include the official restrictions and conditions you intend to impose on the client. But they also include those personal limits and conditions that are necessary to make your relationship with the client reasonably comfortable to you and productive to you both. (These limits should exclude rudeness and insults for example--even subtle ones that may not be officially punishable.)

Cooperation describes the quality of the relationship we intend to achieve with the client. Note that cooperation is a two-way relationship. (That is what makes it different from compliance.)

Open communication is also a two-way relationship. Are we prepared to be perfectly straightforward with the client, every step of the way? The openness and honesty we want from the client are the same qualities we need to present to him.

Ask for comments and responses from the participants. Are there philosophical disagreements? This should be expected. The strategies of cooperation and openness are contrary to some traditional correctional attitudes. Disagreement shows that people are paying attention.

Brief discussion of philosophical and moral opinions is OK, but don't enter into long discussions. The focus of this training is effectiveness. The foundation of these skills and strategies is not philosophical or moral, but practical. They work. Suggest to participants that effectiveness is the criteria that counts most.

Setting clear goals is essentially an activity that takes place inside our minds.

To practice this strategy we need to take time to picture our goals in our mind.

The ability to imagine a goal is one step toward achieving it.

Present the following demonstration:

1. Ask for a volunteer who has a client who always seems to be uncooperative and difficult. For this demonstration you don't want a client who is overtly threatening or violent.
2. Have the volunteer come to the front of the group and describe what this client is like. Ask her or him to describe a typical encounter with the client.
3. Refer to the chart of Clear Goals. On a fresh chart, ask the volunteer to "walk through" each of the 3 points as they apply to this client.

Limits/conditions: official and personal

Cooperation:

Clear Channel:

I.e., ask, what are her official and personal limits and conditions?

What kind of cooperation does she want to achieve with this client? Ask her to describe that cooperation in terms of the client's behavior and attitude. Does she feel willing to cooperate with the client? Does that willingness get communicated?

Is openness and honesty a goal with this client? Is she open and honest with him? Again, ask her to describe this goal in terms of behavior and attitude.

This is what setting clear goals amounts to. It's very simple. Of course, it may be easy to forget these good intentions when we get into a tough spot with the client. But goal setting is essentially a process of mental preparation that we perform inside of our own minds. It is a cognitive behavior.

Cognitive behaviors are the thoughts that go on inside our head. There's a way of demonstrating these thoughts, called "cognitive modeling."

Point your finger at your brain and say out loud some thoughts that you have (or might plausibly have) in your mind. The pointing of your finger and speaking your thoughts out loud is called "cognitive modeling."

We are going to be doing a lot of cognitive modeling in this training. Our skills and strategies involve paying attention to what's in our head, as much as to what we say and do.

Ask for another volunteer with another difficult client.

Go through the same steps as before, but this time move more quickly through the second step (cooperation), and third step (clear channel). Treat these points like a check list: Is cooperation a goal? Is it a 2-way relationship? Is open communication a 2-way goal with this client?

Then ask this volunteer to demonstrate what the opposite goals might be like. Ask him to imagine what it might be like not to have the goal of cooperation. (For instance, the goal might be simple compliance imposed by force.) If he does not come up with alternatives, ask the group for suggestions. Make your own suggestions if you have to.

Ask him to cognitively model this contrary thinking. Ask him to cognitively model a goal contrary to open communication. (The officer may be unwilling to be straightforward in his communication with the client, for instance, if his personal goal is to catch him screwing up and put him in jail.)

The point of this is to display the contrast between goals based on cooperation and openness, and some possible alternatives. Cooperation and openness are not empty words. They demand conscious and deliberate attention, and sometimes a lot of effort.

Finish this demonstration by asking the volunteer to cognitively model his actual goals for this client.

2. Depersonalize Conflict.

Display this chart:

Depersonalize-Your authority -Constraints -Conflict	“It’s nothing personal”
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What’s the difference between conflict that is personal and conflict that’s not?

Solicit brief discussion.

What's the difference between impersonal use of authority, and personal use? Can you give examples?

How is an aggressive client likely to perceive our use of authority?

Lead a brief discussion. The group should focus on clients' resentment of authority, and their tendency to perceive authority as an unjust intrusion into their right to live their life as they see fit.

If a client sees our authority as a personal abuse of power, does it make matters worse or better if we put a lot of personal feeling into it?

Help the group to see both how easy it is and how destructive it is to fall into personal conflict-us versus them-with correctional clients.

Lead the following series of demonstrations:

Ask the group to think about how they could demonstrate both a personalized and a depersonalized use of authority. When they think they can do it, ask them to raise their hand. Pick two of the first people to raise their hand as volunteers.

Tell these people to talk together for no more than 3 minutes to plan their demonstrations. They should take turns playing the parts of officer and client. Tell them to pay attention to both the thoughts and attitudes that go on inside their heads, as well as their communication to the client.

While they are planning their demonstrations, display the following chart to the group:

Thoughts, Internal Attitudes	Message Conveyed
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Explain to the group that you will ask the demonstrators to model their thinking as well as their interaction with the client. The group is

to watch and judge how successful they are in demonstrating the difference between “personalized” and “depersonalized” authority.

Ask the volunteers to present their first demonstration.

A. Start with the “personalized” use of authority. Have them first model their thinking (cognitive modeling), then their behavior. Then have them do the same with the “depersonalized” use of authority.

B. Now ask the group how well they succeeded in illustrating the difference. Ask the group specifically where and how they saw the difference being displayed.

C. Encourage discussion, comments, and questions.

D. Finally, ask the performers to describe their thoughts and feelings while they were being the client. Was there a difference?

Repeat this demonstration process two more times with two more pairs of volunteers.

1. Demonstrate a situation in which a specific restriction is being imposed on a client that the client doesn't like.

2. Demonstrate a situation in which emotional hostility begins to be displayed by the client, and the officer responds to control that hostility.

Continue demonstrations and discussion until the difference is clear and meaningful to the group, and everyone is confident that they can perform the skill strategy.

3. Personalize Cooperation

Display the following chart:

Personalize Cooperation-an internal attitude.

-a message

-does not compromise limits, controls

Briefly explain the chart. Emphasize the third point: personal cooperation does not mean abandoning control. In fact, the skill strategy of cooperation is only effective when it is applied in conjunction with controls. This point is critical to overcoming some forms of staff resistance to cooperation with correctional clients. It is not a question of either/or-control or cooperation-it is both. In an important sense, the ability to do both at once is what this training is all about.

Explain the connection between depersonalized conflict and personalized cooperation:

The strategy is to depersonalize conflict and to personalize cooperation.

This puts our personal relationship with the client in a positive light. The negative parts-restrictions and controls-are purely business, nothing personal.

This should not be the slightest bit dishonest on our part. The fact is that restrictions and controls are purely business. They are necessary and legitimate constraints on the client for the protection of society. They are necessary because of the client's behavior. But personally judging or condemning the client is no part of our job. And neither is personal domination in a battle of wills.

Cooperation is part of our job. It is not based on personally "liking" our clients. But cooperation is a genuine interpersonal relationship. The connection between the client and us needs to be a personal and human one, or the client will discount it as meaningless.

Lead a discussion of these ideas.

Then display this chart:

Cooperation acts/attitudes/messages	Non-Cooperation acts/attitudes/messages

Ask the group to describe actions, attitudes, and messages that define cooperation, and examples that define non-cooperation. Write their responses in two columns under the above headings.

Cooperation examples could include respect (an attitude), statements of willingness to cooperate, finding of common goals with the client. Non-cooperation could include threats (tones as well as words), intimidation, messages of contempt, adversarial definition of roles (e.g., “cops and robbers”).

Continue discussion until the concepts are clear. Then lead the following demonstrations:

Tell the group we are going to do more demonstrations. Ask them to imagine how they could demonstrate examples of personal cooperation and non-cooperation. When they are ready, ask them to raise their hand.

A. Pick one volunteer. Ask that person to pick a partner for their demonstration.

B. Have them take 3-5 minutes to prepare the demonstration. They should do this out loud, in full view of the group, so that we all see what they are setting up.

C. They then present the demonstration, using cognitive modeling. Refer to the previous chart:

Thoughts, Internal Attitudes	Message Conveyed

D. Ask the group for their feedback: Did they demonstrate the difference? Exactly where and how?

E. End the demonstration by asking the “clients” to describe their thoughts and feelings during each of the demonstrations. Was there a difference?

Continue with additional demonstrations until a variety of different situations are displayed.

4. Choices

Presenting choices to clients is a complex and subtle skill strategy. It sometimes involves offering choices. Offering choices keeps us away from a purely coercive and controlling relationship. Sometimes it involves forcing choices. When a client is reacting automatically to what he or she perceives as a threatening form of interference, it is important to break up their automatic reaction by forcing them to make conscious and deliberate choices. Either way, placing choices with the client is a foundation of effective strategy with correctional clients. With aggressive clients it is critical.

This idea is contrary to some common beliefs. Aggressive clients need more control, and therefore less choices, don't they?,

Remind the group that none of these strategies, including Choices, compromises or diminishes the other elements of strategy. In particular, presenting choices does not diminish our commitment to maintain limits and control. But within the framework of limits and controls, there is a world of choices to be made. We need to give these special attention and special emphasis.

Present the following chart:

- | |
|---|
| <p>Choices- softens coercion and controls</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- implies respect- communicates confidence- diverts automatic reactions- places responsibility |
|---|

Briefly discuss each point in turn.

Note the importance and effect of conveying interpersonal respect. This is an essential part of achieving genuine cooperation.

Communication of confidence means that we are prepared to deal with any choice that the client may make.

Placement of responsibility is a fundamental goal. Aggressive clients typically place responsibility for their behavior on us, not on themselves. ("I had no choice.") Acceptance of responsibility is essential to long term behavior change. The strategy of Choices is a powerful tool for reaching that goal.

How do we communicate to the client that he or she has choices?

Ask for examples and discussion.

Point out that presenting choices should meet these 3 criteria:

Presenting Choices:

1. Communicate: "It's up to you."
2. Take the threat out of consequences.
3. Convey your readiness to deal with any choice.

"It's up to you" is a simple message. It can be said. It can also be conveyed by our tone and attitude.

Our job always involves enforcing conditions and consequences for breaking those conditions. The problem is that this makes it easy to fall into a threatening posture with our clients. Presenting choices involves defining conditions and consequences without being threatening. (This depends on our ability to depersonalize our use of authority.) Communicating this meaning requires a high level of skill. This skill is part of what makes us correctional professionals.

Finally, we need to convey that we are prepared to deal with any choice they make. We have a professional response for anything they are likely to do. This means we can remain objective and professionally detached toward their choice. This also means they have nothing to gain by challenging our ability to respond.

Tell the group we are going to practice demonstrations of the strategy of Choices. We want to communicate that the client has a choice, in a variety of different situations. As before, part of the demonstration will be to model the opposite-communicating to the client that they do not have a choice.

Demonstrate an example of presenting choices: Describe a scene in which a client in your office refuses to sit down. Instead he walks back and forth. When you ask him to sit down he says "I don't want to," and keeps walking.

Ask a group member to play the client. You be the probation officer.

While standing, say in a loud voice, “Look. Sit down right now or I’ll bring the police in here and make you sit down.”

Did this convey to the client that he had choices? (Obviously not)

Now sit down yourself. In a calm voice say, “It’s up to you. If we’re going to talk you will have to sit down. If you don’t sit down our talk is over. What do you want to do?”

Ask the “client” to describe his thoughts and feelings during these two demonstrations. Was there a difference?

Let’s suppose that the client still didn’t sit down. What now?

The situation has now changed. The original conversation is over. Now the problem is what to do about this person walking back and forth in my office. Get some suggestions from the group. Evaluate them by the 3 criteria of presenting choices.

Pick a reasonable option. For instance, say to the client, “If you keep walking back and forth I will need to get help to have you removed from here. Or you can just leave. It’s your choice. What do you want to do?”

Point out that making this statement commits you to getting help and having the person removed if he chooses not to leave.

Bluffing is not part of the strategy.

The problem will remain, of course, what to do with him once he is gone from the office. But for now we are just practicing the strategy of Choices.

Option 1: Repeat demonstrations using pairs of participants until the strategy is clear.

Option 2: Have the participants break into groups of 6. Have each participant describe a scene, and then demonstrate to the rest of the group how to convey choices and how not to convey choices.

In either option, include each of the demonstration steps:

- A. Use cognitive modeling.
- B. Demonstrate both conveying choices and conveying no choices.
- C. Get group feedback. How and where did the communication work?
- D. Ask the “client” to report their thoughts and feeling during each form of demonstration. Was there a difference?

1. Confidence in our ability to cope with, respond to, and control any behavior a client is likely to present is essential to the effectiveness of all of our skill strategies. It is only when we are prepared to deal with non-cooperation that we are in a position to achieve cooperation.

The first principle of coping with critical situations is this:

Have confidence in your ability to cope with the situation. If you don't have confidence, do what you have to do to get it.

2. This strategy calls for us to make a conscious decision what to do, based on the risk and our resources.

“Use imagination” means, don't expect all of the answers to be in the book. The ability to use imagination in critical situations can be our most important skill. We will practice it in some of our demonstrations.

We can apply these skill strategies by following this check list of questions and actions:

Critical Situations Check List:

1. What is the immediate risk?
2. What is the scope of the threatening behavior?
3. What are my skills and resources?
4. Do I need help?
5. Decide what to do.
6. Proceed, using the 4 basic skill strategies.

Briefly review each step. Step 2 involves estimating what kind of problem you are facing by considering how the client's present behavior fits with what you know about that client's past behavior. Is this a rare event, or has it typical? Knowing the scope of the behavior helps us to perceive the problem objectively. (It can also be an important part of our long term-i.e., non-crisis-response to the behavior.)

Be sure the participants are clear about the meaning of each item.

Then present the following demonstration:

- A. Ask for a real life example of a critical situation.
- B. Have 2 (or more) participants play the scene for about 1 minute.
- C. As soon as the nature of the crisis is clear, have them stop. Then ask the group to review each item on the check list. (What is the immediate risk?, etc.) Reach a consensus decision for the fifth step.
- D. Have the participants complete the scene, following the strategy decision of the group.
- E. End by asking the "client" for their thoughts and feelings throughout the demonstration.

Review the demonstration with the group. Did the strategy appear to be effective? Was each step important?

Then assign the following exercise:

- A. Assign the participants into small groups of no more than six members.
- B. Each member is to write a brief (2-3 lines) description of a critical situation they have experienced with a client. (Note: the

exercise will be more effective if they pick situations that did not turn out particularly well.) Then they are to write brief answers to each of the first 5 items on the check list.

C. Each participant then describes their critical situation to their group and presents their check-list analysis.

D. The group gives feedback and suggestions.

E. Finally, the group selects one sample critical situation to demonstrate for the large group. Everyone in the small group should help with the check list items.

Give the groups 20 minutes per person to complete the process.

When the small groups are finished, each of the groups will demonstrate the critical situation they selected to the large group. Have them cognitively model the steps of the check list.

Review each demonstration with all the participants.

2. The Critical Review.

We can convert each negative experience with a client into a positive learning experience by applying two simple strategies of review:

- 1) Conduct a staff Critical Review of the situation as soon as possible after it occurs.
- 2) Conduct a follow-up interview with the client. (The follow-up interview is described in Module Five.)

The staff Critical Review is a systematic review of the critical situation to discover what went wrong and what can be learned from it. It is an objective process of learning, not an investigation to fix blame.

The six points on the Critical Situations Check List provide a convenient structure for conducting a Critical Review.

Critical reviews should be conducted as a matter of routine. This demands administrative planning and supervision. It is worth doing. Systematic reviews of critical situations, performed regularly, are a powerful tool for transforming problems and crises into training.

MODULE FOUR

THINKING REPORTS: A BASIC COUNSELING TOOL

Objective:

Learn the technique of thinking reports, and be able to apply it in routine counseling situations.

Content:

We are already quite familiar with the idea of thinking reports. Most of our demonstration exercises have included reports of the thoughts and feelings experienced by the players. Our cognitive modeling is also a kind of thinking report.

Display the following chart:

Thinking Reports:

-An objective report of what goes on in a person's mind during a specific situation and period of time.

Thinking reports are a very powerful tool for communicating with correctional clients, particularly aggressive and resistant clients.

List the following points about thinking reports.

- “objectify” emotional experiences.
- defuse emotional conflict.
- present a neutral focus of attention for officer and client.
- display targets for change: cognitive interventions.

Thinking reports are presented in 3 basic steps. We will add one additional step that points the way toward the use of thinking reports in counseling and long range change.

Thinking Report Steps

1. A brief description of the situation.
2. A detailed report of thoughts.
3. A brief report of feelings.
4. (the extra step) Identification of any significant patterns displayed in the thinking report.

Ask for a volunteer who has had a frustrating experience with a client.

Ask them to briefly describe the situation.

Then ask them to report the thoughts that ran through their mind, as accurately as they can remember them.

Then ask them for the feelings they experienced.

That is a thinking report. (We didn't do step 4.)

Pick another volunteer to be the client in this situation. Have both volunteers demonstrate the scene to the large group. (Do not do cognitive modeling.)

Imagine that some time has gone by since the last critical situation, so that feelings have settled down. It could be the next scheduled meeting with the client.

Have the “officer” ask the “client” for their thinking report.

Ask the officer whether they see a significant pattern in the thinking. Did it seem typical? Does the thinking reported help to explain their behavior? Do they see how changing that thinking could help to change that behavior?

Review the thinking report with the group.

Do more demonstrations of critical situations, with the officer giving a thinking report and then asking the client for their thinking report.

(Note: this exercise is similar to parts of previous exercises.)

Do you think we can get clients to give us thinking reports in real life situations?

Thinking reports can help us achieve cooperation with clients. When we have that cooperation they can be powerful counseling tools.

MODULE FIVE

THE FOLLOW-UP INTERVIEW

Objective:

Learn the method and application of follow-up interviews to critical situations.

Content:

Critical situations, as we use the term in this manual, are any situations in which cooperation between client and officer has broken down. Critical situations have the potential for permanently destroying cooperation. An effective follow-up interview has the potential for converting a threatening crisis into a positive gain in cooperation.

Follow-up interviews have two main objectives:

Objectives

1. (re)-establish cooperation with the client.
2. learn the client's thinking patterns during critical situations.

The second objective - identifying the client's thinking patterns in critical situations-becomes the foundation of cognitive counseling skills (Module Six).

Follow-up interviews apply the skills of previous lessons to reach these two objectives. They don't involve any totally new skills or strategies.

Elements of Follow-Up Interviews:

1. Address the crisis situation.
2. Apply the 4 basic skill strategies.
3. Emphasize the goal of cooperation.
4. Use Thinking Reports

It is sometimes helpful to give a thinking report of your own on the critical situation. This can demonstrate the process as well as demonstrating your willingness to be non-judgmental about the conflict.

Present the following demonstration:

Pick a critical situation from a previous exercise.

Ask for two participants to demonstrate a follow-up interview. Imagine that this is the next scheduled appointment between the officer and the client.

Make sure the person being the officer understands the two objectives and the 4 elements of the follow-up interview.

The client enters the room, sits down, and the officer begins the interview. Let them play the scene through.

Review the process:

A. Ask the two demonstrators for their feeling about how it went.

B. Ask the group for feedback on the 4 elements of the interview. Was each element included? Did the officer

effectively utilize the basic skill strategies? Finally, did he or she reach the objectives of the interview?

Ask the participants to return to their small groups. This time each person will demonstrate a follow-up interview with the client who was the subject of their critical situation in Module 3. The group will critique their interview using the 2 objectives and 4 elements on the above charts.

MODULE SIX

COGNITIVE COUNSELING SKILLS

Objective:

Present an outline for using Thinking Reports and the basic skill strategies to teach clients “self-risk-management” skills.

Content:

The power of thinking reports to promote a clear channel of communication was discussed in Module Four. If a client is discussing his aggressive thinking in an objective way with his parole or probation officer, he is not running out that thinking in a destructive and obstructing way. It is not possible to do both at once.

This module is necessarily brief. The goal of this manual is not to train counselors or therapists, but to help probation and parole officers achieve a cooperative relationship with their clients.

But the essential skills for cognitive counseling are the very same skills already practiced in this training. The attitudes that need to change to achieve cooperation are essentially similar to the attitudes that need to change to avoid criminal behavior. There is no reason why a motivated officer cannot apply the basic skill strategies of this training to accomplish long term change in their client’s criminal behavior. That change will-at some point-require the active effort and cooperation of the client,. but that, after all is what this manual is all about.

he essential steps of cognitive counseling to achieve long term change are these:

Long Term Change

1. With the client: identify their thinking patterns that are most directly connected with their criminal behavior (or other target behavior, such as alcohol consumption, etc.)
2. Teach the client elementary cognitive interventions to control these thinking patterns:
 - Thought stopping (e.g., “Here I go again.”)
 - Self Talk
3. Help the client design a comprehensive “self-risk-management-plan” to keep the patterns under control.
4. Review and support their efforts.