

## **COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING**

### ***(What kind of program is it? How does it "fit" with Restorative Justice?)***

Cognitive methods of personal control have been applied to nearly all aspects of life. Addictions, depression, personality disorders and a variety of other conditions are targeted by cognitive methods of intervention. The presumption is that the way an individual thinks has a great deal to do with her behavior, learning ability and coping in general. Group members are taught to identify errors in thinking by definition and by awareness of those errors as they have manifested in daily living situations. The purpose of the program is to explore errors in thinking, specifically as they apply to the individuals involved in the group with emphasis on how they apply to problems leading to recidivism.

The key idea is simply this: relevant correctional change must include a change in the offender's fundamental concept and perception of authority, rules and accountability. This marks the essential difference between pro-social and anti-social attitudes and behaviors. It is the crux of correctional change.

It is useful to conceive of correctional intervention as a message from society to offenders. The content of this message should include three basic elements:

1. Our society's determination to enforce social limits and enforce the law.
2. Extension of a genuine opportunity to change.
3. Respect for the offender's capacity to make her own choice.

In this message, security (in the broad sense of the term which includes law enforcement and accountability) and treatment are complementary. Neither is an isolated component; each derives its meaning by its relation to the other. The same applies to the condition of respect. Society must not impose an insurmountable barrier between itself and the guilty offender.

Motivation for self-change is developed out of a triangulation of forces. Legitimate limit-setting and accountability, along side of realistic opportunity to change, creates a leverage for change. When that leverage is supported and strengthened by basic respect for the offender, a respect which does not compromise accountability but which recognizes the offender's autonomy and genuinely invites her to join with society, the result is powerful force for change.

Cognitive Restructuring is the first, important step to cognitive change. An offender learns about her own attitudes, belief system and thinking patterns. It works hand-in-glove with our existing Critical Thinking Skills which teaches the second step. An offender learns skills, both thinking skills (problem-solving, assertiveness, negotiation) and social skills (interacting with groups, relationships, the management of emotions). It smoothly co-exists with current, on-going programming such as addiction treatment and parenting and with life skills as taught through educational and vocational classes.

The Cognitive Restructuring curriculum, developed by John Bush, was made available to attending MCF/Shakopee staff at a National Institute of Corrections Training Academy in May, 1995. The complete curriculum involves three phases; because of time constraints, Shakopee is concentrating on the first phase only which is part of an "options package" sent in cooperation with Bush by the NIC and all free of charge. Shakopee began inmate classes in mid-November, 1996. The target group is inmates in the Reception and Orientation program, offenders who are either new to the institution or who have re-offended and returned. Classes run Monday through Friday, Noon to 4:00 p.m. daily, alternating weeks with Victim Impact classes. Staff at Shakopee are proud to be active participants in the Restorative Justice philosophy.

COGNITIVE RESTRUCTURING  
PHASE I

- Lesson 1.....Introduction
- Lesson 2.....The Idea of Cognitive Self-change
- Lesson 3.....Different Points of View
- Lesson 4.....Thinking That Gets Us Into Trouble
- Lesson 5.....Thinking Errors, Part I
- Lesson 6.....Thinking Errors, Part II
- Lesson 7.....Thinking Reports, Part I
- Lesson 8.....Thinking Reports, Part II
- Lesson 11.....The Change Process
- Lesson 12.....Interventions For Change
- Lesson 13.....Barriers To Change
- Lesson 14.....Review

## **PHASE I REQUIREMENTS**

### **TASKS**

1. Learn the basic principles of Cognitive Self Change:
  - A. What we do in our minds controls what we do in our lives.
  - B. We can control the course of our lives by controlling what we do in our minds.
2. Learn how to do Thinking Reports of our thoughts and attitudes.
3. Identify one key pattern of thinking that has led me to violent or criminal behavior in the past.
4. Identify one realistic alternative or intervention in this pattern of thinking.

### **PARTICIPATION**

1. Attendance, punctuality and completion of assignments.
2. Keep an open channel of communication. This means:
  - A. Help myself and others to complete the tasks of Phase I by maintaining a business-like approach to group work.
  - B. Present real, honest and meaningful Thinking Reports.

### **TIME REQUIRMENTS**

Phase I is 14 sessions over a one-week period of time (20 hours).

***Completion of Phase I is not automatic by attending all group sessions. The task and participation requirments must also be met. People who fail to meet minimum expectations of task completion and participation will be dropped from the program.***