

Cognitive Model

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT) is a form of psychotherapy that arose in the 1950s from a merger of Cognitive and Behavioral Therapies (Spiegler & Guevremont, 2003). Originally, CBT was not a technique for rehabilitating offenders, but rather a briefer, more time-limited, form of therapy aimed at treating specific psychological disorders, such as anxiety or psychotic disorders. It was not until the 1970s that Samuel Yochelson and Stanton Samenow (Samenow, 1984 & Yochelson & Samenow, 1977) pioneered the use of CBT within the criminal population. Current research establishes CBT as an evidence-based form of treatment and shows that it yields the strongest, most consistent benefit in reducing recidivism (for systematic reviews see Lipsey, Chapman, and Landenberger, 2001; Wilson, MacKenzie & Bouffard, 2005; Pearson, Lipton, Cleland, & Yee, 2002).

CBT emphasizes the important role that thoughts and feelings play in determining behavior. In essence, CBT states that our thoughts about a particular external situation, rather than the situation itself, determine our behavior in response to that situation. The benefit of this is that even though most situations are outside our control, we do have control over our thoughts and therefore our behavior (Beck, 1970 & 1976; Ellis, 1991 & 2001). By introducing the cognitive model (Figure 2) to the offender, the officer can begin the process of restructuring antisocial thoughts and help the offender learn to replace them with alternative, pro-social thoughts, which lead to changes in behavior. Teaching this model helps the offender see and understand the connection between thinking and behavior. The cognitive model is an easy-to-understand, pictorial representation of how events can trigger thoughts/feelings, which cause the behavior. For many offenders, behaviors happen so quickly and automatically that they pay little attention to the thoughts that come in between. By initiating a discussion about the cognitive model, officers can help offenders start the process of identifying and paying attention to high-risk thoughts that typically have led to irresponsible behavior and creating new thinking patterns likely to decrease criminal behavior.

Among key terms in explaining the cognitive model are thoughts and replacement thoughts. In this model there are external and internal events. An external event is anything that happens outside your control.

External events are things like someone cutting you off in traffic, spilling coffee on you, yelling at you, etc. They are things that you cannot control. Internal events are **thoughts** that we have about the external event.

Thoughts include attitudes, thoughts, values, and beliefs that a person experiences in response to an event. They are seemingly automatic in that they might be quickly recalled when an event occurs. These thoughts are at times so automatic that the offender might not even be aware that they are occurring. These thoughts may provide direct support for engaging in criminal behavior (e.g., "it's okay to beat someone up if they disrespect you"), or they may provide indirect support by neutralizing or justifying the criminal behavior (e.g., "corporations have insurance to cover the loss, so my stealing didn't really hurt anyone").

Thoughts can occur before the behavior, thereby supporting its use, and/or after a behavior, thereby excusing or justifying its use. Once a problematic thought is identified, the process of cognitive restructuring begins by developing **replacement thoughts**.

Replacement thoughts

are alternative thoughts that replace the old thoughts to help produce new outcomes. Start by explaining the purpose and components of the **cognitive model** using the **steps** listed below.

1. Identify a problem behavior or situation that would benefit from the cognitive model and offer the model as a solution.

- a. Choose a non-threatening example like being cut off in traffic or someone bumping into you.
- b. Use the hand-out (Fig. 5.1) as a guide.

2. Explain the three main components of the cognitive model.

- a. Explain that there are external events that occur, internal events (our thoughts), and then our behavior.
- b. Stress the importance of paying attention to the internal thoughts that occur in response to the external situation that led to the behavior.
- c. Explain to the offender how developing replacement thoughts can lead to different behavior.

3. Ask the offender to examine his situation using the cognitive model.

- a. Discuss how initial thoughts lead to one outcome and replacement thoughts would lead to another.

4. Contract with the offender to use the cognitive model in a future situation.

- a. If time permits, work through a real-life example.
- b. Take notes using the hand-out Figures 5.1 and 5.2.

Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (CBT)

- ◆ Evidence-Based treatment
- ◆ Yields the strongest, most consistent benefit in reducing recidivism
- ◆ Emphasizes the important role that thoughts and feelings have in determining behavior
- ◆ Cognitive Model
- ◆ A pictorial representation of external events, thoughts, and the resulting behavior

Benefits of teaching the Cognitive Model

- ◆ Increases offender's awareness of high risk thoughts that typically lead to trouble
- ◆ Helps the offender see and understand the connection between thinking and behavior

Starts the process of restructuring antisocial thoughts and replacing them with alternative, pro-social thoughts (replacement thoughts).