Butterfly Effect.
Helping Clients Understand the Consequences of Addiction and Criminal Behavior.

Atlantis Chemical Dependency
Treatment Program
Minnesota Department of Corrections at Stillwater

• Marc McShane, LADC, MN Department of Corrections.
• Vera Edokpayi, LADC, MN Department of Corrections.

Reasons why this discussion needs to happen:

• Examine the effect of one’s behavior on others, creating personal responsibility and the means to process one’s thoughts, feelings and behavior.
• Not every addict or criminal lacks empathy.
• Need to understand the characteristics of the criminal personality which contribute to having a lack of empathy towards others, particularly their victims.
• Need for an effective intervention which incorporates self-reflection while building the capacity for empathy.
What is the Butterfly Effect?

- (with reference to chaos theory) the phenomenon whereby a minute localized change in a complex system can have large effects elsewhere.
- noun
- 1. a cumulatively large effect that a very small natural force may produce over a period of time.
- the idea, used in chaos theory, that a very small difference in the initial state of a physical system can make a significant difference to the state at some later time.

How does the Butterfly Effect pertain to a criminal population?

- Intergenerational, cumulative effect of learned thought patterns, exhibited feelings and negative behavior.
- The narcissistic nature of the criminal mind impedes the ability to produce authentic empathy towards others, particularly the criminal's victims.
- Often the affect of one's actions on the thoughts and feelings of the other, is unrecognized by the criminal mind.
- A "ripple effect" of negative thoughts, feelings and behavior is often produced by criminal behavior, setting up conditions for the same "environment" to be reproduced. This ripple effect causes damage to relationships and society at large.

Eliciting Empathy.

- It is necessary to present therapeutic strategies which can assist clients in understanding the impact of their addiction and criminal behavior on others, by examining their thought processes and the ripple effect that their criminal behavior creates.
Overview

- Several research models have established a link between Substance Abuse and intimate partner violence.
- Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is one approach used to connect a client’s thought process with their feelings and subsequent behavior.
- Moral Reconation Therapy (MRT) was developed by Kenneth Robinson and Gregory Little. As a CBT based therapy model, MRT refers to the process of making deliberate, conscious moral decisions.
- Reasoning and Rehabilitation program. Based on their empirical research that sought to identify effective intervention strategies for offending behavior, Ross and Fabiano (1985) proposed a cognitive model of offender rehabilitation and delinquency prevention. The main principle is that cognition plays a vital part in criminal behavior. Deficits in cognitive skills influence the onset and maintenance of offending behavior.

MRT is grounded in the framework of cognitive behaviorism, and draws inspiration from Kohlberg’s (1976) theory of moral development.

“The implications of Kohlberg’s and Gibbs’ theories of moral development are clear. Breaking the law would seem more acceptable to those at the earlier, more self-centered, stages of development. According to Little and Robinson (1988), offenders “enter treatment with low levels of moral development, strong narcissism, low ego/identity strength, poor self-concept, low self-esteem, inability to delay gratification, relatively strong defense mechanisms, and relatively strong resistance to change and treatment” (p. 135). Consequently, MRT seeks to move offenders from a lower, hedonistic level of moral reasoning (pleasure vs. pain) to a higher level where social rules and others become important.”

- MRT has a deficit orientation that focuses on several areas, including confrontation of beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, assessment of current relationships, reinforcement of positive behavior and habits, positive identity formation, development of frustration tolerance, and development of higher stages of moral reasoning.
1988: Moral Reconciliation Therapy is introduced into the criminal justice system.

- MRT seeks to move offenders from a lower, hedonistic level of moral reasoning (pleasure vs. pain) to a higher level where social rules and others become important.
- The appropriateness of such a strategy is supported by a recent meta-analysis that found a negative relationship between moral development and the recidivism of offenders.

Little and Robinson (1988), found offenders "enter treatment with low levels of moral development, strong narcissism, low ego/identity strength, poor self-concept, low self-esteem, inability to delay gratification, relatively strong defense mechanisms, and relatively strong resistance to change and treatment."

Development of Criminal Thinking Errors.

Cognitive behavioral treatment of felony drug offenders: a five-year recidivism report.

Little GL1, Robinson KD, Burnette KD.

- 70 male felony offenders treated with the cognitive behavioral approach of Moral Reconciliation Therapy during and after reincarceration were assessed for reincarceration and rearrests five years after their release. They were compared to a nontreated control group of 82 male felony offenders.
The five-year report found:

- Reincarceration in the treated group (37.1%) was significantly lower than recidivism in controls (54.9%).
- Also, the treated group showed fewer rearrests and fewer days of additional sentence.

Furthermore:

- In 2010, in its latest efforts to bolster its claims of success, CCI published “Twenty-Year Recidivism Results for MRT-Treated Offenders” (Little, Robinson, Burnette, & Swan, 2010). Results from the analysis of the post-release criminal records of 1,052 MRT-treated offenders and 329 untreated controls revealed a similar pattern to that which was reported after 10 years (Little, Robinson, Burnette, & Swan, 1999).

The researchers concluded as follows: the present study clearly shows that offender participation in MRT leads to significantly lower re-incarceration rates, lower re-arrest rates, and a higher rate of clean records following MRT.
Because MRT takes a cognitive-behavioral approach, it assumes that cognitions affect behaviors, which we can monitor and alter our cognitive activity, and that changes in cognitions lead to changes in behavior.

Reasoning And Rehabilitation

- The aim of the multi-modal R&R program is to teach offenders “how to think, not what to think” (Robinson & Porporino, 2001, p. 180). The idea is that, when they are equipped with thinking skills, offenders will make prosocial behavioral choices that will allow them to move out of an offending lifestyle, which had previously been reinforced by poor thinking skills or criminal thinking.

- The aim of cognitive/behavioral treatment program is to change the criminogenic thinking of offenders. Cognitive skills are taught to enable offenders to react more appropriately to situations that trigger their criminal behavior. The “Reasoning and Rehabilitation” (R&R) program is one example. It was developed in Canada and seeks to teach offenders the following cognitive and behavioral skills: social skills, lateral thinking, critical thinking, values education, assertiveness training, negotiation skills, interpersonal training and social perspective taking (Ross, Fabiano & Ewles, 1988).
Criminal Thinking Errors

1. Closed Thinking
2. Victim Stance
3. Views Self As A Good Person
4. Lack of Effort
5. Lack of Interest in Responsible Performance
6. Lack of Time Perspective
7. Fear of Fear
8. Power Thrust
9. Uniqueness
10. Ownership Attitude

Closed Thinking

Closed minded, secretive, and self righteous.
The person is unreceptive to new information;
The person is unwilling to disclose;
The person is unwilling to be self-critical.
The are closed to anything that challenges their personal reality and view of the world.

The Victim Stance:

Definition: When the criminal is held accountable for their irresponsible actions, they blame others and portray themselves as a victim.
The Victim Stance:

- Blaming of others and portray self as the victim.
- Family: blaming family as being too strict, too lenient, uncaring, overly protective, too demanding, not demanding enough, abusive, absent, drug and alcohol addiction, etc.
- Psychological factors: focusing on the disadvantages in their lives. E.g. living conditions, father missing, etc.
- Fate: "He is just like his father";
- Past history: "because what I did in the past, people now hold that against me and won’t give me a chance"

There are six (6) things that put the criminal thinker in victim stance:

- Over reacting to not getting their way.
- Self-centeredness.
- Believing they are misunderstood and mistreated.
- Believing rules don’t apply to them.
- Believing they do not have choices.
- Having no empathy for their victims.

Views Self as a Good Person:

- They believe they are good and decent people and reject the thought of themselves as a criminal.
- Focusing only on positive attributes.
- Fragmenting and compartmentalizing their lives.
- Comparing themselves to others who are worse.
- Minimizing irresponsibility.
Lack of Effort:

- The person is not lacking energy, however their energy is applied to what they want to do putting little effort towards what they should be doing. Effort is what it takes for them to do something they don’t want to do.
- "can’t", "wont", "boring", "stupid"
- "I’ll try" – means "I have no intention doing it, but I want to get you off my back"

Lack of Interest in Responsible Performance:

- Success is not defined with concepts such as working hard in cooperation with others to achieve something for the mutual good. It is defined as getting their way regardless of who will get hurt in the process. Success is self-centered, immediate and very easy.
- Limited ability to set goals.
- Lack of effort.
- Lack of persistence.

Lack of Time Perspective:

- Driven by a desire for immediate gratification, which often results in impulsive behavior.
- They learn to take shortcuts, quick fixes, power and control to get what they want.
- Avoid fact-finding because they think it is an admission of ignorance.
- Operate with “Tunnel Vision”, which eliminates the consideration of options or consequences.
Fear of Fear:
- Want others to think he is fearless.
- Fear of being vulnerable.
- Not anyone to get close; lack of trust.
- False pride.
- Cut Off – elimination of fear/no consideration for consequences.
- Corrosion of Conscience.

Power Thrust:
- The need to exercise power and control over people and situations.
- Power for power’s sake, control for control’s sake provides excitement.
- Methods to obtain power and control
  - Deceit
  - Threats
  - Manipulation
  - Harassment
  - Emotionality / anger
  - Psychological and/or physical Abuse

Uniqueness
- Thinking of himself as different and better than other people.
- Loss of reasonable perspective on both himself and others; selective perception.
- Ways to elevate himself: boasting, bragging, demeaning or ridiculing others, engaging in power struggles and conflicts, refusing to admit personal errors.
Ownership Attitude:

• Believing wanting equals having.
• Having no recognition of or consideration for the impact that his words and actions have on others.
• Using sex for power and control, not intimacy.
• “If I want it, it’s mine.”
• “If I want her, she’s mine.”
• “if you won’t give it to me, I’ll just take it”

Worst 24 Hours Assignment.

• Write a paper on one of the worst 24 hours during your addiction and criminality. This could be your governing offense, an incident that had a significant negative impact on your loved ones, or a time that you hit rock bottom.
• Write this assignment like you are telling a story. Start at the beginning and be specific. Describe how you harmed others, significantly affected someone in a negative way, were cruel to your loved ones, etc.
• This is not about something that happened to you. This is about something you did to someone else. One way to think of it is: “Things would be very different if this never happened” or “If I could take back one bad thing I did, it would be this.”
• If you use a crime you have not been caught for, do not include details like full names, exact dates, addresses, etc.
• Most of your peers have found this to be a tough assignment, so think carefully when choosing an event and writing about it.
• Do not glorify your past use and criminal behavior. This is not about telling war stories from your past. It’s about taking ownership for your behavior and developing victim empathy.
• This assignment will be read in primary group with your therapist and your group members will give you feedback. You may be asked to re-write parts or re-do the assignment.
My Worst 24 Hours: “Her Precious Meatloaf.”

Core Beliefs

SOME COMMON UPSETTING BELIEFS

1. The belief that you MUST have love or approval from almost everyone for almost everything you do.
   - (“People MUST love or approve of me.” “I MUST please everyone.” “I SHOULD be loved.” The demand for acceptance and approval.)

2. The belief that you SHOULD be thoroughly competent, adequate, and achieving in all possible respects to be worthwhile.
   - (“I MUST not make mistakes or do poorly.” “Making mistakes is TERRIBLE” “I SHOULD be perfect.” The demand for perfection.)

3. The belief that certain behavior is AWFUL, and people who behave that way are no good and should be punished.
   - (“People SHOULD be punished for their wrongdoings.” “I am a bad person because of what I did.” Self-blame/other blame and SHAME)

4. The belief that things should go your way. It’s AWFUL when things do not go the way you would like them to go.
   - (“Things should always go the way I want them.” “It’s terrible when things go wrong.” “I SHOULDN’T be frustrated.” “I MUST have things my way.” Demanding your way, non-acceptance of reality.)
   - False belief that others must change their behavior for me to be okay.

5. The belief that your emotional upset is caused by external pressures or other people and you have little ability to control or change your feelings.
   - (“My upset feelings are caused by the way others act or what happens to me.” “I CAN’T control my feelings.” Avoidance of responsibility for change.)

6. The belief that if something may be dangerous or fearsome I SHOULD be very worried and upset about it.
   - (“I SHOULD worry and be anxious about threatening things.” “Threatening situations can keep me TERRIBLY worried.” “I SHOULD worry about problems.” Awfulizing/exaggerated fear or over concern.)

7. The belief that it is easier for you to avoid facing many life difficulties and self-responsibilities than face up to them.
   - (“Self-discipline and self-responsibility are too hard for me to do.” “I SHOULDN’T have to do unpleasant things to change.” Avoidance of responsibility/the easy way out.)
8. The belief that your past is all important and that because something once strongly influenced your life, it SHOULD keep determining your feelings and behavior today.
   (“The effects of my childhood and my past still HAVE to control my life.” “I CAN’T change.” Excuses for not changing.)

9. The belief that people SHOULD be different from the way they are.
   (“People SHOULD behave differently.” “People SHOULD be the way I want them to be.” “I should have my way.” “I must be right.” Demanding others change/non-acceptance/avoiding of responsibility to change.)

10. The belief that you can achieve human happiness through inaction or by passively and uncommittedly enjoying yourself.
   (“I can’t get my way by sitting back and not asserting myself.” “You SHOULDN’T look for trouble.” “You SHOULDN’T take chances.” “Don’t rock the boat.” Avoidance of responsibility/fear of failure.)

Thinking Report.

EVENT – Only facts, what exactly happened to begin the chain
of thoughts, feelings, and behaviors? Leave the emotions and opinions out of this description.

THOUGHTS – What popped into your mind when the event occurred? Be specific, don’t sugarcoat, or change your thoughts.

FEELINGS – The emotions or other sensations that resulted from the thoughts about the event. List a minimum of 3 feelings. Don’t exaggerate your feelings, be honest.
- **BEHAVIOR** – Your actions in response to the event as directed by your thoughts and reinforced by your feelings. Exactly what you said or did.

- **CORE BELIEFS** – The thoughts behind your thoughts. Must be applicable to all situations, not just Atlantis. What you believe about all people, places, or things. (All cops, all offenders, all women, men, etc.)

- **ALTERNATIVE THOUGHTS** – Healthier thoughts, which are different from your first, automatic thoughts and that could lead to a more positive outcome.

- **ALTERNATIVE BEHAVIOR** – What you could do based on your alternative thought.

---

**The Ripple Effect.**

---

---
References