MOTIVATING OFFENDERS TO CHANGE
A Guide to Enhancing Engagement in Therapy

Edited by
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MOTIVATING OFFENDERS TO CHANGE
Cognitive Behavioural Treatment of Sexual Offenders
William L Marshall, Dana Anderson and Yolanda Fernandez

Violence, Crime and Mentally Disordered Offenders:
Concepts and Methods for Effective Treatment and Prevention
Sheilagh Hodgins and Rüdiger Müller-Isberner (Editors)

Offender Rehabilitation in Practice:
Implementing and Evaluating Effective Programs
Gary A. Bernfeld, David P. Farrington and Alan W. Leschied (Editors)

Motivating Offenders to Change:
A Guide to Enhancing Engagement in Therapy
Mary McMurrnan (Editor)
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ABOUT THE SERIES

At the time of writing it is clear that we live in a time, certainly in the UK and other parts of Europe, if perhaps less so in other parts of the world, when there is renewed enthusiasm for constructive approaches to working with offenders to prevent crime. What do we mean by this statement and what basis do we have for making it? First, by “constructive approaches to working with offenders” we mean bringing the use of effective methods and techniques of behaviour change into work with offenders. Indeed, this might pass as a definition of forensic clinical psychology. Thus, our focus is application of theory and research in order to develop practice aimed at bringing about a change in the offender’s functioning. The word constructive is important and can be set against approaches to behaviour change that seek to operate by destructive means. Such destructive approaches are typically based on the principles of deterrence and punishment, seeking to suppress the offender’s actions through fear and intimidation. A constructive approach, on the other hand, seeks to bring about changes in an offender’s functioning that will produce, say, enhanced possibilities of employment, greater levels of self-control, better family functioning or increased awareness of the pain of victims.

A constructive approach faces the criticism of being a “soft” response to damage caused by offenders, neither inflicting pain and punishment nor delivering retribution. This point raises a serious question for those involved in working with offenders. Should advocates of constructive approaches oppose retribution as a goal of the criminal justice systems as incompatible with treatment and rehabilitation? Alternatively, should constructive work with offenders take place within a system given to retribution? We believe that this issue merits serious debate.

However, to return to our starting point, history shows that criminal justice systems are littered with many attempts at constructive work with offenders, not all of which have been successful. In raising the spectre of success, the second part of our opening sentence now merits attention: that is, “constructive approaches to working with offenders to prevent crime”. In order to achieve the goal of preventing crime, interventions must focus on the right targets for behaviour change. In addressing this crucial point, Andrews and Bonta (1994) have formulated the need principle: