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Makin' It Work

Transitioning from Corrections to the World of Work

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PROGRAM INFORMATION

THE PROBLEM

The U.S. Department of Justice reports that 2.2 million people were in jail or prison at the end of 2016, with another 4.5 million on probation. Sources indicate that 95% of all state prisoners will be released from prison at some point, and 67% will be rearrested within 3 years.

Long-term employment in a job earning a living wage is a significant deterrent to recidivism. However, many people who have been incarcerated are poorly prepared with the prosocial attitudes and interpersonal skills employers demand. As a result many leave otherwise good job placements, even though they may have the vocational or technical skills to succeed.

THE SOLUTION

Meta-analyses of correctional interventions clearly indicate that the most successful means of rehabilitating offenders is a cognitive-behavioral (CB) approach. CB interventions challenge offenders to change their beliefs as well as their behaviors by taking a hard, clear look at the impact these elements have had upon their lives. The "Makin' It Work" ® curriculum uses elements of both cognitive restructuring and cognitive skills instruction to help individuals with criminal records prepare for employment by developing:

- (1) New insight into the thinking traps which justify their illegal actions;
- (2) Awareness of the hidden code of conduct held by today's employers;
- (3) Self-control skills for managing anger and anxiety;
- (4) Critical thinking skills for solving problems; and
- (5) Interpersonal skills for dealing with difficult conversations.

THE DETAILS

Makin' It Work is a 10-lesson cognitive-behavioral program which targets people transition from correctional environments (prison, jail, residential re-entry, probation/parole) to the community and the world of work. Through structured guided group discussion, benign confrontation, targeted role plays, and thought-provoking stories and activities, the *Makin' It Work* program challenges participants to examine how their own attitudes and perceptions have justified a tendency toward harmful or illegal behaviors. Participants then explore the hidden code of conduct employers expect good workers to understand, and practice valuable new communication and problem solving skills to handle difficult situations (such as dealing with criticism and expressing complaints) in an appropriate, professional manner. *Makin' It Work* works best when delivered to groups of 10-16 participants by 1-2 trained instructors over the course of 2-4 weeks.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Makin' it Work consists of 10 two-hour lessons, delivered by instructors who have successfully completed an intensive 3-day certification. The curriculum is divided into four parts, each focused on a different set of insights and skills needed to transition to the workplace.

Module 1: Thinking Straight

[Lesson 1 Challenge of Change](#)

[Lesson 2 Thinking Traps](#)

[Lesson 3 Hidden Code of Work](#)

Module 1 focuses on cognitive awareness. It begins by offering ex-offenders a realistic perspective on the steps of lasting change. Next, it helps them become more aware of beliefs, attitudes and perceptions which justify illegal behaviors, then explores the unspoken expectations that most employers hold. Skills and insights are applied to specific personal and work-related situations.

Module 2: Keeping Self-Control

[Lesson 4 Warning Signs](#)

[Lesson 5 Stop & Think](#)

Module 2 focuses on self-control skills. It first helps ex-offenders recognize high risk situations -- emotional situations which may tempt them into behaving in harmful or illegal ways. It then teaches a step-by-step strategy for calming down and keeping emotions in check. Skills and insights are role played in specific work-related situations.

Module 3: Solving Problems Logically

[Lesson 6 Defining the Problem & Goal](#)

[Lesson 7 Gaining Information & Insight](#)

[Lesson 8 Considering Choices & Consequences](#)

Module 3 focuses on problem solving skills. It first helps ex-offenders reframe difficult workplace situations using problem and goal statements. It next helps them examine their assumptions and consider other points of view. Finally, it teaches them to analyze all possible choices before making an impulsive decision. Skills and insights are applied to specific work-related situations.

Module 4: Handling Difficult Conversations

[Lesson 9 Expressing Complaints](#)

[Lesson 10 Dealing with Criticism](#)

Module 4 focuses on communication skills for handling difficult conversations. It begins by teaching a step-by-step approach for expressing a legitimate complaint in a professional manner, then goes on the teaching a similar skill for handling criticism from others. Skills and insights are role played in specific work-related situations.

Makin' It Work is supported by a strong evidence base. For more information about this program, including an e-sample of the workbook, visit www.WorkinItOut.com or contact the author:

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