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Presents

**COMMITMENT TO CHANGE:
OVERCOMING ERRORS IN THINKING**

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Commitment to Change: Overcoming Errors in Thinking

Welcome to the growing family of coursework participants at CEU Matrix - The Institute for Addiction and Criminal Justice Studies.

This distance learning coursework was developed by CEUMatrix, and the content is based upon the work of Stanton E. Samenow, Ph.D.

This course is reviewed and updated on an annual basis to insure that the information is current, informative, and state-of-the-art. This package contains the complete set of course materials, along with the post test and evaluation that are required to obtain the certificate of completion for the course. You may submit your answers online to receive the fastest response and access to your online certificate of completion. To take advantage of this option, simply access the Student Center at <http://www.ceumatrix.com/studentcenter>; login as a Returning Customer by entering your email address, password, and click on 'Take Exam'. For your convenience, we have also enclosed an answer sheet that will allow you to submit your answers by mail or by fax.

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About the Instructor:

Dr. Stanton E. Samenow worked side by side with Dr. Samuel Yochelson, as they pioneered the research which uncovered the key role played by thinking patterns in criminal behavior. Out of their work came the concept of criminal “errors in thinking.” Dr. Samenow is the author of several books, including *Inside the Criminal Mind* and *Before It's Too Late*, a study of children and the development of criminal behavior. During his eight years as research psychologist at Saint Elizabeth's Hospital in Washington, D.C., he co-authored the three-volume ground-breaking study, *The Criminal Personality*. He has been a member of the President's Task Force on Crime and has held the position of Clinical Instructor in Psychiatry and Behavioral Sciences at George Washington University Medical School. Dr. Samenow is widely-recognized as an authority on the evaluation and treatment of offenders. He travels widely as a speaker, consultant and leader of workshops.

Using the Homepage for CEU Matrix - The Institute for Addiction and Criminal Justice Studies

The CEU Matrix – The Institute for Addiction and Criminal Justice Studies homepage (www.ceumatrix.com) contains many pieces of information and valuable links to a variety of programs, news and research findings, and information about credentialing – both local and national. We update our site on a regular basis to keep you apprised of any changes or developments in the field of addiction counseling and credentialing. Be sure to visit our site regularly, and we do recommend that you bookmark the site for fast and easy return.

Commitment to Change: Overcoming Errors in Thinking

Human nature is complex.

There are no simple solutions. No single approach can meet all the needs of all the people we serve.

The material presented here has proven valuable as an independent program -- as well as a component -- a complement -- for programs of many kinds.

Change is never easy. It requires motivation, effort, support and time. But it is important for us -- and our clients -- to remember that change is possible.

-- *Stanton E. Samenow, Ph.D.*

PURPOSE of this course

- To introduce and explore the concept of thinking errors
- To support and/or complement counselors' increased awareness and understanding of the errors in thinking commonly demonstrated by addicts and offenders
- To provide vivid information and insights about thinking errors
- To demonstrate ways to address thinking errors in a program for change.

THE FORMAT

Description: This course has been developed utilizing concepts from Dr. Samenow's writings and dialogues from group sessions conducted by Dr. Samenow. The dialogues used are from the first three segments of a video series featuring Dr. Samenow's work known as "Commitment to Change." This first video series was subtitled "Overcoming Errors in Thinking". In group settings and in individual interviews, convicted felons -- men and women -- interacted with each other and Dr. Samenow as they uncovered fundamental errors in thinking and explored their consequences. This information has been edited where necessary to better fit within the context of written materials as opposed to the oral format in which it initially occurred. All dialogue and information from these

videos are identified when used in this course. Additional information has been added to expand on or clarify various aspects of Dr. Samenow's work.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

In the 1960's and 1970's two doctors, one a psychiatrist and one a psychologist began working with individuals at a hospital for the criminally insane in Bethesda, Maryland. Dr. Samuel Yochelson was a psychiatrist who had had a successful private practice for years in Buffalo, New York, and who had also appeared regularly on a local television show informing the public about psychiatry. In his mid-50's Dr. Yochelson decided to take on a new challenge and leave the comfort and security of his private practice in search of making a more lasting contribution to the field he had made his life's work.

Dr. Stanton Samenow is a psychologist who had accepted suggestions from Dr. Yochelson as a doctoral student concerning a dissertation on college dropouts. Dr. Samenow had found that using standard procedures, practices and theories were not leading to significant results with the adolescents he was working with early in his career. Thus, he decided to abandon his work with adolescents for the opportunity to join with Dr. Yochelson and his project at Saint Elizabeth's Hospital for the Criminally Insane.

In the beginning, Dr.'s Yochelson and Samenow were intent on finding the psychological and emotional causes of criminality. Both drug users and non-drug users were studied. Over time what began to emerge was rather surprising. First, it seemed that regardless of the amount of insight attained about early conflicts or trauma in life, rather than leading to more appropriate behavior, such insights were often used as excuses for ongoing patterns of violations inside and outside of the hospital setting. In fact, early in their research efforts, they noted that many of the offenders participating in the group never stopped offending.

Second, while a substantial number of the offenders came from backgrounds of poverty, abuse and neglect, the majority had siblings from these same backgrounds who had not become criminals. Also, there were many who had caring families that had done everything they knew to do to help these individuals, but to no avail. These facts made the doctors begin to turn away from focusing on a deterministic view of criminality (childhood abuse and trauma), to one that focused more on the lifestyle choices offenders make.

Third, while it was believed that these individuals must suffer from terribly low self esteem resulting from experiencing a vast array of failures in life - ranging from school to work to personal relationships - it became obvious over time that the

opposite was the case! Most had highly inflated views of themselves and their abilities; thinking themselves smarter and better than others.

Other favorite theories, such as the role of peer pressure and “falling in with the wrong crowd,” or that being denied the opportunities others have in life had driven these individuals to crime, began to crumble as well. It turned out that these individuals were not so much failed by their schools as they failed to make any effort toward school; they didn’t “fall into the wrong crowd,” they sought out the wrong crowd. And rather than being highly impulsive or compulsive people who couldn’t control themselves, they tended to be highly controlled and “opportunistic” in the commission of crimes.

Slowly, Dr.’s Yochelson and Samenow began giving up their theories of psychological and sociological causes for crime, and began looking at the thinking patterns and attitudes that led to it. They began focusing on the criminal’s ***choices***, and his or her rationalizations and justifications for such behavior. They began mapping the worldview of the criminal. Ultimately, they found a variety of thinking errors that criminals had in common regardless of age, race, social class or educational background. Their search for the cause of crime and what they eventually discovered became their landmark work *The Criminal Personality*, a three volume set outlining the process by which they arrived at a new view of the criminal and the best way to treat him or her.

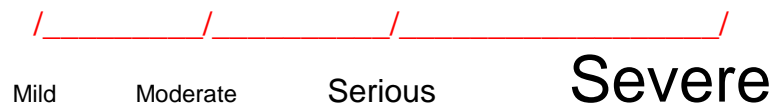
At the very core of this approach is the idea of “afflicting the comfortable, rather than comforting the afflicted.” According to this approach, what leads to lasting change in the criminal offender is becoming absolutely fed-up with him or her self - filled with self-disgust about who or what they have become. In his or her past, the criminal (very much like the addict) has had instances of self-disgust, but this has not lasted or resulted in behavioral change. Therefore the offender must – in a matter of fact and respectful manner – be constantly reminded of the consequences of his or her actions, the damaged and destroyed lives, and the fact that continuing in the same mode will lead to a life of more and more incarceration for longer periods of time. Other than accepting this as his or her lot in life - or committing suicide - change is the only option that remains. Those who have worked primarily with addicts will notice that these same dynamics apply to the process of change with addiction as well as with criminality. In fact there is a saying heard in AA clubs across the country that, “If you don’t remember your last drunk, you haven’t had it.” This is a reference to the need for the alcoholic to constantly remind him or herself of the devastating consequences of his or her past behavior.

What was also learned in this landmark research is that the criminal offender is constantly sizing up others, and that this remains true when he or she enters a treatment program as well. He or she sees everything in terms of power and control, contests of will, and winning and losing. Therefore, rather than

concerning themselves primarily with showing empathy or developing rapport, Dr.'s Yochelson and Samenow were more concerned with direct, but factual discussions in which they revealed what they knew about the criminal's M.O. and mindset - in many instances better than the criminals themselves.

They learned not to buy into the criminals' attempts to portray themselves as the victims rather than the victimizers (though some excel at this), they learned not to allow their efforts to be diverted by an array of irrelevant matters and issues criminals will bring up to derail the therapist, or to allow themselves to fall victim to the tactics of attack that are often used to put the therapist on the defensive.

They laid out what they had learned about the offenders with whom they worked - that they (the offenders) tended to be secretive even as children, took great pride and pleasure in being able to fool others with their "slickness", demanded the world bend to their wishes rather than trying to fit themselves better to the world, were highly critical of others but had a "glass jaw" when it came to taking criticism themselves, and tended to see themselves as unique individuals to whom the normal rules of society do not apply. Again, those who work with addicts will notice the commonality of many of these traits. In fact, most of these traits can be thought of as running along the lines of a continuum, from mild to severe as demonstrated in the diagram below:



Where addictions and/or criminality are concerned, the degree of severity of these traits can have a great deal to do with the individual's ability to "hit bottom" – that is to develop enough self-disgust or disturbance to their own self image, to motivate change.

Additionally, Yochelson and Samenow let the offenders with whom they worked know they did not expect them to be fervently committed to change from the outset. In fact, they often revealed to these clients that they knew they had always viewed the world of "straights" as boring, dull and a fate worse than death. (Again, those who have worked with addicts will recognize that this is common to how many feel in the beginning stages of their recovery. In fact, motivational interviewing has made much of the counselor's ability to recognize "ambivalence" on the part of the client in the early stages of the change process.)

However, returning to the fact that ultimately, the criminal's way of life had never led to anything more than fleeting satisfaction or happiness, and that without change they faced a life of increasing time incarcerated, their choices were few. They did not berate, browbeat, attempt to humiliate or ridicule the men and women with whom they worked, but treated them with respect. Nonetheless,

they were firm and matter-of-fact about unmasking the façade of respectability these individuals tried to put on.

This course is an overview of some of the basic principles, dynamics and errors in thinking that lie at the foundation of Dr. Yochelson and Dr. Samenow's original work, as demonstrated in Dr. Samenow's highly popular "Commitment to Change" video series. The material covered in this course corresponds with and uses examples based on the first three tapes in the series entitled "Overcoming Errors in Thinking."

It should be noted that while the dynamics of addiction may involve more physiological aspects than is the case with criminality, the applicability of these errors in thinking to the lifestyles and mindsets of both groups, should be obvious.

HOW *ERRORS IN THINKING* RELATE TO OTHER APPROACHES AND PROGRAMS

This information, as presented by Dr. Samenow, can be used to support or complement many existing programs. The heart of this approach -- taking personal responsibility for our decisions -- is a concept shared by many treatment programs. Twelve-step programs identify "alcoholic" or "stinking thinking" as a barrier to recovery. Therapeutic Communities confront "dope fiend moves," which are actions motivated by attempts to deceive, manipulate or control others. In virtually all programs of recovery, people are encouraged to take responsibility for their lives and their actions. As this approach assists participants to become aware of their distorted, irresponsible ways of thinking and interacting with others, it can also serve as a catalyst to initiate the process of accepting responsibility.

Because personal change is a complex and challenging process, effective programs utilize a variety of approaches and techniques. Any treatment or educational program can benefit from the information provided in this course. It provides participants with vivid, clear and concrete descriptions of some of the major errors involved in shaping the irresponsible and destructive thinking of those served in both "free world" treatment centers and in criminal justice settings.

People who know they need to change often fail to recognize the role of thinking in the feelings, attitudes and behavior that cause them problems. The approach presented here not only provides a set of concrete, practical ways to begin to identify these errors – but to also to overcome them – and to open the door to responsible choices and responsible living.

Although all of us realize we cannot fully control what happens to us, we also know we can decide how to react to a given situation or circumstance. This is the core of what it is to have free will – to be able to decide the choices we make. These choices make a crucial difference. Through the examples provided in the group and interview sessions presented, this course teaches how to put a mirror in front of clients who are blind to these dynamics; to encourage an honest, unflinching look at their lives and the role their thinking has played in creating them.

The corrections community has embraced this approach in many arenas – along with educators, youth workers and other mental health and social services professionals. Programs and workshops utilizing these materials are sponsored by the Federal Bureau of Prisons, the National Institute on Corrections (NIC), and Departments of Corrections, Community Corrections Programs, probation and parole offices and private treatment providers in just about every state. Many professionals, publications and programs have built on the original research of Dr.'s Yochelson and Samenow. It was in response to numerous requests, that Dr. Samenow created a unique and practical, step-by-step video program. We are pleased to be able to adapt that work and information for this course.

INTRODUCTION

A Key to Change: YOUR THOUGHTS

The good news is we can change. None of us needs to be a prisoner of our thoughts or our behaviors.

Think about the last 24 hours; can you remember a specific situation when you felt angry? Think about what you said – what you did. What happened as a result – what were the consequences? What would have happened if you had acted on your thoughts (for instance, lashed out in anger), rather than controlling your actions?

Can you think of a recent event that you would like to re-live, if you could, in order to do things differently? What trouble resulted? What could you, or would you have done differently?

Think of a recent temptation to do something that you knew was wrong. Can you remember what you thought before you decided what to do? What was the temptation? What actually happened? When stopping to look back, are you happy with how you handled the situation? If not, how could you have handled the situation differently? Would this have led to a different result? Would the

result have been better or worse? What role would changing your thinking about the situation have played in changing the outcome?

Consider the following basic tenets of the cognitive-behavioral approach:

- Some thoughts lead to results we don't want.
- Thoughts that lead to unwanted trouble are considered "errors in thinking."
- By teaching offenders to become aware of their thoughts that lead to trouble, we can teach them to catch errors in thinking before they act.
- They can stop and remember the trouble their actions may have caused in the past, and forecast the trouble those thoughts may bring in a current situation or in the future.
- By being aware of the full range of consequences from past attitudes and actions, clients can become acutely aware of the heavy price they or others have often paid for their destructive acts.
- As has been identified in other treatment approaches, counselors often assume that because clients have entered treatment, the work of identifying these dynamics has already been accomplished – that is, these dynamics are obvious and known to the clients. However, because a large percentage of clients (especially when mandated to treatment) enter treatment in the "precontemplation" stage, many have not truly considered the full ramifications of their actions on others or even on their own lives.
- Beginning to see the role of thinking in keeping us locked in destructive patterns of behavior is often what provides the motivation and the commitment needed to change.

When any of us change our thinking, we change what we end up doing. A major roadblock to recovery is the temptation to take a shortcut in order to accomplish something of value. But by stopping and catching thoughts – before acting – our clients can begin to take a different direction in life.

Part 1

What are Errors in Thinking?

*Programs that help us change often ask us to look at our own **thinking**.*

Distorted thinking eventually leads to results no one wants.

Why do people return to prison again and again?

Male Inmate: “It’s a self-fulfilling kind of prophecy. I know I’m going to go back, it’s only a matter of time, so why kid myself about it?”

WHY CHANGE?

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: You lived a certain way before coming here. You did a lot of things that were exciting at the time, the important question is: Why change? And what was so bad about before that you would really want to change?

Inmate: “The idea of change is the experience - for one, I got tired of crawling on the floor, taking my old lady’s money for drugs--taking my kids’ Christmas money for drugs. I wanted change because I was taking everything out of my house, something that my old lady would work for, hard! I didn’t have a job. I was selling dope and ended up using. I got out there in the streets and I got addicted to this drug, and I was selling everything that my wife worked hard for. I would go in there and take the VCR to go sell. Now it’s the change I want when I come out of here, I want my people, my family, to see that I’ve changed. But I’m not promising that I’m going to change, because if society kicks me in my rear, believe me, I won’t take it again.”

Dr. Samenow: But that’s exactly the question. Why change? You’d make your resolution, you’d decide to do something different, and then you’d go back to that life.

Different Inmate: “Why change? I’d just like to invite you over to Cell House One to spend about 30 days in my twelve by fifteen concrete block with me.”

Third Inmate: “You asked the question, why change? I feel why change because I want to change, and I have to change. Because if I don’t

change, the way I was going, which is the road to self-destruction, this may be my only chance to change.”

Dr. Samenow: Well, wait a minute, if you don't change, then what?

Third Inmate: “It could be death, by anything – overdose, gunned down doing a dope deal, it can be anything.

Dr. Samenow: Fair enough. Let's move to the gentleman in back.

Inmate: “Change for me is like life and death. I've been so miserable all my life, drinking and robbing and beating people up and maiming people. It's very important for me to change. That's why I took advantage of this group to make this change. Because I'm tired of going to jail, being on the police blotter, police looking for me, hurting people. There comes a time in your life when you have to just want to change. And this is the time for me. I'm not getting any younger. And I see other guys, I talk to guys that got life sentences, ninety years, a hundred years, whatever, and I knew these guys on the streets, and they weren't as bad as I thought I was. So that made me realize that I was really a bad guy. I know I value my family, my children, my loved ones, and I'm tired of my wife coming down to this prison, year after year after year, to see me. And there's a couple of times, when my wife asks me, like last week, 'When does it end?' And that snapped in my head. When does it end? I never thought about it.”

Different Inmate: “It's like the dog chasing his tail around all the time, somebody's either going to say 'That's really stupid', or he's going to figure it out sooner or later. And for me the 'why change' was because I got tired of supporting all the baloney for the wrong reasons. Everything I did, the image, the justification, every time I stepped on somebody, the lifestyle, the friendships that were abusive, all that baloney, it was all for the wrong reasons. So you sit down and you say, this ain't making me healthy, there's no nurturing in my life, and it don't matter if I'm in here or if I'm out there, I'm still living my life, and there's got to be some quality. So you look at it and you say, 'this is really sad.'”

Dr. Samenow: Fair enough. How about somebody else, the question being: Why change?

Another Inmate: “Like when you got a drug habit or you're drinking, you wake up in the morning and you're shaking and you're broke. You get up and you might not have any cigarettes left, so the same thing, the beginning thought that morning is: I gotta make money. I gotta make money; I gotta take care of my habits. I gotta do my drugs. And then after you get high, it's cool for about four or five hours. But then after that four

or five hours, you might stay up a day or two and you're on a drug run, and then you feel lousy physically, and you treat people lousy."

Inmate: "If I was to change, which I am changing, not to repeat the past and make those same mistakes that got me here from the first place. If you get here, you know there's something wrong with your life."

Dr. Samenow: Well, my question is, other than the fact that you ended up here and got caught for whatever it was you did, what was so bad about the past, that you would want to change it?

Inmate: "Dead end roads. Hopelessness. No goals, no life ambition. Just not exciting after a while, just repeated."

Dr. Samenow: Well, when you say no goals, no life ambition - you got up every day, you did something. What did you do?

Inmate: "Go to work, come home, get drunk. Just an on-and-on-process of the same lifestyle, the same thing, never getting ahead. I guess that's part of it."

Dr. Samenow: What do you want life to be for you? What do you want to be like as a person?

Inmate: "I want the best of life, of course. But I want a house, I want a wife, I want the kids; I guess the American dream, you could say. And the road I was going wasn't giving me that; it was giving me misery. Waking up every morning next to who knows? And that got old. I want something meaningful. There was no meaningfulness in my life before I started to change. I guess you could say that."

Inmate: "I'm not getting any younger, like the guy back here was saying, 'There's a couple of us in here been doing time for years.'.. And I think it's just come to the point where you're saying, 'Hey, this ain't the life we want. We need to get something else.'"

In a nearby correctional facility for women, a group of inmates looked at the same question. Many talked about family and children as they gave their answers to the question, why change?

Female Inmate: "Because I'm not with them. It's the absence. It's the absence that I feel bad about because of the fact that I'm away from them. And I'm never ever going to be able to make this time up, and I know that. I can sit here all day and all night and say I'm a good mother and I do this,

I do that, but I'm not there. And that's what they need is my time. They need me."

Another Female Inmate: "I know it pains them to put that ink to paper, because they have to write 'Correctional' on there. I can't see her because she's locked up, I can't touch her, and I can't love her."

Third Female Inmate: "When I talked to my daughter, this last time when I got in trouble, she told me, 'I don't want to see you in jail no more.' That was the bottom, OK? I mean, that was a feeling."

Fourth Female Inmate: "I don't hear from any of my kids. I don't hear from my real mother. I do hear from my stepmother, which that's the only family I do hear from. I've had one visit since I've been here."

Last Female Inmate (in this exchange): "You get frustrated; you get just plain disgusted with yourself because nobody did it but you."

FOCUS ON THINKING

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: Well, let me ask this question. You're expressive. You clearly know right from wrong. You probably know the laws better than I do. So the question that would be logical to ask is: why is it that people who are smart, who are intelligent, come back again and again?

Inmate: "I got back into the same crowd, the same situation that I left from, when I first came to the penitentiary. If I hadn't got back into that, or hadn't thought about that when I was out, I don't think I'd be back now."

Inmate: "Even though I'm an intelligent person, I still was thinking the same way I was when I got arrested. And when you think the same, you go back and do the same things again. It's as simple as that."

Dr. Samenow: So what you're saying (and I know you won't let me put words in your mouth) is that it has to do with the way you were thinking.

Inmate: "Yeah, it was my thinking, because I went out with the same thinking pattern that I came in with. I thought I could go out and do the same things and not be involved in the same situation. It doesn't work that way."

Inmate: “It all revolves around how you think, how you see yourself. Once you come to the conclusion that you can’t change, that this is truly you, this is what you do; your whole purpose in life is to serve as a bad example, you will live up to those expectations.”

Dr. Samenow: So if somebody wants to change, how do they change? Well, one very important part of change is to pay attention to your thinking. Because what you do really is a result of the way you think.

Discussion/Mini-lecture: Why Change?

In the group session, you could see that each person who spoke was quite different from the others. When we look around us, we see that each person has a different approach to life: Some are loners, others go with the group; some are easy-going, others are not...and so on.

Yet we seldom decide how we’re going to be. We just get up each day and do what we’ve always done – without giving it much thought. We don’t think about our way of doing things or whether we’re satisfied with ourselves – until we hit a dead end.

When we find ourselves in painful situations – over and over -- some of us eventually begin to think, “What am I doing wrong?”

But even when we find ourselves in serious trouble again and again, it’s tempting to blame others. People who are in frequent conflict with family, spouse, the people around them or police, courts and prisons, often believe they’ve had a “raw deal” – and live in a state of anger and self-pity.

Some of us have to experience a great deal of pain before we begin to look at ourselves. The result is that we lose what matters most to us: control over our lives. We find ourselves locked up, away from children, family and all we value. What can we say to wives and husbands who are in such pain? How can we explain it to our children? To ourselves?

The fact is this: Only when we’re faced with the painful consequences of our behavior do many of us make major, lasting changes. Even then, people promise themselves or others they will change -- only to discover that old habits die hard. It takes a strong desire and a long-term effort to change lifelong habits and ways of thinking.

Many return to prison again and again for this reason: They are dissatisfied with their situation -- but not with themselves. They cannot see how they helped to create their troubles. They see no reason to change.

When people have the courage to take a long look at their lives and their own part in creating them – they may make a commitment to change. When people are willing to see what they've done – to become disgusted with their own behavior – with the pain it has caused so many – then change is possible.

The good news is that each one of us can make a series of choices that will lead us in new directions. None of us need be victims of our past or of our own personality. Change is possible. Many have changed their lives.

Change may be one of the most difficult things that human beings ever attempt. But for those who are willing to put in the long-term effort – willing to stick with it when times are hard -- change is a practical goal.

AN ERROR IN THINKING – An Interview

Dr. Samenow: “How do you happen to be here in this institution?”

Gus: “I was sentenced to the Department of Corrections for second degree murder.”

Dr. Samenow: “How many years do you have?”

Gus: “I've presently got in fourteen and a half years total incarceration.”

Dr. Samenow: “And how many years do you have as a total sentence?”

Gus: “Thirty to forty.”

Dr. Samenow: “Can you give me, in a short answer, what the motive was for you to commit murder?”

Gus: “Anger. A lot of frustration and a lot of anger that had built up from childhood.”

Dr. Samenow: “From childhood because of what?”

Gus: “A lot of neglect, a lot of deprivation of, say, love, and parent caring. I was really hyperactive and kind of out of control. Getting in trouble; going around the neighborhood and wreaking havoc.”

Dr. Samenow: “How old?”

Gus: “I was seven, eight and nine years of age. And it had gotten to the point where my stepfather had sent me to a foster home.”

Dr. Samenow: “And when you were in the foster home, did the wreaking havoc continue?”

Gus: “Yeah, it got worse.”

Dr. Samenow: “And so if we looked at your whole life, it was a pattern where it got worse and worse and worse.”

Gus: “Yeah.”

Dr. Samenow: “And ended up in murder. Could you explain that more for me?”

Gus: “Well, as a child, when I wanted to share the affections that I had for my father or stepfather, I was turned away. And that built frustration within me, and I really felt rejected and neglected as a child by a parent. When I would see my friends and their parents react in a parent-child situation that I wanted to be in, it really frustrated me that I couldn’t share the same affections with my father.”

Dr. Samenow: “So you took it out on the rest of the world, is what you’re saying?”

Gus: “That’s true.”

AN ERROR IN THINKING

GROUP SESSION – The group has been viewing an earlier interview between Dr. Samenow and Gus on a recorded tape.

Dr. Samenow: All right, let me give the person himself the first chance to look at that screen; and, as you are watching yourself on that screen, is there anything that you have to say about any possible mistake in your thinking?

Gus: “That a person would have a tendency to grow up in a self-made value system which would be real distorted.”

Inmate: “What I see is that he’s kind of feeling sorry for himself, and he’s justifying the murder that he committed.”

Inmate: "There's only one thing that can justify murder--one thing and one thing only. There is nothing else, and that's self-defense. That's the only thing, that's the only exception. There's no other way out. That's the only exception, self-defense."

Inmate: "Sometimes anger can make you forget about common sense. It can take it away, and sometimes you just can't help yourself."

Inmate: "I think he is a victim."

Dr. Samenow: Granted that he may well have been a victim as a child, that is, a victim of neglect. Maybe a victim of abuse, but my question is not to dispute that, but what does that have to do with an adult male committing homicide?

Inmate: "First of all, I want it understood that I'm here on a murder conviction also. He's trying to justify what he did. There's no justification for it because once you take a life, you cannot put it back. You can steal a person's property; and later on make amends. They make you pay restitution. And that takes care of it. But once you take a life, you cannot replace it. So there's no justification. That's the bottom line for it."

Dr. Samenow: This man is saying, "I was abused, I was neglected, I was angry at my parents, I was angry at the world; and therefore," at least as I'm hearing it, "as an angry person, I committed an angry act. The most heinous or extreme of angry acts: murder."

Inmate: "I was physically and mentally abused as well, neglected, and so forth. And there came a point in time - and actually I was blaming this on my parents." My actions, little cases that I copped out--"well, I've been abused, and so forth" -- but there came a point in time that I had to say, "I can't no longer blame this on my folks. I gotta take responsibility for my own actions because my mom and dad ain't doin' the time. I'm doin' the time. It's me who's got me here, and it's me who's got to get me out."

Inmate: "I've been in situations where I was gonna actually kill somebody. But I was abused to a degree by my father, I mean very extensively, as a child. Love wasn't there. Nurturing wasn't there from my father, which I really sought. I hated my father a lot, and I'm a junior and all that. So when I had this particular individual in a situation, I was going to kill him. No doubt about it, I was going to kill him. And I thought about it -- something just came -- I thought about it. Now all this anger also was there. In the back of my mind somewhere: the love, the past, whatever, all that was there -- I was going to kill this guy. I looked at this guy--nice jewelry on, brand new Porsche, Caucasian. I grew up in Georgia to a degree, a lot of prejudice, seen a lot of prejudice, black and white. That

fact was a factor in me thinking about killing this guy. And something clicked in my mind. I began to wake up to a degree. I couldn't do it. There was no excuse for it."

Dr. Samenow: There are people who are abused by parents who are themselves criminals. I mean, there are some pretty terrible parents out there. And this man is saying that he was a victim of abuse and neglect. I'm not arguing that; he was there. He knows what his life was. I think the question is: what relationship, if any, does this situation have to do with murder; or do you think that there was an error in the thinking that you saw there in that interview?

Inmate: "Everybody's responsible for the things that they do. When you're a little kid, if your parents don't teach you that, eventually society will. The laws will teach you that you are ultimately responsible for what you do. And this error in thinking would be, in my opinion, to think that that ain't so. To think that there's any kind of external reason that can justify or rationalize it. I didn't hear this guy giving an excuse; he was just giving a reason, as best as he saw it. And it sounds like he has identified his own error in thinking, if that's what he chooses to call it. And I think that some people will cling to that error in thinking if they've done something so bad that the only way they can deal with themselves is to say, 'It must be somebody else's fault. It must be society that made me do this horrible thing.' Because if they say, 'I'm ultimately responsible for this act,' then they feel so bad about themselves, they can't never get past that."

Dr. Samenow: I understood you correctly. I don't think I could have put that any better. I happen to agree with that. I think that one reason that a person does not admit to himself his own personal responsibility is that it would be extremely painful to do so, and in some cases, very difficult to go on. But the thing is, every one of us in this room - I'm sure of it - I mean, I don't have the details, of course - but every person in this room, we have had some sort of problem in our past as kids. The world can be cruel, parents can be abusive, and parents can be thoughtless. Even well-intentioned parents make mistakes. But, what has impressed me more and more over the years is not as much what happens to a person as how he chooses to deal with it. So it is, in my experience, an error in thinking when a person says, "I did such-and-such," and then starts to point to all kinds of things outside of himself.

AN ERROR IN THINKING: "I'm a victim of others."

Female Inmate: "I'm here because of a relationship, a bad relationship."

Female Inmate: "I do believe that if I'd have got the nurturing as a child to develop right, my thinking would have been different."

Inmate: "Blaming my problems on the white man. White man did this, white man did that."

Inmate: "I didn't have no dad or no older brother to show me right from wrong."

Inmate: "Because I didn't really have no love in my family."

Inmate: "Feeling sorry for myself. I reflect back on my mother. Oh, my poor dear mother, this, that and the other. My father this, my father that. He never taught me this; he never took time to do that for me. And I'm feeling sorry for myself. That's all it was. Self-pity. It's just self-pity."

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: "Now, all of these problems exist, heaven knows. But the fact of the matter is that there are people who grow up under terrible conditions, but they do not turn to crime. In fact, some of you told me in the individual interviews, that you had brothers or sisters who also had it pretty rough, but they did not follow the same path in life that you took. Now some of you have brothers or sisters who did. But again, there were choices that were made along the line. So the error in thinking, as I see it, is particularly important when it comes to change. It's thinking of ourselves as victims and presenting ourselves to other people as victims. That is what I see as the core of that thinking error."

DISCUSSION/Mini-lecture: Error In Thinking: "I'M A VICTIM OF OTHERS."

Victim Stance means:

- **Blaming others/externals (family, past, the police, social conditions, even crime victims) for causing behavior,**
- **Seeing responsibility for problems as caused by others, society, or circumstances.**

Examples:

- **"My P.O. violated me."**
- **"The only reason I got a DWI was because the cops were out to get me."**
- **"If society won't give me a chance, I got to do what I got to do."**
- **"I fell in with the wrong crowd."**

By thinking of themselves as victims and pushing responsibility for their actions or problems onto others, most addicts and offenders reinforce the idea that their inappropriate actions are justified, or were not really their problem to begin with. "My boss was unfair to me, so I showed him a thing or two and quit." "My girlfriend was on my back, so I left the house and got drunk." "I didn't want to hit her, but she asked for it!" Obviously, with thoughts like these to justify their actions, individuals involved in such thinking can only remain blind to their roles in creating their own life problems and stay stuck in destructive behavior.

Sometimes, unfortunate things do happen – and what occurs really isn't the individual's fault. But of course, one's actions can contribute to making the situation worse. The important part about life is not what happens to us, but how we decide to react to it. How do we handle life and its inevitable ups and downs? This is a critical task to the process of early recovery – getting the client to become more introspective and to begin to separate out what happened to him or her from how he or she responded.

Life can only begin to change when the addict/offender begins to stop thinking of him or herself as a victim – and begins to think of themselves as a person who has choices, who can learn how to deal effectively and responsibly with life's many challenges. It takes a lot of courage and self awareness to shoulder responsibilities – to stop blaming others. However, the overcoming of this error in thinking is one of the most critical to the whole process of change. In fact, Dr. Samenow has stated that the best indicator for the hope of change is whether or not the addict/offender will give up the use of "victim stance" to justify his or her actions.

I'M A VICTIM OF MY SUBSTANCE ABUSE– An Interview

Dr. Samenow: So what would happen to your conscience under drugs?

Bobby: "What happens to my conscience? Heck – well, I tell you, when you inject a load of cocaine in your arm, the last thing in the world you're worried about is ethics and morals."

Dr. Samenow: Are there things that you did on drugs that you would not have done if you weren't using drugs?

Bobby: "Oh, yes."

Dr. Samenow: For example?

Bobby: "Stealing. Lying to people. Cheating. Just things that are not part of my make-up."

Dr. Samenow: Explain what you mean when you say, "things that are not part of my make-up."

Bobby: "I've just never done those things sober."

ERROR IN THINKING?

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: Someone else had a comment. Yes, in the back...

Inmate: "Most people will say that it was the drugs made them do it or something, because they're concerned about how other people look at them."

Dr. Samenow: I think that really, he felt – and probably still feels – I'll ask him in a minute – that this really wasn't part of his makeup. In other words, if he had not had drugs, that it would have been totally foreign.

Inmate: "Well, if we all sat here and said that this was really us and not the drugs, and yeah, I'm a jerk. That was me that pulled the trigger...it's like when we're talking to you -- we've got to have our little romantic notions about what we do, part of the image."

Dr. Samenow: Is it part of the image for you to say that, or do you really believe as you sit here now that what you did is not part of your make-up? Bobby, I'd like you to explain that more.

Bobby: "If I would be given the opportunity to steal two or three thousand dollars without somebody looking, I know that I would not do it. I also know that if I had a quarter gram in my arm at the time, that I most likely would do it. And I'm not the type of person to do that without being high on cocaine."

Dr. Samenow: All right – when you said, "It's not in my make-up," in my experience, drugs bring out only what is already there.

Bobby: "You say it's been your experience that people who use drugs, what they do, they would have done anyway, or that's part of what they are anyway. I want to know when's the last time you put a needle in your arm?"

Dr. Samenow: Never have.

Bobby: “OK, then you don’t have much experience along those lines.”

Dr. Samenow: Well, there are plenty of people who might drink, who might use certain substances, but they wouldn’t go out and kill. They wouldn’t go out and hold up a bank.

Bobby: “You know, I can face the fact that yes, perhaps there are some – in fact there are – some very antisocial, maybe even real incorrect thinking patterns that I have, and I rationalize doing a drug again even though I know the result is going to be the same. It’s really quite insane to do the same thing over and over again and expect different results. But...”

Dr. Samenow: That was my point – that you put yourself in the position again and again by using the drugs, and hoping, as I think you said with your own words, that there might be a different outcome.

Bobby: “Yes, but I can’t help but feel that I’m being called a cheat and a thief and a liar, which are the three things that I said are not part of my make-up. And I keep trying to squirm my way out of this; and, perhaps, there’s no way out. But I know today for a fact that I don’t cheat, and I don’t steal and I don’t lie, when I’m not using. So I can’t help but make those two things synonymous.”

Dr. Samenow: Alright, but if any of us is going to change the way we are, then we have to look at what we have done, what we are capable of doing, and realize that if we make errors in thinking, we could still continue to do those things.

Inmate: “The obstacle to recovery would be if you’re lying to yourself. You can lie to everybody else - can lie to the Sarge - can lie to the (parole) board – whatever - but you can’t get better if you keep on lying to yourself.”

Bobby: I guess I’m not understanding – I’m not owning up to the fact that it’s my decision and my responsibility from the very beginning, in the first place, whether to get high. Knowing that I’m going to make all of these irrational decisions, these things are going to hurt other people if I get high, and then going ahead and getting high anyway. That’s what I’m doing wrong.”

Bobby: “It is like looking in the mirror. So you see what you’re saying and how you’re thinking. I completely neglected the fact that I was the one that chose to put the dope in my arm in the first place.”

Dr. Samenow: Think about it. Have any of you ever made such statements? Whether using drugs or not using drugs, done something, and then said, "Well, this is not part of me. This is not me."

Inmate: "Many of the crimes I've committed and the things I've done wrong, I've always justified it by saying, later on, days later, 'that wasn't me. I'm not that kind of individual.' Well, of course it was me! It's part of my make-up. I did it, so it had to be me. It was me."

Inmate: "One of the reasons that I drank and took drugs was for the simple fact of running and hiding from my emotions. Instead of having to face the reality of my actions, I buried them in a substance."

Dr. Samenow: Yes, I think a bottom line of this is that if we continue to think of ourselves as victims, change is impossible. Absolutely impossible because we're always going to be thinking about what happened to us, what somebody else did to us, or didn't do for us, and we never start to look at ourselves.

Discussion/Mini-lecture: Error In Thinking: "I'M A VICTIM OF MY SUBSTANCE ABUSE."

Dr. Samenow asked, "Are there things you did on drugs that you would not have done if you were not on drugs?" Some spoke of committing crimes, cheating, lying -- and said they would never do these things when sober. They seemed to be saying, "It wasn't me. It was the drugs."

It was pointed out that many people use and abuse alcohol and other drugs -- and yet do not commit crime or violent acts. There are many addicts, who may have lived on the street in desperate circumstances for years, yet would never have considered sticking a gun in someone's face and robbing them. And, of course, there are others who may have taken such actions time and again, all the while blaming the drugs for their actions.

The group was asked to look honestly at themselves: "Look at what you have done -- and what you were capable of doing. Look at your choice to continue to do those things."

One participant answered, "You can't get better if you lie to yourself."

Another said -- after some resistance -- "I guess I'm not owning up to the fact that it's my decision from the very beginning...knowing that if I get high I'm going to do these things....and then going ahead and getting high anyway..."

He continued, “I completely neglected the fact that I was the one who chose to put the dope in my arm in the first place.”

Another person said that drinking and drugs allowed him to “...run and hide from my emotions. Instead of having to face the reality of my actions, I buried them in a substance.”

Dr. Samenow makes it clear: “If we continue to think of ourselves as victims, change is impossible. We are always going to be thinking of what happened to us, what somebody else did or did not do for us. We never really start to look at ourselves.”

Only when we look honestly at ourselves -- can change begin.

Dr. Samenow: What we have to do – and I mean myself, too – any of us who want to change – we have to look in the mirror and see some things about ourselves that aren’t too pretty.

INTERVIEW:

Female Inmate: “I don’t believe I’m a victim of circumstances, because of the fact that I believe we are all responsible for our actions.”

Dr. Samenow: Does that mean you made some bad choices?

Female Inmate: “Yeah, definitely, I did. One bad choice, how I ended up here, and that one bad choice came from a lot of bad choices that I made.”

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: That is the beginning. And you have to feel bad about yourself. Not for ever and ever - but as a beginning. I don’t think any of us change anything that lasts unless we look in the mirror and just don’t like what we see, and say, “Well, there is something wrong with what I did. There is something wrong with the way I think.” And you don’t just get stuck there. We’ll talk about change later. The whole point in looking at what we do or what we’ve done in the past, or at our past thinking, is to ask the question: “Do we want to continue to live as we have? Or is there a choice?”

So the good news is that once you realize that there are choices, then change becomes possible. I have seen people actually make these changes, and become responsible people, and not go back into police stations, courts, prisons, jails, or detention centers.

By the end of these early sessions, the group had looked at several key questions. Why change?

Inmate: "Because I want a wife, I want the kids. I guess the American dream, you could say. And the road I was going wasn't giving me that. It was giving me misery."

They considered this idea: The way we think creates our lives.

Inmate: "It all revolves around how you think, how you see yourself."

Inmate: "Yeah, it was my thinking. Because I went out with the same thinking pattern that I came in with. I thought that I could go out and do the same things and not be involved in the same situations. Which is - it doesn't work that way."

They began to look for errors in thinking.

Inmate: "Kind of like looking in the mirror. So you see what you're saying and how you're thinking. I completely neglected the fact that I was the one that chose to put the dope in my arm in the first place."

And they found the courage to look at themselves.

Inmate: "That wasn't me. I'm not that kind of individual. Well, of course it was me! It's part of make up. I did it. So it had to be me. It was me!"

Discussion/Mini-lecture of Part 1: "I'm Responsible for my Choices."

Participants in the group and interview sessions talked about things they did while under the influence of drugs and alcohol – then went on to say, "These things are not part of my makeup." They seemed to suggest that drugs "made them" take wrong or irresponsible actions.

But it is a common experience that people early in recovery will find themselves in certain instances doing things that they had always blamed on the alcohol or drugs. They are often surprised to find themselves doing these things when they are sober. This can be a thin line for many of us as clinicians. We know that when it comes to addiction there are certain changes in brain chemistry that take place that can make an individual think and act differently. Yet, in the twelve-step approach, as is also true of the Therapeutic Community view of addiction, "liquor" (or drugs) is seen as only a symptom. The real problem is how one

views and deals with life. That is why in the twelve-step approach, once one gets the alcohol or drugs out of one's system, the main focus and attention turns to issues of one's character. This approach is in perfect alignment with Dr. Samenow's work.

Looking in the mirror requires courage and a desire to be totally honest with one's self. We would all like to see ourselves in a favorable way; but, in order to change, we must be willing to see ourselves as we actually are – both good and bad. This is the essence of the commitment to change - looking at the painful reality of addiction and/or criminal behavior rather than hiding from it, trying to justify or make excuses for it. The result is a healthy sense of self-disgust. This represents the beginning of a psychic change – moving from a glorified view of addiction and criminal behavior, to a degraded view. It is the constant reminder of personal responsibility that the addict or criminal carries for the things he or she has said or done, that becomes the driving force for maintaining one's commitment to change and to live differently.

Part 2

Two Crucial Errors

Inmate: "My thinking changed when I was in prison about the second time, maybe the third time - the third parole violation. I realized this is a career. This is not going to stop."

Inmate: "I'm going to have ask myself, is it worth it? It's not worth all the time I've missed with my kids, my wife. This has been right now the hardest time I've ever did, out of about fourteen, sixteen years I've got in prison. This is the hardest time I've ever did because of the things I'm aware of that I've lost that I can't get back."

Every one of us has the same needs. Home, family, loved ones. Why do some of us leave these behind, to sleep in a prison cell?

Inmate: "It's a hard process, 'cause all my life I've thought I can do just a little bit more dope; I can do just a little bit more crazy stuff. I can rip just one more guy off and nobody's going to notice. But here I am. I'm doing a nine year sentence right now."

Why do people come back again and again? What happens in the mind that brings a person back here?

Inmate: "When I was in the first time, I felt like this is pretty messed up; I ain't gonna do this no more. But it didn't go like that. When you get out, you tend to become as you think of yourself."

Time after time people return. What makes a person cause himself pain? These men and women are looking for answers by looking within themselves. They're becoming aware that the actions they take begin with the thoughts in their minds.

Inmate: "And that, for me, was going back on the streets and using drugs again. And it brought me back again."

In a next series of group meetings and interviews with Dr. Samenow, the participants are taking a step toward change. They're about to explore two major errors; two ways of thinking that create painful results. They began by talking with Dr. Samenow, one on one, while a video camera recorded them. Then, in the group, they looked at themselves on screen, as a way to learn about their own thinking.

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: All right, what we'll do now is we will watch the next interview and again the purpose is not to put the individual on the hot spot, but to use this as a mirror for the person to look at his thinking. Let's see if there any mistakes in the thinking.

ERROR IN THINKING? An Interview

Dr. Samenow: Why didn't you learn? What was there about that life that kept you in that life?

Ed: "The money. The money, the fantasies, the gold, the cars."

Dr. Samenow: What were the fantasies?

Ed: "The cars, the women."

Dr. Samenow: What's the longest you've held a job?

Ed: "Thirty, forty days. I ain't never had a job over a year. And to be forty years old...now I'm sad to say that, but workin' - I just didn't like working' - I don't like gettin' up in the mornin' at 6:00; and you go on a three dollar, a four dollar a hour job. My mother gets up at six in the morning and don't get home till six in the evening. For what? For a lousy two hundred or three hundred dollars a week. I said, "I'm not goin' that route. I want to take a chance of gettin' five thousand within four or five hours, and I call it a day."

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: Let's let the person who said what he did in that taped excerpt have the first crack at it, commenting on what he said.

Ed: "It means to me that I wasn't born with a silver spoon in my mouth. My mom and daddy had to work all their lives, and I didn't have a bicycle or some of the fine things that my neighbor had. You understand what I'm saying? I had to get out there and get mine. Either one way or another, either I'm gonna take it or sell dope."

Dr. Samenow: Comments on that?

Inmate: "You know - he wants to show everybody that he's got the flash, he's got the money, instead of going out and just trying to get a job."

Dr. Samenow: You can respond to that, quickly...

Ed: "But you fail to realize that it's harder for a black person to walk on a job with no education to get a job, you understand what I'm sayin'? If you walk in there with me right now, both of us going to a place for job, you'll get hired first because of the color of your skin, brother. I'll guarantee you. They'll look at my record and my education and say, 'Well, no, let's try him.' So hey, I'm not going to be denied because you're white. I'm going to get mad because if I got to take it from you, when you get your check, I'm going to meet you out there at the door and take it from you, in order to satisfy my needs."

Dr. Samenow: All right, is there what any of you would consider an error to the way of thinking that this gentleman described?

Inmate: "He doesn't want to earn it. Everything that I hear him saying about lack of opportunity and he's such a victim, he's not wanting to earn it. His error in thinking is that he needs to earn what he wants rather than take what he wants."

Ed: "If I didn't think like that, I wouldn't have it. I would have had to come and ask you. Would you give it to me? Hell, no, you wouldn't. So, hey, I'm gonna get mine one way or the other. Hey, if I go to the job and get turned down and I want these new wheels on my car and I come to you, 'hey, man, loan me five thousand dollars,' would you give it to me? Just answer that question. No, you wouldn't give it to me."

Inmate: "I might give you a job."

Ed: "I don't like to work! So you can stop that right there. I don't like to work."

Dr. Samenow: But this is the point. Let me take your comment, the gentleman back here.

Inmate: "I believe that's his thinking error. Like the other gentleman said, you have to earn, you have to work. In society, you have to work for what you have. You can't just use other people and take what they've earned, because most of the time who you're taking it from, they've worked hard for it. You can't just use people to get what you want in this society. You have to work for it. However, it may be that there's different styles of working. And granted, an uneducated person, be s/he black or white, is going to have a harder time getting a job. What you do is go get an education, and then go for what you want. So I think that's where your

thinking error is: taking from somebody and saying, 'I don't like to work so I can do it my way.'"

Inmate: "I feel what he's saying is he wants it fast, and he wants it in one big bundle. And if he can't get it that way, he's willing to take anybody out that gets in his way, to get this, whatever it may be. Instead of calming down and really actually thinking about something, because we know he has a brain. And know the consequences, what they are, if he gets caught in the act of doing this. He needs to just settle down and take it easy, and try a job, even if you don't like it. Just try it."

Ed: "If I leave this penitentiary today and I've got to get a job, I'm going to go to every opportunity I can to get one. And you still hear 'no.' Well, hey, man, I got to eat."

Dr. Samenow: If that way of thinking continues, what is going to happen as a result?

Inmate: "I feel he's either going to end up back in prison where he is right now, or he's going to end up dead. That's the road he's taking."

Inmate: "The error in his thinking is one of the end results - he's not really thinking he's going to hurt himself, but he's going to hurt everybody around him that cares about him, because he's putting everybody else out. Like he was sayin', if he goes to somebody's house and asks them, 'Are you gonna feed my kids?' Well, hey, you know, if you're in prison, you can't feed your kids, you know. Every time you go out and commit a crime, there's that chance that you're going to come to prison. And you're not only hurting yourself, but you're hurting people that should be valuable to you. People that should come first. But the way that you present everything, it's like you don't care. You're number one and you come first, but you're trying to make yourself perceived that 'well, hey, I'm doing this for everybody else. I'm doin' this for the kids, I'm trying to feed my kids, I'm trying to feed my old lady, I'm trying to do this...' But that's not what you're doin', you're just looking out for number one, and you don't care who you hurt. And I think that's one of the major errors. And that's the end result, that you're going to hurt people that really care about you. And then when you do need those people, they ain't gonna be there."

Dr. Samenow: As I looked at it, I am lifting out one error in particular, and that is, that to live responsibly, a person really has to make an effort. This idea of "I want it all now" or "If I can't get what I want now, I'm going to take it," that leads to all kinds of problems. And to live responsibly in this world does require, very often, going very slowly, starting at the bottom, working your way up, sticking with something over time, doing something you may not even want to do, and not

doing some of the things that you do want to do. Maybe in a sense you could say it's a sacrifice now for something better down the road. So the error that I am concentrating on in this interview is what seems to me to be a lack of effort.

ERROR IN THINKING: "*I want it fast and easy.*"

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Inmate 1: "I wanted to be different. I wanted to do something different. But I wanted to make the type of money that they were making. See, they were making theirs legal; I wanted to make mine illegal. I didn't want to make it illegal, but I wanted to make it fast. And the only way I could make it fast was to make it illegal."

Dr. Samenow: What is the longest that you've ever held a job?

Inmate 2: "Actually, the longest I ever held a job would probably be right around a year. 'Cause I would move. I was a free-spirited individual, and I liked to just pick up and leave at any time I wanted to. Kind of like a gypsy of some sort."

Dr. Samenow: What is the longest that you have ever held one job?

Inmate 3: "It was here in prison."

Dr. Samenow: How about outside of prison?

Inmate 3: "Outside, six months."

Dr. Samenow: What's the longest period of time that you were unemployed, not counting being locked up?

Inmate 4: "Probably between - anywhere from three or four years at a time."

Dr. Samenow: And if we had a videotape of those three to four years, let's say your four-year period of unemployment, what would we see you doing, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week?

Inmate 4: "Wasting my life."

Dr. Samenow: You dropped out.

Inmate 4: "Yeah."

Dr. Samenow: Why?

Inmate 4: “Because it wasn’t interesting. It wasn’t fun.”

Dr. Samenow: All right, you saw your brothers and your sisters doing what they did the gradual way, the step by step way. The slow way, in most cases, probably. Why did you not want to do it that way? What was it about their way that you didn’t like?

Inmate 5: “Well, a lot of them would come home with headaches. ‘Oh, I have to go do this class tonight; I don’t want to go do this class tonight.’ ‘Greg, you ought to get in school.’ I said, “Why would you want me to get in school, just to have a nervous breakdown behind school?”

“It didn’t make any sense then, but it pays off now. But – I was in my own little world, see?”

Dr. Samenow: What was that little world like?

Inmate 6: “Being free. Being free from being pressured to an everyday situation, like a job, reality, going to work, gettin’ up in the morning. Knowing that I didn’t have nobody to tell me what to do.”

Dr. Samenow: OK, so in the last fourteen years or so, is there anything that you struggled toward?

Inmate 6: “No.”

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: The error really is, in part, a focus on the present: “What do I want now? It’s a kind of tunnel vision, and you want this and you don’t think about anything else. And you’re gonna get it now, and you’re gonna get it your way. Or you look around and you see what somebody else has, and you say, “I want that. Why shouldn’t I have that now?” So you don’t think about what it takes to be able to get that.

Ed: “Well, society really made me this way.”

Dr. Samenow: Now, there you are...

Inmate: “I mean I cannot help it. I mean, I got shot in the chest seven times. Why? Because I’m in the street. I mean, do you think I would trust somebody else after this man that done this to me, after this man that

filleted me, filleted my face with a razor, do you think I can trust society? I got to get mine the best way I know how.”

Dr. Samenow: And my only response to you is to say that if you continue to try to get it that way, you’re going to run certain risks - it’s a choice.

Ed: “Well, I’m gonna give it a chance. I’m going to try. The least I can do is give it effort. When I get out of here, I’m going to get me a job. And if it works successfully for me, I’ll stick with it. But if I have one chance in my life and it gets cut off, you never know what I’ll do, if it comes down to feeding mine...so that’s all I can really say.”

Dr. Samenow: And that is exactly the point. That is what every person has to decide. Whether he is willing to take the slow track, live responsibly, or whether he wants the fast track with its risks and its possible consequences and harm to other people. And that’s the choice.

Discussion/Mini-lesson: “I Want it Fast and Easy.”

“I want it fast and easy” has several thinking errors contained in it. First, it demonstrates what Yochelson and Samenow identified in their original work as “Lack of Interest in Responsible Performance”. Here are the major aspects of this thinking error:

Lack of Interest in Responsible Performance:

- **Responsible living is viewed as unexciting and unsatisfying**
- **Always looking for the short-cut**
- **No sense of obligation to others or to society**
- **Abandons anything found boring, tedious or difficult**
- **“Forgets a lot”**
- **May display an attitude of, “Work is for suckers, those in the know skim off the top.”**

All of us at times, may have thoughts that indicate a “Lack of Interest in Responsible Performance.” But we generally do not let such thinking rule our lives, it is the exception to our thinking, not the rule. But for the majority of clients in the criminal justice system, this is a habitual way of thinking and of dealing with the world around them. Some may have *never* made an honest attempt at “living life on life’s terms”. Instead of starting at the bottom and expecting to have to build success over time and through steady effort, they tend to think, “Why work at a job with no status and that pays too little, when I can go get what I want without having to put up with all of the hassle?”

As we have previously stated, this kind of thinking can relate not only to crime, but to substance use as well. In fact, it is one of the most common causes of relapse with substances as well as with crime. When something goes the least bit wrong or requires more effort than expected, often the alcoholic or addict's view is, "Forget it! I'll just go get high!"

Whether the issue is addiction or criminality, can you think of other examples of things you have heard your clients say that indicate a "Lack of Interest in Responsible Performance?"

People who are successful in life generally do a lot of things that they find boring or unpleasant. They have a goal, and they stick with it. They are willing to work hard, put up with difficulties and work toward solving their problems. They are willing to develop self-discipline and apply steady effort in working toward their goals. Even if they have setbacks, instead of getting angry, getting high, hurting someone or quitting, they don't give up. Instead, they try to learn from their mistakes and continue to move forward.

This is why many psychologists and counselors view addicts and offenders as psychologically immature. Rather than dealing with adversity and overcoming it, these individuals choose habitually to try to go around it, avoid it or overcome it by false or deceptive means.

In the Twelve Step model, addiction is seen as a "spiritual malady".

We all have a choice. Will you choose the fast and easy way, the way that is temporary, putting you at risk of harming others and ending up in jail, injured or dead?

If you choose to live responsibly, you will have to work hard and put up with people and conditions you don't always like. But if you stick with it, you can become good at something legitimate. You can go to sleep each night, knowing that you have not hurt innocent people, and that no one is looking to arrest you. You can create a life that you and the people you care about can be proud of.

Or you can choose to think, "I want it fast and easy." We all have a choice.

Where does this thinking lead?

INDIVIDUAL INTERVIEWS

Where does this thinking lead?

Inmate 6: "So some mornings, I wake up and I feel like, this is nothin' - it's just a matter of doin' this amount of time, and then I get out, and then I can do what I want to again. Or maybe I convince myself that maybe next time, I'll be lucky. Next time I won't be all hooked and doing day to day crime. Next time, I'll do 'the big job' and then everything will work out real good."

Where does it lead?

Inmate 6: "My thinking changed when I was in prison about the second time, maybe the third time, third parole violation. I realized, this is a career. This is not going to stop. When I get out, I don't think of normal stuff no more."

Where does it lead?

Inmate 6: "To the same behavior - *the same behavior* - and it's twenty-some years I been doin' this."

Woman Inmate 2: "So the more I stole, the more people told me I was good at it. And I knew I was good at what I did. And it was kind of like, yeah, I can do this."

Where does it lead?

Woman Inmate 2: "Each time I went to jail, I got smaller. I just wanted to crawl under something and go away."

Inmate: "I might give you a job..."

Ed: "I don't like to work. You can stop that right there. I don't like to work."

Where does it lead?

Ed: "I was taking everything out of my house, something that my old lady would work for - *hard*. I didn't have a job."

Inmate 6: "And like I said before, it's harder for me to sit and think, well, I have to accept an entry-level position in this or that or this other line of work."

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: But even if you started at the bottom, there's no guarantee of what's going to happen. But let me tell you of a person that I know who was in the federal penitentiary. He got out at the age of 43, and he began work as a bus boy in a restaurant. Which you know is a pretty menial job. He certainly didn't make much, just tips. And tips for busboys aren't great, but he worked his head off. And he went from busboy to bartender to waiter to assistant manager to manager and then eventually as a partner in another restaurant. This was starting at the bottom in the most basic of jobs. So I have seen it done. It is possible. But you're quite correct that there's, first, no guarantee, and second, you're absolutely right that if you start at the bottom, you have to endure conditions of life that are a lot less than desirable. But if I work, if I put my all into it, if I stick with it, if I make a commitment to it, the chances are, eventually I'll get there. That's what I'm talking about by effort.

Dr. Samenow: Last night I spoke to a woman inmate at the women's facility. She gave me permission to discuss with you today in this meeting what she had done. She doesn't have the opportunity here to criticize her thinking, although she did a very good job of it last night. So I want to tell you what she told me, and just see what you think.

Below is the case of a woman who held a legitimate job for fourteen years. She prided herself on the fact that she could go into a store, into a mall for that matter, and in virtually no time at all, she could come out of that mall with two thousand dollars worth of stuff.

INTERVIEW: ERROR – *No one was hurt.*

Sandra: "I mean I know women that have sixteen felonies in a year. I had two in twenty years. And all the time I didn't really realize that I really had serious thinking problems."

Dr. Samenow: Did you think that what was wrong was other people?

Sandra: "Yeah. It had had to be other people, because I mean, I was intelligent, I had a good job. And then people would tell me how good I could steal. And that was...I think it kind of made it increase. Because at first I was just stealing to give stuff to my family members. And then people would say, 'Oh, you want something? Call Sandra.' I used to actually get lists to go steal for people. And then I would go to like a bar or somewhere to deliver this stuff, and it would be like, 'Oh, she's good. She's the best.' And that was the first praise I ever got, was for stealing."

Dr. Samenow: So just as a lawyer might have his specialty and a doctor have his specialty, you were a specialist and a consultant in stealing.

Sandra: "Um-hmm. I used to say that I was a consumer representative that provided those with lesser means the better things in life."

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: She started the stealing, as I remember, when she was around 15. Of course, this was before she was working. So she said she had been stealing for years and years and years. She had some misdemeanor charges and she said, "To me, that was like a traffic ticket. Nothing really ever happened."

INTERVIEW

Dr. Samenow: So there was no consideration at all about any impact that it *could* have on other people.

Sandra: "I never learned to consider someone else because my mom only considered herself. She never considered me. So I didn't know about considering someone else or nothing else. My mom did what she wanted to do, she traveled, she shipped me off somewhere, and she kept my baby sister with her all the time. So I didn't know nothing about 'why should I feel guilty?' There's nothing to feel guilty about. My mom didn't do nothing for me, and she didn't feel guilty. So why should I feel guilty about stealing from somebody that I don't even know. My thought process didn't include any of that. That's just the way I thought. It's like, it was my thinking. My thinking was that this is OK because it feels good. I get praised for doing it, so that made it OK. That's as far as I could think."

Discussion/Mini-lecture: Where Does This Thinking Lead?

Several people in group and individually admitted that this error in thinking has led to painful results in their lives.

Those results included: years of wasted living; dropping out of school or not seeking further education; never holding a job longer than a few months; "freedom" from responsibilities (which eventually resulted in loss of personal freedom); never struggling for anything and so never achieving anything of lasting value; loss of self-respect -- and harm to self, family and friends.

Dr. Samenow observed that all of those problems can be a result of thinking, "I want that; I want it NOW; I'm going to get it now." The focus, he said, is only on the present.

The "fast and easy way" does have temporary benefits. You may get what you want, quickly. But in the long run, the "fast way" leads to a life filled with pain. The men and women in the interviews demonstrate -- through their lives -- what these costs are. Several of them believe the price is too high to keep paying.

ERROR IN THINKING: “No one was hurt.”

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: And then finally she got a felony charge and then another felony charge. Now, of course, she’s locked up today. If you were looking at this from the perspective of a person who wanted to change, what is missing from her thinking?

Inmate: “I honestly don’t know about what’s not there, but I wish I had an old lady that could steal two thousand dollars worth of stuff.”

Dr. Samenow: Would you respect her?

Inmate: “I would respect her skill.”

Dr. Samenow: All right - let me take this gentleman’s comment.

Inmate: “Shoplifters don’t look at it in a sense of stealing from another person, like stealing from you, when in reality it is, because in the end result, you’re paying the taxes...”

Dr. Samenow: Let me tell you what she said, because I asked her the question: who was hurt by this? And she said, and this is just what we’ve been talking about, she said, “well, I never gave that any thought at all.”

INTERVIEW

Sandra: “I never felt guilty because people praised me. I mean, why should I feel guilty? These people are paying me for this. They gonna go to the store and buy it anyway. I’m gonna give you a \$500 dress and you give me \$250 cash. I’m happy, I’m getting praise, people are saying how good I am at this, and you’re happy. So I never was guilty. But I never considered the fact that it might hurt my kids later on, you know. Or it might cause me to be in prison away from my kids. None of that ever crossed my mind because it wasn’t things that I ran into.”

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: So the error really is the failure to consider injury to other people in the broadest sense. Let’s look at another interview piece.

INTERVIEW

Gary: “I don’t know if this is justification or not, but I didn’t go in to hurt nobody and I wouldn’t hurt nobody. I had that tested. I had people slam a safe shut, an 18 year old girl, cute as a button, and I got a gun right in her chest, and she’s saying, ‘No, I ain’t gonna give you the money,’ and she

slams the safe. You have to make a decision. I mean the stupid drunk that's standing there, he's probably going to shoot her just 'cause he's mad. I just walked away and laughed."

Dr. Samenow: Did you hurt anybody in that situation?

Gary: "Oh, no, I just wanted the money."

Dr. Samenow: You didn't physically hurt anybody.

Gary: "I know I did emotionally. I'm sure...I understand the difference. At the time, there'd be justification. Now I understand every time you justify somebody's losing their rights. So that was an awakening. But at the time, I drew a line and I said I'm not gonna hurt nobody."

GROUP SESSION

Inmate: "Well, hurt is hurt, no matter whichever way you look at it. If you hurt somebody by physically hurting them, then you're taking it much deeper. But if you humiliate them, you're hurting a person then, too, because you're degrading them. You're making them feel maybe worthless, maybe useless. 'Cause you might have a person that's having a problem with that, with self-worth, and you're humiliating them and stuff like that, and you're just drawing them down further, and making them feel even worse about themselves."

Inmate: "He was also robbing her emotionally, and hurting, scarred her, or whatever, although he didn't realize it at the time. That's what, in fact, I believe happened. And by not realizing it, you harmed a person emotionally. I believe that's an error in thinking."

Inmate: "I don't see that. You know, in society today there's more innocent people getting hurt in drive-bys, I mean seriously and physically getting hurt and something to scar them for life. For something to not happen, more or less just a threat, and it not happened and just walk away..."

Dr. Samenow: But your idea of hurt is pumping a bullet in somebody, or leaving them in a pool of blood. There are degrees of hurt, aren't there?

Inmate: "Yes. Now maybe she was hurt a little bit emotionally."

Dr. Samenow: OK, let me take the comment of the gentleman behind you.

Inmate: "There's no doubt in my mind the young lady was scarred for life, okay? I've been in situations where people have scared me. And I saw a program on TV about another guy in a certain situation, and I'll reflect

back to that, it's impacted my life. So there's no doubt in mind the young lady with no experience with criminal activity and a guy comes in the store to rob her, puts a gun on her, something that's probably never happened to her in her life. She's got to be emotionally scarred for life."

Inmate: "I would think about the victims, but just briefly. And I would think about them more after I had done my little crime."

Dr. Samenow: But afterwards only?

Inmate: "Well, no, I would think before and after. But before, I would just say, OK, so what? I choose to do this. This is what I'm gonna do, and too bad if they don't like it. Then later on, after I was high, because my objective was to get drugs, so once I got my drugs and I'd be sitting there high. I'd be thinking, that was pretty messed up, man. They're gonna come home tonight and they can't watch TV because I've sold their TV. And they can't do a number of things because I've taken their things. And I'd feel ashamed of myself. But I'm high, so that was what it was all about. About me getting high, and I was gonna do that, and if any people got their feathers ruffled along the way, too bad."

Dr. Samenow: As I understand it, you're saying the hell with what happens to the person, true?

Inmate: "Yeah, I think that that's true. And I think that anybody that has any moral compunctions at all, at the time that they're doing these things, they do set them aside. And they're not going to dwell on it because it becomes...it's painful to sit there and go, 'I'm a creep, I steal stuff from people'."

Dr. Samenow: Who else is hurt by the crime?

Inmate: "His family's hurt, I would think. He's locked up in here; he's got a wife and kids maybe. If he does or doesn't...maybe parents. People who love him that aren't with him every day, that don't get to go places with him, do things with him, hold him, whatever. Those people are hurt. He's hurt as a result of it, I think."

Dr. Samenow: OK, he's hurt. His family is hurt.

Inmate: "When I came to prison - this time I came to prison - my nieces and nephews were like two, three, four, five, six, eight, nine years old. Now they're like young teenagers. A couple of them are going to college now. And they was really hurt by it. Confused. Didn't understand what was really going on. My daughter, at the time, a very young girl, didn't know

what was going on. Why her father wasn't there. And now she's going to college now, and she's still confused why I'm still in prison and when I'm getting out. And everybody's hurt by it. My sisters, like my aunt I just lost three weeks ago. She was very hurt by it. She was going to come see me in prison a couple months ago. She got cancer, couldn't make it up to see me and now she's passed away. My sister and family and my wife - they're all affected by that, you know. Everybody's hurt by it. Everybody. The victim, my family, me, everybody's hurt by it. It's like a snowball effect, like an avalanche, you know what I mean? It affects everybody."

Discussion/Mini-lesson: Error in Thinking: "NO ONE WAS HURT."

Failure to Consider Injury to Others

How often have you wanted to do something and then, with little thought about the consequences, immediately acted on it?

Did you decide to break into a home, steal a car, hold up a store, snatch a pocketbook? Or did you lie, con, insult and threaten? Your mind was only on what you wanted at the time.

Maybe you saw a night clerk alone -- and felt positive that, at the sight of your gun, he or she would empty the cash register. Perhaps you've seen a woman standing alone at a bus stop, purse swinging loosely in her hand. The opportunity was there, and you acted.

At these times, you were so intent on what you wanted that you never thought about how upset and fearful the clerk would feel, or how the woman whose purse you stole might be afraid ever to go out again by herself.

Every time someone commits a crime, there are many victims. Yet criminals consider only what they want at the time.

Imagine that your wife or husband, sister or mother has been harmed by a criminal. How would you feel? How would your family feel?

Have you ever told others that you don't hurt people -- you only take things? The truth is that the employee who was on duty may be so terrified that he or she cannot return to the job. The victim's children may be shaken and fearful. His or her family may be frightened. Neighbors may be plagued by fear.

The criminal who is arrested is also hurt. So are his or her children, family and loved ones. Everyone pays a price.

The criminal thinks only of himself -- and usually in the short term.

Each of us has a choice. We can be one of society's takers; we can spend a lifetime harming others, including those who care about us. Or we can choose to think about the consequences of our actions; we can commit ourselves to living responsibly. If we choose, we can become people who help instead of hurt. Instead of taking, we can contribute. The choice is ours.

WHO IS HURT?

Female Inmate: "I have my mom and my dad, I have my parents. And my dad, you know, the first time I ever seen my dad cry was when he seen me in the county jail and he knew - he couldn't even get me out, I didn't even have a bond. And I think that broke me. That was it. That was enough."

Inmate: "When they come and visit me now, I hate for them to come down here because they always cry, and that kills me for them to see me like this."

Inmate: "And it takes a while before you realize that, like, maybe your mom is in tears and she's embarrassed. Her friends are reading about her kid in the newspaper."

Inmate: "My mom was hurt most of all by it all. And which in turns hurts me to look in her eyes at visiting, and to see the hurt and tears when she leaves and so forth. And that's a big impact. And I come back to the cell and I dwell on that, and you know, that hurts as well."

Female Inmate: "I didn't get in trouble until I was 34; I'm 43. I have a 14 year old daughter, and I've missed the last five or six years of her life. I have a 19 year old, with a 4 month old baby."

Female Inmate: "They want me home, and there's a lot of pain right now."

It's an error to think no one was hurt, when the truth is that many were hurt. Thoughts like these lead to painful results, again and again. But every time we become aware of these thoughts, we take a valuable step toward change.

In Part 3 of this course, we'll look at practical steps for change. For example,

- **Focus** on your thoughts and find each error.
- **Remember** where it leads.
- **Eliminate** the error before you act.
- **Explore** other options, and take responsible action.

There's an easy way to remember. Responsible thinking keeps you **FREE** from choices that create painful consequences.

Inmate: "I believe - I honestly believe today that change is possible. I've never believed that before. I really haven't. I've always felt at a total loss that I could somehow get through, continue do what I'm doing, expecting different results somehow. And today I believe that a change is possible. But it's lot of work. It's a tremendous amount of work."

Discussion/Mini-lesson: Who is Hurt?

One important step toward change is to become aware of – to fully take in – the injury done to self and others by destructive actions.

People in the interviews talked about who was hurt by their actions. The victims were scarred emotionally, if not physically. The victim's family -- and neighbors -- may have been left with a lifelong feeling distrust or even a feeling of being terrified by strangers, or by those with similar characteristics to their perpetrator. The convicted person's loved ones – children, wife or husband, lover, mother and father, brothers and sisters and friends – all pay a painful price. And so does the person who committed the act.

This circle of injury -- the result of a single irresponsible act -- can be called a "ripple effect." The wave of hurt moves out, endlessly, like the ripples on a pond when a stone is thrown in.

Family members of those who commit destructive acts are typically confused by these actions. It's not unusual for children to ask why Dad, Mom, or Uncle so and so... would do something so bad.

Victims live with the confusion and anger they feel because someone was willing to harm them for selfish gratification. Family and friends of victims have to take time off from work to attend numerous court hearings, where they re-live the painful experience again and again.

Society watches, day after day, as the news shows them violence, injury and death resulting from criminal acts. Large businesses, insurance companies and

small shop owners all have to increase their prices to compensate for costs forced on them by crime. Taxpayers, especially people with limited income -- single moms trying to feed and clothe their children -- are affected the most by these increases.

When a habitual criminal finally decides to stop harming others and become a responsible individual that also creates a ripple effect. Potential victims will not be harmed; neither will family and friends. This newly-responsible person contributes to the family; the children have reason to be proud. They have a parent that provides a model for their own lives, and ultimately, they may even become a positive force for turning others from crime and creating more victims, as well.

In working with offenders it is important that we provide them with exercises and opportunities for exploring these ripple effects. Just like the dynamic of denial in the alcoholic or addict, the offender has rationalized and justified his or her actions to such a degree, that he or she has come to habitually live in a substantially reduced state of self-awareness. One of the critical factors in developing a commitment to recovery from a criminal lifestyle is beginning to see the full impact and ramifications of one's own behavior. Dr. Samenow often refers to the need for "afflicting the comfortable" which is the process of "consciousness raising" and the self-disgust that often ensues when offenders see just how destructive their actions have been.

When working with correctional clients it is important that we do not "gloss over" the full range of this ripple effect. However, once the individual's consciousness has been raised, and they have become remorseful about their own behavior; then offering them the hope of the positive ripples that can result from a life based on a commitment to recovery is also crucial to helping the individual in sustaining motivation for change.

PART 3

Overcoming Errors in Thinking

Inmate: "I can own the fact that perhaps there are some - in fact, there are - some very antisocial, maybe even real incorrect thinking patterns that I have, and I rationalize doing a drug again, even though I know the result is going to be the same. It's really quite insane to do the same thing over and over again and expect different results."

Inmate: "Rather like looking in the mirror. So, you see what you're saying and how you're thinking. I completely neglected the fact that I was the one who chose to put the dope in my arm in the first place."

What does it take for a person to change? Two things are basic: 1) deal with destructive and addictive behavior, and 2) deal with your thinking. These two are linked together.

Inmate: "If I hadn't got back into that, or hadn't thought about that when I was out, I don't think I'd be back now."

Inmate: "Even though I'm an intelligent person, I still was thinking the same way I was when I first got arrested. And when you think the same, you go back and you do the same things again. It's as simple as that."

When you think the same, you do the same. Over and over, the same thoughts bring the same results.

Inmate: "Yeah, it was my thinking. Because I went out with the same thinking pattern that I came in with. I thought that I could go out and do the same things and not be involved in the same situation. But it doesn't work that way."

Female Inmate: "And all the time I didn't really realize that I had really had serious thinking problems."

Inmate: "I've been in prison almost two years now, and my thinking's caught up with me a little bit. So it's got to change, or things are going to stay the same. That's where I've changed mostly is realizing that the more I think the same, the more of the same is going to happen."

When you think the same, you do the same. And if you can change your thinking, you have a chance to change your life.

Inmate: “As I’ve taken this new thinking a little bit to heart - and I still make a lot of mistakes - but I get a little bit better results today, because I’m consciously aware of what I do this moment is going to make my tomorrows.”

Inmate: “The change in my thinking feels great because, I’m meeting a person I never knew before. And I like this person.”

Female Inmate: “It’s just so much the feeling you get from your family when you start to change; and they know you’re really trying to change, it’s great, OK? Because once you start changing, things happen.”

Inmate: “It’s all real difficult, but when you really make an effort, and you really want it, it’s possible to change.”

If you really want it, it’s possible to change. And the question is: How?

Inmate: “I covered it up with drugs. Also neglect.”

This group session began by focusing on their own thoughts and finding the errors. Error: *I’m a victim of others.*

INTERVIEWS

Dr. Samenow: Can you give me in a short answer what the motive was for you to commit murder?

Inmate: “Anger. A lot of frustration and a lot of anger that has built up from childhood.”

Error: I’m a victim of my substance abuse.

Dr. Samenow: Are there things that you did on drugs that you would not have done if you weren’t using drugs?

Inmate: “Oh, yes.”

Dr. Samenow: For example?

Inmate: “Stealing. Cheating. Just things that are not part of my makeup.”

Error: I want it fast and easy.

Dr. Samenow: What’s the longest you’ve held a job?

Inmate: “Thirty, forty days. I ain’t never had a job over a year.

Error: No one was hurt.

Dr. Samenow: Did you hurt anybody in that situation?

Inmate: "Oh, no. I just wanted the money."

So the group began by looking at thoughts that are errors, because they lead to lives filled with pain. In the sessions ahead the group will focus more and more on the process of change.

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: All right, what we'll do now is we will watch the next interview and again the purpose is not to put the individual on the hot spot, but to use this as a mirror for the person to look at his thinking. Let's see if there are any mistakes in the thinking.

INTERVIEWS

Dr. Samenow: How many years do you have to serve in your present sentence?

Dean: "I'm doing sixteen years. And I've done 11 years so far, working on 12 now. And I'm discharged next year around August or September."

Dr. Samenow: How old are you?

Dean: "Thirty-eight years old."

Dr. Samenow: How many years of your life have you been locked up?

Dean: "All together, fifteen all total."

Dr. Samenow: Did you use drugs before you were...

Dean: "Yes, I did. I used drugs and alcohol."

Dr. Samenow: What did you use?

Dean: "I used marijuana, amphetamines, and alcohol."

Dr. Samenow: How many fights, and I don't mean in the boxing ring, but fight fights have you been in in your life?

Dean: "Oh, 39, 40 fights."

Dr. Samenow: 40 fights. How come?

Dean: “My attitude, anger. But it only comes out when I’m drinking. It’s amazing to me. When I was a boxing pro, I made good money boxing pro. I made good money. Absolutely no reason for it. I robbed a gambling shack one time just to see if I could rob it. I was drinking at the time.”

Dr. Samenow: Just for the excitement?

Dean: “Just for the excitement of it. There was no reason for it. Absolutely no reason for it. I did it. Drinking.”

Dr. Samenow: I want to know what happened to conscience and remorse.

Dean: “There was no remorse. The conscience was telling me this: Looking over at what happened in the robbery, how well they saw me, they recognize me from a mug shot, etcetera. There was no remorse at all.”

Dr. Samenow: What did you do when you drank that you didn’t do when you weren’t drinking? What chances did you take?

Dean: “Number one: I only carried a gun when I drank. If I saw an opportunity to rob somebody in a certain situation, for instance, I robbed a couple of guys in hotel bathrooms. I’d been drinking. I went to these motel lounges, because - there’s a reason - go to the bar, have a few drinks, whatever.”

Dr. Samenow: But you wouldn’t have stuck somebody up with a gun if you weren’t drinking?

Dean: “Oh, definitely not. I was scared to death. I wanted to do a couple of robberies a couple of times when I was sober, right? I didn’t have the nerve.”

ERROR IN THINKING: “It’s okay to shut off fear.”

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: Well, I should give you the chance to comment on your own interview.

Dean: “No comment.”

Dr. Samenow: Well, we’ll give somebody else a chance. Is there an error? Or if you think there’s more than one in what you heard...

Inmate: "The thinking error isn't in the 'I want a drink in order to have the courage to go rob someone' - I used to do the same thing. I used to steal car batteries, but I couldn't do it until I got drunk. I know it sounds like a pretty wimpy crime, but I couldn't do it until I got drunk. The thinking error is in wanting to steal in the first place."

Dr. Samenow: Let me ask you, because I want to be sure I understood this. In this case, in that interview, you are saying that really you wanted to get rid of the fear, and that the way to do that for a pretty serious crime was to drink.

Dean: "After looking at my stuff on tape, I realize this here: the fact of the matter is, there's no excuse for what I did, OK? I can't blame it on the liquor, whatever. I was going to do these crimes anyway. Somewhere, previous to when the crime took place, I had it in my mind. I'd been in these particular establishments at one time or another. There's a money situation in the different places I was in, and I used alcohol, OK, for the excuse to give me the courage to go in there and pull these particular crimes."

Dr. Samenow: You used the alcohol to get rid of the fear so you could do the crime.

Dean: "Yeah, I'd use alcohol just for the fear."

Dr. Samenow: You know that if you commit a crime, there's the possibility that you might get caught. There's the possibility that you might get convicted. And there's the possibility that you might be locked up. Or in a certain type of crime, you might get hurt or you might even get killed. So, I mean, you know the consequences, what they could be. My question to you is: What happens with those fears of consequences, at the time you're actually committing the crime.

Inmate: "I think his error is that he's not listening to his fear. His fear is there for a reason. It's telling him not to do this. It's an instinctive fear; that's an instinct that we should follow, I think. If you don't listen to that, you wind up in trouble."

Dr. Samenow: I think that's well-put. The fear is there at a certain level. But by the time you're ready to commit the crime, and you're on your way to do it; you're thinking about what you're going to do and as you put it, you're not listening to your fear.

Inmate: "He's trying to consciously drown it, his fear, by drinking. So he's pursuing the act even further by drinking. Whereas he should have listened to his fear in the first place and allowed that to give his body, his mind, a signal that says: this is wrong."

Dr. Samenow: Which is interesting, because you said in an earlier part of our discussion that you had thought about killing a person and then you had this debate inside yourself, or this series of thoughts, and you decided not to do it.

Dean: “I never was going to actually take a life before. That’s why that fear set in, so intense, like it did. I was in a robbery I was talking about killing a guy, in those situations, right? Killing a guy - but after I thought about it, taking this guy’s life, it wasn’t a robbery motivation. I was robbing this guy, but that wasn’t the motivation - I got this guy’s jewelry, money, stuff like that. I’m killing this guy because he’s wealthy, rich, and at that time I had a lot of strange prejudice against Caucasian people, and he’s white. He’s got everything that I want, OK?”

Dr. Samenow: And you’re not thinking one bit about how he feels, who he is, whether he has a family; or the fact that he’s just some innocent guy in a bathroom or getting off a train or whatever.

Dean: “It never entered my mind. Never entered my mind. The fact is that I was actually going to kill this guy. I knew I was going to shoot him in the heart. I was going to hit him in the heart. And the guy said, ‘please don’t kill me, please don’t kill me...’ - this, that and the other. So I’m thinking about it - I honestly thought about the gas chamber, which I’ve seen this gas chamber done before, so I thought about that.”

Dr. Samenow: In other words, you listened to the fears, the consequences.

Dean: “But the fear is still there when you’re drinking. But like you said, the man’s life, I’m drowning it--my fear--in alcohol.”

ERROR: I shut off fear

INTERVIEWS

Inmate: “When you’re addicted to heroin, you don’t stop and think of the consequences. You think of the moment.”

Dr. Samenow: When you committed that armed robbery, what did you think of the possibility of being caught?

Inmate: “At the time, I really didn’t think about being caught.”

Inmate: “At the time, I just shut the world off at that time and allowed the anger to flow. And at that point is when I took the life.”

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: From the standpoint of the person committing the crime, it's not an error, at the time he's committing it. It's the way he thinks. It is only standing back and saying, "Well, look, if you want to live a life in which you're not injuring others, in which you're not going in and out of penitentiary and jailhouse doors, then you have to think about possible consequences. You can't shut them off just like you turn off a light switch, because if the fears were there, then he wouldn't be out robbing somebody. He wouldn't be out putting a gun to somebody in a hotel bathroom. The error is getting rid of the fear."

ERROR: It's okay to shut off fear.

Instead of shutting off fear of destructive behavior, we can use fear to remind us of the painful consequences.

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: What we've done here is to see that there are mistakes that we make in our thinking. Errors in the way we think. But I think that the important point is that if you decide that you do want to change, you know that it is possible to do it. And there are really two points at which any of us can become aware of our thinking. One is after something has happened -- you realize where you went wrong. But a further step is to be able to catch your thinking before you act on it.

Discussion/Mini-lecture: Error in Thinking: "It's Okay to Shut Off Fear."

We all know that when we do something that is harmful or illegal, there will be consequences. A person who breaks the law knows that he can be arrested and locked up. In a risky or dangerous crime, he is well aware that he can be injured or killed. Yet it is striking to see how often some people ignore these thoughts.

A person planning destructive behavior may shut off fear of what could happen – like turning off a light switch.

These same people may warn their own children about the risk of destructive behavior, yet ignore their own advice in their own lives. A father teaches his children how wrong it is to steal. Yet, when he runs out of money to buy drugs, he steals everything in his son's piggy bank. He did not intend to hurt his son. But he is so determined to buy the drugs, he simply shuts off any thought of right or wrong – or of the consequences to his family and himself.

Maybe it would be too painful for such people to stop and think; they might have to face the fact that they're hurting others. The problem is that people who act

destructively don't stop to think. The excitement of the moment or the intensity of their desire gains the upper hand.

People whose conscience would prevent them from harming an elderly or sick person might break into an elderly person's home; they choose to not think about the consequences.

Only later will they be faced with possible regret about what happened to them as a result of their actions or what they have done to others. That "later" is always too late!

Most of us feel some fear when we think about actually doing a dangerous or destructive act. The thought of what could happen brings that fear. We may shut it off – drink or use drugs – or choose to think of other things. But we do feel it. That feeling of fear is like an alarm, warning us that something is wrong. If we take the time to notice the fear – to think about what could happen – we are less likely to do something destructive.

Some people think it takes courage to do dangerous and destructive things. The truth is, people who do those things often don't have enough courage to face their own feelings.

Facing your feelings takes a great deal of courage. And learning to listen to your own conscience – your own fears of what could happen – is a valuable step toward change.

Catch your thoughts before you act

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: Let's take a look at something that does happen in real life, and how you can catch your thoughts and what you can do about it.

Role Play with Rick Broussard, Instructor

OK, we're going to do a brief role play about an incident in the chow hall. Dean, would you come up and join us. The situation is this: Dean is sitting in the chow hall and I'm going to come up and approach him.

Rick: "You're in my chair."

Dean: "Wait a minute, man. Let me tell you something. All you guys come to the penitentiary and you claim the seat belongs to you. All you had when you came in was your shorts, t-shirts, and green clothes to wear."

Rick: "Hey, I was using this chair all last week. This is my spot, and now you moved in on me."

Dean: "You've been sitting over there with your buddies over there, jumping back and forth between tables, back and forth, and back and forth. And you sat here last week a couple times..."

Rick: "Right, and I'm going to sit here this week. And I'm going to sit here next week, and there ain't nothin' you're gonna do about it."

Dean: "Tell you what you can do. Step right outside, and we'll see if we can't settle it."

Dr. Samenow: OK, freeze! Let's stop. What is he thinking? What is this man thinking? And what is going to happen?

Inmate: "Security sees this. They know something is about to happen. The two aren't mixing right. Now either he's going to hit him in the chow hall, or else they're gonna go outside with a cop following them. They're gonna take care of it, and they're both gonna get kicked outta here."

Inmate: "It's not so much the chair. It's not so much the dudes involved. What it is, is the individual's perception of how other people in the pen see them. So both of them are more concerned about the other convict's perception of them."

Inmate: "One of the steps that he could have taken in the first place is not to come at this person that's sitting in his seat. Just find another seat that's available in the area. If you don't present yourself or confront a person, nobody's going to notice it in the first place. He's trying to save face in a penitentiary setting, in order not to draw attention to other convicts or inmates around. Just go find another seat and sit down. If somebody says that's their seat, well, say don't worry about it. I'll sit there tomorrow when he's not there. It's happened to me in the cafeteria with the gentleman that is role-playing right now. He came back around, like you said, to his seat, and instead of me confronting him, there was a table next to his that had open seats. I got up and I'm sitting at the other table now. I've had no problem with saving face whatsoever. He has his seat, I have my seat, and we go on eating."

Inmate: "You're smarter. In more ways, it takes a bigger man to walk away."

Dr. Samenow: I think the point is that if he wants to change, then he needs to catch his thinking in the very beginning. He does not have to go up and instigate. I think one of you said that. He does not have to go up and instigate it to begin with. What I heard you say, I understand. In other words, if he starts it and you get into it, then there's the issue of backing down and all of that stuff. At least there is for some people. But the point is, once he sees somebody with the chair, he's got to catch his thinking and he's got to say to himself -- there's a lot of different things he can say to himself. He can say, "Is it that important? There are other places I can sit. To challenge him is trouble." But he has to become aware of his thinking, or else he's going to be right into it.

Inmate: "Some of the things that people say irk me sometimes. I have to catch myself--really catch myself."

Catch the error – remember where it leads

Dr. Samenow: What can you do, if anything, to change your thinking in this institution? The small steps that you can take while you're in here?

Inmate: "The way to change your behavior every day is to stay aware of the way you're thinking every day. You stay on top of it. All that would require for me is to analyze every day the way you thought that day. As I went through the day, did everything go right for me? Was my thinking pattern on a positive aspect or was I thinking in a predatory style? Was I thinking trying to overrun people? Or was I thinking to let somebody overrun me? I guess if you stop every day and think about how you thought that day--I know it sounds strange--it helps you to change your behavior, especially when you're trying to change your behavior. You have to be aware of it every day."

Inmate: "And if someone says, hey, let's go smoke a joint or do something like that, you stop and you say: 'Is that what I really want to do?'"

Inmate: "That's the main issue: Think, before you do. That's the main issue."

Dr. Samenow: What is important - and this I want to emphasize again and again - is doing it in little steps. It's the little things; the little things that occur every day. You think of saying something back to somebody. You catch yourself. You stop it. You say something else. You think about instigating a situation because you're bored or whatever. You catch yourself. And why do you decide you're going to respond in a different way? Because you know what striking back, cursing somebody out, or doing some of these other things has resulted in, in the past.

Inmate: “Just knowing that when somebody tries to start shooting me, I can just tell them: Just leave me alone, and I can walk away from that without a confrontation. Then that feels good about myself because it shows that I can take it. I can deal with life on life’s terms, when it comes to a situation like that. If I don’t have to revert to violence, then I know that there’s no consequences that I’m going to have to face.”

Dr. Samenow: And then you start with these little things, you try to catch your thinking. It’s practice. It’s practice. It’s practice. And every time you correct an error in thinking, it is a step toward changing a lifetime habit. This is very much like body building. It takes a lot of time. It takes a lot of patience. It takes a lot of effort. And in fact, you can really talk about change as a process that you get better and better and better at if you work at it. Like anything else. The way of life in all of this is that you can change if you become fed up enough with your old ways. And we have to be fed up with some of the things about ourselves that have resulted in harm to other people. We have to look in the mirror.

Look in the Mirror

Inmate: “I had a lot of time to reflect back on the old me. And I didn’t like what I seen.”

Female Inmate: “Well, yeah, because when I had first got arrested, I’m like - one thing I’ve done...and I was kind of upset - well, I was highly upset. And then I had to think about it. And it took me a lot - it took a lot of my heart to admit to myself that I was wrong.”

Inmate: “What I used to do when I looked in the mirror and not see or not like what I saw in that reflection. I used to lash out at people because I couldn’t hurt myself. And what I didn’t like in myself, I would go out and hurt somebody else.”

Inmate: “You know, I was in a cell for 23 hours a day. I didn’t have nothin’ to do but to think about what I was going to do and what was happening, and all that. And I come to the realization that I’m going to be here for the rest of my life if I don’t change. Because that was the lifestyle I was living. It was the lifestyle of just feeling that I was superior, and that I could get away with anything that I wanted to.”

Inmate: “First of all, you had to stop and look at yourself and say: Hey, I want to change, because you’re tired of looking at what you are now.”

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: I don’t know anybody that likes to look in the mirror for very long at some of the flaws: the things that aren’t so good. But I think that’s really a very

tough thing to do. And I've said it again and again. I don't think that for me or for any of us that looking in the mirror and seeing the things that we've done that we're ashamed of, that we feel guilt about, that we feel remorse over - I don't think any of us likes to do that. And yet that is one of the most important parts of change because if you're not fed up with it, if you're not sick of it, then there's no motivation to change."

Fear of Change

For those who are serious about change, there is another difficult step: an honest look at fear of change.

Inmate: "I'm afraid of getting out. I'm afraid of the temptation. I have some fear. I'm not going to lie to you."

Inmate: "I'm at a time in my life, I'm old enough, I've done a lot of time. I don't have nothin' to show for it, except a lot of time and hanging around with a lot of my buddies. And I'm kind of scared when I get out this time. I'm not scared about doin' time, 'cause time is easy. The streets is hard. And you know I just want to go out there with a clear head and get a job and not 'Wow, man, I'm gonna get drunk today; I'm gonna do some dope today.' I've had so much of it in my life, I'm just really tired of it. But I don't even know if I can change that, because it's been so much of my life. A big part."

Female Inmate: "But when they see you trying to change, they shut you off here. And it's hard to do time with 300 women and you've got 250 of them looking at you 'cause they don't want - they're afraid of change, I guess. And when they see someone else breaking off from the mainstream or not doing what the crowd does, I think it scares them, as well. So I mean, it's rough. It's really rough when you start trying to change, and you need a support system when you change that lets you know that you can do it and that it's OK to do it."

Inmate: "This ain't hard to do. You look around these yards; anybody can do this. You get out on the street, you start thinking about, hey, I gotta work every day. I gotta take care of my kids; everyday stuff. I gotta be responsible. That becomes really hard to do. Here, they think of everything for you. Everything is planned."

Female Inmate: "But I know as long as I'm doing wrong, they're gonna accept me. So I had a great fear about trying to change, and not do the things I did for twenty years."

Inmate: "I have to get out and immediately establish contacts with people who I can relate to. I have to make the commitment and follow through on it. And there's no way I can predict whether that'll work. I've known people, my contemporaries, people that I ran with and used with and did time with that have years and years of sobriety. And when I get around them, I can hardly even relate to them, because they don't even seem like the same people any more. They don't laugh at the same stuff no more."

Female Inmate: "I'm still scared about trying to change. But I've learned that it doesn't matter if someone else accepts me. It's OK for me to just take it day by day and then just keep working on trying to think better thoughts and to utilize what I've gotten in and out of this place and hopefully prevent someone else from coming."

Inmate: "The biggest obstacle to my recovery would be the inability to picture myself recovered. I can't picture myself with a job every day, a commitment to a job. I can't picture myself being the father and doing a normal life. I can't even imagine me doing that. And I think that holds true for a lot of people. They've been some way so long that they cannot even imagine themselves living any other existence than the one that they've lived."

Discussion/Mini-lecture: Catch the Error – Remember Where it Leads

One of the earliest warning signs of inappropriate behaviors is inappropriate thoughts. Catching these thoughts, each and every time they occur, is a small but crucial step toward change.

It is valuable to analyze your own thoughts each day. If you took an irresponsible action, what were your thoughts before it happened?

When a friend asks you to do something, take a few minutes and ask yourself, "Is that something I really want to do? Will it result in trouble?"

Practice doing this, step by step, one situation at a time. If you find yourself thinking of saying something inappropriate, stop . . . think it over . . . and explore other ways of expressing yourself that are responsible and appropriate.

Why would you want to catch yourself before you act? Because you know where it's going to lead. Sometimes walking away from a conflict is a greater sign of strength than heating up the situation into a crisis. Learning to live without creating trouble takes practice and effort. It also takes a willingness to consider others' rights, in addition to your own.

The good news is, you can change. Catching these errors in thinking requires a hard look into a mirror that honestly reflects things about you that need to change. No one likes to look too long at their weaknesses, flaws and errors – but in the beginning, that's essential. Unless you're willing to take a good hard look at what needs changing, you're not going to do the difficult work of change. Until you become disgusted with these aspects of your life, you're not likely to be motivated.

As you begin to catch your errors, you can think through the problem, realizing the possible outcomes for responsible and irresponsible actions. Every time you correct an error in thinking it becomes another step forward – a step that can lead to positive habits – and a life that is free of the pain caused by errors in thinking.

GROUP SESSION

Dr. Samenow: I've heard people say that even if they want to change, they're so used to being themselves (we're all used to being ourselves, that's who we are) that it seems rather overwhelming that a person can change the patterns, the habits, the thinking, the behavior, of a lifetime. I know that change is not only possible. I have seen people work very hard and actually change. So what I'd like to ask you - I'm interested - and we won't spend a lot of time on this part of it - but if you would just give me some of the ideas that you have about really what it does take to change.

Inmate: "I'm afraid in my mind that when I get out and get with my cousin and brother and stuff; I'm afraid that I'm gonna take a drink of alcohol. You know what I'm saying? Like the man said a while ago, things are easier said than done. Now, the positive part of this process is this: I made my mind up what I'm going to do to stay away from my cousin and brother, not to drink. That's the positive part of the situation. And I can do that."

Inmate: "How I'm going to change - instead of getting out and going looking for the same people that I used to hang out with, I'm going to look for people that are going to better my thinking, like in finding a job. Once I find a job, accomplish something, a goal. Then I'm going to go find another person to help me achieve more than degrading me saying, 'Well, you're working at Burger King flipping burgers, what kind of job is that?'. I'm going to find someone that says, 'You're doing good. Keep up the good work. Sooner or later, you're gonna be climbing the ladder instead of going down the ladder.'"

Dr. Samenow: But when you're out there, how are you going to change your thinking? I mean, you're out there, you know where you can go, you know what

kinds of people you can find, how are you actually going to change your thinking, so that you don't go back and take the easiest path -- the path that you know?

Inmate: "Someone could start out -- if they really were prepared to make the commitment to change their life, to change to a healthy thinking - they might start out with just being compliant. And then do that and do that until it becomes habitual, and you start to reap the benefits of acting in a healthy manner. In a certain length of time, your sobriety or just being what to you appears to be a better person could become a source of self-esteem in itself. And once you attach this good behavior, or this healthy behavior, as a source of self-esteem, you say that being healthy is good. It makes you feel good about yourself, in time that will become something that you wouldn't want to disrespect. You wouldn't want to mess up this good sense of self-esteem you got."

Dr. Samenow: There is a point that you're making and that is that part of change is doing things that you may really not feel like doing.

Inmate: "And doing all the hard stuff that comes with change. Looking in that mirror, like you say, and not liking what you see--taking a real low, crummy job. If you can endure that and still act right and live up to the new expectations you have, that could become a source of self-esteem to you that's valuable. And in time you might not want to blow that off, knowing that your alternative is going back to something where you didn't like yourself, or you had bogus unrealistic feelings of being OK."

Dr. Samenow: I agree with that. Then the question there is, particularly once you're out, the endurance. Whether you're willing to put up with a lot of things you don't like now for a greater gain later. I think the important point is no matter where you are in terms of whether you want to change or not, is that you know or you understand that change is possible. That you can change if you set your mind to it. And a problem for some people is that they expect--just as with other things -- that they're going to be able to change overnight. They expect change to happen fast. And, well, that's just in line with their thinking about a lot of things. That it should happen fast. And they want a short-cut. Or they want a quick way to do it. And unfortunately there is no quick way that I know of.

Inmate: "Well, to change requires a commitment, to me. An ongoing commitment. It means to stop, look, and listen. It means to do things almost entirely opposite of what you're used to doing. It's uncomfortable. It hurts. It's a real difficult process. But when it's done and you even see a minor aspect of it, I feel it's reinforcing enough to continue it. Three years ago when I was in county jail, just about to be sentenced, I was diagnosed with the AIDS virus. If there's anything that's going to make you change, that is one thing that will make you change. Either swim or drown. Do you

want to go out the same way you are, and that's really the catch-22 with this--a lot of people want to drink themselves to death because they have it, and in my case, I want to change. I don't want to go out this way. I don't want to be robbing and stealing and cheating everybody around me. Today, I run three miles a day; I'm on the weight pile three hours a day, 4 days a week, I've made some changes in my physical being. I've cut way back on cigarette smoking. I eat right. I do what I can inside here to change. But that's not the hardest change. The hardest change is the emotion, the intellectual, the thought processes. Trying to get out of what you are and trying to become something else. Trying to think of other people first, rather than always me, me, me. That's a hard thing to change. It's all real difficult. But when you really make an effort, you really want it, it's possible to change."

Dr. Samenow: And there are slips. I mean, I don't know of anybody that changes and goes in a straight line. There are slips. There are mistakes. Old patterns die hard. But if you keep at it -- and I don't mean just in here, you can use this place as a kind of training camp for change. Then it's got to continue when you get out. Where there are all the temptations. It's to keep doing the small steps. Then practice over and over and over. Again, I think the bodybuilding isn't such a bad example, because you may start in very bad shape, and if you keep at it and keep at it and keep at it, then you end up with something that you are proud of.

But the thing is, that there isn't anybody that can make somebody change. And you know, you're right. You're in here and you can decide to be well-behaved. You can be compliant and just say, you know, "I'll chill out and I'll do what I need to do," and then be thinking about where you're going to get your drugs as soon as you get out. But compliance, just kind of getting along, that's very different from basic change, so that you don't come back to this place, or any other place like it.

What it boils down to is this: the bottom line is that you can change. We all make mistakes in thinking. That we can become aware of those thoughts. We can recognize those thoughts. That we can correct those thoughts, and we can live a life in which we have accomplished something that we're proud of. Our families are not having sleepless nights worrying about us, and we're not having to look over our shoulders for the police or other people. That change is in fact doable. I've seen it. I have seen people apply themselves to this and say that this is a life or death matter. And I really believe that that's the way you have to view it in order to stay with it -- that it's life or death.

IN CLOSING . . .

Moment by moment, week by week, these are practical ways to move toward change.

- Focus on your thoughts and find each error.
- Remember where it leads.
- Eliminate the error before you act.
- Explore other options and take responsible action.

There's an easy way to remember: Responsible thinking keeps you **FREE** from choices that create painful consequences.

Inmate: "It's all real difficult. But when you really make an effort and you really want it, it's possible to change."

Discussion: How Change can Begin: Overcoming Fears; Overcoming Errors in Thinking

Overcoming Fears

What does it take to change lifelong patterns – to grow as a person and create a better life? When we work to change any habit, we run into similar issues:

- Confronting fears
- Making the necessary commitments
- Putting forth the required effort
- Enduring difficulties and situations that feel painfully unfair

Why would anyone choose to face these difficult barriers? What are the benefits to be gained?

For many, personal improvement is the doorway to a far better life. But the journey is not an easy one; it requires the courage to face our fears – and there is no guarantee of success. The only thing certain is that if we do not make this journey, our lives are likely to stay exactly as they are.

Often, when people choose to change, it is because they have become "fed up" – their lives are too hard to bear. For them, it has become a choice between life and death.

But fear of change is real. It can be a barrier which prevents us from making the commitment to a better lifestyle. How can we overcome these fears? We can begin by stopping what we usually do; that is, we can stop avoiding our fears.

It's hard to overcome something unless you know what it is. A good first step is to make a list of what you fear. Many have found it helpful to list their fears and ask themselves, "If I begin to change, what's the worst possible thing that could

Commitment to Change – Overcoming Errors in Thinking

happen to me?" And, "If I don't change, what's the worst thing that could happen?" Often, the second option is far worse than the first.

Overcoming Errors in Thinking

The group and interview sessions revealed several key errors in thinking and showed where those errors lead: they create lives filled with pain.

The group sessions also showed the steps required to overcome those errors – to create a life that is not based on errors. Change can begin with the next situation you meet today – and how you choose to handle it. These are practical ways to overcome errors in thinking:

- **F**ocus on your thoughts; find each error
- **R**emember where it leads
- **E**liminate the error before you act
- **E**xplore options for responsible action

*Responsible thinking keeps us **FREE**
from choices that lead to painful consequences.*

Some suggestions for each step:

- Focus on your thoughts; find each error

Do this every day, moment by moment. Your thinking diary can assist you in noting changes that occur.

- Remember where it leads

Ask yourself, "If I take this action, what is the likely result?" Painful consequences last far longer than the temporary benefit of irresponsible action.

- Eliminate the error before you act

This is the commitment you make to yourself -- to abstain from all irresponsible, self-centered behaviors, regardless of the situation.

Be accountable to someone you trust, who understands the nature of your problem and is capable of helping you become increasingly responsible.

- Explore responsible options

This will become a major part of your new life -- a life based on self-honesty that agrees with and supports your commitment to change.

A Final Message from Dr. Stanton Samenow

Congratulations on your persistence; you are completing this course, which means you are now familiar with five basic errors in thinking for working with offenders and substance abusers.

You have seen that they need to give serious thought to their personal situation—and hopefully have concluded that right now, personal change is the most important thing in their lives.

If they desire to change their lives, they will need to be willing to put forth the needed effort constantly; they will need to make this commitment central to their activities every day.

You know that change does not occur simply by completing a course of treatment. If they want to correct their thinking, it's up to them to follow through and practice what you taught them.

You have been offered guidelines to help them become aware of their thinking, to spot the errors and practice correcting those errors. Through these interviews and group sessions, you can help others make effective choices.

The rewards may not be immediate, but they will come. In time, the benefits will grow more and more evident and will begin to last longer. As in lifting weights, it takes time and sticking with it – but the benefits can be real for those people you are helping to make changes in their lives.

Now that you have completed the content of this course, you may want to turn to the next page and complete the self-scorable Thinking Errors Inventory and Checklist.

Thinking Errors Inventory and Checklist

(T E I C)

Directions: For each of the following statements indicate your agreement or disagreement by circling the appropriate number.

1. Most of my problems have been caused by other people.

<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>
4	3	2	1

2. When I have done bad things, it wasn't me that did them; it was the drugs.

<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>
4	3	2	1

3. When I look at the trouble I've had in my life, I believe I'm a victim of circumstances.

<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>
4	3	2	1

4. If I can't get what I want now, I'm probably going to go out and take it.

<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>
4	3	2	1

5. Living the straight, responsible life is unexciting and unsatisfying.

<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>
4	3	2	1

6. Work is for suckers; those in the know skim off the top.

<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>
4	3	2	1

7. Even though I've been in trouble for things I've done, next time I'll get lucky.

<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>
4	3	2	1

8. When I've done drugs or crime, I rarely have considered how my behavior could hurt others.

<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>
4	3	2	1

9. The hell with what happens to other people.

<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>
4	3	2	1

10. I've used alcohol or drugs to get rid of the fear of doing a crime.

<u>Strongly agree</u>	<u>Agree</u>	<u>Disagree</u>	<u>Strongly disagree</u>
4	3	2	1

Thinking Errors Inventory and Checklist (T E I C)

Scoring Directions:

In order to score the TEIC, add the circled numbers to obtain a total score. The higher the score, the greater the existence of thinking errors. The range for the scores is 10-40.

Scoring Interpretation

10-20: Low reliance on thinking errors

20-30: Intermediate use of thinking errors

30-40: High reliance on thinking errors

Applications

The TEIC can be used for:

1. A client self-evaluation checklist
2. A counselor's informal assessment of the client
3. Instrumented learning in individual or group treatment settings

Appendix A: Post Test and Evaluation for Commitment to Change – Overcoming Errors in Thinking

Directions: To receive credits for this course, you are required to take a post test and receive a passing score. We have set a minimum standard of 80% as the passing score to assure the highest standard of knowledge retention and understanding. The test is comprised of multiple choice and/or true/false questions that will investigate your knowledge and understanding of the materials found in this CEU Matrix – The Institute for Addiction and Criminal Justice distance learning course.

After you complete your reading and review of this material, you will need to answer each of the test questions. Then, submit your test to us for processing. This can be done in the following manner:

Submit your test via the Internet. All of our tests are posted electronically, allowing immediate test results and quicker processing. First, you may want to answer your post test questions found at the end of this appendix. Then, return to your browser and go to the Student Center located at:

<http://www.ceumatrix.com/studentcenter>

Once there, log in as a Returning Customer using your Email Address and Password. Then click on 'View Lesson Quiz' and you will be presented with the electronic exam.

To take the exam, simply select from the choices of "a" through "e" for each multiple choice question. For true/false questions, select either "a" for true, or "b" for false. Once you are done, simply click on the submit button at the bottom of the page. Your exam will be graded and you will receive your results immediately. If your score is 80% or greater, you will receive a link to the course evaluation. You will also receive a link to the Certificate of Completion. This is the final step in the process, and you may save and / or print your Certificate of Completion.

If, however, you do not achieve a passing score of at least 80%, you will need to review the course material and return to the Student Center to resubmit your answers.

NOTE: THE EXAM QUESTIONS AND /OR ANSWERS MAY BE IN A DIFFERENT ORDER IN THE ONLINE EXAM

Answer the following questions by selecting the most appropriate response.

1. Which of the following did the two doctors not find characteristic of the offenders they worked with?
 - a. high self-esteem
 - b. highly inflated views of themselves
 - c. thinking themselves smarter than others
 - d. thinking themselves better than others
 - e. low self-esteem

2. The research by Drs. Yochelson and Samenow produced a landmark work on:
 - a. sociological causes
 - b. psychological causes
 - c. personality
 - d. behavior
 - e. genetic predisposition

3. The core of their approach is:
 - a. afflicting the afflicted
 - b. comforting the afflicted
 - c. afflicting the comfortable
 - d. comforting the comfortable
 - e. constitutional predisposition

4. When a criminal offender enters a treatment program, they see everything in terms of:
 - a. power
 - b. control
 - c. winning
 - d. losing
 - e. all of the above

5. The men and women that Drs. Yochelson and Samenow worked with were:
 - a. ridiculed
 - b. berated
 - c. browbeat
 - d. humiliated
 - e. treated with respect

6. Because we can decide how to react to a given situation or circumstance, this approach is based on:
 - a. will power
 - b. free will
 - c. determinism
 - d. biology
 - e. conditioning

7. A large percentage of clients enter treatment in what stage?
 - a. contemplation
 - b. maintenance
 - c. action
 - d. pre-pre
 - e. precontemplation

8. The tenet that thoughts lead to unwanted trouble is basic to what approach?
 - a. cognitive mapping
 - b. cognitive behavioral
 - c. behavior modification
 - d. EMDR
 - e. cognitive restructuring

9. In the approach of this course, change is based on:
 - a. attitudes
 - b. feeling
 - c. thinking
 - d. beliefs
 - e. social forces

10. We seldom decide how we're going to be until we:
 - a. get inspired
 - b. experience a miracle
 - c. hit a dead end
 - d. get lucky
 - e. none of the above

11. People who are in serious trouble again and again can be described as:
 - a. angry
 - b. having self-pity
 - c. believe they had a raw deal
 - d. all of the above
 - e. none of the above

12. Many people who return to prison again and again are not dissatisfied with:
- themselves
 - their situation
 - the police
 - courts
 - spouses
13. The one reason that a person does not admit to himself his own responsibility is:
- blockage
 - repression
 - pain
 - suppression
 - biodefense
14. Which of the following is a major error in thinking?
- repression
 - counter-victimization
 - standard victim
 - victim stance
 - cognitive maps
15. A critical task in the process of early recovery is:
- derereflection
 - retrospection
 - introspection
 - introjection
 - projection
16. "The drugs made me do it" is an example of:
- introjection
 - counter victimization
 - blaming the victim
 - victim stance
 - victim games
17. In the twelve-step approach and the therapeutic community, drugs are seen as a (n):
- underlying motivation
 - social issue
 - moral cause
 - cause
 - symptom

18. The beginning of a psychic change means moving from a _____ view of addiction and criminal behavior, to a _____ view.
- glorified, degraded
 - degraded, glorified
 - degraded, upgraded
 - upgraded, downgraded
 - downgraded, exhalted
19. "Lack of interest in responsible performance" does not involve which of the following aspects:
- looking for short-cuts
 - forgetting a lot
 - believing work is for suckers
 - a strong sense of obligation to society
 - abandoning anything boring
20. People who are successful in life generally don't do which of the following aspects:
- give up
 - get high
 - get angry
 - hurt others
 - all of the above
21. Psychological immaturity means dealing with adversity by:
- trying to go around it
 - avoiding it by false means
 - overcoming it by false means
 - avoiding it by deceptive means
 - all of the above
22. The way to remember how to avoid painful consequences based on responsible thinking is the word:
- REEF
 - THINK
 - FREE
 - FEAR
 - TREE
23. The circle of injury can be called a(n):
- internal effect
 - external effect
 - intrinsic effect
 - ripple effect
 - retroactive effect

24. When a habitual criminal finally decides to stop harming others, it creates a(n):
- internal effect
 - external effect
 - intrinsic effect
 - ripple effect
 - retroactive effect
25. Dr. Samenow stresses a process of:
- conscience raising
 - constructiveness raising
 - consciousness raising
 - comfort raising
 - affliction raising
26. Offenders habitually live in a substantially _____ state of _____ awareness.
- increased, social
 - reduced, self
 - increased, self
 - reduced, ego
 - increased, civil
27. The emotion that offenders frequently drown in alcohol or drugs is:
- love
 - anger
 - fear
 - uncertainty
 - confusion
28. Facing your feelings takes a great deal of:
- will power
 - intelligence
 - strength
 - courage
 - social pressure
29. Dr. Samenow emphasizes again and again:
- doing it in little steps
 - doing it in large steps
 - doing it spontaneously
 - doing it instinctively
 - doing it naturally

30. Changing a lifetime habit is very much like:
- home building
 - body building
 - body work
 - body-mind building
 - bridge building
31. One of the earliest warning signs of inappropriate behaviors is inappropriate:
- feelings
 - attitudes
 - urges
 - thoughts
 - instincts
32. The sequence of change is:
- explore, eliminate, remember, focus
 - remember, focus, explore, eliminate
 - focus, eliminate, remember, explore
 - focus, eliminate, explore
 - focus, remember, eliminate, explore
33. The first issue in overcoming fears is:
- enduring difficulties
 - commitment
 - effort
 - confronting fears
 - none of the above
34. Catching errors in thinking requires a hard look into:
- a mirror
 - the past
 - the future
 - social pressures
 - peer pressures
35. Distorted thinking eventually leads to results no one wants.
- True
 - False
36. Among reasons given by inmates for finally wanting to change is:
- "I'm tired of my wife coming down to this prison."
 - "This may be my only chance to change."
 - "I'm tired of going to jail."
 - All of the above

37. One of the motivators for change for women inmates is the pain of separation from family, especially their children.
- True
 - False
38. Dr. Samenow tells the group they are all **except** which of the following:
- intelligent
 - knowledgeable of right from wrong
 - victims
 - expressive
 - knowledgeable of the laws
39. Dr. Samenow believes that criminal behavior is directly attributable to childhood abuse.
- True
 - False
40. Blaming others for your actions:
- is an error in thinking
 - makes us feel helpless
 - causes us to lose the power to change
 - makes change impossible
 - all of the above
41. Dr. Samenow concedes that being under the influence of alcohol or drugs can cause a person to commit acts that are “out of character” with their real values.
- True
 - False
42. In order to make changes, Dr. Samenow tells the inmates, in the beginning “you have to feel bad about yourself.”
- True
 - False
43. One of the errors of thinking is that criminals tend to see *themselves* as the victims rather than considering the injury their behavior causes other people.
- True
 - False
44. Two things are basic to change:
- Wanting to do the right thing and dealing with destructive and addictive behavior.
 - Dealing with ones thinking and dealing with destructive and addictive behavior
 - Wanting to do the right thing and dealing with ones thinking.

Commitment to Change – Overcoming Errors in Thinking

45. Instead of shutting off fear of destructive behavior, we can use fear to remind us of painful consequences.
- True
 - False
46. Correcting an error in thinking requires all of the following **except**:
- becoming fed up with your old ways
 - getting a support system in place
 - practicing new thinking until it becomes a lifetime habit
 - catching the error before you act on it
47. Shutting off fear is essential to gaining the confidence to change.
- True
 - False
48. According to some inmates, successfully committing crimes can result in increased self esteem and feelings of competence.
- True
 - False
49. The first step necessary for change to begin is:
- Having a good support system
 - Believing you can change
 - Picturing a normal life
 - Getting sober
 - Apologizing to those you have hurt
50. Compliance with prison rules is good training for success on the “outside.”
- True
 - False
51. Key factors involved in change include all **except** which of the following:
- Understanding that change is possible
 - Finding the shortcut
 - Endurance
 - Putting up with a lot of things you don’t like now for greater gain in the future

The final step in the process required to obtain your course certificate is to complete this course evaluation. These evaluations are used to assist us in making sure that the course content meets the needs and expectations of our students. Please fill in the information completely and include any comments in the spaces provided. **If you submit your evaluation online, you do not need to return this form.**

NAME: _____

COURSE TITLE: Commitment to Change – Overcoming Errors in Thinking

DATE: _____

<u>COURSE CONTENT</u>		
Information presented met the goals and objectives stated for this course	<input type="checkbox"/> Start Over <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good
Information was relevant	<input type="checkbox"/> Start Over <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good
Information was interesting	<input type="checkbox"/> Start Over <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good
Information will be useful in my work	<input type="checkbox"/> Start Over <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good
Format of course was clear	<input type="checkbox"/> Start Over <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good
<u>POST TEST</u>		
Questions covered course materials	<input type="checkbox"/> Start Over <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good
Questions were clear	<input type="checkbox"/> Start Over <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good
Answer sheet was easy to use	<input type="checkbox"/> Start Over <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good

**CEU Matrix – The Institute for Addiction and Criminal Justice Studies
Course Evaluation – Page 2**

COURSE MECHANICS		
Course materials were well organized	<input type="checkbox"/> Start Over <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good
Materials were received in a timely manner	<input type="checkbox"/> Start Over <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good
Cost of course was reasonable	<input type="checkbox"/> Start Over <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good
OVERALL RATING		
I give this distance learning course an overall rating of:	<input type="checkbox"/> Start Over <input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Needs work <input type="checkbox"/> Very Good
FEEDBACK		
How did you hear about CEU Matrix?	<input type="checkbox"/> Web Search Engine <input type="checkbox"/> Mailing <input type="checkbox"/> Telephone Contact <input type="checkbox"/> E-mail posting <input type="checkbox"/> Other Linkage <input type="checkbox"/> FMS Advertisement <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____	
What I liked BEST about this course:		
I would suggest the following IMPROVEMENTS:		
Please tell us how long it took you to complete the course, post-test and evaluation:	_____ minutes were spent on this course.	
Other COMMENTS:		