

Ways of dealing with offender behaviour



1 Custodial sentencing

Definition: A court requirement for an offender to be held in a closed institution (for example, prison or psychiatric hospital).

Process: Offenders are deprived of their liberty (freedom) and autonomy (independence).

Aims:

- 1 Deterrence. The unpleasant experience aims to put people off committing crime.
- 2 Incapacitation. Taking the offender out of society protects the public.
- 3 Retribution. Society is enacting revenge for the crime.
- 4 Rehabilitation. Prison should reform prisoners and prevent reoffending.

2 Behaviour modification in custody

Definition: A behaviourist approach — operant conditioning (reinforcement) is used to produce more desirable behaviour in offenders (for example, a token economy).

Process: In a token economy, prisoners are given tokens when they perform desirable behaviours (for example, making their bed, obeying prison rules, avoiding conflict).

Tokens can be used to obtain goods (for example, tobacco, a phone call), thus rewarding (reinforcing) the desirable behaviour.

Aims: To gradually improve offenders' behaviour by asking increasingly more of prisoners in order for them to get their tokens. This should assist in adapting to life back in society.

3 Anger management

Definition: A form of cognitive behavioural therapy (CBT) for anger problems.

Process:

- 1 Cognitive preparation. Offenders are taught to change the way they think about situations that may provoke anger.
- 2 Skills acquisition. Learning new skills, for example learning positive self-talk to stay calm (cognitive) and learning communication skills to resolve conflicts (behavioural).
- 3 Application training. Offenders practise their skills in non-threatening situations, for example, role plays of situations that previously made them angry.

Aims: To teach offenders to recognise the signs that trigger anger and to practise different ways of responding so they manage their anger more effectively.

4 Restorative justice

Definition: A method of reducing and atoning for offending behaviour through reconciliation between an offender and victim, as well as the wider community.

Process: The offender may offer compensation (for example, doing community work) or write a letter to a victim (to avoid interaction). A supervised meeting between the two parties may be arranged with a trained mediator. The victim is given the chance to explain to the offender how the incident affected them.

Aims:

- 1 Rehabilitation. Offenders are forced to take responsibility for their actions.
- 2 Atonement. Offenders can show their guilt and possibly offer compensation.
- 3 Empowering victims. Victims are given a voice in the justice process.

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