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# MORAL REASONING SKILLS

## OVERVIEW

### DEFINITION

Moral reasoning skills help adolescents recognize thought processes that rationalize negative behaviors and understand how their thinking, values, and choices affect their behaviors.

### RELEVANCE

Anti-social attitudes, values, and beliefs are directly related to criminal behavior. Teaching juvenile offenders to identify and replace pro-criminal thinking and behavior with pro-social thinking and behavior has been shown to reduce criminal behavior.

### GOAL

Making the right decisions for the right reasons.

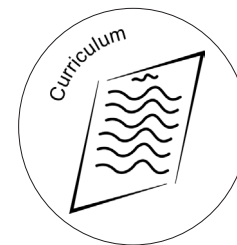
### MORAL REASONING SKILL SET

- ✓ Connecting Thoughts and Actions
- ✓ Pro-Social Ways of Thinking and Behaving



## CORRECTIVE ACTIONS JOURNAL SYSTEM

Skill-training interactive journal system for youth ages 16 and older who display criminogenic thinking, values, and behaviors.



✓ MORAL REASONING SKILL SET

### INTERESTING FACTS

The Change Companies started in 1988 in Madison, Wisconsin and by 1991 they had developed the concept of Interactive Journaling, an experiential writing process designed to guide and motivate juveniles and adults toward positive lifestyle changes using strategies from change and motivation research.

### ABSTRACT:

The *Corrective Actions Journal System*<sup>1</sup> is designed to expose the self-destructive "con game" that encourages criminogenic thinking and behaviors, and encourage participants to develop a system of pro-social values and strategies that lead to responsible thinking and behaviors. The Interactive Journal System is a structured and experiential process designed to motivate and guide participants toward positive life changes and divert them from a criminogenic lifestyle. The *Corrective Actions Journal System* includes four Student Journals: *The Con Game*, *Values for Responsible Living*, *Thinking Errors*, and *My Change Plan*.

The *Corrective Actions Journal System* supports a wide range of treatment programs and behavior modification modalities, and provides opportunities for youth to identify their readiness to change and develop personally relevant goals. The Interactive Journal System offers providers the flexibility to select Journals that best fit their programs' parameters and participants' needs.

The *Corrective Actions Journal System* may be implemented in probation departments, community-based programs, and residential facilities within existing programming, and may be introduced in either one-on-one counseling sessions or group settings. Participants are assigned Journal segments as homework and encouraged to write about their honest feelings, opinions, experiences, and hopes. Participants are then encouraged to share responses and feedback during one-on-one counseling sessions or with their peers in structured and informal group settings. The *Corrective Actions Journal System* may also be utilized as a self-directed study tool.

Training is offered but not required to facilitate the *Corrective Actions Journal System* or purchase materials. Optional free telephone training is also offered to help implement the Journal System and provide ongoing technical support. Curriculum materials include a general orientation guide and student journals with corresponding facilitator guides.

The *Corrective Actions Journal System* has not been evaluated or listed in a registry, but meets NCJJ's criteria for inclusion.

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**OBJECTIVES:**

Participants will:

- ✓ Have an organized format for self-exploration and change,
- ✓ Be better equipped to apply program concepts to their individual life experiences,
- ✓ Experience increased motivation to change,
- ✓ Be provided a "roadmap" for successful change,
- ✓ Be provided with strategies and coping mechanisms for continuing the change process,
- ✓ Learn strategies to decrease high-risk behaviors and harm associated with these behaviors,
- ✓ Build confidence in their abilities to make positive behavior changes, and
- ✓ Increase their abilities to maintain their new behaviors.

**COMPONENTS:**

The *Corrective Actions Journal System* includes:

- 1) **The Con Game** – Helps participants look at some of the faulty beliefs and behaviors that may keep them trapped in criminal thinking and behavior, and guides them toward self-responsibility and positive life change.
- 2) **Values for Responsible Living** – Guides participants through an evaluation of the criminal values that have influenced their lives, explores values that support a responsible lifestyle, and shows participants how to incorporate these values into their lives.
- 3) **Thinking Errors** – Examines eight faulty thinking patterns that may lead to criminal behavior and stresses that changing the way they think is the key to changing their feelings and behavior.
- 4) **My Change Plan** – Explores how people make positive changes in their lives by looking at the stages and processes they go through, and assists participants through the appropriate processes for positive change.

**TRAINING AND MATERIALS:**

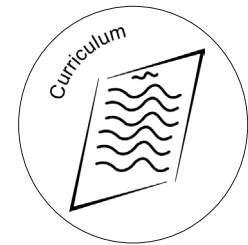
Training is offered but not required to facilitate the *Corrective Actions Journal System* or purchase materials. See Appendix B for more information about training, a list of materials, and associated costs.

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## COURAGE TO TAKE ACTION: A COGNITIVE-BEHAVIORAL SYSTEM FOR YOUTHFUL OFFENDERS

Skill-training interactive journal system for youth ages 14 and older who display negative, anti-social, and destructive behaviors.



### ✓ MORAL REASONING SKILL SET

### INTERESTING FACTS

The Change Companies collaborated with the California Department of Corrections Youth Division to develop the *COURAGE To Take Action* Journal System.

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### ABSTRACT:

The *COURAGE To Take Action*<sup>2</sup> Interactive Journal System addresses cognitive skill building, criminal thinking, and behavior change. The Interactive Journal System is a structured and experiential process designed to motivate and guide participants to develop a personalized plan for realistic change and avoid behavior that got them in trouble. *COURAGE* includes three Student Journals: *What Got Me Here?*, *Responsible Thinking*, and *My Individual Change Plan*.

The *COURAGE* Interactive Journal System supports a wide range of treatment programs and behavior modification modalities, and provides opportunities for youth to identify their readiness to change and develop personally relevant goals. The *COURAGE* Journal System is designed to be utilized in its entirety to guide participants in the development of an individualized plan that supports positive life changes.

The *COURAGE* Interactive Journal System may be implemented in probation departments, community-based programs, and residential facilities within existing programming, and may be introduced in either one-on-one counseling sessions or group settings. Participants are assigned Journal segments as homework and encouraged to write about their honest feelings, opinions, experiences, and hopes. Participants are then encouraged to share responses and feedback during one-on-one counseling sessions or with their peers in structured and informal group settings.

Training is offered but not required to facilitate the *COURAGE* Interactive Journal System or purchase materials. Optional free telephone training is also offered to help implement the Journal System and provide ongoing technical support. Curriculum materials include a general orientation guide and student journals with corresponding facilitator guides.

The *COURAGE* Interactive Journal System has not been evaluated or listed in a registry, but meets NCJJ's criteria for inclusion.

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**OBJECTIVES:**

Participants will:

- ✓ Have an organized format for self-exploration and change,
- ✓ Be better equipped to apply program concepts to their individual life experiences,
- ✓ Experience increased motivation to change,
- ✓ Be provided a "roadmap" for successful change,
- ✓ Be provided with strategies and coping mechanisms for continuing the change process,
- ✓ Learn strategies to decrease high-risk behaviors and harm associated with these behaviors,
- ✓ Build confidence in their abilities to make positive behavior changes, and
- ✓ Increase their abilities to maintain their new behaviors.

**COMPONENTS:**

*COURAGE To Take Action* includes:

- 1) ***What Got Me Here?***
  - ✓ Examining the personal consequences of their involvement in the juvenile justice system; Describing the person they see in the mirror
  - ✓ Exploring facts about their past; Identifying their top three problems
  - ✓ Barriers to changing behavior; Positive attitudes that can help them be successful
  - ✓ Writing a Readiness Statement for change
- 2) ***Responsible Thinking***
  - ✓ Why they feel and act the way they do; Experiencing through their five senses
  - ✓ Connections between self-talk, feelings and actions; Personal responses to self-talk; Evaluating the way they think
  - ✓ Eight thinking error filters and eight responsible thinking filters; Applying new thinking skills to their top three problems.
- 3) ***My Individual Change Plan***
  - ✓ Changing high-risk behaviors can be a positive experience; Change happens in five distinct stages
  - ✓ The stages of change can be applied to any behavior they wish to change
  - ✓ Applying the stages of change to the three problems they identified in my *What Got Me Here?* Journal

**TRAINING AND MATERIALS:**

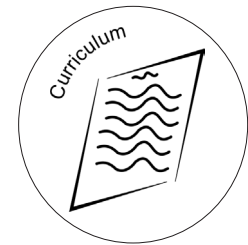
Training is offered but not required to facilitate the *COURAGE To Take Action* Interactive Journal System or purchase materials. See Appendix B for more information about training, a list of materials, and associated costs.

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## THE FACTS OF LIFE SEMINAR

Skill-training curriculum for youth ages 13 and older who display negative behaviors.



### ✓ MORAL REASONING SKILL SET

### INTERESTING FACTS

*The Facts of Life Seminar* was developed in 2002 to teach adolescents about the relationship between happiness and pro-social human behavior. The curriculum is currently implemented as a mandated intervention for all youth going through juvenile probation in Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania.

### ABSTRACT:

*The Facts of Life Seminar*<sup>3</sup> is a character development curriculum designed to provide juvenile offenders with a method of decision-making that maximizes their potential to make positive, pro-social contributions to society. *The Facts of Life Seminar* is based on a secular system of moral reasoning designed to encourage right behavior and motivate youth to make responsible choices because they understand why it is in their best interest to act on ideas about what's right and wrong.

*The Facts of Life Seminar* curriculum consists of eight lessons designed to be completed in 12 hours, either through twelve 1-hour sessions over 12 consecutive weeks or eight 1 ½-hour sessions over eight consecutive weeks.

*The Facts of Life Seminar* may be conducted in probation departments, community-based programs, and residential facilities. *The Facts of Life Seminar* is presented in an interactive manner utilizing positive group dynamics. Key concepts are reinforced by a multi-sensorial integration learning process, including oral repetition and auditory processing, which is designed to facilitate the restructuring of participants' thoughts. In addition, participants are required to take notes to reinforce learning.

Training is required to facilitate *The Facts of Life Seminar* and acquire materials. Curriculum materials include a facilitator manual and pre- and post-tests to evaluate learning. Facilitators provide participants with notebooks for note taking.

*The Facts of Life Seminar* has been evaluated but not listed in a registry. Internal evaluation indicates that for juvenile offenders who completed *The Facts of Life Seminar* there was a 123% increase in the number likely to refrain from violence, a 90% increase in the number likely to refrain from theft, a 178% increase in the number likely to keep their promises, and a 160% increase in the number likely to tell the truth.<sup>4</sup>

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**OBJECTIVES:**

Participants will:

- ✓ Understand how they are situated with respect to a set of core values that have natural, inherent, or intrinsic worth,
- ✓ Recognize that whether they are able to acquire and maintain these values is a matter of choices they make in daily living,
- ✓ Be equipped with a set of principles—ideas about right and wrong—that enable them to get and keep core values,
- ✓ Be motivated to act on the principles, and
- ✓ Develop a sense of mastery over their own destiny, have an approach to living that will instill an optimistic attitude toward the future, and have a method for living that will enhance their self-esteem.

**COMPONENTS:**

*The Facts of Life Seminar* includes:

1. Quality of Life
2. Emotions, Happiness, and Values
3. Core Values, Things, and Relationships
4. Conditions and the Matrix of Core Values
5. Happiness and Self-Defeating Behavior
6. More Self-Defeating Behavior
7. Choices, Principles, and Happiness
8. The Formula for Happiness

**TRAINING AND MATERIALS:**

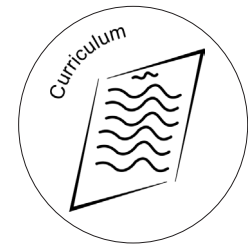
Training is required to facilitate *The Facts of Life Seminar* and acquire materials. See Appendix B for more information about training, a list of materials, and associated costs.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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## MORAL RECONATION THERAPY (MRT)

Skill-training curriculum for youthful offenders ages 13-18 who display criminogenic attitudes and behaviors.



### MORAL REASONING SKILL SET

### INTERESTING FACTS

*Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT)* was developed in a prison-based adult drug offender therapeutic community in 1985 in Memphis, Tennessee. The curriculum has been used with at-risk youth and juvenile offenders since 1989.

### ABSTRACT:

*Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT)*<sup>5</sup> addresses criminogenic attitudes and behaviors by emphasizing the development of moral reasoning skills that reduce future problem behaviors and increase the likelihood of exhibiting pro-social behaviors. *MRT* is designed to enhance social, moral, and positive behavioral growth in a progressive, step-by-step approach that promotes development of a strong sense of personal identity with behavior and relationships based on higher levels of moral judgment. Reconciliation is the conscious decision to change.

*MRT* can be completed in either 12 or 16 steps that correlate with consecutive stages of moral development and progress toward other treatment goals. Most juvenile offenders complete all *MRT* steps in 20 - 32 group sessions. *MRT* groups are open-ended, and new participants can enter a group at any time.

*MRT* groups may be conducted in probation departments, community-based programs, and residential facilities. *MRT* is organized into a continuum from low to higher levels of moral development delivered through group sessions held at regular intervals. During the group discussion sessions, clients share their exercises and homework assignments from their *MRT* workbooks.

Training is required to facilitate *MRT* groups and purchase materials. CEU credits are offered to those who complete training. Curriculum materials include a facilitator manual and student workbook.

*MRT* is listed in one registry, as specified in Appendix A. Evaluations show that when conducted in juvenile "therapeutic community" programs *MRT* leads to lower recidivism, less severe offenses in those who did reoffend, higher levels of moral reasoning, and improved school performance.<sup>6</sup>

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**OBJECTIVES:**

Participants will develop moral reasoning skills through:

- ✓ Confrontation and assessment of self,
- ✓ Assessment of current relationships,
- ✓ Reinforcement of positive behavior and habits,
- ✓ Positive identity formation,
- ✓ Enhancement of self-concept,
- ✓ Decrease in hedonism, and
- ✓ Development of higher stages of moral reasoning.

**COMPONENTS:**

Participants begin with Step 1 and progress to completion of either Step 12 or Step 16.

1. Honesty
2. Trust
3. Acceptance
4. Awareness
5. Healing damaged relationships
6. Helping others
7. Long term goals and identity
8. Short term goals and consistency
9. Commitment to change
10. Maintaining positive change
11. Keeping moral commitments
12. Choosing moral goals (Note: Most clients complete *MRT* with this step.)
- 13-16. Evaluating the relationship between inner self and personality

**TRAINING AND MATERIALS:**

Training is required to facilitate *MRT* groups and purchase materials. See Appendix B for more information about training, a list of materials, and associated costs.

**CONTACT INFORMATION:**

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## ENDNOTES:

- <sup>1</sup> Material in the *Corrective Actions Journal System* profile was derived from three sources:  
The Change Companies website [www.changecompanies.net](http://www.changecompanies.net). (Information acquired April 11, 2008.)  
*The Change Companies Resource Guide, 2007-2008*. Carson City, NV: The Change Companies.  
*General Orientation Guide*. (2007). Carson City, NV: The Change Companies.
- <sup>2</sup> Material in the *COURAGE To Take Action* profile was derived from three sources:  
The Change Companies website [www.changecompanies.net](http://www.changecompanies.net). (Information acquired November 2, 2007.)  
*The Change Companies Resource Guide, 2007-2008*. Carson City, NV: The Change Companies.  
*General Orientation Guide*. (2007). Carson City, NV: The Change Companies.
- <sup>3</sup> Material in *The Facts of Life Seminar* profile was derived from two sources:  
Facts of Life Programs website [www.factsoflifeprograms.com](http://www.factsoflifeprograms.com). (Information acquired December 3, 2007.)  
Ramm, D.R. (2004). *Overview of The Facts of Life Seminar: Handout for Developing Decision-Making Competencies in Delinquent Youth*. 2004 Pennsylvania Conference on Juvenile Justice.
- <sup>4</sup> Ramm, D.R., Driscoll, J.D., Beighley, A., and Ramm, J.K. (2009.) "Motivating Juvenile Offenders Toward Making Responsible Choices in Daily Life." *Juvenile and Family Court Journal*, No. 1, Winter.
- <sup>5</sup> Material in the *Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT)* profile was derived from three sources:  
Correctional Counseling, Inc. website [www.ccimrt.com](http://www.ccimrt.com). (Information acquired October 30, 2007.)  
Moral Reconciliation Therapy website <http://moral-reconciliation-therapy.com>. (Information acquired October 30, 2007.)  
Carr, T.R., Thies, J., and Penelton, R.A. (2004). *An Evaluation of the Moral Reconciliation Therapy of the Franklin/Jefferson County Evening Reporting Center Program*. Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University.
- <sup>6</sup> Burnette, K.D., Swan, E. S., Robinson, K.D., Woods-Robinson, M., and Little, G.L. (2003). "Effects of MRT® on Male Juvenile Offenders Participating in a Therapeutic Community Program." *Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment Review*, 12 (2), 2-5.  
Burnette, K.D., Swan, E. S., Robinson, K.D., Woods-Robinson, M., and Little, G.L. (2004). "Treating Youthful Offenders with Moral Reconciliation Therapy: A Recidivism and Pre- Posttest Analysis." *Cognitive-Behavioral Treatment Review*, 3 (4), 14-15.

