

# The Criminon Program Evaluation: Phase I

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## INTRODUCTION

In 1972, Criminon, a prison rehabilitation program, was established in New Zealand. Soon thereafter, it was implemented in prisons, juvenile detention centers, court facilities, and community organizations throughout the United States. The Criminon program is based upon techniques developed by L. Ron Hubbard, founder of the Church of Scientology. The content of Criminon, however, is entirely secular, and is offered via two delivery modes: on-site courses and correspondence courses. The program consists of a series of modules that are intended to assist prisoners in understanding the impact of various influences in their environment, the consequences of past choices, and how to make better choices in the future (Criminon International, 2005). To date, Criminon has been delivered in either on-site or correspondence form to over 2,500 prisons in 17 countries worldwide. More than 10,000 prisoners have completed the program and 7,000 are currently enrolled in the program (Criminon International, 2005).

In March 2005, the Association for Better Living and Education (ABLE International), the nonprofit organization that administers Criminon and other social betterment programs, contracted with the Urban Institute to conduct a process and impact evaluation of the on-site version of the Criminon program. The first phase of this evaluation is to: (1) describe the content and delivery of the Criminon curriculum; (2) review the research literature regarding “best practices” in prisoner rehabilitative programming; (3) conduct site visits to existing Criminon programs; and (4) assess the extent to which Criminon is consistent with what prior research suggests are likely to be the most effective approaches to the positive behavioral reform of prisoners.

This report is presented in five parts. We begin with an in-depth overview of the four core Criminon on-site course modules: (1) *Communications*, (2) *Learning Skills for Life*, (3) *The Way to Happiness*, and (4) *Recognizing and Overcoming Antisocial Behavior*. We describe the content, delivery mode, purpose, and expected outcomes for each course. Following these course descriptions, we outline how instructors are trained as well as the guidelines instructors follow for delivering the course curriculum. The second section of this report is a logic model of the core Criminon curriculum developed from the Criminon course materials and other documents and information about the program provided to us by ABLE International. The logic model provides a description of the theory and logic behind the program design, program curricula, project goals, and expected outcomes. The third and fourth sections provide brief descriptions of complementary course offerings that are sometimes combined with Criminon’s core modules, as well as descriptions based on site observations of four programs offered throughout the country that partner with Criminon. The fifth section provides a review of the evaluation literature on prisoner rehabilitation programs, focusing specifically on

programs that address common deficits found in prisoner populations, such as cognitive-behavioral skills, life skills, and the development of moral values and restoration of self-esteem. This section describes in-prison rehabilitation programs that have been found to have a positive impact on the development of pro-social behaviors and reduced recidivism, categorized across five broad areas: cognitive-behavioral skills, Moral Reconnection Therapy (MRT), Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R), life skills, and general correctional program evaluations. The report concludes with a description of the elements of Criminon that are consistent with promising rehabilitation strategies identified through prior research. The results of this report will help identify areas of the curriculum that are likely to achieve the goals of transforming prisoners into confident, ethical, and law-abiding members of society.

## **OVERVIEW OF CRIMINON ON-SITE COURSE MODULES**

The on-site Criminon curriculum consists of four core modules, which are discussed in the order in which they are typically delivered. The first course is the *Communications Course*, which teaches participants how to actively engage in positive social interactions; communicate clearly and effectively through the use of appropriate volume, intonation, and body language; and how to respond appropriately to both positive and negative communication initiated by others. The *Learning Skills for Life Course* teaches the fundamentals of learning through the identification of barriers to effective learning and studying and the use of strategies to overcome those barriers. *The Way to Happiness Course*, central to the program, is based on a secular moral code written by L. Ron Hubbard, which is intended to lead prisoners into a new way of thinking about themselves, their relationships with others, and how they conduct their lives. Lastly, the *Recognizing and Overcoming Antisocial Behavior Course* teaches participants how to identify and deal with antisocial behavior patterns within themselves and others. We conclude with a discussion of Criminon's *Fundamentals of Instruction*, as well as the training and certification process that is required of Criminon's on-site instructors.

### **Communications Course**

#### ***Overview***

The *Communications Course* covers a variety of topics that encourage the student to learn how to be comfortable with himself and others, how to speak clearly and articulately, and how to respond calmly and appropriately to comments made and questions posed by others. A 255-page workbook designed for on-site delivery guides the course. The curriculum begins by defining "communication" and providing several illustrations (both with text and pictures) of what constitutes communication, as well as

what does not constitute communication. The following definition is provided: “Communication is the exchange of ideas or things between people. One person sends it and the other person gets it” (Criminon Communication Course, p. 7).

The remainder of the course curriculum is presented through a series of drills intended to reinforce the key principles of communication: “be there,” “confronting,” “bullbaiting,” “getting your communication across,” “acknowledgments,” “getting a question answered,” and “handling originations.”

## **Content**

### *Be There*

According to the course materials, “ ‘be there’ means to be where you are, comfortably” (p. 29). Illustrations of being there and not being there suggest that being there entails confronting the situation or task at hand and thus being fully engaged in whatever you are doing -- whether it is reading, participating in sports, or communicating. The “be there” drill is a silent drill during which twins<sup>1</sup> face each other and sit still, relaxed and comfortable, without twitching or moving.

### *Confront*

In the context of the communication course, “confront” means, “...being able to face someone or something without being embarrassed or feeling uncomfortable... [or] wanting to run away” (p. 43). Text and illustrations depicting what it is to confront or not confront are provided. They suggest that confronting involves addressing tasks, problems, and interpersonal interactions head-on. The confront drill requires twins to sit facing each other three feet apart without twitching, moving, sleeping, talking, laughing, or being shy, stiff or uncomfortable. Twins are to sit confronting each other until they feel very relaxed and comfortable.

### *Bullbait*

“Bullbait” is defined as acting or speaking in a way that causes a person to react instead of continuing to confront his twin. The course materials refer to a bullbaiter “pressing buttons” to get a reaction. The text and pictorial illustrations suggest that bullbaiting typically involves challenging the person with some remark or statement with which the person is likely to be uncomfortable or to which he is likely to react. Examples include one man remarking to another, “Wow, what a nose.” An individual could also be agitated based on a fear something, such as dogs or rats. The bullbait drill requires twins to sit across from each other and take turns pushing each other’s buttons. One twin begins by making a comment that will engender a response of anger (“You look like a frog”) or alarm (“There’s a big spider behind you!”) in order to get the other twin to

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<sup>1</sup> A “twin” is the term used to describe the student’s study partner during course exercises.

react. The bullbaiter is told to repeatedly push buttons – and to make his/her comments increasingly confrontational – until pushing the buttons no longer causes a reaction. The purpose behind this drill is to help students learn to control themselves and communicate more effectively. “If you can be there and not get thrown off or confused by what someone else says or does, it can help you to communicate more easily” (p. 85). It is not expected that pushing the button will cease to have a potential impact when repeated over time, but rather that the person’s skill and ability level has developed to the point where they can focus on what is being communicated without being distracted by their emotional response to what the other person is doing or saying (Gutfeld, 2005). An illustration of a young woman singing confidently in front of a bored and rude audience underscores this point.

#### *Getting Your Communication Across*

This section is intended to instruct students on how to communicate clearly and effectively through the use of appropriate volume, intonation, and body language. Twins are instructed to sit across from each other and take turns reading lines from Lewis Carroll’s *Alice in Wonderland*<sup>2</sup> as if the prose were their own. The lines provided from Carroll’s book include both questions and declarative statements. Students are instructed to take turns reading those lines in order to “reach the person you are talking to... You want him to understand it” (p. 111). The twin on the receiving end of the drill determines whether his partner has communicated clearly (“pass!”) or not (“fail – you said it too softly”).

#### *Acknowledgments*

“An acknowledgment is something that you say or do to let another person know that you heard them and understood them” (p. 126). The curriculum provides both written and visual examples of what people can say or do to indicate that they have heard and understood someone communicating with them, as well as examples that would *not* constitute appropriate acknowledgment. The acknowledgment drill instructs twins to sit facing each other and take turns reading lines from *Alice in Wonderland* while the other acknowledges those statements or questions.

#### *Half-Acknowledgments*

Half-acknowledgments are responses designed to encourage the person communicating to keep talking. Illustrations of half-acknowledgments include a man asking a woman how her trip was and providing encouraging words to get her to continue to elaborate. The half-acknowledgment drill instructs twins to face each other and take turns reading part of a line from *Alice in Wonderland*, waiting for the other student to provide encouraging words for the speaker to continue.

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<sup>2</sup> According to Criminon instruction materials, there is no significance to the selection of *Alice in Wonderland* as the text from which to draw quotes.

### *Getting a Question Answered*

This section is designed to help students learn how to pose questions in a way that elicits an appropriate response. Illustrations provide information on what constitutes a responsive versus an unresponsive answer. The drill instructs twins to sit across from each other and take turns asking questions until they are able to elicit an appropriate response.

### *Handling Originations*

Originations are communications initiated by another person. This section instructs students on how to respond appropriately when a speaker communicates feelings, ideas, or problems related to him or herself. The curriculum illustrates through text and pictures examples of what does and does not qualify as an origination. Responding to an origination requires acknowledgment and often sympathy. The drill is designed to teach students how to handle an origination in a friendly way that communicates understanding. Twins sit facing each other and take turns reading a series of questions and statements until the other student gives an appropriate acknowledgment.

### ***Delivery Mode***

The *Communications Course* is led by one or more<sup>3</sup> instructors who supervise paired students (termed “twins”) and guide them through a series of communication drills. Drills are to be conducted repetitively, until each student is able to do them with ease (p. 19). Students are instructed not to stop the drill and move on to the next one until they have “passed” on it, which means that both their twin and the instructor have determined that they have done the drill successfully.

Students are also instructed through the course materials to prepare short written assignments that they hand-in to the instructor. The written assignments are designed to reinforce certain key concepts in the curriculum, such as what effective communication looks like, or what might happen if someone did not acknowledge another person and how it might feel. The instructor evaluates written assignments and grades them as either “passing” or “rejected.” Students receiving rejected written assignments must rewrite their responses and resubmit them to the instructor until they receive a passing grade.

### ***Program Purpose***

The purpose of the *Communications Course* is to teach students to be comfortable in the presence of others and to be able to communicate effectively to improve interpersonal

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<sup>3</sup> The number of instructors varies based on class size. According to ABLE International’s Research Director, Howard Gutfeld, the student-instructor ratio is typically five-to-one in juvenile courses and ten-to-one in adult courses.

relationships and avoid conflict. The techniques taught in the *Communications Course* are designed to increase the student's confidence in his ability to deal with contentious and upsetting matters through verbal communication.

### ***Expected Outcomes***

The expected short-term outcomes of the Criminon *Communications Course* are increased confidence, strengthened ability to communicate comfortably with others in a non-confrontational manner, and decreased sensitivity to potentially upsetting situations. The expected long-term outcomes of this course are improved interpersonal relationships and a reduction in the use of verbal or physical violence.

## **Learning Skills for Life Course**

### ***Overview***

The purpose of the *Learning Skills for Life Course* is to teach students how to overcome barriers to learning so that they can read and study more effectively. These learning skills are designed to enable students to use what they learn in their daily lives, helping them to build new knowledge and develop new skill sets.

### ***Content***

The curriculum of the *Learning Skills for Life Course* consists of a 233-page workbook, which is made up of a series of lessons and drills to reinforce those lessons, and an 11-page check-sheet, which documents student's progress through the course materials. The course is designed for on-location delivery. The workbook begins with an overview of general concepts that are critical to the entire course content, such as "learning" and "studying." It includes a discussion of why individuals choose to learn and study, and why these are important life skills. The majority of the course content focuses on explaining the three barriers to learning, teaching the student how to recognize that they have in fact run into a barrier to learning, and explaining methods they can use to overcome each barrier. The course content concludes with discussions and examples of four demonstration and learning techniques: (1) the demonstration kit; (2) clay demonstration; (3) sketching; and (4) study drill cards. A more detailed description of the course content is provided below:

#### ***Learning How to Learn***

This section covers the fundamentals of learning and studying. The course curriculum explains that, "to study means to: look at something, ask questions about it, or read about it, so that one can learn about it" (pp 17-19). This section explains that individuals study

so they can use what they have learned. Furthermore, the material in this first section explains that some people do not know how to study, and therefore have trouble learning.

*The First Barrier to Study: Lack of Mass*

This section of the course curriculum explains the first barrier to learning, “Lack of Mass.” Lack of Mass occurs when an individual does not have the actual physical object that s/he is studying. Through the course materials and drills, students learn how to recognize that they have in fact run into this barrier to learning. The materials explain the methods one can use to overcome this barrier. For example, if one cannot obtain the real thing (mass), a drawing, clay model, or movie may substitute for it. But reading about it, or listening to someone talk about it does not suffice or substitute for mass. According to the course materials, having a lack of mass can make one feel: squashed, bent, sort of spinny, sort of lifeless, bored, angry, dizzy, can lead to one’s stomach feeling funny, can lead to one having headaches, and can make one’s eyes hurt (pp 59-62). Students are instructed in how to identify these feelings as symptomatic of a lack of mass so that they may apply methods to overcome this barrier.

*The Second Barrier to Study: The Skipped Gradient*

This section of the course curriculum explains the second barrier to learning, “The Skipped Gradient.” Learning something step-by-step is called “learning on a gradient.” An individual must learn each step, or gradient, in a task to be able to perform the entire task well. If an individual encounters a step that is too difficult or poorly understood, he or she has “skipped a gradient.” Through the course materials and drills, students learn how to recognize that they have encountered this barrier to learning, which results in feelings of confusion and reeling (p 84). The key to overcoming the missed gradient barrier is not to examine the new step that is too hard, but rather to examine the previous step that the individual thought s/he understood. It is this former step that the individual does not completely understand and therefore s/he is unable to proceed to the next steps and accomplish the task.

*The Third and Most Important Barrier to Study: The Misunderstood Word*

This section of the course curriculum explains the third and most important barrier to learning, *The Misunderstood Word*. The Misunderstood Word is the most important barrier to learning because it is the single barrier that can stop an individual from learning anything at all. Through the course materials and drills, the student learns how to recognize that they have run into this barrier and how to overcome it. According to the curriculum, a misunderstood word, phrase, or symbol can make one feel blank, tired, not there, worried or upset (pp 110-111). If an individual is feeling any of these symptoms it is invariably due to a misunderstood word, phrase, or symbol. Similar to the skipped gradient, the misunderstood word, phrase, or symbol is not in the current section that the individual is reading, but rather it is in the section or page immediately preceding it. The key to dealing with a misunderstood word, phrase, or symbol is to look it up in a dictionary.

### *Learning the Meanings of Words*

This section of the course outlines the eight-step process that an individual must undertake to learn the meaning of a word or phrase that they do not understand. The eight steps are provided below:

1. Look at the previous section of what you were reading and locate the misunderstood word;
2. Look it up in a dictionary;
3. Read all the definitions;
4. Read the definition that fits your sentence;
5. Make up sentences using the word until you really understand the definition;
6. Learn each of the other definitions in the same way;
7. After you've learned all the definitions, go back to what you were reading;
8. If you are not "bright and ready to study again" there is still a misunderstood word. Go back through steps 1-7 until all misunderstood words have been identified and understood; and
9. Return to the location that you found the earliest misunderstood word and resume studying.

### *Demonstration and Learning*

The final section of the course curriculum introduces the student to a number of learning tools and has several drills that the student must undertake to practice using each of the tools. The tools include a demonstration kit, a clay demonstration, sketching, and study drill cards. The demonstration kit contains various objects<sup>4</sup> that can be used to represent whatever it is someone is trying to learn about. For example, a piece of cork represents a person trying to learn about car engines, a paper clip represents a book about car engines, and a rubber band represents an actual car engine. Using the demo kit, the student role-plays the learning activity with each of the objects. The clay demonstration involves making something in clay. It helps one better understand what s/he is studying by understanding how an object is put together, how it looks or how it works. According to course materials, making representations out of clay can make the object one is trying to learn about more real to the student. Sketching involves making a rough drawing of something one is trying to learn (e.g., directions to the store). Study drill cards help students memorize the symptoms associated with each learning barrier and the methods to overcome each barrier. One side of the card lists the symptoms and the reverse side lists the name of the barrier and the specific steps used to overcome it. If there are specific steps to handling a barrier (i.e., the 8 steps to understanding a misunderstood word), the student must be able to list them off exactly in order, with numbers.

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<sup>4</sup> The *Learning Skills for Life* coursebook cites "corks, pen tops, buttons, pieces of sponge or other similar things" as examples of items contained in a demonstration kit (p. 178). However, Criminon's *How To Supervise Students Through the Criminon Program* notes that prisons may have restrictions on such objects. Therefore, instructors are told to find out what restrictions exist in the prison, so as to accommodate them (p. 56).

### ***Delivery Mode***

The course is designed for on-location delivery with one or more instructors and approximately 15-40 students in each class. There are a number of drills throughout the course materials that the students work on individually or with a twin. Pairs of twins work through the course content at the same pace. As students complete a drill, they either initial the corresponding line on the course check-sheet, get their twin's initials, or get their instructor's initials, based on the workbook instructions.

Each section describing a study barrier contains drills that require students to demonstrate that they understand and can illustrate – both physically with their bodies, and through pictures and sketches – each of the negative consequences of the barrier (e.g., associating bored with lack of mass, confusion with skipping a gradient, and blankness with a misunderstood word). Students must be able to distinguish the negative feelings associated with each particular barrier from those associated with the other barriers. The curriculum also includes short written assignments that each student hands in to the instructor, and interactive drills with a twin that involve practicing with the demo kit, clay demonstration, sketching, and the study drill cards.

### ***Program purpose***

The *Learning Skills for Life Course* is designed to improve students' reading and learning skills. The course addresses the ability of the individual to extract, comprehend, and use information, primarily through reading. The course is designed to enhance the student's ability to understand and use the information provided in subsequent Criminon modules, as well as to increase the student's acquisition of new knowledge, whether derived from school or educational programs, on the job, or through vocational advancement.

### ***Expected Outcomes***

The short-term expected outcome of the *Learning Skills for Life Course* is that students will acquire a basic understanding of Study Technology<sup>5</sup> so that they may apply it to future learning. The long-term expected outcome of the course is that students will be able to successfully study any subject they wish and apply what they learn to a variety of life circumstances.

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<sup>5</sup> "Technology" is the term used throughout the Criminon course curriculum and instructor's training manuals to describe the methodology employed for a particular task.

## The Way to Happiness Course

### Overview

*The Way to Happiness Course* is the cornerstone of the Criminon curriculum, providing participants with lessons in understanding and integrating the 21 tenets of L. Ron Hubbard's *The Way To Happiness* into their lives. The course is guided by a 64-page booklet entitled *The Way to Happiness* and a 313-page workbook designed for on-site delivery. Each tenet is explained, followed by a series of questions and activities designed to reinforce the importance of integrating the principles into the participant's daily life. The curriculum covers topics in the areas of personal, civic, legal, and social ethics, framing them so as to show the participant how adhering to the principles in *The Way to Happiness* can ensure their survival<sup>6</sup> and lead to a happier, more fulfilling life. The course seeks to accomplish this by appealing to the participant's self-interest with examples of how his or her behavior can positively or negatively influence his or her happiness and survival.

The course book instructs participants that through the course, participants can build pride and self respect while improving the quality of their lives. Participants are also encouraged to give the booklet to others so that they too may improve the quality of their lives. The 21 tenets are grouped thematically below.

### Content

#### *Taking Care of Yourself*

The first of the course's 21 tenets teaches participants to care for themselves.<sup>7</sup> The sub-tenets of "Take Care of Yourself" include seeking medical care, maintaining personal hygiene, and getting the requisite amount of rest and nutrition. The curriculum presents each sub-tenet and describes potentially negative conditions associated with a lack of adherence. Tenets two and three address threats to physical well being posed by intemperance and promiscuity, respectively. The curriculum cites violent emotions caused by unfaithfulness and sexually transmitted diseases as reasons to be sexually faithful (pp 37-38).

#### *Work Ethic*

Tenets sixteen and seventeen describe the value of industriousness and competency. According to the curriculum, productivity is essential to morale. Competency is defined

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<sup>6</sup> *The Way to Happiness* booklet defines survival as "the act of remaining alive, of continuing to exist, of being alive."

<sup>7</sup> The course addresses taking care of oneself in the first tenet. This principle is also a subtenet of the twelfth tenet, Safeguard and Improve Your Environment. This subtenet reads, Be of Good Appearance.

as “a person [accomplishing] what he planned to” (p. 178), and is divided into three subsections: look, learn and practice. ‘Looking’ is defined as “[seeing] what you see and not what someone else tells you to see” (p. 180), ‘learning’ is the process of differentiating truth and falsehood, and ‘practice’ is the application of learned information. The curriculum teaches students that they must be able to “look, learn and practice” if they are to be competent. The “look” component of competency draws on the literal meaning of the word; participants are encouraged to see things as they truly are. The learning component of competency draws on the concepts covered in Criminon’s *Learning Skills for Life Course*: students are taught that learning involves not just memorization of facts and processes, but finding better ways to do things. In this way, the text emphasizes that looking involves passive observation, whereas learning requires the student to seek out knowledge.

#### *Civic Ethics*

Civic ethics addressed in *The Way to Happiness Course* include political participation, religious tolerance, relationships with parents and children, environmental conservation, and truthfulness. Course materials on civic ethics focus on demonstrating to participants that their behavior can affect the society in which they live and that society can in turn affect them. For example, the sixth tenet teaches participants that when they set a positive example for others, they can change the behavior of others. This in turn will elicit behavior from others that the individual will find pleasing.

The idea that participants’ interaction with society and their environment can positively or negatively affect them is incorporated into several of the tenets. The curriculum teaches participants to consider reciprocity when acting. The text recognizes this concept as ‘The Golden Rule’ in tenets nineteen and twenty. The fourth tenet, Love and Help Children, reinforces this principle by counseling participants to set a good example for children; the curriculum describes a child who is not moral or self-reliant as a “liability to everyone” (p. 45). Tenet 12, Safeguard and Improve Your Environment, incorporates three sub-tenets: 1) Be of Good Appearance, 2) Take Care of Your Own Area, and 3) Help Take Care of The Planet (pp 119-124). These three sub-tenets all reinforce the principles of personal responsibility to self, each other, and the environment – they develop from a narrow focus on care for oneself and expand to a broader focus on care for the entire planet.

#### *Legal Ethics*

The tenets regarding legal ethics advise participants not to murder, harm others, steal, or lie. The curriculum’s argument against breaking the law appeals to the participant’s self-interest by citing potential negative consequences for those who commit transgressions. The course book teaches participants that breaking the law may seem like a shortcut to getting what they want, but it actually makes it more difficult for them to do so over the long term. The curriculum similarly describes the effect of lying as creating a trap for the person telling the lie.

### ***Delivery Mode***

Participants work independently in a designated classroom with one or more<sup>8</sup> instructors present to help participants who have trouble understanding directions or content. Course drills requiring participants to define key terms in their own words and explain the importance of key concepts are required for each of the 21 tenets. Drills often require participants to describe how they might feel in certain hypothetical situations or experiences of their own, related to each of the tenets. Such drills also require participants to turn in written assignments to an instructor. The instructor grades the written assignments and returns them. A few drills require participants to use clay to express their feelings or how they would portray a situation. These drills require that an instructor check the student's work for understanding and correct application of the principles embodied in the specific tenet.

Participants are sometimes directed to complete assignments outside of class. For example, after reading "Set a Good Example," participants are directed to identify how they can set a good example for someone else, to carry out that plan, and to describe their actions in writing. In such cases, students complete their work outside of class and bring any written assignments to their next class for instructor evaluation.

### ***Program Purpose***

The purpose of *The Way To Happiness Course* is to help participants build self-respect, regain pride in themselves, and take actions that can help them live a happy life while helping others become happy as well. The course helps the participants to understand, adopt and put into use a set of common sense values and principles associated with the 21 tenets included in the *Way to Happiness* booklet. Through this process, participants learn how to conduct their lives in a manner that is responsible, contributive and in harmony with others and the environment.

### ***Expected Outcome***

The short-term expected outcomes are that participants will learn to act in a socially acceptable manner and feel capable and worthy of behaving in this way. The long-term expected outcome of the course is that participants restore trust in themselves, their

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<sup>8</sup> The number of instructors varies based on class size. According to ABLE International's Research Director, Howard Gutfeld, the student-instructor ratio is typically five-to-one in juvenile courses and ten-to-one in adult courses.

behavior, and responses to others and thus are able to avoid relapsing into their previous criminal and substance abusing behaviors.

## **Recognizing and Overcoming Antisocial Behavior Course**

### **Overview**

Criminon's *Recognizing and Overcoming Antisocial Behavior Course* is intended to teach participants how to overcome the obstacles preventing them from reaching their goals, maintaining good health, and being happy. The course is based on the theory that the difficulties people experience in reaching goals or finding happiness are due to suppression by antisocial individuals. Course participants are instructed in how to identify and overcome the antisocial personality type and the "Potential Trouble Source" types common among individuals associated with the antisocial personality. A 318-page course book and a 56-page instruction and exercise book guide the course, which is designed to be completed independently, in a classroom with one or two instructors.

### **Content**

#### *The Antisocial Personality*

Criminon estimates that roughly one in five people have an antisocial personality and one in forty are dangerous (p. 20). The course book provides examples of problems resulting from antisocial personalities including failed businesses and divorces. According to the text, the antisocial personality believes that everyone is an enemy and trusts no one. He or she also believes that their survival depends on suppressing others. Criminon defines the antisocial personality as having the following traits (pp 31-78):

- Speaks only in broad generalities, particularly when passing rumors or lies;
- Deals mainly in bad news, critical remarks, invalidation and suppression of others;
- Negatively alters news when delivering information
- Does not respond to treatment or reform;
- Surrounds him/herself with subordinate, impressionable or weak personalities<sup>9</sup>;
- Habitually blames problems on the incorrect source;
- Cannot finish projects or tasks;
- Has no sense of responsibility;
- Supports only destructive groups and opposes anything constructive;
- Tries to bring good, successful people down through words;

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<sup>9</sup> According to the coursebook, the leading cause of 'insanity' is association with antisocial persons, although antisocial persons are rarely themselves institutionalized (p. 53).

- Supports activities that harm others; and
- Does not respect the idea of personal property (i.e. helps themselves to others' belongings).

#### *The Social Personality*

According to course curriculum, unless individuals understand the characteristics of social and antisocial personalities, they are unable to discern enemy from friend, and will ultimately end up hurting friends as a result. However, the course curriculum warns participants against making judgments based solely on consideration of antisocial characteristics. Thus, to differentiate the social and the antisocial personalities, one must consider both social and antisocial traits. Criminon defines the social personality as having the following attributes (pp 117-162):

- Speaks of specific circumstances rather than generalities;
- Is eager to relay good news and reluctant to relay bad news;
- Censors information only to spare others' feelings;
- Is very open to reforming negative attributes;
- Associates with those who are 'well, happy and of good morale' (p. 33);
- Correctly identifies the source of a problem;
- Completes projects and tasks when possible;
- Takes responsibility for errors;
- Supports constructive groups and resists destructive ones;
- Helps others;
- Resists acts that harm others; and
- Respects the personal property of others as such.

The curriculum teaches participants that a fundamental difference between the social and antisocial personality types is their view of others: the social personality type wants others to be happy and do well, while the antisocial personality type wishes harm to others. The course book also notes that rising above one's peers in power or status does not necessarily make one antisocial; it is only the motives of the individual in wielding such power or control that differentiate the social from the antisocial.

#### *The Potential Trouble Source (PTS)*

A PTS is defined as someone who is connected to and adversely affected by a suppressive person.<sup>10</sup> One indicator of PTS is when an individual exhibits poor judgment in the presence of a suppressive person. According to the curriculum, "when a person makes mistakes... it is evidence that a suppressive person exists in that vicinity" (p. 185).

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<sup>10</sup> 'Suppressive person' or 'suppressive' are synonymous with 'antisocial personality' (p. 185).

The course book identifies three types of PTS personalities. The first is the individual associated with or in close proximity to a suppressive person in his present environment. The suppressive person continuously stands in the way of the individual's attempts to better him or herself. The second type of PTS occurs when past suppression of an individual is reactivated. In this case, when an individual is reminded of a past suppressive person, they can exhibit symptoms associated with the past suppression. The third type of PTS will see suppressive ghosts or demons everywhere he goes. According to the curriculum, such cases are found mainly in mental institutions.

#### *PTS Handling*

The course teaches participants that “all illnesses in greater or lesser degree, and all foul-ups stem directly and only from a PTS condition” (p. 221). The text identifies three actions to remedy such a condition—Discover, Handle, and Disconnect—and notes that the most basic stumbling block to handling PTS is the notion that there are exceptions or alternatives to this understanding of problems and their solutions.

The curriculum notes that PTS persons are rarely psychotic, but may be in a state of deficiency or illness, which prevents recovery, and that this state is directly caused by suppression. Here the text draws a comparison between doctors' notion of stress and its health effects and PTS and its physical manifestations. According to the curriculum, stress is actually the effect of suppression in one or more areas in an individual's life.<sup>11</sup>

A series of steps that may be used to diagnose others who are PTS is provided in the curriculum. The first step is to give them written materials on the subject that discuss and define PTS<sup>12</sup> in hopes that this will lead the individual to believe that his or her accidents or illnesses are a result of suppression by someone else. The second step is to discuss with the individual their accident or condition. In the third step, the participant is to ask the potential PTS when their illness or accidents began. The fourth step is to ask the potential PTS who their suppressive is. In the fifth step, the participant is to ask the potential PTS whether s/he would like to handle or disconnect from his suppressive. In the final step, the participant is to check up on the person they are helping to ensure s/he is continuing to do well. The curriculum warns participants that these steps may not be effective in more complex cases of PTS. It also advises participants that their intervention may not prompt instant recoveries.

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<sup>11</sup> The curriculum notes that doctors lack all information about stress (i.e., that “a person under stress is experiencing suppression in one or more parts of his life”) and cannot fully treat the condition as a result (p. 222).

<sup>12</sup> The text implies that this step will lead the individual to believe that his or her accidents or illnesses are a result of suppression by someone else. After receiving the materials described in step one, Criminon describes step two as follows: “Get him to talk about the illness or accident situation that he thinks happened from suppression. Don't push him too much, just have him tell you” (p. 235).

### ***Handling and Disconnection***

Criminon states that PTS people commonly lack the ability to ‘confront’, defined as the ability to face up to something (p. 309). The curriculum teaches participants that in many cases, PTS situations arise from poor communication between the PTS and his/her suppressive. Thus, the ‘handle’ approach, as it is called in the text, involves the PTS individual restoring good communication with the suppressive.

The curriculum also teaches that, in some situations, it may not be possible or fruitful to restore or establish communication with the suppressive. In these cases, the PTS individual must sever communication and interaction with his/her suppressive.

### ***Delivery Mode***

Participants work independently, reading the material in the course book and completing the 10 lessons contained in the lesson book. Each lesson contains questions that check for participant understanding. These may be questions requiring the student to verify information contained in the material, questions requiring students to explain key terms and concepts in their own words or through sketching, or questions asking the student to cite ways in which the text is applicable to their lives. Students must answer in writing and turn in their responses for each lesson to a Criminon instructor. The instructor will then grade and return the participant’s responses. Students may continue to complete remaining coursework while waiting for instructor feedback.

### ***Purpose***

The purpose of this course is to provide participants with an understanding of the characteristics of suppressive (antisocial), social and PTS personalities. The course then teaches students how to deal with suppressive and PTS individuals through either communication or disconnection (the severing of ties). The course also teaches participants how to coach PTS individuals to confront their suppressive and/or disconnect from them. Further, the course educates the participants, making them aware of their own behavior and helping them adopt more pro-social lifestyles by enabling them to understand behavioral patterns that they may have adopted as a consequence of past associations with antisocial personalities.

### ***Expected Outcome***

The short-term expected outcome of this course is that participants will be able to recognize and manage (or terminate) their relationships with antisocial personalities and PTS individuals. The long-term expected outcome is that individuals will be more successful in reaching their goals, and be happier more consistently.

## **Instructor Training**

### **Overview**

According to ABLE International, Criminon instructors typically have experience and/or training in education or the social sciences, or have life or employment histories working with similar populations. However, there are no strict educational or employment requirements beyond a functional high school literacy level. As a result, instructors represent many walks of life – from ex-offender Criminon program graduates to corrections staff to volunteers from the community who may have no formal connection to the criminal justice system.

Instructor training materials are divided into two manuals: *Fundamentals of Instruction* and *How to Supervise Students Through the Criminon Program*. Because training is self-paced, the time taken to complete it varies. However, potential on-site instructors are encouraged to train at least 10 hours per week. Training may take place in an office or classroom setting, depending upon location. Since the training is based on the methodology of instruction, instructors-in-training are prepared to teach all four courses. Upon completion of instructor training, instructors are given a certificate and are qualified to begin teaching any of the Criminon course modules. In some locations, instructors go through an apprenticeship, shadowing a more experienced instructor. Once they complete this apprenticeship, which may vary in duration, they receive another certificate and are able to begin instruction on their own.

Although all instructors are trained in the same basic instruction methodology, their delivery methods may vary depending upon the literacy level of the class, and the time and resource constraints the institution may impose. Depending upon location, instructors may be volunteers or full- or part-time paid employees. Below are descriptions of the main components of *Fundamentals of Instruction* and *How to Supervise Students Through the Criminon Program*.

### **Content**

The main difference between the two instructor manuals is that the *Fundamentals of Instruction* teaches the instructor the basic material covered in all four courses as well as how to facilitate the student's understanding of the material, while *How to Supervise Students Through the Criminon Program* advises instructors on how to run a classroom, deal with disruptive students, and interact professionally with corrections staff and students. However, there is some overlap in the content of both manuals, as will be noted below.

The *Fundamentals of Instruction* manual teaches “the basic technology of how to instruct students through the Criminon course”(p.1). Instructors are first taught Study Technology, which includes barriers to effective studying and concepts such as the absence of mass, the skipped gradient, and the misunderstood word, as they are presented in the *Learning Skills for Life* workbook. In addition to learning the basic material covered in the courses, instructors receive training in how to teach the coursework to students. For example, they are taught to use the following three methods of word clearing based on the literacy level of the student and the material being studied:

- Basic Word Clearing (also called “Method 3 Word Clearing”): the method of finding a student’s misunderstood word by having him read the text that came before the word he doesn’t understand to find previous misunderstood words and look them up in the dictionary.
- Specialized Reading Aloud Word Clearing method (also called “Method 7 Word Clearing”): this method is recommended when teaching children, foreigners, or those with limited literacy, and involves having the student read aloud and noting all the omissions, hesitations, or word changes, and correcting them. This process is repeated until the student is brought up to literacy (p. 38).
- Key Word Clearing: the method used to define key words when a student is given a new job or assignment. Instructors or “word clearers” make a list, with the help of the student, of all new words and definitions.

After instructors-in-training become comfortable in their understanding of key course concepts and how to facilitate a student’s understanding of them, they are presented with rules for running the course. They are instructed to use “spot checking” on a regular basis throughout all courses to make sure students understand what they are being taught. In addition they are presented with several additional rules:

1. Note that students are present on time.
2. Take role.
3. Introduce new students or those returning from exams.
4. Orient newcomers.
5. Handle questions.
6. Ensure space and equipment are available.
7. See to it that top service is provided.
8. Ensure that breaks are started and completed promptly with roll call.
9. Keep the area neat and tidy at all times.
10. Make a library of books and materials available should the bookstore run out of literature.
11. Ensure that students do not arrive or leave on their own accord.
12. Ensure that students are not interrupting each other at work.
13. Do not allow anyone to walk in and interrupt or address any student.

14. Be there and be on time.
15. Make things run precisely on schedule

Rules of proper student behavior are then outlined and appear in both the *Fundamentals of Instruction* manual and *How to Supervise* manual. Students are to be punctual and refrain from eating or chewing gum. Students continually disturbing the class are asked to leave. However, this occurs after instructors attempt to get to the bottom of why the student is disruptive (*How to Supervise Students Through the Criminon Program*, p. 68).

In both manuals, instructors-in-training are then briefed on how to handle the orientation of new students and are informed that they will be joined by a course administrator if a course is made up of 18 or more students.<sup>13</sup> The *Fundamentals of Instruction* manual outlines welcoming the students, informing them of the rules, and getting them started on course material right away (p. 71). The *How to Supervise* manual advises instructors to complete an oral interview with the new students (p.43). The interview form, which appears at the end of the *How to Supervise* manual, consists of basic questions about age, name, date of birth, ethnicity, as well as the following twelve questions:

- Before you came to this facility, who did you normally live with?
- Were you raised by one or both of your parents? How did you get along with them?
- Do you have any kids yourself? How many?
- Did you ever stop going to school every day? What grade was that?
- Did you drop out of school? What grade was that?
- What was the name of the last school you attended?
- What types of street drugs have you taken?
- How old were you when you joined a gang? Why did you join?
- How old were you when you first got into trouble with the law?
- Why do you want to do this program? What do you think you are going to get out of it?
- Do you think people can get better? Do you want to get better?
- Are you currently taking anything to relieve stress or help you to sleep better?

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<sup>13</sup> The course administrator's job is to keep students and materials neatly arranged and placed to ensure the class runs smoothly.

After the interview is complete, instructors are advised to give the student a checksheet, explain its use, and seat the students across from each other in order to introduce each student to his “twin” or study partner for the course (p. 45).

Through the *How to Supervise* manual, instructors are given further training on course-related specifics such as word clearing for the *Learning Skills for Life Course*, communication drills for the *Communications Course*, and encouraging students to refer material covered in *The Way to Happiness Course* back to situations in their own lives (pp 47-63).

To ensure order in the classroom, the manual gives three rules in addition to the rules on proper student and instructor behavior: 1) guards or staff must be present at all times; 2) students may not leave their seats and wander around; and 3) students must ask permission to use the bathroom. Instructors are taught to communicate with disruptive students to uncover the source of the problems and show them that the instructor cares. The manual also states that “if they are really too much of a problem, they will have to be let go” (pp 67-68).

The manual also lists the following supplies needed to run a course room:

- Copy of “Student Rules”
- A place to store materials under lock and key
- A typewritten list of students
- An adequate number of chairs and tables
- Criminon books and checksheets
- Pencils for all students
- Plain paper
- “Easy” dictionaries (for children or young adults)

Upon a student’s successful completion of a course, instructors are encouraged to hold a graduation ceremony within the institution they are working. At the graduation, instructors are advised to read some of the students’ success stories aloud, and anonymously, and to call students to the front to speak if they wish. At the end of the ceremony, students are called to the front, one by one, and presented with their certificates (p. 77).

# CRIMINON LOGIC MODEL

## Introduction

This section describes the underlying logic behind Criminon's on-site program components and course offerings. Specific elements of the Criminon curriculum are analyzed with an eye toward the needs they are intended to address and the outcomes they are expected to produce. The result is a "logic model" that identifies both the explicit and implicit expected outcomes of Criminon. Resources used to develop the logic model include copies of the course material, memoranda supplied by ABLE International, and email communication with ABLE staff.<sup>14</sup>

## Goals

The Criminon program consists of four overarching goals: 1) To instill in participants an awareness that they are worthwhile and capable of having positive social interactions and creating positive effects on others; 2) To provide specific tools and skills to help participants regain self-respect and live better lives; 3) To reduce recidivism by providing information on changing negative and antisocial behaviors; and 4) To encourage non-criminal behavior by instilling a sense of self-worth and encouraging pro-social behavior commensurate with that new self-awareness. The more specific goals of Criminon are:

- Strengthening reading and learning skills;
- Improving the ability to resolve problems verbally without reliance on force or avoidance;
- Building self-respect and confidence;
- Identifying and addressing unhealthy relationships; and
- Increasing awareness of patterns of antisocial conduct and learning how to develop more pro-social behaviors.

The purpose of the following section is to describe the logical relationships between prisoners' needs, the programming components of Criminon that are intended to address those needs, and the expected short- and long-term outcomes of the program. The four course modules of Criminon detailed above can be categorized into three specific areas of

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<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that this section is based on paper documentation of Criminon and communications with ABLE staff, rather than on how Criminon is actually being delivered in institutions (this latter question will be addressed later, through original data collection efforts associated with the impact evaluation).

need: building moral values and restoring self-esteem, improving cognitive-behavioral skills, and developing life skills. These areas are outlined in the Criminon Logic Model, Figure 1.

## **Building Moral Values and Restoring Self-Esteem**

### ***Needs Addressed***

The fundamental belief underlying the Criminon program is that a lack of self-respect underlies criminality. It is believed that this lack of self-respect led participants to engage in antisocial behavior. *The Way to Happiness* course is the means through which participants attempt to regain their sense of self-respect and pride, and begin to live happy lives.

### ***Programming Components***

Over the course of several classes, participants work independently or with one or more instructors who teach them values and principles associated with 21 tenets for better living. *The Way to Happiness* curriculum addresses the following topics:

- *Taking care of yourself* – seeking medical care, maintaining personal hygiene, and getting adequate rest and nutrition
- *Work ethic* – the value of industriousness and competency
- *Civic ethics* – political participation, religious tolerance, relationships with parents and children, environmental conservation, and truthfulness
- *Legal ethics* – not to murder, harm others, steal, or lie

### ***Expected Outcomes***

The short-term expected outcomes are that participants will become aware of their own pattern of antisocial behavior and the consequences associated with it. In addition, it is expected that participants will learn to behave in accordance with the moral code presented in the 21 tenets for better living and as a result will make more socially acceptable decisions. Long-term expected outcomes include internalizing the *Way to Happiness* moral code thereby restoring trust in themselves and avoiding relapse into previous criminal and substance abusing behaviors.

## **Cognitive and Behavioral Skills**

### ***Needs Addressed***

In addition to lacking a sense of self-respect, many inmates have additional cognitive and behavioral deficits that present challenges to living crime-free lives. To address these needs, the on-site Criminon program includes two courses that help participants to (1) distinguish between healthy and unhealthy relationships and gain the social skills to develop relationships with pro-social individuals and disconnect from antisocial individuals, and (2) gain the confidence and interpersonal skills to comfortably interact with others and communicate constructively so as to avoid conflict.

### ***Programming Components***

Programming is delivered through two courses. In the first course, *Recognizing and Overcoming Antisocial Behavior*, participants work independently, completing an exercise book in a classroom with one or more Criminon instructors. The course is designed to teach participants three main points:

- How to examine their own behavior for patterns of social and antisocial characteristics and become aware of how they ought or ought not to act;
- How to identify and develop relationships with pro-social individuals; and
- How to deal with or avoid interactions with antisocial individuals.

The second course that addresses cognitive and behavior skills is the *Communications Course*. This course is led by one or more instructors who supervise paired students and guide them through a series of communication drills. Through the course, participants are taught:

- How to actively engage in positive social interactions and communicate clearly and effectively through the use of appropriate volume, intonation, and body language; and
- How to respond appropriately to positive and negative communication from others.

### ***Expected Outcomes***

Short-term expected outcomes of the *Recognizing and Overcoming Antisocial Behavior Course* include developing: the ability to recognize and manage relationships with antisocial individuals, the ability to recognize and develop relationships with pro-social individuals, and an awareness of their own patterns of pro-social and antisocial behavior,

thereby gaining an ability to act in socially acceptable manners. Long-term expected outcomes include: regaining health, achieving goals, and being consistently happy.

Short-term expected outcomes of the *Communications Course* include: increasing confidence and the ability to communicate effectively; decreasing sensitivity to potentially upsetting situations; and increasing the participant's ability to use communication as a tool to resolve disagreements, arguments, or conflicts civilly. Long-term outcomes include: reducing verbal and physical violence in which participants may engage, and improving relationships.

## **Life Skills**

### ***Needs Addressed***

Many inmates may lack the study skills necessary to enable them to master a subject or task.

### ***Programming Components***

*The Learning Skills for Life Course* is led by one or more instructors in a classroom of 15 to 40 students who work on drills independently or with a twin. The course includes discussions and examples of four demonstration and learning techniques: the demonstration kit, clay demonstration, sketching, and study drill cards. In order to teach the fundamentals of learning and studying, three barriers to effective learning and studying are presented:

- Not processing the physical object or replica associated with the subject being studied;
- Skipping steps in the learning process; and,
- Misunderstanding words or symbols.

Course participants are taught solutions to each barrier, after which they participate in drills to practice each solution. They are also taught eight steps to understanding the meaning of a word or phrase with special emphasis on the importance of using a dictionary.

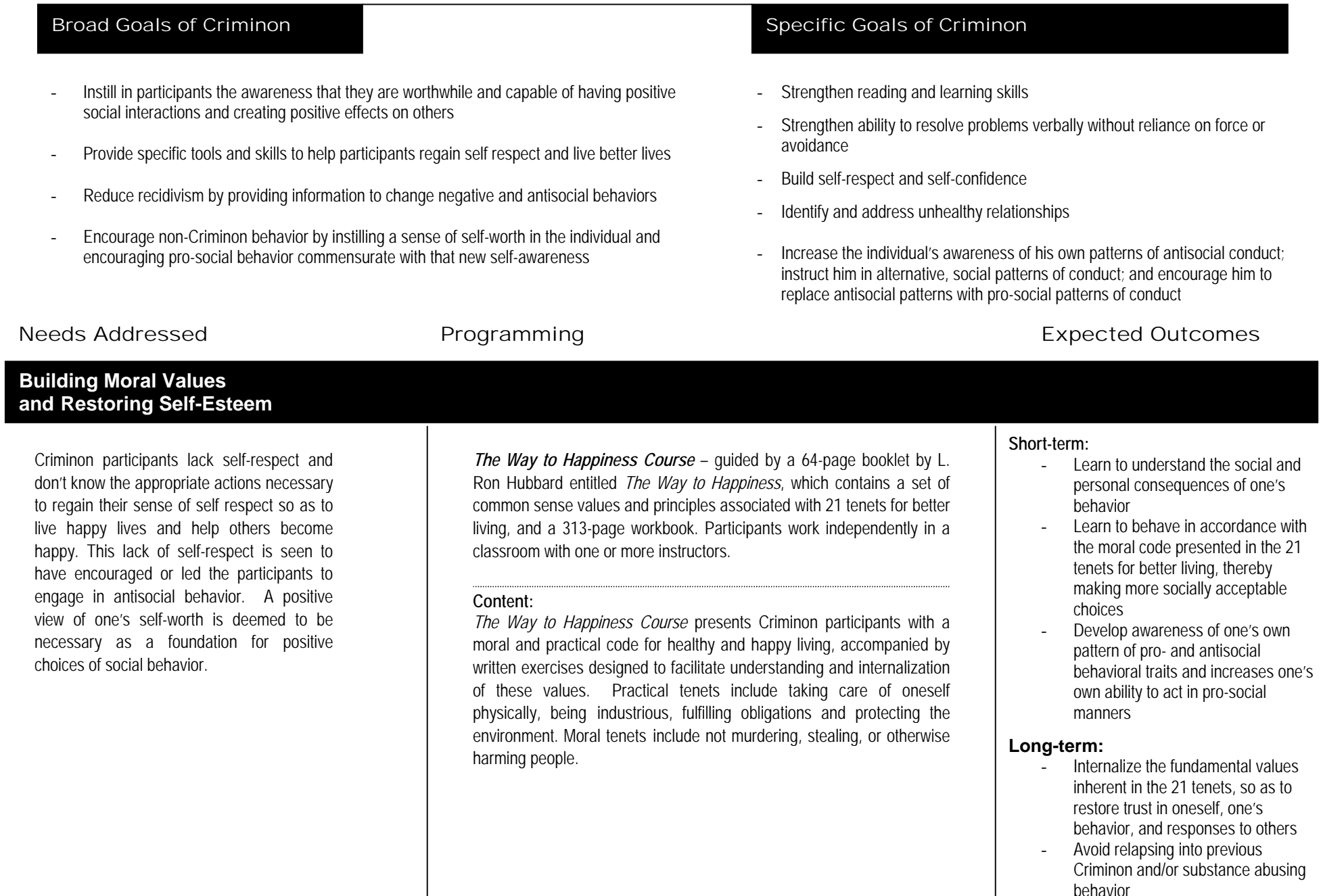
### ***Expected Outcomes***

Short-term expected outcomes of this life skills course include: developing skills in identifying and overcoming the three barriers to effective learning, and applying learning

skills to other courses in the on-site Criminon program. Long-term expected outcomes include: developing the ability to study any subject successfully, and applying learning skills to daily life.



Figure 1. Criminon Logic Model





## Cognitive and Behavioral Skills

<p>Criminon participants are unable to distinguish between healthy and unhealthy behavioral patterns and healthy and unhealthy relationships, and lack the social skills to forge relationships with pro-social individuals and to disconnect from antisocial individuals.</p>	<p><i>Recognizing and Overcoming Antisocial Behavior Course</i> -- guided by a 318-page coursebook and a 56-page instruction and exercise book designed to be completed independently in a classroom with one or two Criminon instructors.</p> <p>.....</p> <p><b>Content:</b> The <i>Recognizing and Overcoming Antisocial Behavior Course</i> teaches participants how to identify, deal with and/or avoid interactions with antisocial individuals. Participants learn how to identify and develop relationships with pro-social individuals. Participants also examine their own behavior patterns for social and antisocial characteristics and become aware of how they ought or ought not to act.</p>	<p><b>Short-term:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Develop ability to recognize and manage (or terminate) relationships with antisocial individuals</li> <li>- Develop ability to recognize and develop relationships with pro-social personalities</li> <li>- Develop awareness of one's own pattern of pro- and antisocial behavioral traits and increases one's own ability to act in pro-social manners</li> </ul> <p><b>Long-term:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Regain health</li> <li>- Achieve goals</li> <li>- Be consistently happy</li> </ul>
<p>Criminon participants often lack the confidence and interpersonal skills necessary to comfortably interact with others and to communicate effectively to avoid conflict.</p>	<p><i>Communications Course</i> – guided by a 255-page workbook and led by one or more instructors who supervise paired students (termed "twins") and guide them through a series of communication drills.</p> <p>.....</p> <p><b>Content:</b> Through the <i>Communications Course</i>, Criminon participants learn how to actively engage in positive social interactions and communicate clearly and effectively through the use of appropriate volume, intonation, and body language. They also learn how to respond appropriately to both positive and negative communication initiated by others.</p>	<p><b>Short-term:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Increase confidence</li> <li>- Increase ability to communicate effectively</li> <li>- Decreased sensitivity to potentially upsetting situations</li> <li>- Increase ability to use communication as a tool to resolve disagreements, arguments or conflicts</li> </ul> <p><b>Long-term:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Improve relationships</li> <li>- Reduce verbal and physical violence in which participants may engage</li> </ul>



## Life Skills

Prisoners often have high levels of illiteracy or limited reading skills. They lack study skills that enable them to learn and master a subject or task.

*Learning Skills for Life* – guided by a 233-page workbook and an 11-page checkbook. One or more instructors lead the course, with class size ranging from 15-40 students. Criminon participants work on drills independently or with a twin. The course concludes with discussions and examples of four demonstration and learning techniques: the demonstration kit, clay demonstration, sketching, and study drill cards.

.....

**Content:**

This course teaches the fundamentals of learning and studying through the identification of three barriers to effective learning and studying: (1) not possessing the physical object or a replica associated with the subject being studied; (2) skipping steps in the learning process; and (3) misunderstanding words or symbols. Solutions to each barrier are presented, and drills that require participants to practice each solution are required. The eight steps to understanding the meaning of a word or phrase are taught and the importance of using a dictionary is emphasized.

**Short-term:**

- Develop skills in identifying and overcoming the three barriers to learning
- Apply learning skills to the Criminon Program

**Long-term:**

- Develop the ability to study any subject successfully
- Apply learning skills to daily life

## **ADDITIONAL CRIMINON COURSE OFFERINGS**

In addition to the Criminon courses described above, the program offers supplementary course materials that vary depending upon the needs of the population being served, the weekly class time allotted to the Criminon program, the overall duration of the program, and each participant's tenure in the program. These courses include: (1) *Successful Parenting Skills*, (2) *Understanding and Overcoming Addictions*, and (3) *Handling Conditions in Your Life*.

The *Successful Parenting Skills* curriculum advises parents to recognize and respect a child's self-determinism and provides parents with various communication techniques to deal with childhood injuries, anger, fear, grief, and irritableness. The curriculum teaches parents to comfort their children and focus on engaging the child in communication about the upsetting situation as a means to overcome it.

The purpose of the *Understanding and Overcoming Addictions* course is to teach participants the tools necessary to help themselves and others overcome addictions. This is done by first helping participants understand the reasons behind their addictions. The course employs physical exercises to help break a person's connections with negative past experiences and prescribes participants to purge themselves of residual drugs through exercise, use of a sauna, and taking vitamin and mineral supplements to help replenish the body.

The third course, *Handling Conditions in Your Life*, is intended to help participants resolve past conditions that may have led to problems in the present. The course holds that people are inherently good and explains how people can go off track in life when they lose site of their dreams and goals. The course emphasizes that the ultimate goal in life is to live as long and as happily as possible, which can only be achieved in cooperation with others. Various parts of life are presented and described – such as focus on self, others, spirituality, and group well being – and participants are instructed that the best decisions in life are those that benefit as many of these parts of life as possible. Finally, the curriculum presents a set of techniques to help a person move forward through different stages of his or her life.

## **SITE VISITS OF CRIMINON**

The Criminon curriculum can be implemented in a variety of ways. Over the course of four site visits, Urban Institute staff observed Criminon in a prison setting, a residential treatment facility for substance abusers, a vocational program for at-risk youth, and a community center specializing in illiteracy.

As implemented in the prison setting at John J. Moran Medium Security Facility in Cranston, Rhode Island, the Criminon curriculum operates as a combination of a lecture and a correspondence course. Class is held for two hours, twice a week, and is attended by a supervisor who leads a group discussion on the topics presented and supervises activities such as *Communications Course* drills and the completion of homework. This program encourages students to apply the tenets of *The Way to Happiness* in their daily lives, to find ways to relate to and understand these tenets within themselves, and to share those personal thoughts and experiences with fellow classmates. The program is open to anyone. Due to class-size restrictions, an average of 15 students participate at a time.

Criminon is also implementing its core curriculum, along with *Understanding and Overcoming Addictions*, in the New Life Center in San Francisco, California, a residential treatment facility for substance abusers. The New Life Center has three phases of programming: orientation, primary phase, and transitional phase. During the primary phase, a case manager identifies life skills courses that would be useful for each client. Criminon is one such life skill program offered, typically in combination with other preexisting programming, such as employment skills seminars, substance abuse treatment, and literacy education.

Project CRAFT, a vocational-technical program developed by the Homebuilder's Association in Tampa, Florida, serves at-risk youth. In cooperation with Criminon, the program delivers the *Communications Course*, *Learning Skills for Life*, and *The Way to Happiness*. Vocational-technical education along with academic education is delivered throughout the day, followed by 2.5 hours dedicated to Criminon. The Criminon components were added to complement the "hard" vocational skills provided through the technical training with "soft" life skills. Program staff believe that the Criminon components will improve communication skills, teach youth how to overcome barriers to learning in order to read and study more effectively, and help the youth to regain their moral compass, build self-respect, and live a happy life. At the time of our visit, thirteen youth were participating in the *Communications Course*, supervised by a team of four trained, volunteer supervisors.

The World Literacy Crusade, located in Compton, California, is a community center that delivers a wide range of life skills and educational services to a variety of people in need, from adults to court-referred youth. The world literacy crusade has been integrating Criminon into its programming since 1992, requiring nearly all clients to take the core Criminon courses in combination with the other anger management, parenting, tutoring, literacy, ethics, and drug rehabilitation programs that are also being offered. A case manager assesses literacy levels prior to referring clients to Criminon, and requires those clients with reading deficits to participate in a basic literacy program prior to starting the Criminon curriculum. The Criminon curriculum is delivered as an after-school program supervised by two instructors in a classroom of about 20 students.

# **BEST PRACTICES IN PRISON REHABILITATION PROGRAMMING**

## **Review of Evaluation Literature on Rehabilitation Programs**

Virtually every prison system in the United States has some form of rehabilitation programming designed to reduce the incidence of both in-prison infractions and post-release recidivism. These programs vary widely in structure, length, and content, and very little empirical research has been conducted to evaluate their effectiveness. For the purpose of this report, we focus this literature review on three program categories that are most closely aligned with the content of the four on-site Criminon course offerings included in this evaluation: (1) programs aimed at developing cognitive-behavioral skills and building moral values and self-esteem, (2) programs focused on the development of life skills; and (3) general correctional program evaluations.

### ***Cognitive-Behavioral Skills***

Within the past two decades, cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) has emerged as one of the most effective treatment approaches aimed at reducing rates of recidivism among the general offender population (Gaes et al., 1999; Gendreau, 1979; Izzo and Ross, 1990; Lipton, 1998; Ross, 1987). While these programs vary widely in their content, structure, and implementation, they all share an emphasis on positive behavior through changes in the way one thinks about his or her life (Dobson and Kharti, 2000). The two most widely used and rigorously evaluated types of CBT programs are Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) and Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R) (Arbuthnot and Gordon, 1988; Cameron and Telfer, 2004; Gaes et al, 1999; Graeber, 2004; Hall et al, 2004; Little, 2001; MacKenzie and Hickman, 1998; Wilkinson, 2005; Wilson, Bouffard and Allen, 2005).

#### *Moral Reconciliation Therapy*

Developed by Gregory Little of the Federal Bureau of Prisons in the early 1980s, Moral Reconciliation Therapy (MRT) is based on Kohlberg's cognitive-developmental theory of moral development. This theory purports that an individual's moral development progresses through six different stages, with very few people ever reaching the highest level of moral reasoning (Wilson, Bouffard, and Allen, 2005). MRT holds that criminal acts are committed by individuals at the lowest levels of moral reasoning – those unable to distinguish between “right” and “wrong” behavior (Wilson, Bouffard, and MacKenzie, 2005). Research illustrating that juvenile delinquents and some adult offenders are at early stages of moral reasoning support Kohlberg's theory (Arbuthnot, and Gordon, 1988). Therefore, in an effort to lower recidivism rates, MRT programs were developed to improve the moral reasoning abilities of offenders. MRT programs incorporate seven elements of treatment: confrontation and assessment of self; assessment of current relationships; reinforcement of positive behavior; identity-formation; enhancement of

self-concept; decreasing hedonistic orientation and increasing delay of gratification; and development of higher stages of moral reasoning (MacKenzie, and Hickman, 1998).

Since the early 1980s MRT has grown in popularity and as of 2000, this approach was being implemented in criminal justice settings in over 40 states and counties in the U.S. (Little, 2001). The increased interest in implementing MRT as a successful rehabilitation program for those involved in the criminal justice system led to a number of efforts to evaluate such programs. In 2000, G.L. Little conducted a meta-analysis of 65 MRT program evaluations that spanned from 1988 to 2000. The evaluations in Little's meta-analysis included programs for adults and juveniles of both genders. The outcome research studies concluded that MRT cuts the one-year recidivism rate in half (Little, 2000). Little further found that in addition to being effective at reducing recidivism, MRT is cost-effective, estimating that \$11.48 (in criminal justice-related costs) was saved for every \$1 spent on MRT treatment (Little, 2001).

#### *Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R)*

Reasoning and Rehabilitation (R&R) programs are similar to MRT programs in that they also rest on the assumption that cognitive and social deficits underlie criminality. Where R&R differs is in its focus on cultivating pro-social attitudes (e.g., self-control, and critical reasoning) rather than developing moral reasoning (Wilson, Bouffard, MacKenzie, 2005). In a recent quantitative review of structured, group-oriented, cognitive-behavioral programs for offenders, Wilson et al. (2005) identified and reviewed seven evaluations of R&R. Wilson's review included studies on R&R published from 1988 to 1996 and primarily focused on the adult, high-risk offender population.<sup>15</sup> While results were mixed across studies, the higher quality evaluations were all found to show positive effects of R&R programs. Overall, these studies found that R&R was effective at reducing recidivism among participants, particularly high-risk offenders.

While there is significant evidence that cognitive-behavioral programs, including R&R and MRT, reduce recidivism, the literature also suggests that certain populations (e.g., property and non-violent offenders, and those under the age of 25) may be understudied (Gaes et al., 1999, Graeber, 2004). Recently, researchers have begun to examine the effectiveness of these programs for more diverse populations (Hall et al., 2004; Cameron and Telfer, 2004). An analysis of the Forever Free program examined the effectiveness of in-prison cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) for substance abusing women (Hall et al., 2004). In addition to substance abuse prevention, the program addressed self-esteem, healthy relationships, parenting skills, risky sexual behavior, and preventative health care. Results indicated that Forever Free participants had lower rates of arrests and convictions than the comparison group both six months (13% vs. 33%, respectively) and one year (33% vs. 44%, respectively) after release (Hall et al, 2004). Early results from another

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<sup>15</sup> Although one study on the juvenile population was included, the results were not statistically significant.

evaluation of a CBT program, the Phoenix Project, also indicate that CBT may be successful at reducing the number of rule violations for maximum-security inmates with mental health conditions and lowering rates of recidivism for graduates of the program who have since left prison (Tucker, Cosio, and Meshreki, 2003).

Despite these positive findings, additional research is needed to examine the effectiveness of CBT programs for specific offender groups. As Cameron and Telfer discovered, insufficient evidence exists assessing the rehabilitative efficacy of CBT for adolescents and female offenders (Cameron and Telfer, 2004).

### ***Life Skills***

“Life skills” programs for criminal populations typically cover a variety of topic areas, including job skills training, personal care, time management budgeting, anger management, and relationship building (Farkas, 2000; Finn, 2000; Orosz, 1996). Because the content of life skills curricula tends to vary greatly from program to program, there are no meta-analyses of life skills programs. Among the limited individual program evaluations of life skills programs that exist, however, results are positive.

One study found prisoners who were taught problem solving, assertiveness, and interpersonal and practical living skills became more assertive, had higher self-esteem, were more empathetic, and had better social skills (Marshall, Turner and Barbaree, 1989, in Gerber and Fritsch, 1993). However, the program’s impact on post-release recidivism was not examined. Another evaluation of a life skills program for female inmates in Michigan that addressed self-esteem, coping resources, problem solving, parenting stress, employability, and well-being found recidivism rates of 10% for program participants versus 25% for non-participants 60 days after release from prison (Schram, and Morash, 2002).

Although more research is necessary and existing research suggests that other programs, such as cognitive-behavioral programs, may be more effective at reducing recidivism, it has been found that life skills programs coupled with probation reduce recidivism and decrease violations more than probation alone (Ross, Fabiano, and Ewles, 1988).

### ***General Correctional Program Evaluations***

While not specific to cognitive-behavioral or life skills programs, a broader research inquiry conducted by Gaes et al. (1999) reviewed a large body of evaluation literature (including meta-analyses) on adult correctional treatment programs. The review included 128 program evaluations spanning a 20-year period from the 1970s to the 1990s. From their review, Gaes et al. developed a set of principles that they believe should be taken into account when designing effective adult correctional treatment programs. The eight principles of effective programs that Gaes et al. identified are summarized here:

**Criminogenic needs: Intervention efforts must be linked to criminogenic characteristics.** This principle recognizes that certain human deficits, such as pro-criminal attitudes, impulsivity, weak socialization, a taste for risk, and weak problem-solving and self-control skills, are directly related to the propensity to commit crime. As such, interventions should be clear about addressing one or more of these deficits (Gaes et al., 1999).

**Multimodal programs: All criminogenic deficits should be treated.** Since an individual may have more than one deficit that is linked to a propensity for crime, all of the deficits must be addressed. The sequencing of treatment for these deficits may be important, though little research exists that examines multimodal treatment combinations or sequencing (Gaes et al., 1999).

**Responsivity: Treatment providers should match client learning styles.** When designing a program, the needs and learning styles of the client should be identified and the program should be tailored to meet those needs (Gaes et al., 1999).

**Risk-Differentiation: Higher-risk clients are more likely to benefit from treatment than are lower-risk clients; the highest level of treatment intensity should be used for the highest risk clients.** Characteristics of clients in a program, such as their risk level, may have only modest effects on outcomes. However, as with the responsivity principle, keeping in mind that higher-risk clients often have the most needs may help treatment providers identify appropriate clients and develop appropriate treatment (Gaes et al., 1999).

**Skills oriented and cognitive-behavioral treatments: Treatment providers should use programs that teach clients skills that allow them to understand and resist antisocial behavior.** The research shows that teaching and modeling social learning can help shape pro-social behavior (Gaes et al., 1999).

**Program implementation and continuity of care.** Echoing the continuum-of-care findings reviewed above, Gaes et al. specify that “treatment initiated in institutions will be more successful if there is continued care in the community” (Gaes et al., 1999: 365). Furthermore, programs held in the community may be more successful than those held in prison because they tend to be less susceptible to the possibility of insufficient funds or lack of commitment from treatment staff, administrators, or support staff (Gaes et al., 1999).

**Dosage: Interventions should be comprehensive and of sufficient duration (sufficient dosage).** While this principle seems self-evident, it is difficult to quantify the appropriate length and timing for interventions because few studies have examined these programmatic qualities (Gaes et al., 1999).

**Researcher involvement.** One meta-analysis showed that when researchers were involved in the program design and development, the study yielded higher effects. With the caveat that researcher involvement can also produce experimenter bias, researchers can also help improve the integrity of a program (Gaes et al., 1999).

## **Limitations to Evaluations of Prison Rehabilitation Programs**

These studies, while informative, should not be interpreted as the final word on what makes for effective correctional programs. Relatively few correctional rehabilitation programs have been rigorously evaluated, making it difficult to generalize what factors contribute to a successful program.

In addition, while some positive outcomes have been associated with program participation in nearly all of the evaluations reviewed herein, those results may be explained by selection bias—that is, those who are willing to participate in the programs are more likely to succeed in the first place (see “readiness to change” literature). Except in the rare case of controlled experiments or other examples of random assignment to the rehabilitation program – which is difficult to achieve in a correctional setting – it is likely that those who are recruited or volunteer to participate in such programs are predisposed to success and therefore may have fewer infractions while in prison and lower recidivism rates.

In summary, the research reviewed suggests that in-prison rehabilitation programs focusing on building cognitive-behavioral skills, including building self-esteem and moral values, as well as programs that address life skills, are effective at reducing recidivism and in-prison violations for the general population. We now turn to a discussion on the extent to which the Criminon program is consistent with the literature on best practices in prison rehabilitation programming.

## **ANALYSIS OF CRIMINON CURRICULUM CONTENT AND THE RESEARCH LITERATURE**

The final section of this report identifies areas of the Criminon curriculum that are consistent with promising practices that have been documented in the literature. In conducting such a comparison, it is important to keep in mind the intended scope of the Criminon program and the main goals it expects to achieve. The four-course Criminon curriculum that is the subject of this process evaluation is not intended to serve as a comprehensive rehabilitation program or to address all the deficits that an individual may have. Rather, Criminon is implemented in such a manner as to complement pre-existing correctional and reentry programming. It is also important to note that the way in which Criminon is implemented can vary greatly depending on the characteristics of the population being targeted and the existing programs that are concurrently offered to Criminon participants.

As stated previously, the specific goals of the Criminon program are:

- Strengthening reading and learning skills;

- Improving the ability to resolve problems verbally without reliance on force or avoidance;
- Building self-respect and confidence;
- Identifying and addressing unhealthy relationships; and
- Increasing awareness of patterns of antisocial conduct and learning how to develop more pro-social behaviors.

These goals are intended to facilitate the overarching objectives of instilling awareness of self-worth, providing the tools necessary to regain self-respect, reducing antisocial behavior, and thereby encouraging non-criminal behavior. It is therefore appropriate to assess the Criminon program in light of other programs that have demonstrated success in rehabilitating prisoners by focusing on building moral values, restoring self-esteem, enhancing cognitive and behavior skills, improving attitudes, and therefore changing behaviors.

### **Cognitive Behavioral Skills Development**

As documented previously, programs based on the cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT) approach emphasize positive individual behavior change through the development or enhancement of moral reasoning skills and pro-social attitudes. The Criminon program is based on the fundamental assumption that the root causes of criminal behavior are lack of self-respect and self-esteem. A positive view of one's self-worth is the foundation that allows individuals to choose to engage in pro-social (i.e., non-criminal) behavior. The Criminon program contains many elements of effective CBT rehabilitative programming. The curriculum places a strong emphasis on positive behavior change through changes in the way one thinks about his or her own behavior and relationships and how those factors influence one's own life and the lives of those around him/her.

*The Way to Happiness*, which is central to the program, is based on a secular moral code intended to help participants better understand the consequences of their actions and to learn to behave in accordance with and internalize the principles and values set out in the 21 tenets. The ultimate purpose of adopting the moral code is to increase the program participant's ability to behave in a pro-social manner, thus avoiding relapse into criminal behavior, substance abusing behavior, and other antisocial behavior patterns. *The Way to Happiness* curriculum incorporates many of the elements of effective CBT programming. Included elements range from taking care of and respecting one's self and one's space (i.e., personal hygiene, preventative healthcare, substance abuse prevention) to taking care of and respecting those around you (parenting skills, developing healthy relationships, not engaging in illegal activities). The seven elements of treatment associated with Moral Reconnection Therapy (MRT) approaches (as discussed previously), are all addressed in the Criminon course curriculum.

The *Recognizing and Overcoming Antisocial Behavior* curriculum emphasizes the importance of pro-social versus antisocial behavior patterns – both on the part of the program participants as well as those they choose to associate with. This emphasis is consistent with CBT approaches to prisoner rehabilitation, particularly those that focus on fostering healthy behavior patterns and relationships; reducing negative behaviors such as criminal activity, substance abuse, and risky sexual behaviors; and limiting contact with those who engage in such antisocial behaviors.

The *Communications Course* curriculum is intended to improve communication skills, thereby increasing participant confidence and self-esteem, use of communication as a tool to resolve conflict, and improving relationships. These elements are consistent with elements of promising CBT programs that focus on enhancing self-esteem, anger management, and non-violent conflict resolution.

### **Life Skills Development**

Life Skills programs for incarcerated populations typically emphasize skill development in a wide variety of areas deemed necessary to live a healthy, productive life once released to the community. Life Skills programs can include everything from job skills development to household or family management (i.e., parenting, budgeting, time management) to anger management, problem solving, and conflict resolution. As discussed previously, many of these skill areas are addressed in *The Way to Happiness* curriculum. The *Learning Skills for Life* curriculum focuses more narrowly on the fundamentals of learning. The Criminon philosophy purports that once program participants are armed with the learning tools developed through the *Learning Skills for Life* course they can study any subject matter. It is a unique approach in that the curriculum is intended to provide program participants with an understanding of how the learning process works and what tools they need to engage in the processes of learning and studying, as opposed to a typical subject matter educational curriculum (i.e., reading, writing, math).

### ***Risk assessment and targeted programming to the individual***

The Criminon program is highly adaptive, as evidenced by its delivery to juveniles, female prisoners, male prisoners, and drug-addicted individuals in the community. Criminon also provides options for oral versus written delivery to address potential issues of illiteracy or language barriers. For example, Criminon was delivered orally to a group of female prisoners in Honduras, with the program custom designed to fit the individual requirements of each student (Barriga, 2005). While the core Criminon materials do not include substantial instruction about administering the Criminon program to those who have a limited ability

to speak, understand, read, and/or write English, the flexibility with which the program is implemented means that it can be adapted based upon literacy level, as evidenced by Criminon's partnership with the World Literacy Crusade.

### ***Substance abuse treatment***

We know from the research literature that prison populations have disproportionately high rates of drug and alcohol addiction, and that far too many leave prison without receiving treatment. In addition, this research shows that in order for potential program participants to be fully engaged, they must be free of substance abuse problems. Criminon addresses drug addiction in a variety of manners. The Criminon program includes an optional course on dealing with substance abuse, entitled *Understanding and Overcoming Addiction*. Criminon also often links with its companion program, Narconon, a drug detox program administered by ABLE International. And in the community, Criminon has partnered with residential drug treatment programs, such as the New Life Center in San Francisco.

### ***Education***

The Criminon course modules teach participants the fundamentals of studying and learning, and *The Way to Happiness* encourages self improvement. While these components of Criminon do not address educational attainment head on, Criminon does partner with educational and vocational entities, such as the World Literacy Crusade, which offers adult education and employment skills, and Project CRAFT, which provides vocational training to juveniles.

### ***Continuity of programming and services from prison to community***

Perhaps the single deficit of the Criminon program as it is currently implemented is that it does not formally address continuity of care from prison to community. The principles taught throughout the Criminon program are intended to permanently change the prisoner and therefore remain with him or her upon release and throughout life. However, research has documented that upon release from prison, individuals are in great need of resources and social and emotional support systems. ABLE International is currently developing an effort that would link its prisoner participants to continued programming in the community. Such an effort would be an important step in reducing barriers to successful transition from prison to the community and ultimately reducing recidivism.

## CONCLUSION

The goal of this report is to outline the logic model underlying the Criminon program, document what is known about in-prison rehabilitation programming efforts that have been associated with successful outcomes, and identify areas where the Criminon program is consistent with promising programs. As discussed previously, this process report is based on formal documentation of the on-site Criminon program (i.e., course materials, instructors manuals, etc.) and site visits to a small sample of Criminon programs throughout the country. In the coming months we will begin the impact evaluation of the Criminon program, which will consist of surveys administered to in-prison Criminon program participants before they begin the program and again after they have completed it, and surveys with a comparison group of prisoners during the same two periods who have not participated in the Criminon program. The survey data will shed light on the needs of inmates, their opinions and attitudes pertaining to concepts that are central to the goals and objectives of the program (e.g., criminal thinking, self-esteem, and substance abuse behaviors), and inmate behavior as measured by infractions and disciplinary measures imposed upon them.

Specific questions that will be addressed in this impact evaluation include the following:

- Is Criminon adequately addressing the needs of inmates?
- What is the impact of Criminon on participants' attitudes about criminal activity?
- What is the impact of Criminon on participants' self-esteem?
- What is the impact of Criminon on participants' antisocial behavior, as measured by infractions and other disciplinary actions taken by corrections staff?

Together with these questions, researcher observations of the Criminon class, focus groups with and surveys of Criminon program participants, and interviews with Criminon instructors, we will explore, in more detail, how the Criminon curriculum is delivered in prison.

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