

Reconceptualising RNR

Why 'Risk-Need-Responsivity'
fails to capture what is needed to
reduce reoffending

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Risk Needs Responsivity?

Risk

Needs

Responsivity

- General
- Specific

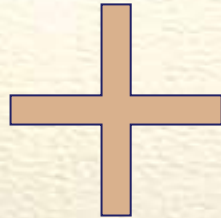
The Principles of Effective Intervention (PEI)

Risk

Needs

Responsivity

- General
- Specific



Respect for the person

Psychological theory

Crime prevention

Human service

Breadth

Assessing strengths

Structured assessment

Professional discretion

Community-based

Staff Practices

Management (includes evaluation)

Principles of Effective Intervention

- *“... these additional principles have either been lost or never really integrated into the RNR model by many correctional administrators, clinicians, and other frontline practitioners ... It would appear that a large part of the criticism about the RNR model may be related to a general failure to appreciate and integrate these additional principles”*

» *Wormith & Zidenberg (2018)*

My Car doesn't work



What is Responsivity??

- Andrews & Bonta (2010)
 - General Responsivity: a therapeutic relationship and the use of a structured CBT intervention
 - Specific Responsivity: adapting interventions to suit specific groups
- Bourgon & Bonta (2014)
 - Therapeutic components are part of specific responsivity, not general responsivity.
- Gannon & Ward (2014)
 - “... treatments should be molded to ensure good fit with the characteristics and learning abilities of offenders” (misses an emphasis on therapeutic relationship and CBT)

What is Responsivity??

- Andrews (2001)
 - Cognitive behavioural
 - Therapeutic relationship
 - Specific responsivity



“Honey can you buy a mandolin?”



Meaning matters: If the same word means different things to different people, we aren't communicating

How RNR fails

- A concentration on 'Risk-Need-Responsivity' means a lack of attention to other (essential) principles.
- The most neglected principle (IMHO) is the Human Services Principle

Human Services Principle

- Staff must be:
 - Genuine
 - Warm
 - Empathic
 - (Some evidence for 'Directive', with certain populations)



Ignoring Human Service

- UK Program accreditation favoured:
 - ...*workbook-centered lectures delivered in grim, windowless prison basements: tiresome bureaucratic exercises that are as meaningless to participants as they are to staff delivering them*
 - *Ward & Maruna (2007)*
-
- Shotgun programs:
 - Throw lots of content at them and hope some of it sticks
- What is important is not what we do **to** offenders, but what we do **with** them
 - *Porporino*



Ignoring Human Service

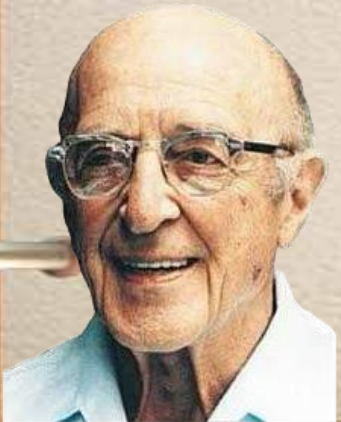
- It was fairly predictable these programs would fail:
 - *This model, which seems to rely heavily on teaching by rote, is not calculated to appeal to offenders who – almost certainly – have not been successful at school*

» Mair (2004)



Ignoring Human Service

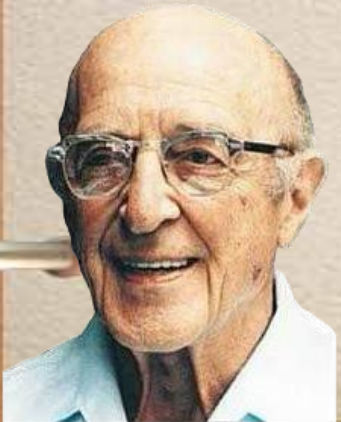
- The general counselling literature was aware of this decades earlier
 - *Unless the counsellor is 'genuine' in relating to the client, his warmth and empathy may have a potentially threatening meaning. To be understood deeply by a potential enemy ... can be deeply threatening, rather than facilitative*
 - » Truax & Carkhuff (1967)



Ignoring Human Service

– *Although **warmth** is of central importance to any trusting relationship, it is even more crucial for the therapeutic relationship, which centres on the inadequacies, the life failures and guilt-ridden feelings and acts of the client*

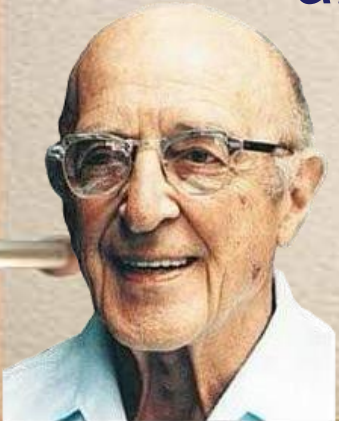
» *Truax & Carkhuff (1967)*



Ignoring Human Service

- *We see events and significant people in his life as they appear to him – not as they ‘objectively are’ but as he experiences them. As we come to know him from his personal vantage point we automatically come to value him and like him*

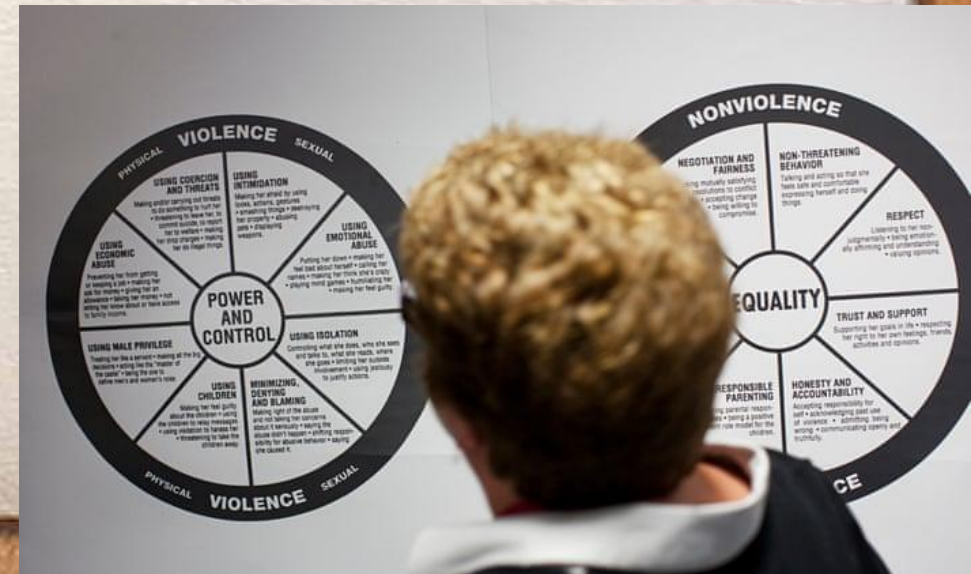
» *Truax & Carkhuff (1967)*



Ignoring Human Service

- The Duluth model for Intimate Partner Violence (IPV)
 - *The goal is not to provide male IPV perpetrators with therapy, but rather to re-educate men on their beliefs regarding IPV, women and gender stereotypes*

- Unsurprisingly, this doesn't work
 - » *Snead et al. (2018)*



Evaluation

- After a mechanic repairs your car, he/she takes it for a test drive, evaluating his/her own work.
- Consequently, most mechanics are successful in their endeavours



Evaluation

- Correctional programs are usually selected and discarded without any evaluation of their efficacy in reducing reoffending
 - “... *the criminal justice system, and more specifically corrections, has historically been rife with panaceaphilia*
» Gendreau et al., 2002

Evaluation

- In the rare instances when interventions are evaluated, the evaluation tends to be of low methodological quality, leading to the inevitable caveat in the evaluation that:
 - “... estimates obtained are based on a simple regression approach and **may not represent causal effects**”
 - » Rahman, Poynton & Wan (2018)

Why not evaluate properly?

- It takes many years (manager won't be around to see the results) →
- Claims it will be unethical to deny service to offenders (even when we have no idea the intervention works!)
- The evaluation needs to start **before** the intervention is delivered
- It is hard work
- “I **know** this works, so why bother?”
- “What if it shows our intervention doesn't work?”



Consequences of non/poor quality evaluation

Programs are selected/cancelled because:

- **Politics** (right wing favours 'getting tough'; left wing favours Restorative Justice, Feminist theory etc.)
- **'Bright and shiny'** – something that can be shown to a Minister (e.g., a nice mural), glossy manuals/posters – so it looks like we are doing something
- **Change for change's sake:** introducing something new looks good on your CV, regardless of whether it works

If we don't (properly) evaluate, in 10 years time, we will be right where we are now

Can we simplify the PEI?



Principles of Effective Intervention (PEI)



Risk



Needs



Theory



Human Services



Program Integrity



Community-based



Evaluation

Risk

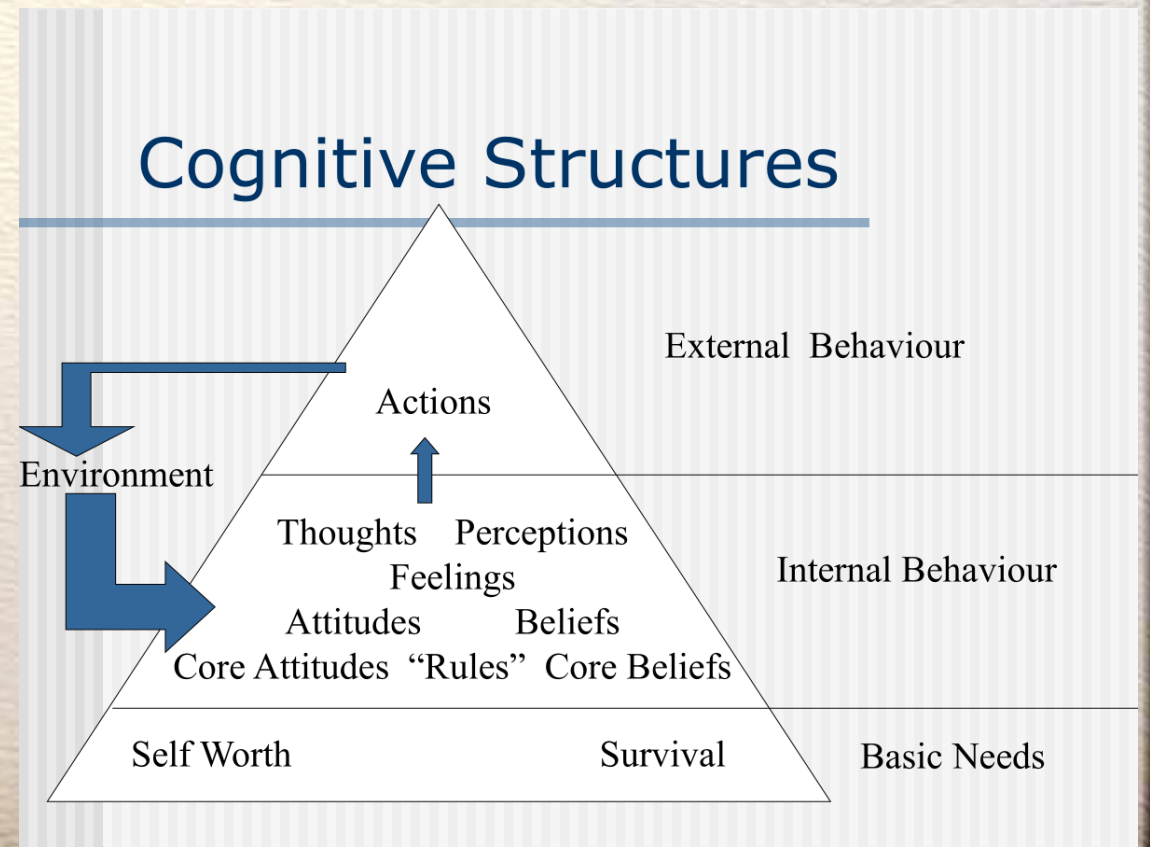
- Higher risk offenders require (on average) more intervention than lower-risk offenders
- Low risk offenders may require little or no intervention
- It's not a matter of completing a certain number of hours of treatment – it's about achieving changes on criminogenic needs
- Risk should be assessed using structured and validated risk assessment instruments – our ability to over-ride this sucks (even when we think we are good at it)

Needs

- Criminogenic needs are the 'things' an offender carries around with him that make him more likely to reoffend. The main ones are
 - Antisocial associates
 - Antisocial cognition
 - Antisocial personality pattern (e.g., psychopathy)
- So we aren't treating "offending" we are treating criminogenic needs

Theory

- Cognitive behavioural
- Family-centred approaches (for juveniles with some form of intact family)



Human Services

- Staff should be:
 - **Genuine:** never lie; mean what you say, say what you mean
 - **Warm:** even (especially) with the most difficult offenders
 - **Empathic:** learn to see the world through their eyes first, and communicate that understanding in a way they can comprehend
 - **Directive:** We (authorised by society – and to that extent only) decide what the process is

Program Integrity

- We won't achieve what we're trying to achieve if we don't actually do what works – **saying we're doing something means nothing if we don't actually do it how it is meant to be done**



Staff need support & training to act in the required manner

Management need to be aware of what staff are actually doing and how this resembles what they are supposed to do

Community-based

- Rehabilitation works better in the community than custody
- Offenders need to practice the skills required for law-abiding behaviour in the community (which is where most reoffending occurs)



Evaluation

- If we don't evaluate our efforts, any good results are likely to be accidental and temporary
- We need to have a long-term plan to discover exactly what works for us, in our setting
- Hubris is no substitute for evidence

A model that can work

- We can't force offenders to change – so don't try to!
 - They'll resist if we try to force them, and know if we are trying to fool them: "Stay away from those psychologists – they fuck with your mind"

A model that can work

- “... develop programmes that don't aim to change offenders but rather aim simply to help them explore – to look at their lives through some new lenses”

» Porporino (2010)



A model that can work

- They won't remember large amounts of content – so don't give them large amounts of content
- They (medium to high risk offenders) generally didn't do well in school – so don't make it like school
- Make it skill-based, so they learn (and remember) the skills

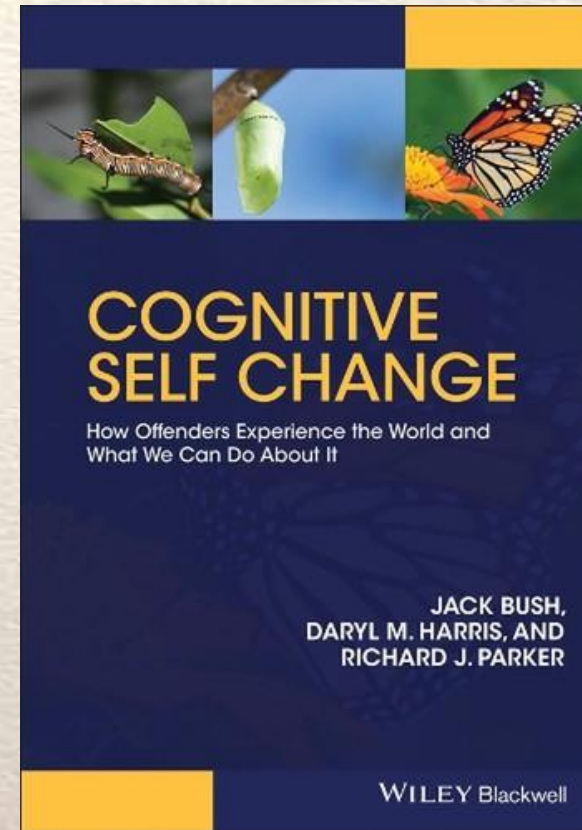
Cognitive Self Change

- “... arguably the most advanced cognitive approach to changing offender behaviour”

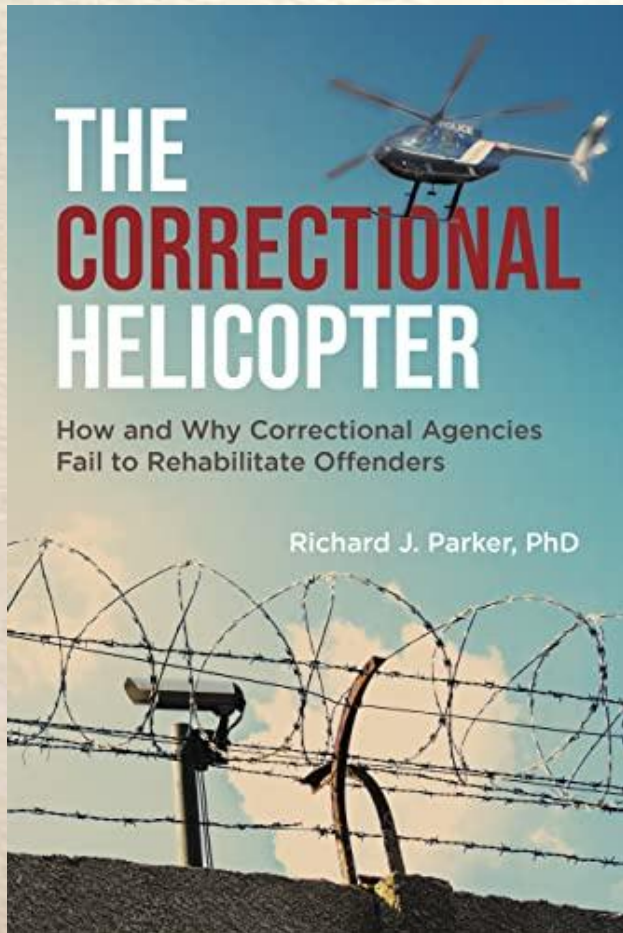
– (Gendreau, in Parker, 2022)

Cognitive Self Change

- Four simple skills:
 - Learn how to notice and report your thinking in the lead up to an offence/rule-breaking situation
 - Learn to identify the thoughts that push you to offend/break rules (“risky thoughts”)
 - Learn to identify alternative thinking that (if you chose to use it) can get you to follow rules, while feeling good about yourself
 - Learn to do it, when it counts



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