

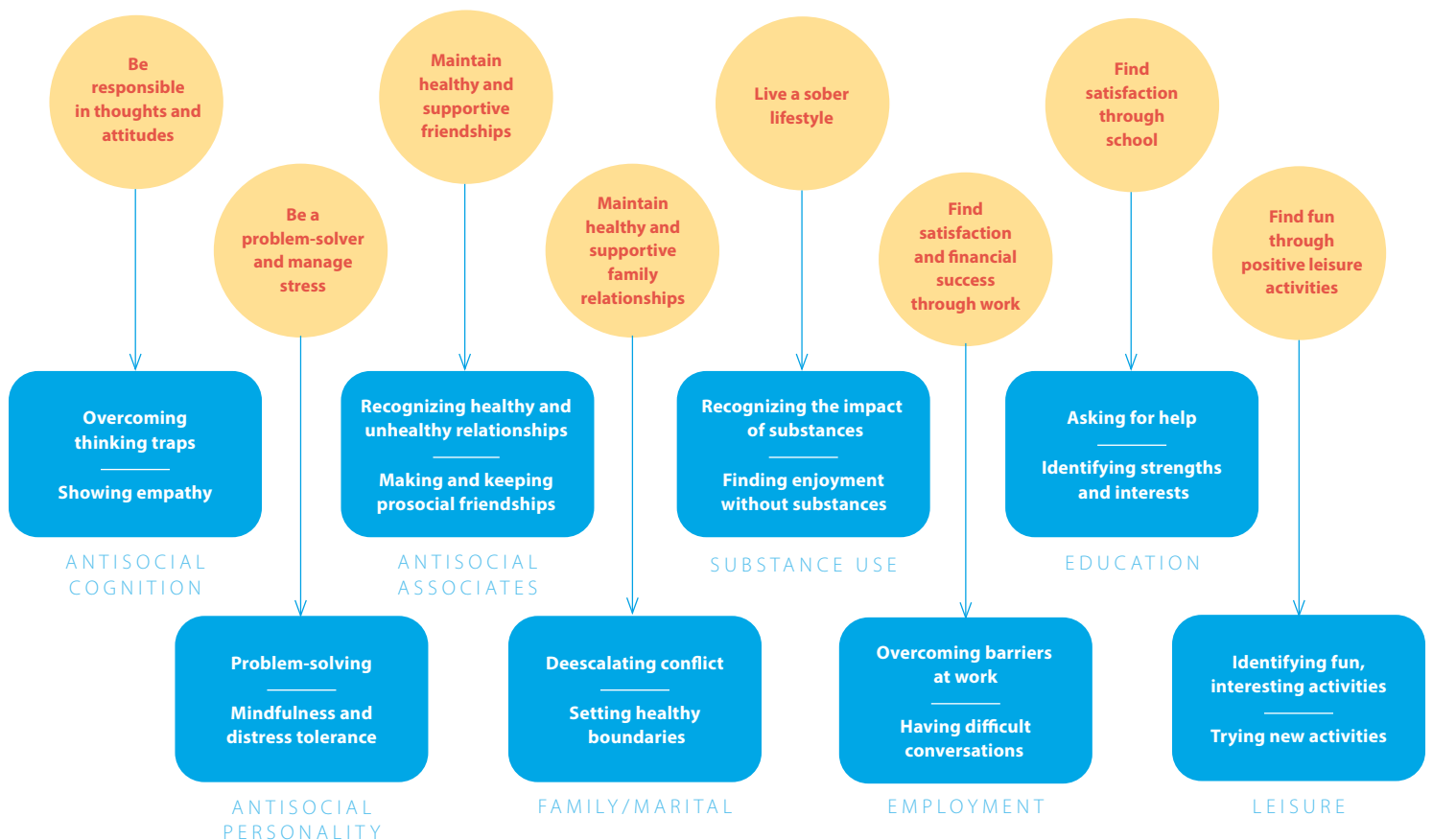
Targeting Skills to Change Behaviors

Behavior change, while challenging, is achievable. Correctional professionals working with individuals under supervision can facilitate the behavior change process by providing opportunities to model, practice, and reinforce new skills, focusing on skills that address criminogenic needs first. Positive changes in criminogenic needs are associated with reductions in criminal offending.

Identifying Skills

Criminogenic needs are changeable attributes of a person or their environment linked to illegal behavior. Correctional professionals can help individuals target skills to positively impact these needs during the supervision or programming process, leading to better outcomes and improvement in key life areas.

KEY LIFE AREAS



SAMPLE SKILLS TO DEVELOP

AND CORRESPONDING CRIMINOGENIC NEEDS

How is Behavior Influenced?

The most effective strategies for acquiring new skills and modifying behavior include the structural components of social learning theory outlined below.

SOCIAL LEARNING THEORY COMPONENT	SAMPLE SKILL DISTRESS TOLERANCE: GROUNDING
<p>MODELING Model the desired skill, showing the person how the skill may be applied.</p> <p>TIP Select skills that are connected to a need that the person is interested in learning. Focus on the most influential criminogenic need.</p>	<p>Example The person comes in overwhelmed. Use a grounding technique to help the person calm down. “Let’s try deep breathing. Inhale, count for four; hold count for four; exhale, count for six.” Repeat a few times. Ask the person to notice how they feel afterward.</p>
<p>TEACHING AND DEMONSTRATION Teach and demonstrate the new skill to the person, breaking the skill down into steps and providing the person an opportunity to observe the skill being used.</p> <p>TIP Consider using role plays that include switching roles.</p>	<p>Example “Today, let’s review some techniques that use your five senses to help you move through distress. Then, we’ll practice with an overwhelming scenario. (Offer a menu of techniques and do a role-play.) Which technique are you most likely to try on your own in the future?”</p>
<p>PRACTICE Practice the skills together, offering feedback and graduating the practice over time.</p> <p>TIP Use examples from the person’s life when practicing. Give homework to try skills in other contexts. Debrief the experience on the next visit. What went well, and what could change?</p>	<p>Example Have the person practice once a day at home. Revisit at future meetings.</p> <p>“Last time, we talked about grounding techniques. (Review.) How did practice go? When did you have moments of overwhelm? What did you do?”</p>
<p>REINFORCEMENT To increase the likelihood that new skills will be repeated, use reinforcers that are meaningful to the person (e.g., verbal praise or tangible benefits).</p> <p>TIP Reward skillfulness with immediacy, outnumbering expressions of disapproval by a ratio of 4:1. Ensure people understand the connection between the reinforcement and their actions.</p>	<p>Example Acknowledge and reinforce when the person uses grounding techniques.</p> <p>“I noticed when the application steps were taking longer than you expected, you took a deep breath, paused, and took a short walk before returning to complete it. That was very skillful. And look, you’re one step closer! That part is behind you now. Great job.”</p>
<p>TRANSFER Encourage people to use new skills in their daily lives, providing feedback and opportunities to finetune skills.</p> <p>TIP Be patient. Learning a new skill takes time and practice.</p>	<p>EXAMPLE Help the person to notice when stressors seem to be on the horizon or when they could have used a grounding technique. Encourage them to use the skill in real-world situations, starting with less overwhelming situations.</p>