Thinking for a Change

Integrated Cognitive Behavior Change Program

Version 3.0
Preface

History and Background

It is more than a decade since *Thinking for A Change* was first designed and introduced as a promising cognitive behavioral intervention for individuals involved with the criminal and juvenile justice systems. Cognitive behavioral programs have evolved over the last fifty years, impacted by a variety of theoreticians and practitioners. Much of the seminal work in cognitive interventions focused on cognitive restructuring aimed at addressing individuals’ thoughts, feelings and attitudes and beliefs. This work is reflected by the contributions of Aaron Beck, Albert Ellis, Stanton Samenow and Samuel Yochelson, Robert Ross and Elizabeth Fabiano, and Jack Bush. Almost at the same time, and parallel to the development of the Cognitive Restructuring interventions, a number of social scientists were also exploring Cognitive Skills training, as a form of psycho-social-educational intervention. Individuals such as Albert Bandura, Donald Meichenbaum, George Spivak and Myrna Shure, Arnold Goldstein and Barry Glick, and Juliana Taymans developed strategies and curricula to teach skills that support pro-social interactions. The work of these individuals set the foundation and benchmarks for many of the programs and cognitive behavioral curricula currently developed and implemented, including those used throughout the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

The First Edition of *Thinking for A Change* was a result of several factors. During the early to late 1990’s, the National Institute of Corrections (NIC) offered a training seminar, *Cognitive Approaches to Changing Offender Behavior*, both at their Academy and as cooperative training throughout the country. The curriculum, developed by a group of experts in cognitive behavioral interventions, presented cognitive restructuring and cognitive skills concepts in a generic, yet practical manner. This was one of NIC’s most highly subscribed seminars. The consistent feedback from seminar participants was that correctional professionals wanted NIC to support the development of an intervention program and that the seminar should focus on preparing individuals for program implementation. Additionally, there was a growing body of research indicating that cognitive behavioral interventions can positively impact high risk offenders. As a result, the authors of *Thinking for a Change* took on the ambitious task of synthesizing the concepts and tools from both cognitive restructuring and cognitive skills paradigms into an integrated intervention.
The Curriculum Format

While the format for this revision of Thinking for a Change is different and improved, the theoretical and philosophical foundation of the program as originally developed, designed, and implemented has not changed. Each component is still presented in a systematic, logical fashion using the standard procedures for cognitive behavioral interventions. The three components of Thinking for a Change are: Cognitive Self Change, Social, and Problem Solving Skills. Cognitive Self Change teaches a concrete process for self-reflection aimed at uncovering antisocial thoughts, feelings, attitudes and beliefs. Social Skills instruction prepares group members to engage in pro-social interactions based on self-understanding and consideration of the impact of their actions on others. Problem Solving Skills integrates the two interventions to provide an explicit step-by-step process to address challenging and stressful real life situations. The program integrates these three types of interventions in the following way:

- Lesson 1 begins the program with an overview and introduction.
- Lessons 2-5 and 11-15 teach Social Skills.
- Lessons 6-10 teach the Cognitive Self Change process.
- Lesson 25 provides a wrap up of the program with the option of extending the program based on the needs of group members. For example, groups may opt to meet for additional sessions to learn new Social Skills that they may negotiate with their Group Facilitators, along with further practice in applying Cognitive Self Change and Problem Solving Skills to newly identified problem situations.

Lesson Format

Lessons follow a similar format. Each lesson begins with a cover sheet for the Group Facilitators to familiarize themselves with the summary and rationale of the lesson. Concepts and definitions are outlined along with the learning objectives for that session. The cover sheet ends with an outline of the major activities of the lesson and a table listing supplements such as charts, handouts, and PowerPoint slides that will be used for that lesson. The lesson is in a two column format, in which the content (the material that must be delivered to the group members) is in the wider left hand column, and the (Group Facilitator) Notes, which provide directions are in the narrower, right hand column of the page.
The following icons outline when to use the lesson supplements:

- use LCD or other projector to introduce and reinforce information.

- sample PowerPoint slide to be used when presenting material

- Present important information from the manual or write what is being discussed on chart paper.

- A prepared handout for group member use

**Curriculum Revision**

**Purpose of Revision Project**

Learning is a continuous process; a curriculum is a living document. The changes we have made are a result of ten years of experiences during which the Authors have expanded their base of knowledge and learning; as well as feedback from Group Facilitators and Trainers of Group Facilitators that provided the curriculum redesign team additional input for revisions.

NIC has supported the production of this revised edition of *Thinking for A Change*. The authors, joined by Renee Bergeron, curriculum developer; Steve Swisher original NIC staff who convened the authors in the first instance; and Michael Guevara NIC project manager comprised the team who redesigned and produced this revision.

One of the goals for this revision is to insure that there is a seamless, interactive synthesis of the three components of *Thinking for A Change*. The newly designed Program Organizer
exemplifies what the authors have accomplished through the modifications. All three components form an interlocking circle of activities and events precipitated by a conflict that result in an “Aha” for the group member.

All of the components are defined as a set of skills, which can readily be detailed by the various steps required to accomplish the skill.

- Cognitive Self Change is now one skill that has three steps.
- There are nine Social Skills included in this revision. We have identified “Listening” (Lesson 2), “Asking Questions” (Lesson 3), “Giving Feedback” (Lesson 4), and “Knowing Your Feelings” (Lesson 5) as core skills group members must have to successfully negotiate the components of Thinking for A Change.
- The flow of the lessons in both Social Skills and Cognitive Self Change provide the foundation upon which Problem Solving Skills successfully mediate stressful situations.
- Problems Solving is now defined as a set of six skills and is delivered in nine lessons.
- The Problem Solving component includes two “review and practice” lessons. Lesson 20 provides group members opportunities to practice the first three skills of Problem Solving. Lesson 24 provides group members a summary and practice opportunity to demonstrate all six skills of Problem Solving.
- The Program Organizer allows group members to initiate discussions about their learning after completing each of the components as well as serve as a summary review after the entire program is completed.

**Delivery**

The curriculum has been redesigned so that individuals in a range of staff roles may facilitate groups. While no special level of education or professional credential is required to deliver the program, there is a credentialing process that is available for those interested in becoming certified Thinking for a Change Group Facilitators. The Thinking for A Change Group Facilitator Certificate is offered and administered by the Center for Credentialing and Education. (See: [http://www.cce-global.org/credentials-offered/t4ccf](http://www.cce-global.org/credentials-offered/t4ccf)).

**Group Facilitator Selection**
The ideal skills for Group Facilitators include: be caring, like to teach, understand group processes and interpersonal interactions, and be able to control a group of offenders, youth at-risk, or problem individuals through non-coercive means. It is strongly recommended that Group Facilitators be trained in the contents and process of *Thinking for a Change*. As such, the Group Facilitators should be included in any management implementation plan for this program. Training should be accomplished within a week-long format using two Master Trainers.

**Group Member Selection**

The group members (offenders, students, and community youth at-risk) should be pre-screened and selected after a brief individual interview. Such a meeting should not take any more than five to ten minutes. It should set the tone of the learning sessions, direct and focus the group member to the usefulness of the program in their own lives, and set expectations that positive participation would greatly enhance their options. This applies to all settings: prison, jail or court ordered group.

**Lessons/Sessions**

For the purposes of this curriculum, *lessons* are defined as a unit of material comprised of activities and concepts that Group Members learn to apply to their daily life situations. Sessions are defined as a unit of time in which groups meet to learn and practice the content taught in each lesson.

*Sessions* are usually an hour in duration, but are a function of the agency or system implementing *Thinking for a Change* and therefore may be longer or shorter in time. As such, a lesson may require more than one session to complete all of the learning and activities. Group Facilitators should take care to deliver each lesson competently and efficiently, but not hesitate to use a second session to complete its content, if necessary.

**Group Size/Frequency**

While the size of the group may be determined by agency policy, it is recommended that groups include between 8-12 members in order to preserve program integrity. More than 12 Group Members, given the activities and learning involved with each lesson, would require more time that is allotted per group session. Less than 8 Group Members would compromise the group process and decrease the effectiveness of the Group Member learning.
Most cognitive behavioral interventions recommend at least two sessions per week. The Thinking for a Change curriculum is best delivered two to three times per week. We would strongly urge that minimally two sessions per week be scheduled. The total number of sessions per week is a function of staff resources, schedules of both Group Members and Group Facilitators, as well as policy direction from agency or jurisdiction executives.

**Group Norms**

The program should also have established group norms and expectations. While these may be based upon the individual institutional or agency policy, the group norms should consider the learning environment and insure the safety and security for all involved. As such the Group Facilitator should consider the following as minimal group norms:

- **Confidentiality:** It is expected that all information shared in the group setting will kept within the group, unless such information indicates possible harm to the individual or others. This norm is subject to agency guidelines for disclosure (which should be shared with group members as applicable).

- **Respect what is shared:** All statements should be accepted as information for learning purposes. As such, individuals should insure that opinions and statements shared are constructive for the purpose of meeting the objectives of the lesson and content of the curriculum.

- **Take turns speaking and sharing:** Individuals need to speak one at a time, listening to what is being said, remain focused on the topic and subject matter, and providing opportunities for others to respond should they disagree with something.

- **No aggression or violence:** Physical or verbal aggression and violence is not permitted and should not be tolerated.

**Group Facilitator Preparation**

Physical plant—ensure the room is well lit, ventilated, and chairs arranged in a comfortable discussion type format (usually tables and chairs in a “u-shaped” format)

Minimally, Group Facilitators should have attended the Thinking for a Change Training for Group Facilitators before delivering the program.

While Group Facilitators have different styles and approaches to content delivery, all must know the content which must be delivered to group members. Group Facilitators should review each
lesson and prepare its contents before each session. This includes practicing modeling displays until they are well rehearsed.

Have all materials duplicated, insure that equipment works, and the physical plant is ready for the group to begin.

Finally, Group Facilitators have the option to extend the curriculum as described in Lesson 25. The decision to extend Thinking for a Change after completion of the program may be based upon such factors as: length of stay of the Group Members within the agency or system; needs of individual Group Members; agency or system mandates; availability of staff and fiscal resources to name but a few.

As you facilitate groups using this revised Thinking for a Change curriculum, the goal is: to effect change in thinking so that behavior is positively impacted. Good Luck as you embark on this most challenging journey.

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Jack Bush, Author                               Steve Swisher, NIC Project Consultant
Michael Guevara, NIC Project Manager           Juliana Taymans, Author

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Summary and Rationale

This critically important lesson sets the tone for the entire program by motivating the group members to participate actively in their own learning and take responsibility for their own life situations. This is accomplished in part by empowering each group member using appropriate positive behavioral “reinforcers.”

The lesson provides each group member with an overview of Thinking for a Change and conveys the fundamental idea of Thinking for a Change: We can take charge of our lives by learning more effective ways of thinking.

Group facilitators demonstrate the three cognitive perspectives of the program: social skills, the skill of cognitive self-change, and problem solving skills.

The group members explore the course outline and the rules. Expectations governing participation are explained.

Concepts and Definitions

1. Thinking is what we say to ourselves inside our head.

2. Internal control is control of our thinking and feelings.

3. Cognitive Self-Change is paying attention to the thoughts and feelings that go on inside of us, recognizing risk and using new thinking to avoid trouble.
4. **Social Skills** are behaviors or abilities we use in situations involving other people.

5. **Problem Solving** is a set of skills to help us make better choices.

**Objectives**

As a result of this lesson, group members will:

1. Describe the 3 key parts of Thinking for a Change.
2. Describe their expectations for Thinking for a Change.
3. Agree to group rules and norms to follow during Thinking for a Change.

**Major Activities**

- **Activity 1**: Introductions
- **Activity 2**: Pocket Analogy
- **Activity 3**: Overview of Course Outcomes
- **Activity 4**: Demonstration – Three Parts of Thinking for a Change
- **Activity 5**: Exploring Actions, Thoughts, and Feelings—Iceberg Analogy
- **Activity 6**: Presentation of the Course Organizer
- **Activity 7**: Wrap Up
Supplements

Charts – Make before facilitating the lesson. (See the supplement section in each lesson for full text of the chart page.)

Denoted in the lesson plan with this symbol:

Handouts – Make copies before the lesson. (See the supplement section of each lesson for camera-ready pages.)

Denoted in lesson plan with this symbol:

Presentation Slides – Make transparencies if a projector is not available. (See the supplement section of each lesson for camera-ready pages.)

Denoted in the lesson plan with this symbol:

C-1-1-Rules and Norms

*H-1-1-Rules and expectations

*H-1-2—Thinking for a Change schedule and outline.

*Note—These handouts are unique to each facility and will need to be developed by the facilitator.

Equipment

- Easel (chart stand)
- Projector to show presentation slides
- Projection screen or suitable surface

Supplies

- Chart paper
- Markers
- Masking tape
- Copies of handouts
### Activity 1: Introductions and Expectations

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<td><strong>Lesson 1</strong> - Conduct a brief (5 – 10 minutes) interview with each of your group members prior to the first session of the program.</td>
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The goal of the interview is to:

- Lay the groundwork for reasonable expectations.

- Discuss ground rules (come to the session ready to participate, have homework completed, and be ready to learn something new).

- Build rapport by getting to know the group member (where he/she is from etc.).
This program is called Thinking for a Change. We’ll talk about what thinking for a change means in a minute. First I want to introduce myself and have my co-facilitator introduce himself/herself. Then, I will introduce each of you to the group.

- Introduce yourself and mention some personal information (such as your job or where you come from).
- Ask the co-facilitator to introduce himself/herself.
- Introduce each
Activity 2: Pocket Analogy

Each of us knows how to do something very well. One skill we use to get what we want is fighting. This is one way some us have learned to survive. I am going to use my fist to represent fighting.

Let’s pretend that you have the ability to pull out your fist, a knife, or a gun from this pocket anytime you want to.

But, what do you have in this pocket? NOTHING! And what do you have in this pocket? NOTHING! And this pocket? NOTHING! And this pocket? NOTHING!

This program will fill up your pockets with tools you can use to do all kinds of things well. Sure, you can pull out your fist anytime member by name to the rest of the group (where they are from—town or state, not institution/facility).

The goal of the “pocket analogy” is to give a feeling of empowerment to the group members. Say something like: “You can succeed at this.” Be sure you have empty pockets that you can turn out as you complete this demonstration.

As you state this, make a fist and pull it out of one of your pockets.

Turn out one of your pockets each time you ask the question and give a response.

Turn your pockets back in as you state this.
you want to, but now you will have choices and will be able to pull out other things to use.

Some of the tools we will give you to put in your pockets are social skills such as listening and asking questions. We will fill your pocket with ways to think about your thinking and use your thinking. For example, tools such as identifying your thoughts or describing how you feel about a particular situation you have to deal with. We will also put some problem solving skills in your pockets.

Your pockets will be filled to the bursting point with skills you can use to improve your chances of getting what you want.

And what happens when you have more choices?

(Example answer: You feel you are in control.)

**Transition**

Let’s take a look at the goals of this course and how we will achieve them.

**Activity 3: Overview of Course Outcomes**

The idea behind the course is that we can...
learn to take charge of our lives and lead more productive and effective lives by taking control over the thoughts and feelings that go on inside of us.

This idea—that thinking connects to the way we feel and act—is the basic idea of the program.

Because thinking controls so much about us, we can learn to control our own lives by learning how to take control of our thinking.

Thinking for a Change has 3 parts: The skill of cognitive self-change, social skills, and problem solving skills.

**Activity 4: Examples—Three Parts to Thinking for a Change**

My co-facilitator and I will demonstrate examples of the three parts of Thinking for a Change.

**Cognitive Self Change**

Our first example is about the skill of

It is essential to plan and practice demonstrations with the co-facilitator prior to the lesson.

Conduct the cognitive self change demonstration.

Keep it brief, light, and
Cognitive Self Change.

Act out a situation in which there is a personal conflict. You both get angry. One walks away angry and the other throws or breaks something (something small, like a pencil) in anger.

Make it realistic.

For example: One facilitator could act angry at the other for not preparing the handouts for today’s session. The other facilitator could act defensive, claiming that he or she had clearly asked another person to prepare the handouts.

**Discuss Example**

This kind of conflict can really happen, can’t it? You saw what each person was saying and doing, right? And from what each person said and did you could tell something about what that person was feeling and thinking, couldn’t
you?

That is the “outside” part, what you could see and hear. But the situation also had an “inside” part. The inside part includes the private thoughts and feelings that other people might guess at but are only really experienced inside our own head.

Now let’s look at the same scene. This time we will add the thinking (what is going on inside our head) that connects to what we are saying and doing.

**Key Concept**

In this program when we want others to be able to see what we are really thinking in a situation, we will hold our fingers to our head and say what we are thinking.

This is what we do in cognitive self-change—observe our thoughts and feelings and recognize how they can lead to trouble.

Paying special attention to the private thoughts and feelings going on inside of us can help us learn to have better control over...
what we do.

**Transition**

You have seen an example of the skill of cognitive self-change.

**Social Skills**

Now let’s look at an example of a social skill. A social skill helps us handle situations that involve other people.

We will demonstrate the social skill of asking for help.

**Conduct the social skill demonstration.**

The facilitator plays the part of a person who wants to ask another person for help.

Example: You want help preparing the handouts for this session. It’s your job but you haven’t enough time to get it done. And (to make matters worse) the person you want to ask for help is impatient and in a bad mood.

Demonstrate a lack of skill in asking for help.

For example, be abrupt, insensitive, and bossy.

Your co-facilitator should act angry and refuse the
Discuss Example

I didn’t get the help, did I? What did I do that hurt my chances of getting help?

(Example answer: Not thinking very carefully at all.)

Give me some ideas of how I can ask for help that might result in a better outcome.

(Example answer: Ask a little more nicely.)

Let’s try that last scene again.

Encourage suggestions. Don’t write them down, but reinforce every appropriate idea.

Conduct the social skills demonstration again. This time ask for help effectively and appropriately.

The co-facilitator should respond positively this time.

Be brief.
**Problem Solving Skills**

The third part of Thinking for a Change is called problem solving. It is something that can help us in tough situations.

Having good problem solving skills can help us think our way out of problems rather than letting our emotions control what we do.

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Note: Do not identify steps of the skill. This is an introduction to the overall Thinking for a Change program.

**Conduct the problem solving demonstration.**

Example: Have the co-facilitator play the part of your boss.

Your boss comes into your work area and demands that you get a project finished in one hour.

(For example: “I want you to prepare the handouts for this session ASAP!”)

You start to explain that you don’t have enough time, but the boss says he/she can’t help it. Then he/she leaves the scene.

You then turn to the group and say, “I have a problem, don’t I?”
Discuss Example

Help me figure out what to do. A big part of problem solving is being able to think of lots of possible actions to take in problem situations. Let’s brainstorm what I can do.

Key Concept

In each session we will show you how to use the steps of each skill by modeling them. This means we will act out an example of exactly how you are supposed to do the steps of the skill.

Then you will try what you see us model by role playing. Role playing means you will work with another group member using a real-life experience you have had to test out using the skill.

Transition

You can learn the skills I have demonstrated as well as all the others included in this
program. These skills connect your thinking with the actions you take.

Let’s spend a couple of minutes talking more about what I mean by this.

**Activity 5: Exploring Actions, Thoughts, and Feelings**

Here is picture of an iceberg. What are some things you know about an iceberg?

*(Example answers: An iceberg is a large ice mountain. The biggest part is under the water, invisible to the eye. This is the part that is dangerous to boats, because they cannot see how wide the iceberg is under the water.)*

**Transition**

In Thinking for a Change, we have an opportunity to look at what we do, both the parts we can see—actions—and the parts we can’t see—thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and beliefs.

Let’s see how the iceberg relates to behavior and the skills we will learn in Thinking for a Change.

During the demonstrations you looked at physical behaviors: actions that everyone can see. For example, talking, yelling, or breaking
a pencil. But we also looked at internal behaviors that are not observable to others. This is the thinking and feelings inside our head.

Actions, the things others can see us doing, are like the tip of an iceberg.

The part going on inside of us that others cannot see are like the part of the iceberg that is under the water. These are our thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and beliefs.

Our behavior then is like an iceberg. Everyone can see part of it, the physical part, but the biggest part (thoughts and feelings, and attitudes, and beliefs) is invisible to everybody but us.

Let’s focus on what goes on “below the surface,” which others cannot see.

We just demonstrated three situations to illustrate the three parts of Thinking for a Change.

When we showed you the first scene about cognitive self-change, we pointed to our head and showed you the thoughts that connected to our actions. That is part of cognitive self-change, learning how to identify the thoughts and feelings that connect to the actions we scene you acted out.
Looking at the picture. What else is hidden that connects to actions?

*(Example answers: Attitudes, beliefs)*

Thoughts, feelings, attitudes, and beliefs are important parts of the actions we take that lie below surface. Others cannot see them. They are the hidden part of the actions we take.

Remember that in these sessions we will point to our head and say what thoughts we are having so others can “see” what we are thinking.

**Transition**

Some of the most important parts of what we do are hidden from others because they are our thoughts and feelings.

We will learn to be more aware of these parts of ourselves.

Controlling our actions gives us the power to choose. It means understanding how we think and what sets our emotions off.

Underlying our thoughts and feelings are our attitudes and beliefs, which we will learn more about in the Cognitive Self-Change part of the
Activity 6: Program Organizer and Rules

Now that we have introduced you to some of the things we will be doing when we meet in our group sessions, I would like to ask you:

- How do you organize your own life? That is, what kind of tools do you have to keep track of what you need to do?
- What things would you like to have to help you better organize your life or affairs?

These are great responses. Yes, we use all sorts of tools and gadgets to organize what we have to do.

In Thinking for a Change, we have an organizer as well. Look at this picture.

Accept any answer that reflects a tool to organize, such as a calendar, notebook, diary, phone, to-do list, etc.

Give the group a minute to study the program organizer.
Can you tell me some of the things or ideas that jump out at you as a result of seeing this program organizer?

All of you have contributed some great ideas and observations about our program organizer.

We shall revisit this program organizer from time to time to explore what new ideas or things you may discover as a result of gaining more experience with Thinking for a Change.

**Transition**

Another thing we will do to help keep us organized and on track is to agree to some rules we will use to help us be successful.

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| Can you tell me some of the things or ideas that jump out at you as a result of seeing this program organizer? | Accept any and all reasonable responses that describe the graphic. Write these down on chart paper or have the co-facilitator write it on note paper to keep for later use. You will be using and building on this chart in future lessons. |
**Group Rules and Norms**

I want to start with a rule that I spoke to each of you about when I met with you individually. I asked all of you to come to this session ready to participate. So, an important norm is “participate actively.” By this I mean genuine, honest participation where you make every effort to truly learn the skills.

A second rule is: “Come to each session prepared,” having your homework completed and ready to learn something new.

Other rules you will need to follow are:

- Attend all sessions
- Be respectful

We must follow these rules for the group to work.

Are there other essential rules that we all need to work as a group?

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*Note—Rules and expectations are unique to each facility and will need to be developed by the facilitator.*
Activity 7: Wrap-up

Thinking for a Change provides you with the opportunity to learn new skills and ways you can have more power and control over the choices you make.

Summarize

Today I have introduced you to each other and to the Thinking for a Change program.

I am excited about working through this program with you. See you next time.
Rules and Norms

- Participate actively
- Come prepared
- Attend all sessions
- Be respectful