



Peers & Relationships

Client Handbook Series
January 2015

Developed by Carleton University, Criminal Justice Decision Making Laboratory
& Ontario Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services
© Ralph C. Serin, Angela DeWolf, & Sarah McQuaid , & the Ontario Ministry of
Community Safety and Correctional Services

This handbook series is public domain and can be copied and used with clients
without cost but also without evidence regarding efficacy.

What Leads to Crime?

There are many things that can lead to criminal behaviours, but there are four big risk areas that are most important when thinking about your own actions.



Now that you have learned about the “Big Four” risk areas, think briefly about what traits or qualities you have that might fit into any of these categories.

Offense Chain

Building an offense chain can help you understand the events that happened before, during, and after you committed a crime and how these events link together.

It means looking back at the people, places, situations, and feelings that may have placed you at risk for committing a crime.

An offense chain means looking at:

Who else was there? (*e.g. friends*)

What did we do? (*e.g. we got into a fight*)

Where were we? (*e.g. we were at the bar*)

When did it happen? (*e.g. during the day or night*)

Why did we do it? (*e.g. we did it for revenge, money problems*)

How did you feel/what did you think before, during, and after? (*e.g. anger, stress, relief, justifications*)

❖ **Who did you get into trouble with?** (*e.g. my best friend Alex*)

❖ **What did you do with them?** (*e.g. we broke into a house*)

❖ **Where were you and when did it happen?** (*e.g. we were downtown around 2:00 am*)

❖ **Why did you do it?** (*e.g. we needed money to score some drugs*)

❖ **How did you feel?** (*e.g. I felt excited*)

Let's Think About Who

Unhealthy relationships are often based on conflict and manipulation. These relationships contribute to negative emotions and unhealthy or criminal behaviours. These negative emotions often lead to stress and more negative emotions. Here are some qualities of negative peer relationships:

Negative Relationship Qualities

- Peers have pro-criminal lifestyles or attitudes
- Peers do not want you to change
- Peers pressure you to do crimes
- Peers make you feel bad about yourself
- Peers are not supportive
- Peers are not there for you when you ask for help
- The relationship contributes to substance use, violence, or other bad habits and criminal behaviours
- The relationship has frequent conflicts
- The relationship is based on manipulation and control
- Conflicts are not resolved
- Feelings are not expressed

**Describe an unhealthy relationship you have experienced.
How has this relationship impacted your criminal behaviours?**

Pro-Social or Criminal?

We often behave like those around us. Even if we are interested in changing our behaviour, having criminal friends or family can make it difficult. Therefore, it is important to take a good look at your current set of friends or family to see if those around you have a negative influence or a positive influence.

Write down the names of 3 people with whom you spend most of your time in the community. Then for each person, answer the following the set of questions. If you answer yes to most of the questions, then they might not be a positive influence in your life.

Name and relationship (e.g. a family member or friend):

- | | |
|---|-----|
| ❖ Does this person have a criminal record? | Y N |
| ❖ Has this person been arrested or charged with a crime in the last year? | Y N |
| ❖ Have you ever been involved in criminal activities with this person? | Y N |
| ❖ Does this person ever make fun of you or not want to hang out with you if you don't want to commit a crime with them? | Y N |

Name and relationship (e.g. a family member or friend):

- | | |
|---|-----|
| ❖ Does this person have a criminal record? | Y N |
| ❖ Has this person been arrested or charged with a crime in the last year? | Y N |
| ❖ Have you ever been involved in criminal activities with this person? | Y N |
| ❖ Does this person ever make fun of you or not want to hang out with you if you don't want to commit a crime with them? | Y N |

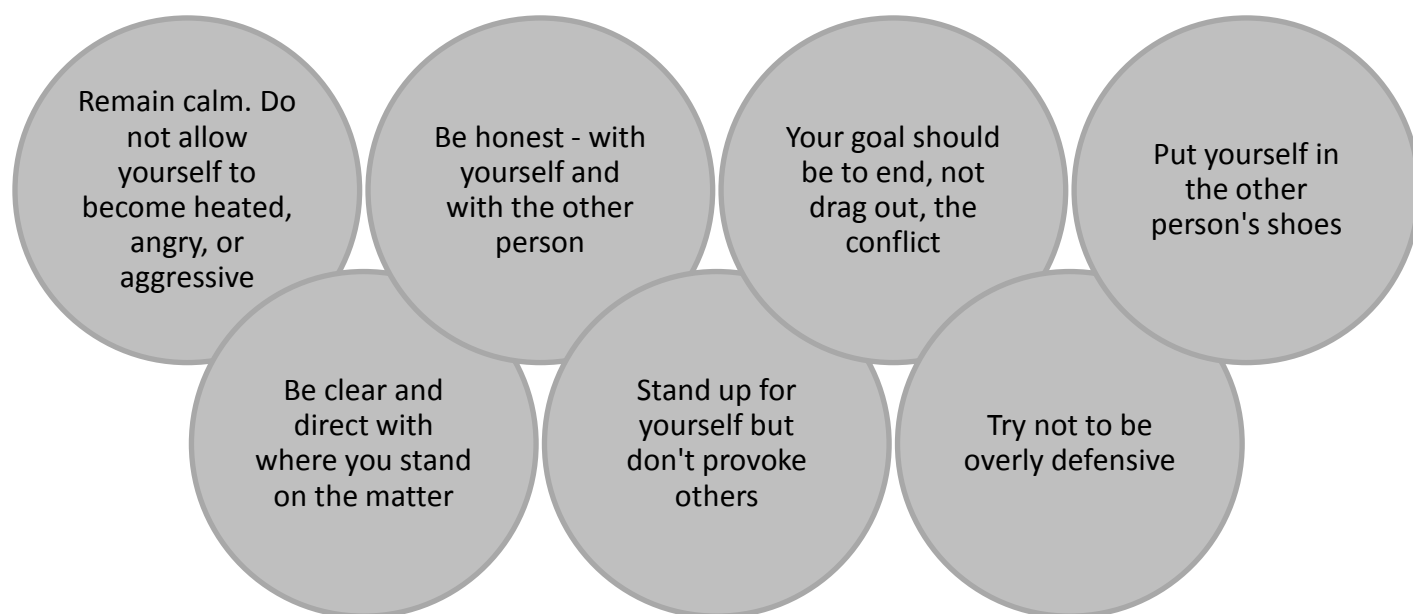
Name and relationship (e.g. a family member or friend):


- | | |
|---|-----|
| ❖ Does this person have a criminal record? | Y N |
| ❖ Has this person been arrested or charged with a crime in the last year? | Y N |
| ❖ Have you ever been involved in criminal activities with this person? | Y N |
| ❖ Does this person ever make fun of you or not want to hang out with you if you don't want to commit a crime with them? | Y N |

Resolving Conflicts

Even friends don't always get along. Some conflict is normal in both good and bad relationships, but it is important to know how to properly manage conflict. Otherwise, leftover feelings may affect you, the relationship, or the other person, in a negative and ongoing way. Learning the skills needed to resolve conflict in a healthy way will make it easier to handle.

Knowing which situations might involve conflict and imagining yourself dealing with it in an appropriate way will help you to prepare for the real thing. Here are examples of some effective responses to conflict:



 Now that you know some good ways to deal with conflict, complete the activity on the next page to practice how you would now handle a situation you have experienced in a past.

Resolving Conflicts

Being prepared for conflicts will help you deal with them and keep your relationships positive and healthy. Practicing effective responses to conflict will help you learn, and feel confident in, how to respond.

Describe a time when you experienced a conflict with one of your peers.

How did you handle the situation then?

How would you handle the same situation now? What has changed?

Setting Limits

If you have criminal friends or family, it is usually a good idea to stop hanging out with them because they can have a negative influence in your life and can put you at risk of getting into trouble. However, sometimes it is not possible to avoid or cut all ties with criminal friends or family. Instead, you can learn to manage criminal friends or family by setting limits, such as when and where you will see them.

When setting limits, it might be helpful to think about:

1. When and where you typically get into trouble and with whom. For instance, you may get into trouble with your best friend while hanging out at a bar late at night (e.g. after midnight).
2. Some pro-social activities that you like to do. For example, playing basketball, working on your car, or going to the movies.

It is also helpful to plan ahead of time what you might say and do. Below are two examples of how you might create healthy boundaries with a family member or a friend and some things you can say to them.

Your brother is a drug dealer:

If your brother deals out of his home, then instead of going to his place where he has drugs, you can meet at a neutral place such as a coffee shop or movie theatre.

Things you can say:

1. You're my brother and I care about you, but I can't be around you if you're using or selling drugs.
2. I can't hang out at your place because it's too risky. How about we go grab a coffee instead.

Your best friend is an active criminal:

If you know that you usually get into trouble with your friend late at night, then you can meet your friend at an organized facility, such as at a sports complex during the day or early evening.

Things you can say:

1. You're my best friend and I still want to hang out with you, but not if it will put me at risk of going back to prison.
2. We can hang out but lets go shoot some hoops instead of going out for drinks.

Setting Limits

Now it's your turn. In the box below, write down when and where you get into trouble and with whom. Also, write down some pro-social activities you can do instead and some things you can say.

When and where do you usually get into trouble? (e.g. late at night when I'm at the bar)

Who are you with? (e.g. friends, family)

What are some pro-social activities that you like to do? (e.g. playing sports, working on my car)

Write down some things you can say:



The next page has some helpful tips on how to develop and maintain healthy relationships.

The Key to Healthy Relationships

Behaviour is often greatly influenced by the relationships you have with others. Allowing negative relationships to take over and control your life will be reflected in your decisions and actions. The same will happen if you develop positive and supportive relationships – your life choice will reflect this positivity and you will be more successful.

The key to having stable, healthy relationships with people who will help you live a non-criminal lifestyle, is to get involved in non-criminal leisure activities (you can build healthy relationships with the people you meet while doing these activities). Here are some examples:



Your turn! What non-criminal activities will you get involved with? What do you hope to gain from doing these activities?

Summary

Here's a quick summary of what you have learned about peers and relationships:

- 1) Our peers and relationships play a big role in our behaviours.
- 2) Making an offense chain can help you identify the thoughts, feelings, and actions that led you to committing a crime.
- 3) Keeping relationships healthy and positive is important for living a non-criminal lifestyle.
- 4) It is important to take a good look at the people with whom you spend most of your time. This can help you determine whether your friends or family have a positive or negative influence in your life.
- 5) All relationships have conflict, but learning how to deal with it appropriately can help keep your relationships healthy and positive.
- 6) Setting limits with criminal friends or family can help you manage these relationships without having to cut all ties.
- 7) The key to developing and maintaining healthy relationships is to participate in non-criminal leisure activities. It is at these places that you can spend time with people who can be a positive force in your life.