Learning Objectives

Upon completion of this unit, students should be able to:

1. Define the term theory.
2. Discuss the three basic theoretical models for rehabilitation in probation and parole.
3. Explain psychoanalytic theory and reality therapy.
4. Explain behavior/learning theory.
5. Explain motivational interviewing.
6. Apply the key points of motivational interviewing.

Written Lecture

This unit will discuss the various theories surrounding probation and parole. There is an immediate tendency upon studying theories to write them off as excuses for criminals; either excuses for getting away with crime or justifying the reasons for these crimes. Some people will see them as valid and completely reasonable, and some will see them as cop outs. This is primarily the case when we are talking about things like syndromes stemming from abuse and insanity defenses. This is not what we are talking about. Rather, we are going to be looking at theories that are more methods for understanding and explaining behaviors, be they valid or not, and no one is required to believe or disbelieve any of them. Just view them with an open mind as humans trying to make sense out of certain behaviors and why people behave the way they do.

Psychoanalytic theory comes from the work of Sigmund Freud. The underlying principle of this theory is that our behavior stems from our unconscious, which is developed over various stages in our life. During these stages, it is theorized that the individual develops three key psychic phenomena: the Id, Ego, and Superego. The Id is classified as developing from birth to almost a year old. This is a pleasure seeking behavior that has nothing to do with morals, or values; it is simply seeking pleasure and avoiding pain. As we begin to age, we develop the Ego. The Ego is a modification of the Id whereby we become more controlled. We still seek the pleasure and find the easiest way to fulfill that pleasure.

The superego is basically more of our conscience. This is where people, without mental defect, seek pleasure, but morality and critical thinking take part in the decision to perform certain actions. Those criminals with antisocial personality disorder, psychopaths, and sociopaths are generally held to have a poorly developed superego. This is generally blamed on a mal developed relationship with parents while growing, although some theorize this behavior is more of an innate imbalance of chemicals or physiological makeup in general. Antisocial personalities do not exhibit remorse or emotional attachment. Rather, they continue to seek pleasure and act based on their needs, or perceived needs, without regard to its effect on people or society. The reverse is also true. There are people who have such a superego that they cannot differentiate doing and...
planning. In this personality, guilt plays a significant part in the decision making process, often leading them to commit crimes or attempt to commit crimes for which they are almost certain they will be caught. There is no doubt that the psyche plays a pivotal role in criminal behavior, and criminals should be treated accordingly. Psychoanalytic treatment is generally not considered a role of the probation and parole officer due to its specialization.

Social work uses some of the underlying theories and principles of psychoanalysis, but practitioners seek to solve problems rather than change the individual personality. The modern social work form is threefold: (1) assessment, (2) planning, and (3) action. Basically, you assess the problem, make a plan of action, and implement that plan. A caseworker must carefully communicate with an individual and monitor their reactions and responses to ensure the method is taking its proper course.

We will also discuss motivational interviewing and its importance in the probation and parole systems. In our unit assignment, you will be performing and critiquing a Motivational interview, so take notes as you move forward with your reading assignments.