

# GANG INTERVENTION PROGRAMMING

## TIPPING POINTS GANG INTERVENTION RESOURCE

### A Users Guide

Everybody has his own **tolerance limit** for the negative experiences connected with his gang membership (negatives vs positives). In this unit, attention is focused on specific triggers or tipping points to desist or reduce their exposure to gang activity. It is designed to increase acceptance of the triggers/ pushes/ pulls to gang desistance and increase confidence in their ability to succeed in making critical changes.

Embedded MI tools and concepts help assess the importance, confidence, and readiness for considering specific changes in their life and lifestyle (the Contemplation Stage of Change).

Specific elements guide consideration of options, and the exploration of possible alternatives, building on internal and external protective factors and pro-social pulls (parenthood, family responsibilities, positive relationships, religious or cultural awakening, job opportunities or responsibilities, decline in substance abuse, etc.).

## UNDERLYING CONCEPTS

- Gang programming ranges from **prevention to intervention to renunciation**. Typical gang programming can include:
  - *prevention* with youth in high risk communities or schools
  - *early intervention* with high risk youth
  - *intervention activities* in the community or school for youth
  - *formal intervention* in correctional, residential, or probation programs for juveniles, emerging adults and adults
  - *group, self-study, or individual (1:1)* programs - residential or correctional for emerging adults or adults
  - *formal desistance* programs in corrections or community setting
  - *formal renunciation* (often associated with legal or correctional factors)
- **Successful gang desistance** can be viewed as a stage-based process similar to the Stages of Change model. In this case, the stages are:
  - triggering
  - contemplation
  - exploration

- exiting
- maintenance

**The Tipping Point Resource** addresses the *triggering, contemplation, and exploration* stages. The attached **Logic Model** clarifies this process.

- The individual decision to desist from gang involvement is reached by a combination of significant **push** and **pull** factors. Individuals reach a crisis or a triggering point - pushed beyond their tolerance limit for the negative experiences resulting from their gang involvement (pushes). This can be one major event, or a combination of factors which add up.
- **Typical PUSH factors include:**
  - personal harm or victimization, including losses, violence, trauma, or abuse
  - harm, threats, or consequences to family or friends
  - gang lifestyle burnout
  - disillusionment with the gang leadership
  - aging out of the gang
  - criminal justice system involvement, issues with law enforcement
  - issues associated with substance use/abuse
- **The Tipping Point Resource** emphasizes these issues and helps clarify internal doubts. Specific curriculum elements guide the process of evaluation of both PUSH and PULL factors, and build toward a turning point or **tipping point**. This process is most effective in a stage-based, CBT, and MI-supported group process of sufficient dosage.
- The decision to desist is enhanced by the development of pull factors: parenthood, family responsibilities, healthy relationships and friendships, religious awakening, improving mental health, decline in substance abuse, gainful employment, etc..
- Programming can emphasize these issues and clarify internal doubts. Specific curriculum elements guide the process of evaluation of both push and pull factors, and build toward a turning point or tipping point. This process is most effective in a stage-based, CBT and MI-supported group process of sufficient dosage.
- For some people, one major life event (a crisis or a religious conversion, for example), is so powerful that it becomes a tipping point to gang desistance. This resource helps confirm and support that decision.

## IMPLEMENTATION

- The *target population* is adult males and emerging adults who have been involved in gang activity or are identified gang members.
- **The Tipping Point Resource** can be provided in a correctional or community setting.
- This CBT and MI-based resource will be most effective if it is provided after basic or core programming. In the **New Freedom** resources, this would include elements from OPEN TO CHANGE (Units G and H, for example).
- **The Tipping Point Resource** is built on prior completion of the **Pushes and Pulls** resource.
- Staff should have some familiarity with **Motivational Interviewing**, at least to the extent that they can use the specific MI tools included in these resources to engage the participants in change talk and change-focused thinking.

## KEY GOALS

- (1) evaluation of the **PUSHES** and **PULLS** relating to their gang activity.
- (2) assessment of negative significant events, areas of victimization, disillusionment, consequences for themselves and their family, criminal justice involvement, and more.
- (3) exploration of the benefits of making specific changes (increasing PULL factors for gang desistance)
- (4) enhanced motivation
- (5) increased recognition and acceptance of the TRIGGERS/ PUSHES/ PULLS to gang desistance
- (6) increased confidence in their ability to succeed in making critical changes
- (7) assessment of whether they have reached their tolerance limit for the negative experiences connected with their gang activity, and this resource is shaped to start the triggering process (the tipping point) for change.
- (8) reduced exposure to external gang activity and involvement risk factors (people, places, things, and situations); improved situational awareness
- (9) desensitization to internal triggers and risk factors
- (10) exploration of protective factors options: safety net, family, cultural elements,

- and relationships
- (11) increased *pull* factors to gang desistance

**Each individual has his own tolerance limit for the negative experiences connected with their gang activity. This resource is shaped to start the triggering process for change.**

## KEY ELEMENTS IN THIS RESOURCE

- Specific attention is paid to the **triggering events (PUSHES and PULLS)** to increase the importance of making key changes and assess the effect of *pushes and pulls* on gang desistance.
- MI assessment of Importance, Confidence, and Readiness to change occurs frequently
- This resource is heavily and intensively focused on:
  - (1) the Triggering and Contemplation stages of gang desistance - specifically on association and experience with criminal and/or gang activity. Assessment of Importance and Confidence - and then Readiness (MI assessment)
  - (2) the tipping point towards action (gang desistance). In the substance abuse stages of change model, this would be similar to the Preparation/Determination stage.
- Multiple resources support the MI change-focused agenda of individual one-on-one sessions. The key question underlying this resource is: **How is this all working out for you?** The resource includes multiple stage of change assessments and emphasizes leverage points.
- Activities are designed to address **engagement, awareness, and acceptance of the importance of making changes**. They address covert resistance, resigned/less-confident precontemplators, reveling precontemplators (to certain aspects of their old life), reluctant precontemplators, rationalizing precontemplators, etc.

## FEATURES

- Assesses the weight of the push factors (the individual-specific costs and consequences of continued gang involvement)
- Assesses the benefits of making specific changes (increasing *pull* factors for gang desistance, for example)

- Assesses their tolerance for continuing the old behaviors (reaching a tipping point)
- Assesses and addresses selected criminogenic behaviors and criminogenic thinking
- Assesses and addresses vulnerability and triggers to antisocial behavior
- Discrepancy mapping (MI activities)
- Decisional balancing (assessing pros and cons, MI)
- Addresses selected remaining confidence issues - identifying needed strategies
- Assesses readiness to move forward in gang desistance

## SUGGESTIONS FOR USE OF THE RESOURCES

- Staff should have an exposure to the concepts in **trauma-informed care**. Gang activity is frequently dangerous. Exposure to certain life experiences (violence, threats, pursuit by law enforcement agencies, incarceration, witnessing violence, living in fear, feeling vulnerable, effects of alcohol or drug use, and the consequences of their behavior on family or friends) can all be the source of trauma. The impact of these experiences is likely to have created at least some degree of post-traumatic stress in your group members. We encourage program staff to be aware that this condition already exists. *The materials in this unit are not shaped to aggravate the symptoms, but these factors may be exactly the impetus they need to actively consider making some changes.*

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- It may be helpful to distinguish between those who have a sudden desire to quit based on a **single powerful event**, and those for whom the **pushes have added up** to a tipping point. In many cases, desistance is gradual, rather than a sudden break with the gang. The resource provides the opportunity for MI to help move them forward through the change process.
- There are levels of complexity, and many of them may need to go through the “bargaining” stage of the grieving process. Staff may help participants explore issues of

grief and loss (of the old life and lifestyle, and certain old friends) in individual sessions.

- Individual (1:1) sessions can be a helpful part of this resource. A set of additional elements is provided after selected lesson, and at the end of this resource. They are shaped for use in confidential individual (1:1) sessions, and may actually not be appropriate for use with all of the group members. Staff are encouraged to use the included MI tools (such as the Importance, Confidence, or Readiness rulers) in the lesson elements - and the *PUSH* elements - in the 1:1 sessions.

Specific resources in the lessons listed below:

- The WDYT (*What Do **You** Think?*) are 1-2 page elements shaped to engage them, generally as a way to begin the session with a focus on one of the *push* topics. We recommend that the group generally spend 5-8 minutes on these elements, thus allowing time to address the other core lesson elements.
- The Worksheets include key summary elements, including an action plan. They range from 1-4 pages, and most document the achievement of specific outcomes or behavioral objectives.
- The core lesson elements are generally 5-9 pages in length, and should be allocated the greater part of the time in the program sessions.
- Program session times may be increased, or additional sessions scheduled, as necessary.

## TIPPING POINTS GANG INTERVENTION RESOURCE

Everybody has his own **tolerance limit** for the negative experiences connected with his gang membership (negatives vs positives). In this unit, attention is focused on specific triggers or tipping points to desist or reduce their exposure to gang activity. It is designed to increase acceptance of the triggers/ pushes/ pulls to gang desistance and increase confidence in their ability to succeed in making critical changes.

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*This unit provides ten sessions.*

|                 |  |   |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Session<br>TPT1 | WDYT 35 - When is enough?                      | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores the costs of the gang life.  |
|                 | TP25 - Self-Management                         | Comprehensive resource guides planning for the change process toward a more healthy life and lifestyle (MI tools included). <i>(May be extended to 2 hours)</i>   |
|                 |  |   |
| Session<br>TPT2 | WDYT 48 - The drama                            | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores drama and anxiety in gang life.  |
|                 | TP31- What are you carrying around with you?   | We may have been carrying many burdens around with us. This resource looks at the various issues and guides the evaluation of 33 specific types of issues or common life problems. Each is evaluated in terms of relevance, degree to which it could be under their control, importance, and priority. Selected critical issues are prioritized and action plans steps are developed. |
|                 | Worksheet - What <u>really</u> matters to you? | This worksheet helps clarify values, goals, and priorities going forward.   |
|                 | WDYT 15 - Bully                                | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores power and control in gang life.  |
|                 |  |   |
| Session<br>TPT3 | WDYT 57 - Why did I turn out like this?        | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores the concept of making positive life changes.   |

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|              | GG17 - Your story  | Directly addresses the factors that contributed to the participants' gang involvement, and helps clarify specific costs and consequences. Asks them to consider specific choices and options available to them if they decide to change.   |
|              | Worksheet - Burnout Checklist  | Burnout happens when we are becoming overwhelmed. Years of stress, drama, conflicting demands, violence, being continually angry or afraid and other aspects of gang life can add up. This resource explores the feelings and symptoms of burning out.   |
|              | WDYT 38 - Danger   | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores the risks of following certain kinds of gang leaders.   |
|              | <b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b><br>We suggest the session build on their responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● GG17 - Your story</li> <li>● Worksheet - Burnout Checklist</li> </ul>  |  |
|              |  |  |
| Session TPT4 | WDYT 61 - Some people just want to fight   | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores issues and consequences of associating with certain types of people.  |
|              | TP22 - Starting to make things better  | Valuable resource in self-discovery and self-healing. Useful resource in developing positive focus to continuing changes - fits recovery, relapse prevention, community, correctional, parole, and probation settings.   |
|              | WDYT 47 - If I knew then   | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores the wisdom that can be gained from certain kinds of life experience - and the chance to act on that going forward.  |
|              |  |  |
| Session TPT5 | WDYT 44 - Getting away   | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores the role protective factors and <i>pulls</i> can play in moving forward successfully.   |
|              | GG25 - In the life (then and now)  | Three-part resource provides checklists and guides the examination of their reasons for joining a gang in the first place, their reasons for staying as an active member of the gang as long as they did, and their reasons for leaving (the <i>pushes and pulls</i> contributing to reaching their tolerance limit). <i>Gang desistance resource.</i> |
|              | Worksheet - Turning points   | Self-evaluation resource. MI resources and other tools guide assessment of importance and confidence in making immediate and short-term changes. Explores areas of difficulty, commitment, and the status of their safety net/protective factors. Includes action plan for next steps. <i>Key resource.</i>  |
|              | <b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b><br>We suggest the session build on their responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● GG25 - In the life (then and now)</li> <li>● Worksheet - Turning points</li> <li>● Worksheet - Starting over (included with the above resource set)</li> </ul> |  |

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| Session<br>TPT6 | WDYT 56 - Respect?   | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores respect and self-respect in helping evaluate choices they may be making right now.  |
|                 | TP26 Making a choice   | Comprehensive checklist and action plan. Addresses 42 key areas in health, mental health and self-management in transition. Action plan includes MI tools for self-assessment.   |
|                 | Worksheet - How do you think you have changed?   | Brief assessment of importance, confidence, and readiness for continuing life and lifestyle changes.   |
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| Session<br>TPT7 | WDYT 52 - Living the life  | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores reduced threats, violence, and trauma - to themselves and those they care about - as consequences of positive choices they can make going forward.  |
|                 | TP28 Obstacles to changing (gang version)  | Participants use comprehensive checklists to identify major obstacles in their gang desistance process, including specific fears and areas needing increased confidence going forward.   |
|                 | Worksheet - Goal setting activity (gang desistance)                                    | Brief change assessment with MI importance, confidence and readiness rules, assessment of obstacles and next steps.  |
|                 | WDYT 22 - Starting over  | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores pros and cons of physically relocating to a different area going forward.   |
|                 | <b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b><br>We suggest the session build on their responses to: |  |
|                 |  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TP28 Obstacles to changing (gang version)</li> <li>• Worksheet - Goal setting activity (gang desistance)</li> </ul>   |
|                 |  |  |
| Session<br>TPT8 | WDYT 46 - I'm too old for this stuff   | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores the cumulative effect of negative experiences.  |
|                 | GG23 Patterns of desisting   | People begin the process of gang desistance in different ways. Some are affected by a major event, and immediately begin the process of separating themselves, while others built up to a tipping point. This resource helps participants examine the <i>pushes</i> toward desistance and reinforce their decision to step away. |
|                 | Worksheet - How do you classify yourself now?  | Key gang desistance resource. Asks participants to assess the status of their current commitment and interaction with gang members. Identifies unresolved issues.  |
|                 | WDYT 45 - Mom  | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores positive connections and <i>pulls</i> .   |

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|               | <p><b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b></p> <p>We suggest the session build on their responses to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● GG23 Patterns of desisting</li> <li>● Worksheet - How do you classify yourself now?</li> </ul>   |  |
|               |   |  |
| Session TPT9  | WDYT 10 - Drugs   | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Brief topical resource explores the role drugs played in his gang activity, and possible options going forward.   |
|               | TP32 At this point (decision summary)   | This resource provides a major review of critical elements in the change process: key decisions they have made, - including their thinking supporting those decisions, analysis and commitment to dealing successfully with key specific external risk factors, analysis and commitment to dealing with key specific internal risk factors and early warning signs, analysis and commitment to dealing with additional substances, dependencies and/or behaviors, identification of specific coping skills, and detailed analysis/scoring of confidence in dealing with more than 25 specific issues. <i>Situational confidence questionnaire - SCQ.</i> |
|               | Worksheet - Then and now #1   | Explores old risk and protective factors, and new protective factors options.  |
|               | <p><b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b></p> <p>We suggest the session build on their responses to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● TP32 At this point (decision summary) - <i>key resource</i></li> <li>● Worksheet - Then and now #1</li> </ul>                                    |  |
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| Session TPT10 | WDYT 40 - Different directions  | <i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores options for enhancing protective factors going forward.   |
|               | Worksheet- Situational Confidence (gang)  | This is a comprehensive self-assessment of their confidence in handling a range of specific high risk situations, including gangs, relationships, criminal activity, conflicts, symptoms and feelings. It also includes a short assessment of internal coping strategies.  |
|               | Worksheet - Action plan going forward   | Action plan also includes basic MI assessment (Importance, Confidence, and Readiness Rulers), as well as brief assessment of obstacles and support.  |
|               | <p><b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b></p> <p>We suggest the session build on their responses to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Worksheet- Situational Confidence (gang) - <i>key resource</i></li> <li>● Worksheet - Action plan going forward - <i>key resource</i></li> </ul> |  |
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| <b>GANG DESISTANCE RESOURCES - FOR INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSIONS ONLY</b> |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|   | Worksheet - Gradual desistance scales  | Short worksheet (5 scales) for self-assessment and discussion.   |
|   | Worksheet - Where do you want to be?   | MI tool: decision matrix to help assess costs and benefits of options (keeping things the same, or making some changes).   |
|   | Worksheet - How do you classify yourself now?  | Worksheet with 22 items relating to the current status of their involvement or association with gang activity. Includes self-assessment and next steps.  |
|   | Worksheet - Goal setting activity (gang desistance)  | Brief change assessment with MI importance, confidence and readiness rules, assessment of obstacles and next steps.  |
|   | Worksheet - Feelings (how are you doing?) #2   | Important review of their current status. Note that similar feelings checkups are included in the other units in this gang intervention/desistance series. Identifying feelings is a basic step in emotion regulation, helpful with both emerging adults and adults. |
|   | Worksheet - When you realized you had been let down or betrayed (feelings - and gang desistance) | Identifies and explores 26 different feelings (and similar issues) and the role they may be playing in their decision process.   |
|   | Worksheet - What if you don't change?  | Asks: If you continue to handle things the way you have been, what might that lead to going forward (5, 10, 15 years)?   |
|   | Worksheet - Where am I? What do I want to be?  | Asks participant to assess their current status and future aspirations on 16 key areas, and then establish priorities going forward.   |

*The cost for this supplemental 1:1 resource set is \$240.*