

GANG INTERVENTION PROGRAMMING

DESISTANCE RESOURCE SET

A Users Guide

Successful gang desistance typically includes stages including exploration, exiting, and then maintenance. This process can be strengthened through an approach which assesses risk and protective factors, strengthens motivation, removes barriers, and practices specific strategies and skills. It helps individuals to consider external identification as a gang member internal identification as a gang member, and replacement of the gang for social support.

This resource builds on the concept of anticipatory socialization. It helps develop plans to gain and maintain adult responsibilities, and re-envision his personal identity in a new life and lifestyle.

This resource provides multiple worksheets and tools to assist this process. *Specifically for 1:1 use in gang desistance with adults and emerging adults who are in the process of making such changes.*

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)
- 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 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..

- **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 DESISTANCE Resource Set** addresses the **exiting** stage. It also includes resources which assist in the development of emotion regulation and executive functioning.
- The exiting stage has specific challenges, compounded by insecurity and lack of confidence, fear of the unknown, loneliness, substance abuse cravings, after-effects of trauma, grief and loss issues relating to the old life and lifestyle, and uncomfortable feelings including anxiety, depression and anger.
- The attached **Logic Model** clarifies this process.

STAGES OF GANG DESISTANCE SUPPORTED BY THIS RESOURCE

- Exiting stage of gang desistance, similar to the determination Stage of Change (AODA)

- Action Planning
- 1:1 evaluation
- Significant amount of strategy and skill practice (avoid-escape-refuse, problem solving, decision making, refusal skills, etc.) - relating to gang desistance

- Anticipatory socialization; develop plans to gain and maintain adult responsibilities, and re- envision his personal identity..

- Defining turning points (desistance)

- Assessing their current tolerance for continuing the old patterns of behaviors

- Burning bridges to elements of the past and making specific commitments (drawing a line)

- Practice in key emotion regulation and executive functioning strategies.

- Exploring strategies for getting away from gang activity. Practicing against specific external risk factors (people, places, things, and situations).

- Practicing against specific internal risk factors and triggers.

- Action planning to build protective factors and safety nets; increasing and strengthening relationships, cultural connections, and family support (as possible).

- Identifying and documenting specific relapse prevention steps (gang involvement - external and internal risk factors).



Setting yourself up for maintenance stage (and aftercare if needed)

- Maintenance stage includes gang avoidance, substance use/abuse recovery, and relapse prevention

KEY GOALS

While each program participant has individual concerns and issues, some of the most common are listed below. The program goal - and the goal of individual sessions - can be to explore these issues and assist the participant in defining their priorities and begin formulating a plan for success. Note that many of these issues are included in various elements in the resources. The participant and the program staff may collaborate in establishing priorities and focus on the areas below.

GOAL: Enhance the pull factors
parenthood

family responsibilities
religious or cultural awakening
job responsibilities
relationship/significant other
moving to a better or safer location
family who have left the gang life
building a safer neighborhood
decline in substance abuse

GOAL: Identify specific needs and issues to address in individual sessions (1:1)

reduced embeddedness with the gang
develop a new social network
de-identification as a gang member
avoiding crime, even drug sales
exploring their old family relationship within the gang and replacing it
forced separation from the gang
exploring the actual cost of leaving
rebuilding of family relationships - or building new ones outside the gang
grieving the losses associated with desistance
safety - going forward
affiliations (outside of the gang)
self-esteem
living independently (even having your own place)
legitimate employment/income
pursuing further education/skills
assessing their strengths, assets, protective factors
assess issues they have had in emotion regulation (identify weak areas)
identify, practice, and develop mastery in avoid-escape refuse strategies and skills
through practice, increase their confidence in their problem solving skills
through practice, increase their confidence in their impulse control skills
through practice, increase their confidence in other executive functioning skills
(goal setting, action planning, priority setting)

GOAL: Anticipatory socialization.

Develop plans to gain and maintain adult responsibilities, and re-envision his personal identity..

GOAL: Build a Gang Desistance plan

- I Remove barriers to making changes (avoidance or desistance)
 - evaluate and develop plans if there are threats of violence from within the gang
 - evaluate and practice strategies for avoidance, getting away and low profiling
 - practice refusal skills and excuses
 - address external identification as a gang member
 - address internal identification as a gang member
 - address mental health/substance issues going forward
 - explore dependence on the gang for social support - and better options going forward
 - evaluate issues within multi-generational gang family

- 2 Help the client gain and maintain adult responsibilities
 - re-envision his personal identity
 - set and achieve goals (executive functioning skills and strategies, as above)
 - explore access to skills, education or training opportunities
 - support the client's efforts to change
 - strengthen family bonds

IMPLEMENTATION

- The *target population* is adult males and emerging adults who have been involved in gang activity or are identified gang members.
- The nature of the gang desistance process requires confidentiality and a trusting relationship designed to reassure the participant of their safety going forward. For this purpose, individual session (1:1) are almost always appropriate.
- **The Desistance Resource** can be provided in a correctional or community setting, but logical safety, security, and confidentiality issues should guide where, and when it is used..
- 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.
- 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.

- Staff may anticipate some degree of regression (backsliding), stress, internal conflict, and anger as part of the exiting process. Transition periods can be times when people become more aware of the actual consequences and challenges that await them, and threaten their commitment to life and lifestyle changes. Some staff may choose to use active listening skills, or help the participant explore ways to use their new executive functioning and problem solving skills (setting priorities, clarifying values and goals, developing concrete action plans, etc.).
- The resource provides opportunities to remind participants to use emotion regulation strategies and skills. It may help to check in on elements of their lifestyle which support emotional balance (physical and mental health issues, diet, exercise, medication compliance, treatment adherence).

Feelings which may surface at this time include anger (directed at others, or at themselves), anxiety, depression, boredom, loneliness, and confusion. Any of these can be risk factors for relapse, or return to prior behaviors if not handled successfully.

The resources which follow include;

- “What do you think?” These shorter elements address specific issues and are a very flexible resource.
- Issue-focused worksheets. These are longer elements which help focus on specific issues, goals, and action plans, and which also serve as models for executive functioning.
- Selected short worksheets. These include helpful Motivational Interviewing (MI) tools. They provide critical summaries and can measure progress in their gang desistance process.
- Longer workbooks which address key gang desistance topics.

We encourage staff to become familiar with these resources before working with individual participants. This familiarity will help select the most appropriate elements.

GANG DESISTANCE RESOURCES

What do you think? - GANG DESISTANCE RESOURCES

	WDYT 59 - How much is too much?	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores the combination of push factors contributing to th decision to desist from gang activity.
	WDYT 17 - Drift away	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores options and issues in drifting away from gang activity.
	WDYT 54 - Re-start	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores their current thinking about desistance from gang activity.
	WDYT 26 - The decision	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores the risks posed by feeling lonely when you have separated yourself from much of your of social life.
	WDYT 49 - The exit trap	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores specific areas of risk that may be experienced by individuals in the process of gang exiting or desistance.
	WDYT 53 - Exploration	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores options to explore when getting away from the old street life.
	WDYT 24 - Career choice	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores the idea of education or job training.
	WDYT 25 - Grandmother's wishes	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores the risks associated with relationships with family members and past gang involvement.
	WDYT 20 - Where do I start?	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores fatherhood issues for people who have been gang-involved.

Key issue-focused worksheets - GANG DESISTANCE RESOURCES

	Worksheet - How do you classify yourself now? (gang desistance)	Worksheet with 22 items relating to the current status of their involvement or association with gang activity. Includes self-assessment and next steps.
	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 - Positive <i>Pulls</i> into a new life (gang desistance)	Explores 17 areas which may be having a current positive influence in making life and lifestyle changes.

Worksheet - Temptation weekly self-monitoring log	Records exposure to specific temptations and risk factors over one week. Identifies key elements: when, where, who, feelings, an thinking. Explores common patters of action, feelings, thinking, and outcomes. Assesses use of avoidance or escape strategies. Explores use of protective elements and patterns.
Worksheet - Situational Confidence - Symptoms and Feelings Checklist	Identifying feelings is a basic step in emotion regulation, helpful with both emerging adults and adults. This checklist asks participants to assess their current degree of confidence in dealing with a range of uncomfortable feelings and symptoms.
Worksheet - What's the difference	What's the difference between changing your <u>life</u> and a <u>lifestyle</u> change? Guides the participant in identifying the most critical values and personal priorities going forward (include Likert-type scales)..
Worksheet - A high risk time	Addresses a common time for relapse - or return to other old behaviors - after programming or release from custody. Highlights risks that may occur in the first three months.
Worksheet- The basic recipe (for meeting new people and making friends)	Comprehensive guidance for people who have begin separating themselves from higher risk people and social activities. Suggestions and planning tools included.
Worksheet - Feelings (how are you doing?) #4	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.

Worksheets - GANG DESISTANCE RESOURCES shorter elements for Motivational Interviewing (MI) self-assessment, documentation, goal setting, and planning	
Worksheet - Gradual desistance scales	Short worksheet (5 scales) for self-assessment and discussion.
Worksheet - Goal setting activity (gang desistance)	Brief change assessment with MI importance, confidence and readiness rules, assessment of obstacles and next steps.
Worksheet - How do you think you have changed?	Brief MI assessment of importance, confidence, and readiness for continuing life and lifestyle changes.
Worksheet - Goal setting activity (gang desistance)	Brief change assessment with MI importance, confidence and readiness rules, assessment of obstacles and next steps.
Worksheet - Then and now #1	Evaluates prior high risk and protective factors, and guides consideration of a range of new protective factors.
Worksheet - Then and now #2 (gang desistance)	Gang desistance tool. Assesses current state of gang involvement.

Worksheet - Family issues #1	Explores family support or resistance to personal changes.
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 have things worked in the past?	Brief review of wisdom or strengths developed from past experiences.
Worksheet - I lose sleep over this	Addresses anxiety issues, assesses those which might be within their capacity to control or manage. Develops specific action plan.
Worksheet- What do you want to be?	Brief worksheet addresses key issues in identity formation and establishing personal boundaries
Worksheet- Challenges	Identifies common challenges to successfully moving on: problems with anger, lapse vs relapse, euphoric recall, bargaining, loneliness, exposure to specific external high risks, anniversaries or celebrations.
Worksheet - Starting over from scratch	Short worksheet provides an opportunity to explore issues and feelings which may occur in times of major transition.
Worksheet - A quick check	Brief worksheet asks participants to identify two high risk places and types of people they will need to avoid - or escape from - going forward, and assess their confidence using these two strategies.
FFT - Vulnerability	Explores significant areas of vulnerability experienced by people in the process of making life and lifestyle transition.. Suggests options to consider in this process.
FFT Setting yourself up #3	Short topical resource explores risky thinking about returning to hang out with old high risk friends (and similar situations).
Worksheet - New activities worksheet	Explores options for structured recreational, less-structure recreation, part-time jobs, and volunteering.
Worksheet - Confidence pre/post	Provides multiple tools for self-assessment: Importance and confidence rulers (MI-tools), difficulty/success rulers, temptation, commitment, safety net/protective factors,
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.
Worksheet - Exploring your future (things to look forward to).	Explores values, interests, and options for more positive future. Includes priority setting element.
FFT- Walk and talk (gang desistance)	Short topical resource suggests a critical problem escape technique for people who may find themselves around former gang or criminal associates.

Workbooks - GANG DESISTANCE RESOURCES			sessions
GG18	A stressful lifestyle	Exposure to violence, participation in violence, gang-related violence, and other elements of a stressful lifestyle have consequences. This resource examines these factors and encourages the consideration of making new choices. It is one element in exploration of violence as a form of victimization and a <i>push</i> factor in gang desistance. It can also set up a later exploration of post-traumatic consequences.	1
RH41/ GG19	The pack	People, by nature, have some of the characteristics of pack animals. Like them, we tend to gravitate to groups for safety, security, belongingness, and even for a sense of identity. In the process of gang desistance, former gang members should begin the process of developing an alternative pack or group, building on family and members of their safety net, for example. This resource helps them build this new option to reduce the risk of returning to the previous comfort zone of street life.	1
RH42/ GG20	Building your gang desistance plan	Addresses 20 key steps in building a personal gang desistance plan. Serves as an introductory checklist and also as a review.	1
RH43/ GG22	When a slip	“When a slip becomes a fall.” Workbook addresses the risks from the Abstinence Violation effect - a minor failure leads to giving up (a complete relapse). This version also addresses slips in the gang desistance process.	1
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 build up to a tipping point. This workbook helps participants examine the pushes toward desistance and reinforce their decision to step away.	1
TP28/ GG24	Obstacles to changing	Participants use comprehensive checklists to identify major obstacles in their gang desistance process, including specific fears and areas needing increased confidence going forward.	1
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 “pushes” and “pulls” contributing to reaching their tolerance limit).	1
GG26	Assessing 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. This SCQ resource also includes a short assessment of internal coping strategies. <i>Gang desistance resource.</i>	1

GG27	Making decisions (gang desistance)	Addresses specific topics in going forward for people who are in the process of desisting from gang involvement.. Explores issues like staying busy, setting boundaries, goal setting, selecting safe people to spend more time with, how you carry yourself, becoming low profile, and dealing with requests to become involved in their activities. .	I
TP24	The crab in the pot	People who are trying to change their life may sometimes find themselves being sabotaged or dragged backwards by their peers. Their efforts at recovery, self-improvement, or other positive changes may be targeted by others. This resource provide support for positive self-talk and positive change.	I
TP16/ Pre12 m/f	I can do this (strengths)	Helps participants identify key internal strengths and protective factors, and guides them to make better choices about how they will live their life in the future.	I
TP20	Burning your bridges	Key resource for the preparation/determination stage of change. Guides the selection of specific changes and the development of a concrete action plan to reduce risk.	I
TP32/ RH49	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>	I.