

# GANG INTERVENTION PROGRAMMING

## THE PUSHES AND PULLS RESOURCE

### A Users Guide

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 for the negative experiences resulting from their gang involvement (pushes). This can be one major event, or a combination of factors which add up.

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.

**The PUSHES and PULLS Resource** offers you a wealth of group and one-on-one materials that explore these two critical elements of the journey to gang desistance. This document is a user's guide to how to use them.

## 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 PUSHES and PULLS Resource** addresses the *triggering, contemplation, and*

*exploration* stages. The attached **Logic Model** clarifies this process.

- **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 PUSHES and PULLS 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.

## IMPLEMENTATION

- The *target population* is adult males and emerging adults who have been involved in gang activity or are identified gang members.
- **The PUSHES and PULLS 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).
- 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

**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 the **Pre-Contemplation** stage of change - specifically on their association and experience with criminal and/or gang activity.
- 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.
- Certain elements pay specific attention to the issues of **emerging adults**.

## 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.*

- The **PUSH** elements are examined in the form of checklists. As such, they are shaped to identify and summarize the specific factors which can push individuals from continuing a dysfunctional lifestyle.

The leader may need to *guide the discussion to the weight that these factors have played in their lives.* These are likely to be somewhat different for each individual in the group (thus specific factors may weigh more heavily on each group member). The leader can make this part of the session more interactive by supporting - or probing - questions shaped to emphasize the cumulative effect of each of the **PUSH** areas.

The point of the total set of seven (7) **PUSH** areas is to help participants assess how heavily the impact of all of these experiences might have influenced their decision to explore stepping away from that lifestyle. This is a key area for individual (1:1) sessions.

- One element clarifies the difference 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.

The focus of the section on those who made a sudden decision to quit is to help lock that in. We revisit that in several of the push **PUSH** type elements in the resource, including anything trauma -related (victimization of self or loved ones, costs/consequences, etc.).

In addition, with this population, the process may be gradual, sort of a moving target or a continuum. Ideally, they would end up out of gang activity and the lifestyle.

- There are levels of complexity, and many of them may actually be going through the *bargaining* stage of the grieving process.
- 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.
- **Individual (1:1) sessions are an important part of this resource.** A set of additional elements is provided after most lessons. 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.
- Two of the resources are noted in the **Table of Contents on the next page** as touching on experiences which may have some degree of post-traumatic stress. It may help if the staff consider the members of the group and adjust their sessions accordingly.

## PUSHES AND PULLS GANG INTERVENTION RESOURCE

A critical step in gang desistance begins with the evaluation of the **PUSHES and PULLS** relating to their gang activity. This includes assessment of negative significant events, areas of victimization, disillusionment, consequences for themselves and their family, criminal justice involvement, and more. Each individual has his own tolerance limit for the negative experiences connected with their gang activity, and this resource is shaped to start the triggering process for change.

This resource includes exploration of the benefits of making specific changes (increasing **PULL** factors for gang desistance, for example), and is supported by embedded MI tools, multiple checklists, and assessment elements.

### Pre-programming: *individual (1:1) session*

Session P1	Worksheet - Survival	Self-assessment. Encouragement of resilience and internal strengths going forward.
	GG18 - The Lifestyle	Workbook. 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 can be a <i>push</i> factor in gang desistance. It can also set up later exploration of post-traumatic consequences.
	WDYT 7 - Reasons	<i>What do you think?</i> Short topical resource explores reasons for getting involved in the life.
	We suggest the session build on their responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● GG18 - The Lifestyle - <i>key resource</i></li> </ul>	
Session P2	Worksheet - Figuring it out	Explores selected issues in identity - who we think we are. Helpful with both emerging adults and adults who are assessing their previous life and lifestyle.
	<b>Push</b> Evaluation 1 - Personal experiences.	Assesses 25 issues and guides self-assessment of effects, and painful or uncomfortable feelings. Explores how these issues have added up, and their current thinking.
	WDYT 3 - Unsafe	<i>What do you think?</i> Short topical resource explores safety issues for people involved in gang activity.
	FFT Paid the price?	Illustrates and examines the impact of life choices.
	<b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b> We suggest the session build on their responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Push</b> Evaluation 1 - Personal experiences.</li> </ul>	
Session P3	FFT - My children saw a lot of things	Illustrates and examines the impact of life choices on family members.

	<b>Push</b> Evaluation 2 - Effect on family and friends.	Assesses 12 issues and guides self-assessment of effects, and painful or uncomfortable feelings. Explores how these issues have added up, and their current thinking.
	WDYT 1 - We've got your back	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores misplaced trust.
	WDYT 43 - Getting out of the swamp	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores the revolving door lifestyle of criminal activity and incarceration.
	Worksheet - Feelings (how are you doing?) #1	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.
	<b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b> We suggest the session build on their responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Push</b> Evaluation 2 - Effect on family and friends. (<i>Opportunity to explore empathy</i>)</li> </ul>	
Session P4	WDYT 32 - Looking for trouble	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores drama and conflict in the lifestyle.
	<b>Push</b> Evaluation 3 - Burnout of gang lifestyle	Assesses 33 issues and guides self-assessment of effects, and painful or uncomfortable feelings. Explores how these issues have added up, and their current thinking.
	WDYT 18 - Loyalty	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores loyalty and misplaced trust.
	WDYT 50 - Best of friends	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource illustrates and explores the <i>pull</i> protective factor - the opposite of the <i>push</i> element.
	Acceptance activity - Self-compassion	Brief self-compassion (affirmation) activity. A tool adapted from Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT).
	<b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b> We suggest the session build on their responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Push</b> Evaluation 3 - Burnout of gang lifestyle</li> </ul>	
Session P5	WDYT 55 - They disappeared	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource illustrates and explores disillusionment.
	<b>Push</b> Evaluation 4 - Disillusionment	Assesses 30 issues and guides self-assessment of effects, and painful or uncomfortable feelings. Explores how these issues have added up, and their current thinking.
	WDYT 60 - If I knew then what I know now	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource illustrates and explores disillusionment - and starting to make choices about their own life.

	WDYT 30 - Trust	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource illustrates and explores misplaced trust and disillusionment.
	<b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b> We suggest the session build on their responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Push</b> Evaluation 4 - Disillusionment</li> </ul>	
Session P6	WDYT 51 - Living large?	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource illustrates and explores quality of life issues.
	<b>Push</b> Evaluation 5 - Grew out of the gang	Assesses 26 issues and guides self-assessment of effects, and painful or uncomfortable feelings. Explores how these issues have added up, and their current thinking.
	Worksheet TB - How can certain life experiences knock you off track?	Explores the role certain life experience may have played in their current circumstances. ( <i>Trauma informed</i> )
	FFT Gladiators	Short topical resource illustrates and explores reckless behavior. (EA resource)
	<b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b> We suggest the session build on their responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Push</b> Evaluation 5 - Grew out of the gang</li> <li>● Worksheet TB - How can certain life experiences knock you off track? (<i>Trauma informed</i>)</li> </ul>	
Session P7	WDYT 5 - Brothers	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores conflict, jealousy, drama, and distrust the gang.
	<b>Push</b> Evaluation 6 - Criminal justice system involvement	Assesses 20 issues and guides self-assessment of effects, and painful or uncomfortable feelings. Explores how these issues have added up, and their current thinking.
	Worksheet TK - Your own exposure	Brief explanation and examination of how traumatic events can have continuing effect. ( <i>Trauma informed</i> )
	FFT I knew they were watching me	Short topical resource illustrates and examines issues relating to being on the radar of law enforcement.
	<b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b> We suggest the session build on their responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Push</b> Evaluation 6 - Criminal justice system involvement</li> <li>● Worksheet TK - Your own exposure (<i>Trauma informed</i>)</li> </ul>	
Session P8	WDYT 58 - Leadership and betrayal #1	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores manipulation and betrayal.
	WDYT 59 - Leadership and betrayal #2 (the dangerous leader)	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores manipulation and control.



	<b>Push:</b> The cops had it in for me	Short topical resource explores high profile exposure as a gang member.
	<b>Push</b> Evaluation 7 - Police harassment/pressure	Assesses 15 issues and guides self-assessment of effects, and painful or uncomfortable feelings. Explores how these issues have added up, and their current thinking.
	<b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b> We suggest the session build on their responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● WDYT 58 and 59 - Leadership and betrayal</li> <li>● <b>Push</b> Evaluation 7 - Police harassment/pressure</li> </ul>	
Session P9	Worksheet - Positive <i>Pulls</i> into a new life	Explores 17 areas which may be having a current positive influence in making life and lifestyle changes.
	<b>Push</b> Evaluation 8 - Substance abuse and addictions (gang-related)	Assesses 18 issues and guides self-assessment of effects, and painful or uncomfortable feelings. Explores how these issues have added up, and their current thinking.
	WDYT 59 - How much is too much?	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores how the various <i>push</i> elements add up.
	<b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b> We suggest the session build on their responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Push</b> Evaluation 8 - Substance abuse and addictions (gang-related)</li> <li>● Worksheet - Positive <i>Pulls</i> into a new life</li> </ul>	
Session P10	WDYT 31 - The Street Code	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores ways to reduce visibility and exposure going forward.
	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). Key gang desistance summary element.
	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.
	<b>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</b> We suggest the session build on their responses to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● GG25 - In the life (then and now) - <i>key resource</i></li> <li>● Worksheet - Action plan going forward - <i>key resource</i></li> </ul>	

See the next page for one-on-one resources.

## GANG DESISTANCE RESOURCES FOR INDIVIDUAL (1:) SESSIONS

*These options may be selected for use with individuals at the appropriate time.*

	GG23 - Patterns of Desisting	<b>This is a KEY gang desistance resource.</b> It may not be appropriate for all members in the group, so should be used selectively. The staff member can use all - or parts - as appropriate. <i>This is a core element in the Tipping Point resource.</i>
	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.
	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.