

GANG INTERVENTION PROGRAMMING

TRANSITIONS - GANG INTERVENTION AND DESISTANCE RESOURCE

A Users Guide

This resource explores options for a better - alternative - future life and lifestyle. It helps build specific plans for successful community reintegration, reducing their exposure to the highest risk factors, using effective coping skills, and enhancing their connection to positive protective factors.

This resource additionally builds on the concept of ***anticipatory socialization***. It helps develop plans to gain and maintain adult responsibilities, and re-envision his personal identity.

- *This resource builds on the **Pushes and Pulls Resource** and the **Tipping Points Unit**.*
- *It complements the **Returning Home** community reintegration resources (RA, RD, RD, RF, and also RG - community aftercare).*
- *This resource is helpful in the area of “gang desistance” and “gang avoidance.*

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 TRANSITIONS Resource** addresses the *triggering, contemplation, and exploration* stages. The attached **Logic Model** clarifies this process.
- This resource-supported approach addresses the **exploration** and **exiting** stages.
- The exploration and exiting stages have 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.

STAGES OF GANG DESISTANCE SUPPORTED BY THIS RESOURCE

● Exploration stage of gang desistance, similar to the Preparation Stage of Change (AODA).

- Minimizing exposure to external gang activity and involvement risk factors (people, places, things, and situations); situational awareness
- Desensitizing to internal triggers and risk factors
- Exploring protective factors options; exploring safety net, family issues, cultural elements, and relationships
- Increasing the pull factors to gang desistance



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

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

- Anticipatory socialization. Begin to 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.

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

GOAL: Build a Gang Desistance plan

- 1 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 Transitions Resource** is provided in a correctional setting, prior to returning to the community.
- 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 ELEMENTS IN THIS RESOURCE

- 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 change 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.).

Session elements

- 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.
- Individual (1:1) sessions can be very helpful. A set of additional elements is provided after selected. 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 during the 1:1 sessions.

TRANSITIONS - GANG INTERVENTION AND DESISTANCE RESOURCE

10-session unit model

Session T1	WDYT 37 - What's next	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Brief topical resource addresses a couple of key issues in avoiding recidivism.
	RH38 - Making adjustments	Designed to assist people in the transition process to evaluate how that are handling common thoughts and emotions. Identifies issues ranging from fears and worries to anger, guilt, sadness, and community and home adjustment.
	Worksheet - Your timeline	Brief worksheet provides a template for setting priorities and making plans for the transition - a key executive functioning model.
Session T2	WDYT 28 - Just go and hang out	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores possible consequences for choosing to return to high risk people, places, and situations.
	TP27.1 - Lifestyle changes (making them happen)	This resource addresses the issue of “anticipatory socialization.” It explores and guides the process of adjusting from street life to a new life and lifestyle that is based on confirming their critical goals and dreams for a different future. For individuals looking to engage in a more pro-social lifestyle, it helps in understanding and making some adaptation to common social and work norms and expectations (removing a few rough edges to find and keep a job and adapt to a less eventful family and community life.
	Worksheet - Risk factors assessment	Self-assessment: participants evaluate 11 key risk factors areas on Likert-type scales. “How serious is this risk factor to your life or recovery?” And, “How confident are you that you can handle this issue successfully going forward.”
	WDYT 23 - Step away	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical gang desistance resource.
Session T3	FFT Your <u>other</u> options	Worksheet provides a list of 30 positive activities and options for consideration, and asks them to identify three for possible action.
	TP27.2 - Lifestyle changes (making them happen)	This resource addresses the issue of “anticipatory socialization.” It explores and guides the process of adjusting from street life to a new life and lifestyle that is based on confirming their critical goals and dreams for a different future. For individuals looking to engage in a more pro-social lifestyle, it helps in understanding and making some adaptation to common social and work norms and expectations (removing a few rough edges to find and keep a job and adapt to a less eventful family and community life.
	Worksheet - Living in transition and stress	Short identity clarification and formation worksheet identifies areas of positive self-talk, values, and attributes as well as dreams and hopes for self-expression going forward. EA

	Worksheet - Anticipation of change	Worksheet briefly explores stress or worry associated with change and provides a basic model which can be tailored to specific issues for each participant.
	<p>INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION</p> <p>We suggest the consideration of the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worksheet - How do you think you have changed? ● Worksheet - Then and now #2 (gang desistance resource) ● Worksheet - Where am I? Where do I want to be? (priority setting) 	
Session T4	WDYT 36 - Slip away	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores the concept of creating a low profile and staying off the gang radar going forward.
	Workbook - Protective Measures	Explores a range of protective measures and strategies, develops an activities calendar for a model week. Identifies specific times and places of highest risk - so they can be avoided. Assesses confidence in specific strategies going forward. Models a set of executive functioning and self-management techniques.
	WDYT 27- Relationships	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores returning home to an old relationship which may pose entanglements with the old gang.
Session T5	WDYT 14 - The job	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short introductory resource explores basic issues and attitudes in keeping a job.
	RH44 - In the long run (keeping a job)	Getting a job is a critical problem considering current local job markets and individual past issues. But it is also critical to keep the job once you have it. In many situations one person out of three will lose that job within 90 days. This resource addresses common problems and offers practical solutions.
	Worksheet - Building blocks	Explores previous job experiences - both good and bad. Identifies specific helpful learning experiences which may be helpful going forward.
	Worksheet - Buffers	Buffers can be both external (specific people, places, things, and situational protective factors) and internal. This is an idea-starter check sheet which provides nearly 50 different buffers.

Session T6	WDYT12 - Ghost	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short introductory resource provides a problem avoidance model for maintaining a low profile going forward.
	RH12 - Safety Nets	Develops concrete plan to increase specific protective factors, including people, places, things, and positive situations. Guides clients to identify and address early warning signs that they are at increasing risk to fall back into old (negative) behavior patterns.
	Worksheet - Your future	Addresses the critical issue of avoiding old high risk people, including dealing with loneliness and making new friendships going forward.
	FFT- Walk and talk	Short topical resource suggests a critical problem escape technique for people who may find themselves around former gang or criminal associates.
Session T7	WDYT 13 - Obstacles	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores specific traps or obstacles other may create during the transition and going forward.
	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 - What do you need - to have a better life?	Provides a 44-item checklist to help focus and prioritize going forward. Models executive functioning analysis and planning techniques. Participants identify their "top 3" and identify first steps.
	INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION We suggest the consideration of the following: ● Worksheet - Gang desistance scales	
Session T8	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.
	RH33 - Handling problems	This is a 27-question confidence assessment resource relating to transition. It includes the identification of the three (3) most critical issues, steps they can begin to take now, and an assessment of confidence going forward.
	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.

Session T9	WDYT 41 - Things change, people change	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores positive roles and opportunities they may consider going forward.
	Worksheet - Risk factors/ protective factors	This CBT-based workbook addresses past problem areas, specific triggers (people, places, things, situations, feelings, and thoughts). It analyzes the progressing from trigger events through faulty thinking and actions, and guides the replacement with functional thinking and a subset of three effective coping skill options. It concludes with a specific action plan and MI-based confidence assessment.
	Worksheet - Feelings (How are you doing) #3	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.
	INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION We suggest the consideration of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worksheet - Risk factors/protective factors (above) ● Worksheet - How do you classify yourself? (gang desistance resource) 	
Session T10	WDYT 23 - Step away	<i>What do <u>you</u> think?</i> Short topical resource explores
	Worksheet - Making the adjustment	Brief activity addresses issues of adjustment and uncertainty experienced in the initial days of transition.
	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. <i>Also included in the Tipping Points Resource.</i>
	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.
	INDIVIDUAL (1:1) SESSION We suggest the consideration of the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● All of the elements in Session #10 ● Worksheet - Starting over from scratch) ● GG21 (Workbook) - Overcoming obstacles to changing (gang desistance resource, also provided in Tipping Points resource) 	
GANG DESISTANCE RESOURCES - FOR INDIVIDUAL (1:) SESSIONS ONLY <i>These options may be selected for use with individuals at the appropriate time.</i>		

GG23 - Patterns of Desisting	This is a KEY gang desistance resource. 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>
Worksheet - Gradual desistance scales	Short worksheet (5 scales) for self-assessment and discussion.
Worksheet - How do you think you have changed?	Brief assessment of importance, confidence, and readiness for continuing life and lifestyle 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 - 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 tool. Assesses current state of gang involvement.
Worksheet - Family issues #1	Explores family support or resistance to personal changes.
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 - 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.

The cost for this set of 1:1 resources is \$345.