

Chapter 2 Security Is Number One

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The first lesson one learns when becoming involved in restorative justice ministry is that security is priority number one. What are we dealing with as we look at security issues? Inmates make weapons for protection out of fear, for power over others, to hurt other inmates, out of anger and aggression, attacking staff and even self-mutilation/suicide. This is the real world of prison, jail and juvenile life. One inmate on death row cut a volunteer's wrist to the bone because he heard from another inmate that if he injured a volunteer, they would retry him and delay his execution date. Lesson learned: Do not believe all you hear from inmates. The book *Games Criminals Play*,¹ is a must read.

As an American Correctional Association professional member of fifteen years, I have attended the Correctional Congress meeting in recent years. I was amazed to see the many industries corrections supports: protective helmets, batons, bulletproof vests, pepper spray devices, guns, razor wire, special tamper-proof tables, toilets, bulletproof plexiglass products, and drug testing equipment, just to name a few. The restorative justice ministry world now becomes even more real to me at these congresses.

In God we trust, all others we search

(A) Security Issues

Christian volunteers empathize too much with inmates, and can be a soft touch for a sad story or teary eye. Thus they open themselves up to be a "mule" for an inmate.

If you think inmates are not creative, you better think again! Bars of soap in a sock knocked out a guard, as two juvenile youth escaped after church one Sunday. They bolted down Harry Hines Boulevard so fast, a bloodhound could not catch them. I could fill up the rest of this book with attempted escapes and successful escapes like on Ellis I Death Row in Huntsville several Thanksgivings ago.

¹Allen, Bud. *Games Criminals Play*. Sacramento: Rae John Publishers, 1999

Why are religious volunteers security risks? Inmates, Christians or not, will use sacred things to run their con games or contraband through. At the old Denton County Jail (1978), Sheriff Kenneth George allowed me to go upstairs to minister to the inmates on Saturday mornings. Back then I was with the Gideons distributing Bibles, gospel tracts and Bible study lessons. He led me to a side office, opened up a metal filing cabinet, and handed me a big black leather "Holy Bible." He said, "What do you think?" "Well, Sheriff, it's a great looking Bible." He said, "Open it up." I did; carved in the center was the silhouette of a .38 caliber gun. Boy, whoever preached from this Bible sure got his listener's attention. I guess it was the old "snub-nose sermon." We were not through; as he put the Bible back, he brought out a toothbrush with a razor blade melted into the end. He said, "This one will tickle your belly button for sure." As if that was not enough, he reached down one more time for an object that was a metal shoe arch, a real shank, sharpened to a razor edge with duct tape on one end. He made his point. "Go upstairs and have a good day," which I did every Saturday for several years, leading countless souls to Christ.

The lesson became very real one Saturday. Outside the two holding tanks was an exercise bicycle. The guards would open up the tank doors to clean cells and bring in food. Unknown to the guards, two young inmates took the metal handles from the bike and sharpened them to a razor point. When the officer came in, he was stabbed repeatedly and left in his own blood to die on the floor. The two young men did not have an elevator key and could not escape. The officer survived, and the two young men were charged with attempted murder.

At the old Irving Jail, the Lieutenant would ask me not to bring in New Testaments and Bibles because the inmates were stopping up the commodes with them. At the Texas Youth Commission, the Gideons could not distribute their New Testaments because their India paper, very fine, made perfect tobacco rolling paper. It was told that they smoked their way through the book of Proverbs. It takes all kinds!

One inmate thought he had fooled the system and the world, but instead received "the kiss of death." This particular inmate had his wife smuggle heroin in a balloon placed in her mouth. With a kiss good-bye after a visit, she would transfer the balloon, filled with heroin, from her mouth to his.

He would swallow it, go back to his “house” prison cell then regurgitate it up, and do his date with Miss Heroin. He thought he had fooled the Warden, Major, and the world until one fateful day he pulled the same routine, but back in his cell he could not get the balloon back up. Eventually the gastric juices ate through the latex balloon, and he died from an overdose. The only person he fooled was himself. He played the fool, and lost his life and his wife.

As Secure As It Gets

“You can never say a prison is escape-proof, but we’ve done almost everything possible to confound even the most creative prisoner,” said John Vanyor, Associate Warden, U.S. Penitentiary, Florence, Colorado, sometimes called the “Alcatraz of the Rockies.” What does “almost everything possible” mean? According to a *USA Today* article, they have built a \$60 million facility that gives new meaning to high security¹.

“Transferred inmates will enter a prison with the most modern corrections technology including 168 video cameras and 1,400 electronically controlled gates. But it also has a good measure of old-fashioned steel bars, cement walls and towers staffed with heavily armed guards.” Some of the features are unmovable furniture inside the cells, no soap dish, knob, toilet seat or toilet handle. All are potential weapons. The glass windows in the visiting room can withstand two hours of pounding with a hammer. The cement walls are 5,000-pound quality, and steel bars crisscross the inside every eight inches. Showers and sinks are timed to prevent flooding. Cells are angled so inmates won’t be able to see other cells or the Rocky Mountains from their small windows. All cell doors open electronically. Six guard towers are at different heights to thwart air attack and allow for clear views of the roof. Metal flaps cover the contours of the guard keys. To get out, inmates will pass through as many as seven steel doors, each one three inches thick, and opening only after the other has closed. The worst inmates get no television and just one fifteen-minute phone call every three months. When the worst inmates leave their cells, they will be handcuffed behind their backs, shackled in leg irons, and accompanied by three guards all carrying steel-tipped batons.

¹USA TODAY “ednesday November 16, 1994, 6a

These are just some of the security measures in the Federal Prison here in Colorado. The “baddest of the bad” will be housed here with forty-year sentences the average. Most will die in prison. 1

(B) 30 Characteristics of The Criminal Mind

To avoid being conned, a Christian volunteer needs to understand how a criminal thinks. This is probably the most important aspect of the criminal mode of operation. He commits crime because he sees easy money and excitement. He doesn't consider the hurt he inflicts on other people. He views love, friendship and life in terms of what he can get out of them, rather than what he can give to them. He is number one, and he is going to look after number one. “To hell with the rest of society.” Occasionally the self-centeredness is extended to family and “close friends,” yet the pattern is still the same. The family members are important only because they are extensions of himself, rather than independent people in their own right.

Because he is so important and special, rules and regulations do not apply to him; he is his own law. What a great life indeed!

Resentment of Authority

The criminal is in a constant stage of rebellion. He is a rebel without a cause. He resents cops, school principals, adults in positions of authority, politicians, etc. He treats most authority figures as if they were his enemies. He puts himself above the law or designs his own law.

The resentment of authority encompasses practically all rules and regulations that form the basic structure of society. For example, he will frequently park his car in prohibited areas, or refuse to wait in line.

Need for Power

The criminal is obsessed with power over people, control over people. He likes to be recognized as a powerful person. He continually attempts to impress others. He also likes powerful machines, fast cars, boats, motorcycles, etc.

His attitude toward sex is likewise motivated by power and control. He likes to show off with good-looking ladies, so they can boost his ego. He uses people to gain power, and uses sex the same way.

1 “Tough Talk Staff” (1984)

To get power or prestige he will generally find or look for shortcuts. Legitimate power takes too long.

Lack of Remorse or Guilt

The criminal shows little, if any guilt, in order to effectively carry out his crimes he must feel no empathy for the victim. In order to enjoy the fruits of his crimes he must "kill any guilt or conscience."

Lying

Everybody lies occasionally. For the criminal, lying is a way of life. The criminal's capacity for lying is indeed remarkable. However, lying requires a good memory, and unless the man is very clever, he will soon be caught by his own lies.

Even when the criminal tells the truth, it is frequently a con game. He uses truth to gain trust, and then starts lying. The clever criminal develops the capacity to tell half-truths, believing that he is an honest man, yet forgetting the half-truths are also half-lies.

Lack of Loyalty and Trust

The criminal feels that trusting someone makes him dependent and weak. "Even friends betray you." He is not trustworthy himself, so he thinks everyone is untrustworthy. A "friend" is someone to talk to about crimes and with whom to commit crimes. There is no openness, no trust. The criminal will say that people have to trust him before he can get a job or go straight, but he is unwilling to work towards earning trust.

Lack of Positive Affect

[Affect: the way emotion is expressed - such as euphoria, anger and sadness. It is different from mood. Mood is how you feel at a particular time; affect is how that mood is expressed.]

The criminal does not express his feelings, and eventually loses touch with them. He fakes positive emotion to get what he wants. He shows anger when he faces frustration, or is being put down.

The suppression of guilt or moral feeling leads to flatness of affect. This perhaps helps the criminal cope with his criminal activities, yet gradually makes him less alive, and his capacity for enjoying life is decreased.

Poor Ability To Love

When a criminal talks about love, he is usually talking about what love can do for him rather than what he can do for love. He uses and manipulates the people he loves for his own ends. He may truly believe that he loves his parents or his wife and children. If he truly loved them, he wouldn't do anything to hurt them, yet he often does hurt them, either directly or indirectly.

There is a common misconception that the criminal does not love himself and therefore cannot love others. We say that he loves himself too much. Therefore there is no room for others. The criminal confuses need with love. He may need a certain person to build himself up to make him look good, to bail him out when he's in trouble, or to keep him from being lonely in jail.

Lack of Responsibility and General Antisocial Behavior

The criminal is an irresponsible individual. It shows by his being unable or unwilling to keep a steady job, being late for an appointment, having difficulty in keeping a promise, not returning money he borrowed, etc. Responsibility implies duty and obligation to loved ones and society in general. For example, a man separated from his wife may have the responsibility to pay child support. A driver has the responsibility to pay traffic fines or parking tickets. The criminal ignores these responsibilities.

In fact, the criminal will frequently go out of his way to demonstrate his disregard for, or contempt of, social norms or standards. For example, he may swear or spit in public. He may pollute the environment or smoke in public places where it is clear that smoking is prohibited.

The criminal is always planning and replanning the "big score," but he never gets around to it. He must be content to dream. When demands are placed on him (writing a letter, paying a bill, handling a marital problem, etc.), the criminal quickly puts off what he should be doing, and again dreams of the big score, which he thinks would solve all his problems. He is always looking for a shortcut to "responsible" living. In the meantime, he spends his energy on immediate excitement.

Low Tolerance to Frustration, Poor Motivation or Staying Power for Long-Range Goals

The criminal seems to have a very low tolerance to frustration. When he wants something, e.g. food, sex or money, he usually wants

it now, not later. If his wishes are blocked or delayed, he gets very irritated and demanding. He believes he can do almost anything, yet he seldom sticks to any project or goal that requires sustained effort. Fortunately for society, this character flaw may explain why he eventually gets caught.

Excitement

The criminal is continuously looking for a thrill. He is easily bored, and excitement relieves some of his boredom. Crime is exciting. The planning and execution of the crime provides lots of excitement. The party following a successful "score" is another opportunity for excitement. A criminal believes the lives "squares" lead are boring, and cannot understand how law-abiding people live routine lives day after day.

Violence and Anger

Violence performs several important functions for the criminal. First, it is used for intimidation in order to gain power and control. Many criminals, for example, would use implied or actual violence to keep their "old ladies" where they want them.

Second, it is used as a cover-up for fear. Rather than admitting to being scared, the criminal will get into a fight to show off his "macho" qualities.

Third, it is used as evidence of his virility. A man should know how to fight, how to take care of himself, and how to protect his possessions. The criminal rarely recognizes that it sometimes takes more of a man to avoid a fight than to get into one.

Anger is basic to the criminal. He is always boiling inside. When something doesn't go his way, or when he is put down, he gets even angrier. Sometimes he gets angry at himself when he hears of a better score he missed out on. The anger spreads until it takes hold of everything in the criminal's life. Then he explodes, taking out his anger on others, and perhaps committing crimes. This relieves his anger by making him feel on top again.

Pride

The criminal believes he is better than others, a "man of principle," never giving in to the system. He is too good for common jobs. "I can't lower myself to the level of the common people. I have my pride." He has too much pride to admit he screwed up.

Pretension

The criminal believes he has the ability to become whatever he wants to — a doctor, a priest, a businessman. However, he never attempts to acquire the necessary skills. “I don’t have to prove myself. I know I could do it, if I wanted to.” He really believes he is above all others, pretending to be something that he is not. So he easily feels put down because people don’t show him the respect he deserves. When asked why he hasn’t attained a higher position in life, he always blames others, maintaining that he is still tops.

Inability To Put Himself In Someone Else’s Shoes

The criminal’s view of injury is limited to bodily harm. He does not consider the “ripple effect” of his crimes—the emotional damage to the victim, the victim’s living in fear of future crimes against him or her, the inconvenience to the victim and to others not directly involved such as the victim’s family, the insurance company, those who have to make repairs, etc. He expects the world to see things his way, to understand how he feels. But he can’t do this for others.

Ownership

Ownership is the extreme form of control. When the criminal wants something like a car or a woman, he cons, lies, picks a lock, does whatever is necessary to “take possession.” Then he feels that he has worked for it, so it is his. He owns it. The real owner no longer matters. He feels he owns the people around him. His wife, his co-workers, his children are all his to control. They must do as he wishes.

Bad, but Good

The criminal often performs good deeds. He may be kind to his mother, love children and animals, be artistic, and so on. All this convinces the criminal that "I'm basically a good person." But the criminal changes from good to bad, and back again, all the time. He may have the sincere wish to "straighten out" one minute, but plan a crime the next minute. He may be a friend to someone one day, but cheat him the next day. The criminal often has good intentions, but he doesn't put these into a good, honest living pattern. He is able to be at times a good person, and at times a bad person. "When I'm in church, I think church. When I'm home, I think crime."

Perfectionist

The criminal thinks of himself as a perfectionist. "When I do something, I do it right." He sets the highest standards for himself, but only in certain areas. Thus, he may dress "perfectly," but do a poor job at work. He may clean his floor so well that "you can eat off it," but only do it twice a year. Being a perfectionist adds to his belief that he is number one.

Suggestibility

The criminal rejects any suggestions of reforming, job training, etc., saying that he has his own ideas. But when he hears suggestions about things he finds exciting—like a new way to get high, a new style of crime, etc.—he jumps in without thinking. He doesn't bother to check into it. He will agree to almost any suggestion that is in line with what he wants—excitement, money, and so on.

Closed Channel of Communication

The criminal does not tell others his true, inner thoughts. Revealing his secrets would open him up to criticism of his faults and weaknesses. The criminal cannot stand criticism. He only hears from others what he wants to hear. He has too much pride to listen to other points of view, because this would prove he doesn't "know it all." He only listens to things that support what he already believes. Often he pretends to listen, and agrees only to lead others on. The criminal criticizes others, but never takes a critical look at himself.

Fear

Fear is a constant for the criminal—fear of the future, fear of being caught, etc. But he never admits to these, and he scorns fear in others, saying it is a sign of weakness. His greatest fear is of his own fear. Being afraid might keep him from committing crime and leading his exciting lifestyle. Thus, he shuts out any fears. He does not show or admit fear, even to himself.

“Zero State”

For the criminal, it’s “all or nothing.” When he’s on top, everything is fine. However, when he gets put down—when things don’t go his way, or when someone makes a fool of him—he hits rock bottom. He feels like a zero. When the criminal is in this state, he thinks everyone else also sees him as a zero. He gets frustrated and angry.

Special

Early in life, the criminal decides to “go it alone.” He sees himself as different from and above everyone else. He squeezes others out of his life (so he never knows that others think like he does). With women, he is the greatest. With a new job, he doesn’t need training—he’s above that. Rules and morals: he makes his own—he doesn’t need to follow society’s. Crime: his M.O. is the best. Others are of the common pack. Even in zero state, “Nobody is as down as me.” You have got to understand him. He’s special.

“I Can’t”

When the criminal is unable to do a task, he won’t admit it. Instead, he puts down the task, saying it is unworthy of his efforts. But if he doesn’t want to do something, he says, “I can’t.” “I can’t do math.” “I can’t stand my boss.” “I can’t be there on time.” “I can’t save money.” “I can’t resist it.” This works because people believe him. After a while, the criminal is unable to do it, so others excuse him. Eventually the criminal starts believing it himself. In trying to go straight, the criminal makes a half-hearted try, but keeps returning to prison saying, “I can’t change.”

The Apprehended Criminal

"Justice," for the criminal, is not getting caught. When caught, he protests, uses loopholes in the law, postpones hearings, etc. He denies whatever cannot be proven against him. Most of all, the criminal acts like he is the victim. He blames his childhood, society, the economy, his partners, the situation in which he was caught, even his own mental state which he claims he could not help (e.g. "I was really depressed at the time.") Everyone else is to blame. If convicted, he tries whatever he can think of to reduce his sentence. He'll say what he believes others want to hear. The criminal refuses to take responsibility for his actions. He sees society as unfit for him, not vice versa. He feels that the world isn't being fair.

Lack of Awareness

The criminal is not aware of the effect his crime has on his loved ones (i.e. father, mother, wife, children, close friends, etc.). His lack of awareness is aided by using excuses. Drugs and alcohol are good examples. There are many others such as unemployment, bad upbringing, lack of love, etc.

Criminal Thinking: All the Time

The criminal is constantly thinking of ways to commit crime. When in a bank or store, he thinks of a plan to rob it. When with someone he doesn't like, he plans a way to hurt him. When around an attractive woman, he dreams of how to get her. He commits very few of these crimes— there just isn't time. When he does pull a job, even if it is a robbery of a store he has never seen before, he is acting out a job he has planned countless times previously. There is no such thing as a "compulsion to commit crime." This would mean the criminal could not stop himself. He can stop himself, and does if he feels he is going to get caught.

Concrete Thinking

The criminal lacks the ability to recognize similarities between situations, i.e. concepts. He has trouble learning from past mistakes. He takes each situation as completely new. He does not understand concepts of obligation, trust or loyalty. He sees these only in terms of how he might use them for his own gain.

This inability is not something with which the criminal is born. He simply does not bother to learn how to see similarity between things, because he doesn't see this as something he can use.

The Criminal in Rehabilitation

The criminal views the social worker, psychologist or mental health worker as gullible or a "sucker," a person who has to be defeated through a series of tactics. The criminal says what he thinks the worker wants to hear, but hides the rest. He lies, attempts to confuse, and agrees simply to agree. He hears only what he wants to hear. He misses appointments or fails to do assignments, claiming he "didn't understand."

Non-arrestable Criminality

Criminal behavior may manifest itself in a person who has never been arrested. A power thrust is seen in those who get ahead at the expense of others. The "non-arrestable" criminal cuts corners, cheats and seeks power for its own sake. Criminals who have been arrested sometimes appear to go straight after leaving prison. For example, those who "get religion" but see themselves as "pure and saintly," rather than as humble sinners, are often just going through a non-arrestable phase, only to return to crime later.