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Innovations *in* Community Corrections

Training Practices, Content, and Delivery

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executive director/ceo's message

How often have you read the words "unlock your full potential"? On reflection, it is a bit odd to think about potential being locked away, prevented from escaping. Yet it is surely true that all of us, especially when overwhelmed, tend to fall into a rut and operate at a subpar level. A narrow perspective and/or lack of knowledge and tools contribute to this—and that's where learning can help. It enlightens. It refreshes us. It opens doors. It enables us to take advantage of the knowledge accrued by others about what gives us the best chance of succeeding.

This issue of Perspectives offers contributions by excellent authors on training and learning—two sides of the same coin. Two of the articles (those by David Sattler and by co-authors Phil Galli, Shawn Trusten, and Jason Mereness) are thought-provoking explorations of training innovations that got a major boost when use of traditional classroom settings came to an abrupt halt during our strictest virus-avoidance time period.

Sattler provides a comprehensive overview of training innovations along with useful implementation suggestions. Skills such as self-defense are optimally taught in a more traditional setting. However, other staff training needs may be best managed with a blended "classroom plus" approach, and there is quite an appealing array of options for fully remote learning, including video-based learning. Other topics covered include dyssynchronous training, microlearning, and use of agency websites. After reading this article, you will come away much more knowledgeable about trends and possibilities. Also, as I reflect on this article I am mindful that all learn differently. In that vein, while I would like to see every PO in America have an opportunity to attend APPA's training institutes, I know that is not possible. I also know it is not the ideal way for many to absorb information or to learn. As such, APPA has been working to ensure various information sharing and training methods are available to all stakeholders including but not limited to e-learning courses, i.e., APPA has just completed the development of a three-module e-learning course titled, Cultural Humility in Community Corrections. It is well worth your time – something for all!

Galli and his colleagues also cover the growth and potential of training technologies, but they go on to emphasize the benefits of supervision staff working effectively with outside agencies/practitioners in adjacent fields such as social services or behavioral health. They make the cogent point that there is an opportunity for using new training technologies in expanding and optimizing outreach to such community organizations and resources, co-training these partners in a way that lays the groundwork for effective interdisciplinary teamwork that better serves client needs.

Finally, there is the quite beneficial article by Caterina Spinaris and Daria Mayotte on resilience training. This one might really strike home, reminding us that there are tools to help us manage whatever is thrown at us. I know how difficult it is to go every day to a job when you feel you are in survival mode. Indeed, we can all feel besieged by client issues, coworkers, job demands, personal life demands, or—most likely—a mix of these. While the issues of stress, burnout, and corrections fatigue are not new, the authors remind us of the importance of addressing them.

VERONICA CUNNINGHAM
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CEO
APPA

One part of the article that especially caught my eye was the description of "inoculation-type, long-term approaches" to prevent corrections fatigue, with emphasis on proactively teaching strategies and skills, both at the individual level and the work-team level. I also appreciated the emphasis on promoting positive values and teaching interpersonal skills—communication, conflict management, and more. My take-away from reading this—and my personal message to you—is DO NOT give up, keep your head held high, know that you are good enough, and do what is needed to personally thrive and retain your passion and emotional health for your work.

As always, I conclude with a sincere thank you to each of the authors, editors, and staff members who contributed to this worthwhile Perspectives issue. My sincere best goes out to you!

board president's message

SUSAN RICE
BOARD PRESIDENT

It is hard to believe it has been four years since an illness we knew little about landed on our doorsteps and turned our worlds upside down. I still remember being at a conference for chief probation officers in my state when news started to trickle in that schools, state offices, courts, and our departments would likely be shutting down the following Monday. We contemplated ending the conference early, but decided to stay and work together on how we could best move forward into very unknown territory. Fortunately, we had a great trainer for the day who was able to quickly pivot his presentation into an interactive work session to help answer the question, "How do we continue to meet the needs of our clients and provide safety in our communities when we cannot meet in person?" As we all know now, the answer relied heavily on technology.

This issue of Perspectives focuses on the many ways technology can be used to enhance the performance of community supervision agencies. From remote reporting options to inter-agency collaboration to addressing employee trauma issues, technology has become an integral component to bring people together.

Adjusting to the use of technology as a tool to continue providing some form of supervision when in-person reporting was prohibitive was an adjustment for both clients and officers; but as we now know, it was an effective solution. Clients and officers both benefitted from the removal of barriers which often caused clients to have a challenging time getting to appointments. As things slowly began to return to "normal," many agencies continued to embrace the use of technology as a supervision tool after seeing positive effects.

Technology also proved to be especially useful with continuing education as training was able to be delivered virtually, saving departments the expense of travel, lodging, and time away from the office. In 2020, APPA offered its first fully remote conference. That practice has now morphed into a hybrid conference option where officers can attend in person or virtually. This has been a positive addition for our association, allowing more individuals to access the impressive training that has been offered for years at our annual institutes.

Technology is also being relied upon to help address the difficult experiences of those who work with clients in the criminal legal system. I happen to reside in a community which hosts a 3,000+ bed prison housing some of the most dangerous inmates in the state. I was shocked when I recently learned how high the employee suicide rate is within the department of correction. Fortunately, agencies are beginning to recognize the need to intervene to assure employees are healthy, both physically and mentally. They are starting to offer more assistance to employees, with technology playing a key role in being able to provide timely help in small settings.

As our profession moves forward and continues to search for ways to provide better services to clients and staff, combined with added options for community safety, technology will surely continue to be a much-needed source of assistance. It will be important for all of us to continue to search and understand what technology can do for us and to embrace what will certainly grow in the future.

editor's notes

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We live in a constantly evolving world, including that of community corrections. Whether it be new training, how it is delivered, or the training content, there is always something new to learn and insights to be gleaned. This issue of Perspectives, curated by David Taylor, delves into the important topic of staff training and training innovations , but it also touches on some more general community corrections issues. These include collaboration between the community and correctional staff, largely a product of the pandemic, and training to promote correctional staff wellness, retention, health, and resiliency.

The first article in this issue, written by David Sattler and titled "Revolutionizing Community Corrections Training: Harnessing Cutting-Edge Technology," speaks to how the COVID-19 pandemic shifted community corrections training and client communication drastically–and quickly. This resulted in creative solutions that will likely persist beyond the pandemic. Sattler discusses various changes in training and client communication, including the advantages and the challenges of training changes, allowing readers to better identify what may be most helpful for their departments and to better assess training innovations, with particular focus on leveraging technology in training. For example, incorporating technology has the advantage of offering increased accessibility and flexibility, but the challenge emerges of how to equip a department with the necessary equipment. Sattler's article also provides overviews of the different types of adult learning that can be used for training community corrections staff.

The second article, "When the Going Gets Tough: Engaging in Resilience Training to Promote Staff Effectiveness and Well-Being," written by Caterina Spinaris and Daria Mayotte of Desert Waters Correctional Outreach, discusses occupational challenges that community correctional staff have always endured and how these occupational challenges were in some cases exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The authors begin with some real stories of occupational adversity and resilience on the part of community correctional staff who were already stretched thin, with high caseloads and high-stress environments. Their article focuses specifically on the importance of resilience, particularly psychological resilience, and how it is incremental and multifaceted. Their article promotes understanding of (a) the nature of resilience; (b) reasons resilience should be promoted in correctional work; (c) skills and conditions that promote resilience; and (d) best practices for teaching skill-based resilience-promoting behaviors. Resilience is vital in community corrections work, as it can help staff members in their personal and professional lives. It also reassures individuals that psychological resilience is not all or nothing; rather, it is used in relative terms (i.e., erosion of well-being). Lastly, Spinaris and Mayotte share how resilience can be trained, discuss roadblocks to resilience training, outline topics generally covered in these types of training, and suggest some basic ways to engage learners.

The third article, written by Phil Galli, Shawn Trusten, and Jason Mereness and titled "Interdisciplinary Training and Collaboration in Community Supervision: Optimizing Technology, Communication, Identity Transformation, and Desistance with External Partners," explores how the pandemic necessitated innovative ways to communicate, not just between community supervision professionals and clients but also with various external service providers and organizations that play an important role in supporting clients who are supervised in the community (e.g., social services, case managers, behavioral health professionals, case managers, and health departments). Further, the authors discuss cross-training and collaborating with community supervision partners, particularly in terms of understanding crime desistance and identity transformation. The authors propose changes in patterns of working with partners in community supervision to optimally meet clients' needs, with the understanding that digital equity is important for this process as well.

Overall, this issue provides a wealth of information about innovative technology, adult learning, resilience and wellness in the workplace (and beyond), and the advantages and potential drawbacks of various types of training and collaboration for community correctional staff. We hope these articles allow you to think creatively about training in general, to understand different ways of adult learning, to optimally use technology, and to assess training innovations that may be appropriate in your workplace, including supportive instruction pertaining to the resilience and wellness of community corrections staff.

instructions to authors

Perspectives disseminates information to the American Probation and Parole Association's members on relevant policy and program issues and provides updates on activities of the Association. The membership represents adult and juvenile probation, parole, and community corrections agencies throughout the United States and abroad. Articles submitted for publication are screened by an editorial committee and, on occasion, selected reviewers, to determine acceptability based on relevance to the field of criminal justice, clarity of presentation, or research methodology. Perspectives does not reflect unsupported personal opinions.

Articles must be emailed to perspectives@csg.org in accordance with the following deadlines:

- Unless previously discussed with the editors, submissions should not exceed 12 typed pages, numbered consecutively, and double-spaced. All charts, graphs, tables, and photographs must be of reproduction quality. Optional titles may be submitted and selected after review with the editors.
- All submissions must be in English and in American Psychological Association (APA) Style.
- Authors should provide a one-paragraph biography, along with contact information.
- Notes should be used only for clarification or substantive comments, and should appear at the end of the text.
- References to source documents should appear in the body of the text with the author's surname and the year of publication in parentheses, e.g., to (Mattson, 2015, p. 73).
- Alphabetize each reference at the end of the text using the following format:
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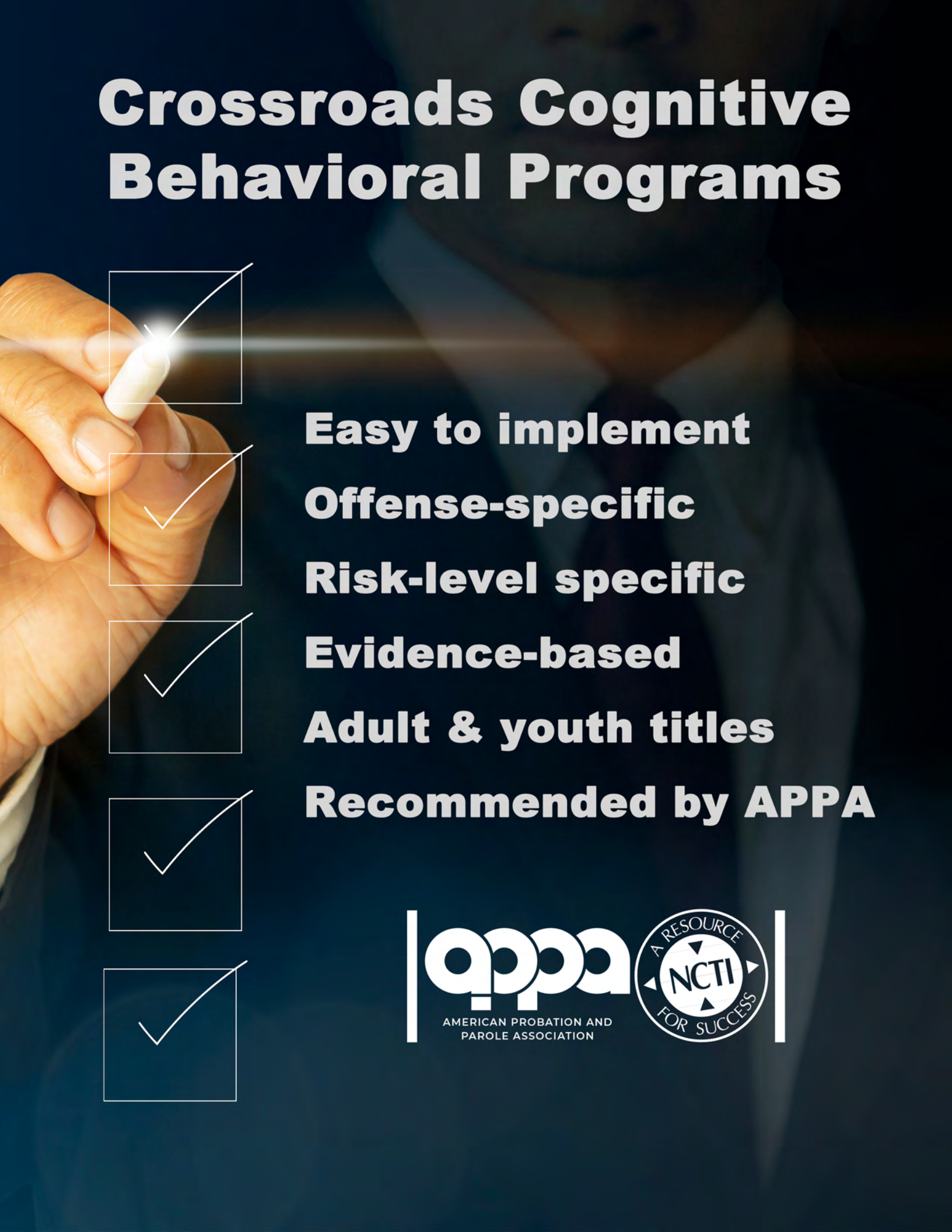

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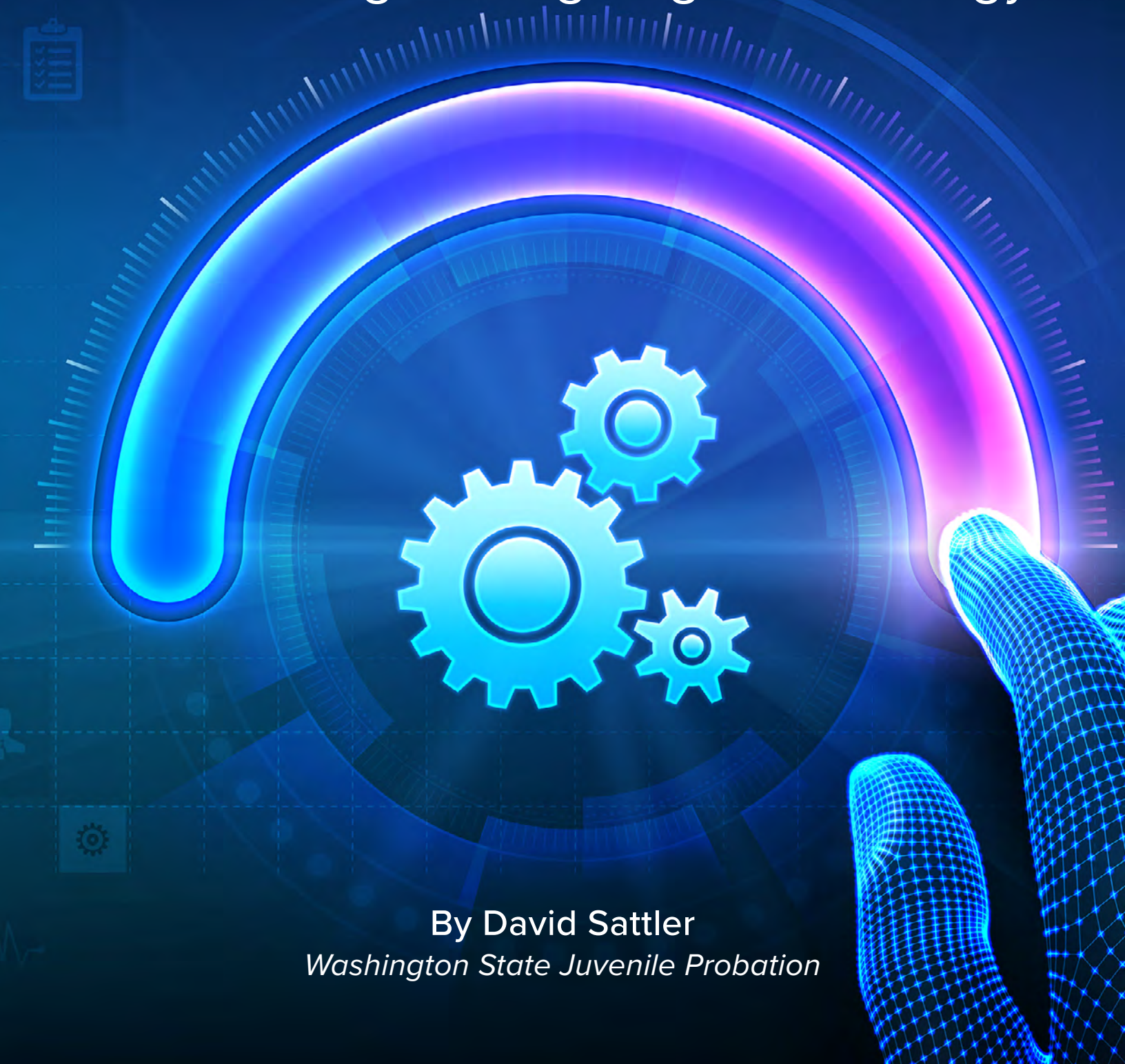
REVOLUTIONIZING COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS TRAINING:

Harnessing Cutting-Edge Technology



By David Sattler

Washington State Juvenile Probation

REVOLUTIONIZING COMMUNITY CORRECTIONS TRAINING: HARNESSING CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGY

The COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted how community corrections operated, with client communication and training—the focus here—particularly affected. The unparalleled circumstances definitely brought about creative solutions for community corrections training. While virtual training sessions had begun taking a foothold before the pandemic, such virtual training quickly became the norm (Viglione & Nguyen, 2022). This new approach provided a safe alternative during a time of heightened health concerns and allowed for greater flexibility in scheduling and accessibility, enabling staff members to receive essential training remotely.

It is important to acknowledge that new training practices were—and are--not without challenges. For example, transitioning to virtual training required adjustments and technological infrastructure to ensure consistent, effective communication and engagement. Some staff members faced initial difficulties adapting to this new medium, such as internet connectivity issues or a learning curve associated with navigating virtual platforms (Flynn-Wilson & Reynolds, 2021). Some departments had no access to the hardware or software needed for virtual training and lacked the expertise to develop virtual training tailored to their needs, while others needed to utilize "off-the-shelf" training material that may have had limited value (Jackson & Makarin, 2018). Off-the-shelf material can be excessively generic, with one-size-fits-all content that lacks customization and is inadequately aligned with an agency's goals. Nonetheless, lessons were learned during the pandemic, and in the end it became a showcase for the effectiveness and efficiency of virtual training and the convenience of digital communication tools. These practices provided solutions during unprecedented times and highlighted the potential for long-term improvements in training.

As we gradually transition towards a semblance of normalcy, it is anticipated that new training methods and approaches will continue to be developed and utilized, but at the same time some longstanding methods that had to be suspended because they involved personal contact are being reimplemented. Going forward, the extent to which agencies will rely on traditional training in classrooms or take advantage of other available options is unclear, but it is hard to imagine a workplace that doesn't utilize some component of e-learning, online collaboration, or virtual learning—likely including virtual reality (VR) technology, a potentially feasible training solution for repeatable and flexible procedures within a safe environment (Xu & Zheng, 2021). As we have learned at Washington State Juvenile Probation, organizations must leverage both old and new training methods to ensure employees remain engaged and prepared for the future.

OVERVIEW

As stated above, agencies needing to impart knowledge and skills traditionally relied on formal classroom-style exercises or on-the-job mentoring. That has changed. It is not only in community corrections that approaches to training and development needs have significantly transformed in today's rapidly evolving world, for the digital revolution and the rise of online learning platforms have broadly transformed how individuals acquire knowledge and skills to an astounding extent. In the field of community corrections, it is crucial to become aware of all options. Indeed, now is an excellent time to assess and take advantage of recent advances, keeping attuned to the ongoing development of innovative technologies and options for integrating them.

The RAND Corporation and the University of Denver conducted a focus group with correctional administrators and researchers on how technology can be leveraged to address key challenges facing community corrections agencies (Russo et al., 2019). One central theme identified through this research was how to optimally use technology to effectively train correctional staff. It was noted that training curricula and delivery methods often do not align with modern learners' needs. There was a need to use training videos and newer technology such as virtual reality (VR) and augmented reality (AR). Having everyone in one classroom simultaneously and only using PowerPoint and handouts has limitations. For example, Falmer (2012) found that students learn linguistics better when the classroom is integrated with computer technology. Moreover, students in general—including members of community corrections staff—can have different learning styles. Due to such perceived predispositions, adult learners tend to be attracted to different learning formats that they feel work better for them (Barry & Egan, 2018). It is prudent for correctional agencies to explore training methods and technologies that effectively meet such staff needs. This newfound flexibility allows organizations to reach a broader audience and cater to the diverse needs of learners.

One of the primary benefits of incorporating innovative technologies in training is the increased accessibility and flexibility they offer (Russo et al., 2019). Traditional training methods that relied on physical classrooms

had a short reach, limiting participation to learners who could come together at one point in time. However, with the advent of virtual training platforms and e-learning solutions, individuals can now access training materials and participate in interactive sessions from anywhere at any time. Innovative training methods include gamification, microlearning, augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR), blended learning, artificial intelligence (AI), mobile learning, learning management systems (LMS), and video-based learning (Medved, 2021). I will discuss some of these innovative training methods and how they can be used in community corrections.

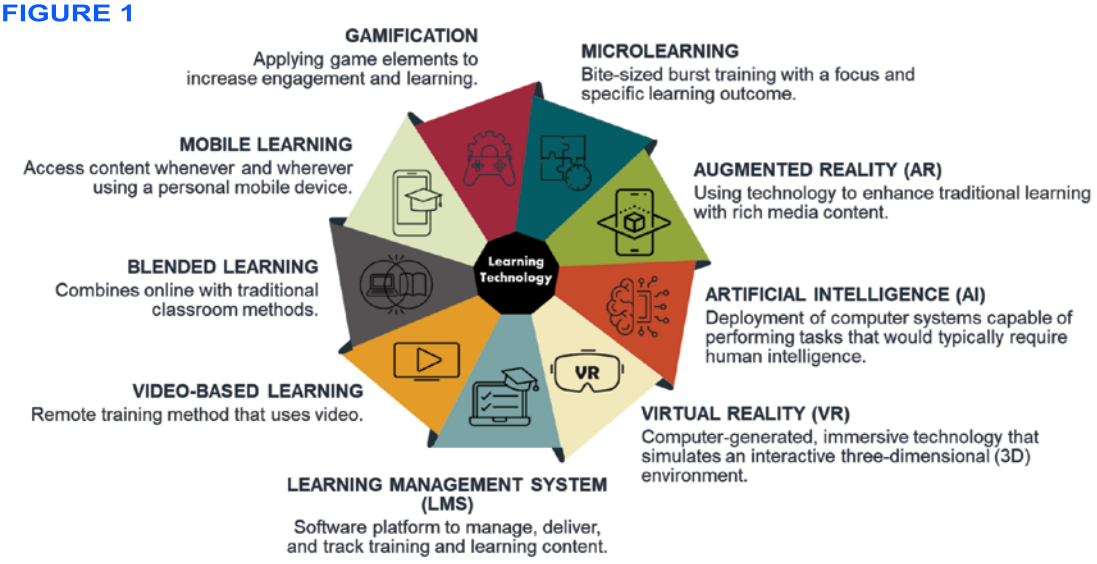
BLENDED LEARNING

In recent years, blended learning has become increasingly popular in educational settings. As described by Schmid and colleagues (2023), blended learning combines face-to-face and online classroom instruction, and it has been found to increase motivation and improve the learning experience (Simanovic et al., 2021). Online learning often consists of working alone, with peers, and/or with the trainer. The authors conducted a meta-analysis and found that blended learning significantly outperformed online or class instruction alone. A similar training method to blended learning is the "flipped classroom" (Cheng et al., 2019). This method consists of trainees doing online learning, such as instructional videos and other resources outside the classroom at their own pace and then coming together in the classroom to do assignments and interactive activities. The classroom setting is used for hands-on training, practice, and group-based problem-solving activities rather than primarily instruction. The trainer is more of a guide and gives feedback on the activities. Blended learning and a flipped classroom may be very advantageous for community corrections agencies. Such approaches can provide greater flexibility for learners, as they can access the materials anytime and anywhere, and at the same time reduce costs associated with traditional classroom settings.

Washington State Juvenile Probation experienced a transition from solely in-person academy training before COVID-19 to blended learning in 2023. During the pandemic, the academy was forced to train entirely online via Zoom, a web-based conferencing software. Although it was not ideal, it did serve its purpose. Throughout the years preceding the pandemic, it was noticed that the academy did not allow enough time to practice the have transformed skills that were taught during the training. In particular, trainees needed more time to practice motivational interviewing (MI) and case management practices with direct input from the trainers. The instructional component was taking too much time, and there was not enough time for this practice and feedback scenario.

As we transitioned back into face-to-face training after the height of the pandemic, we realized we could retain some virtual instruction, freeing up some time for more practice. Virtual online training is now used before the in-person training takes place. Topics such as the risk-need-responsivity principles, assessment instruments, and an overview of MI are conducted virtually as the foundation of the training. Content is virtually delivered to staff for one day a week for three weeks leading up to the in-person training sessions, allowing participants to master the basics. Our subsequent in-person training therefore does not consist of much instruction per se, instead focusing on activities geared toward guided practice, and the training is more effective overall. We set a foundation and familiarity with the topics we will cover for the in-person training but also

FIGURE 1



allow more time for practice and feedback. Ultimately, we want staff to come away confident they can do the skills, not just learn about them. Moving forward, there are many more options now with blended learning that can be fine-tuned to maximally meet the needs of the organization.

SYNCHRONOUS VS. ASYNCHRONOUS LEARNING

Online learning can be either synchronous and asynchronous. Synchronous learning allows students and the trainer to interact via video conferences or webinars in real time. On the other hand, asynchronous online learning does not require the instructors and students to gather at the same time, so students can access materials at their own pace and interact with the instructor and other students over time-delayed periods (e.g., through assignments like participating in discussion boards). A meta-analysis by Zeng and Luo (2023) found that asynchronous learning was more effective in promoting student knowledge than synchronous, though the gain was relatively trivial in amount. However, the authors indicate that the asynchronous learning gave students more flexibility and control over their learning at their own pace and time, especially for students with other commitments, such as work or family responsibilities. Furthermore, asynchronous learning allows students to reflect more deeply on the material and to construct their own understanding. Overall, the meta-analysis shows that online learning, whether synchronous or asynchronous, can be useful for adult learners. It seems safe to say that online learning in both formats is a valid learning method in corrections, but blended learning may still produce the best results, particularly compared to pre-pandemic, classroom-only learning. Washington State Probation has noted the benefit of blended learning by adding more hours of training without further expense and concomitantly ensuring increased time for practice when trainees participate in the in-person portion of the training. If one were to use exclusively online learning, it might be best to use a combination of synchronous and asynchronous learning. That would give the benefit of direct contact with the trainers but still provide trainees access to material on their own time.

ASYNCHRONOUS FORMAT

Two main factors to consider when adopting an asynchronous format to augment correctional staff training are the need for (a) technology to build the training and (b) a platform to access the training. In regard to this first factor, numerous software options are available for putting together e-learning courses and content, making it relatively easy to develop training modules. These software tools allow users to create interactive and engaging training materials for community correctional staff.

One example is Articulate 360. This software offers a wide range of features like multimedia integration, interactive assessments, and customizable content templates. A powerful Articulate 360 desktop application is Storyline 360, with a similar feel to Microsoft PowerPoint. Courses created in Storyline 360 must be accessed on an agency server or uploaded to a Learning Management System (LMS). Articulate 360 also has a web-based application called Rise 360 that simplifies the course development process. Aside from the benefit of its streamlined ability to develop online courses, it also allows content to be accessed on the Articulate 360 website via a link. Articulate 360 is FedRAMP certified, which means that the U.S. federal government has done a thorough security and risk assessment of the Articulate 360 applications and determined that the software meets strict cloud security requirements and is safe to use.

Washington State uses Articulate 360 to build online training for its juvenile probation counselors. To this point we have primarily utilized Rise 360 to create online courses, as Storyline 360 has more of a learning curve. Practically anyone can create a course in little time with Rise 360. It has a variety of block components for text, photos, multimedia, graphs, scenarios, and knowledge checks (e.g., multiple choice, fill-in-the-blank, and matching questions).

We have learned that having staff members interested in and available to create the training content is vital. While it will not take up all their work hours, some time commitment is a consideration when developing online training. If training material such as handouts, PPTs, and videos is already available, this content could be easily translated into an online format. Articulate 360 provides tutorials, on-demand training, webinars, and an online community called E-Learning Heroes for further instruction on using the software. The Washington State Case Management Assessment Process (CMAP) Coordinator overseeing juvenile probation training and quality assurance already designs training material. Translating to a virtual format has not been too complex or time consuming. The primary issue is finding a subject matter expert in the training topic and someone interested in virtual technology. This could be two different persons (or even more), but having someone designated to handle each of these aspects of training module development is vital.

If an agency needs a platform to store its online courses for user access or would like greater control of enrolling and managing trainees, then a Learning Management System (LMS) should be considered. An LMS is what colleges tend to use to conduct their online courses (e.g., Canvas, Blackboard, Moodle), so LMS technology has become a major player in the area of distance education. It certainly could also be very helpful in training correctional staff (Zheng et al., 2018). An LMS allows one to create and organize online courses, store files or documents, embed multimedia, and design assessments and quizzes. One particular benefit of an LMS is in the area of monitoring a learner's progress and performance. Moodle is one popular LMS that is free and open source. MoodleCloud is a cloud-based version that is relatively inexpensive and used by the Washington State Juvenile Probation.

VIDEO-BASED LEARNING

Videos are a powerful learning tool. When a skill is being explained, especially one that will be used in corrections with clients, it seems that staff members always ask: "Show me the video." We find this to be the number one training request. Viewing a video is much easier than reading a long explanation of how to do something. Using videos as a training tool is particularly effective in strengthening trainees' motivation to learn and acquire practical skills, but this modality has been found less effective in imparting knowledge (Lin & Yu, 2023). Given that, it would be helpful to show videos but supplement them with extra instruction and reading material via in-class, asynchronous, or synchronous training. Videos might be particularly helpful in demonstrating core correctional practices (CCP) and MI.

Videos suitable for training do not have to be professionally done. A decent camera is inexpensive, and trainers can script and act out the scenarios. In fact, staff may appreciate seeing their colleagues in action more than strangers. Now that artificial intelligence (AI) is readily available (i.e., ChatGPT or Bard), these can be used to develop a script. Software for editing, such as Camtasia, is relatively easy to use and can be used as a tool to make a video of decent quality. Videos can be uploaded to one's LMS or accessed on a free account with YouTube with an unlisted or private link. Washington State likes the ease of using Camtasia and then uploading videos to YouTube for staff to access through a private link.

MICROLEARNING

Microlearning is an effective learning method that focuses on delivering content in small, concentrated units. Microlearning involves short, stand-along bursts or modules (Dolasinski & Reynolds, 2020). This approach is designed to help learners focus on one specific topic or skill without feeling overwhelmed by excessive information. According to a study by Wimmer et al. (2018), training distributed over time instead of condensed into one long session is significantly more effective in promoting long-term knowledge retention. Mohammed and colleagues (2018) found that microlearning increased students' learning by 18%. Microlearning is based on the idea that learners have limited attention spans and can only absorb a certain amount of information at a time. By breaking down learning materials into bite-sized modules, learners can engage with the content more effectively and retain the information for longer periods.

Microlearning may contain one learning objective using videos, text, images, and/or audio (Dolasinski & Reynolds, 2020). One key advantage of microlearning is that it is especially suited to allow learners to fit lessons into their busy schedules. With short, targeted lessons, learners can easily access and complete the material during short breaks or downtime. This flexibility makes microlearning particularly suitable for correctional staff who have limited time to dedicate to learning. Another benefit of microlearning is that it promotes a learning environment by keeping it front and center. For example, Washington State sends monthly newsletters regarding training and quality assurance topics. The newsletters have links to training videos and handouts that staff can use with youth on probation–a form of microlearning embedded into the newsletter.

INFORMATION THROUGH THE AGENCY WEBSITE

Another helful technology for staff is for the agency to have its own internal website (or intranet). A website can be accessed at any time on any device. Information, documents, training material, videos, and links to further resources are available to all staff. Some of this information can be kept password-protected. For example, Washington State Juvenile Probation has a website that court personnel can access through the Administrative Office of the Courts webpage via their username and password. This website is used for announcements, training material, manuals, videos, access to online training, quality assurance information, worksheets to use with youth, and many documents and articles on evidence-based practices. Everything is available without emailing out every item upon request, allowing easy access in one location. This has been one of the most helpful technological tools to get information out to all staff throughout the state.

THE FUTURE OF CORRECTIONAL TRAINING

Correctional agencies' primary role is to promote public safety and reduce recidivism. One of the key strategies these agencies can employ to achieve these goals is to provide effective training and develop opportunities for their staff in a complex and ever-changing environment. Training equips correctional staff with the necessary knowledge, skills, and tools to carry out their duties effectively, professionally, and in accordance with legal requirements. To make optimal training choices, agencies need show initiative—the initiative to acquire knowledge of up-to-date research, the initiative to investigate evidence-based best and data-driven practices, and the initiative to find key technology-savvy and knowledgeable staff to develop training tools. Agencies must be proactive and intentional to make this happen. It is also helpful for agencies to create a culture that encourages using new technology and takes steps to ensure successful implementation.

What will our training look like in the future? Identifying "best practices" for training delivery must be a part of this discussion. While some guidance can be gleaned from general research into adult learning and workforce development, more research specifically focused on training in correctional settings is needed. In the meantime, in keeping with the approach at Washington State Juvenile Probation, it seems clear that hands-on training plays an essential role in teaching skills like motivational interviewing and self-defense, but the integration of virtual training should not be overlooked. A commitment to investing in training and embracing new technologies represents a forward-thinking strategy that correctional agencies should steadfastly pursue to realize their long-term goals. In the long run, this commitment to innovation will surely lead to a more productive and positive correctional environment.

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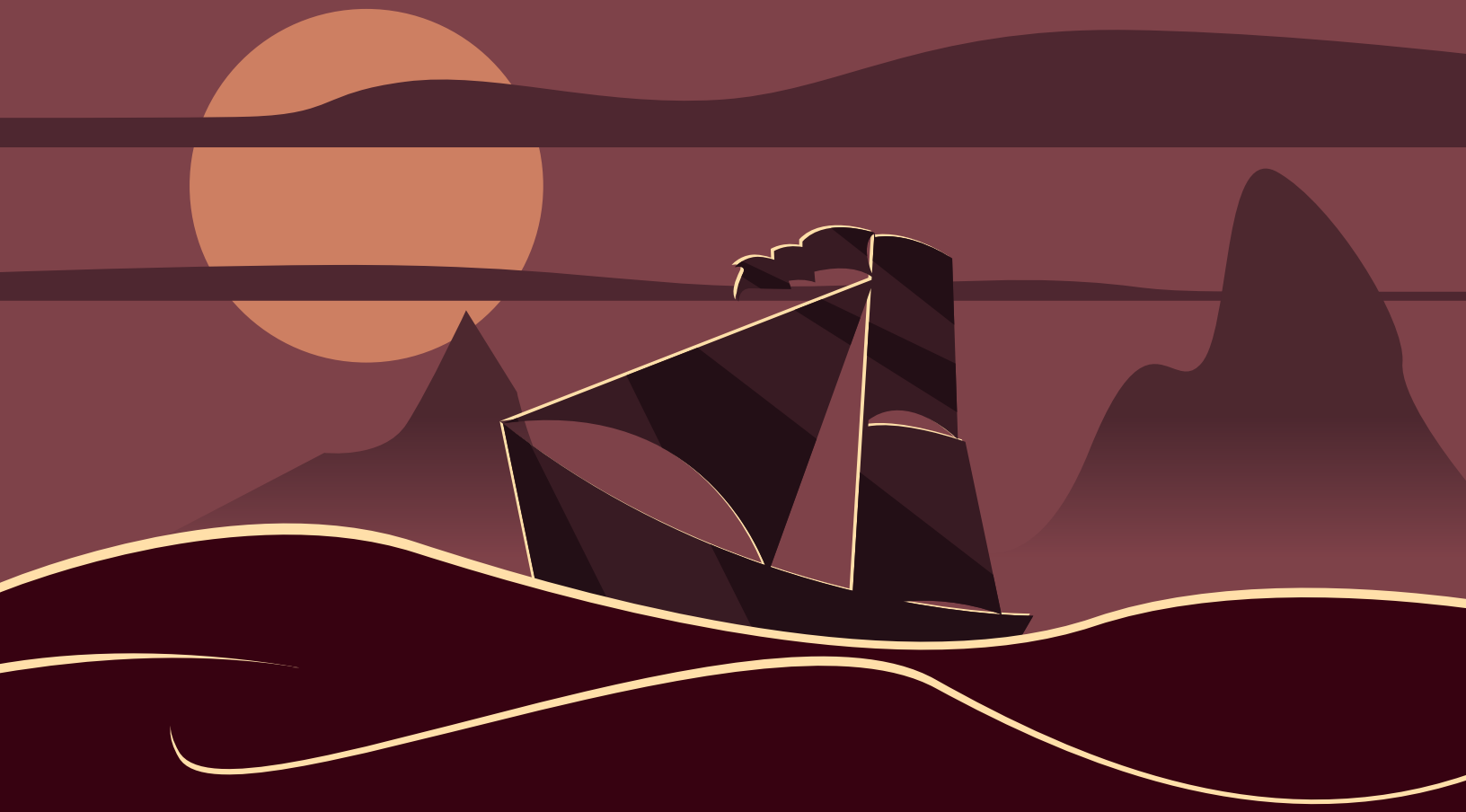

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH:

Engaging in Resilience Training to Promote Staff Effectiveness and Well-Being

By Caterina Spinaris and Daria Mayotte
Desert Waters Correctional Outreach

WHEN THE GOING GETS TOUGH: ENGAGING IN RESILIENCE TRAINING TO PROMOTE STAFF EFFECTIVENESS AND WELL-BEING

Tom,1 a parole officer, had a very hard year. Tom had always excelled at his work and was deeply caring towards and engaged with his clients. Ethical conduct was a priority for him, "walking his talk," as he would describe it. However, a client he had sanctioned for a significant policy violation, with a recommendation that her parole be revoked, accused him of assaulting her sexually in his office a few months prior. The accusation horrified him. It was blatantly false and retaliatory, yet his future career and possibly even his freedom depended on the outcome of the case, and all he had was his word against that of the parolee. While under investigation, Tom felt all alone, unsupported by his supervisor and colleagues, and viewed as guilty before the verdict was pronounced. Additionally, in that same time period his wife was diagnosed with breast cancer. Tom became panicked and overwhelmed, and he experienced great difficulty focusing and sleeping. Unable to cope with the stress on his own, he finally sought the help of a psychotherapist, who taught him resilience-promoting skills based on cognitive-behavioral and positive psychology approaches. These skills that helped him pull through the crisis--and to even identify its positives--included, among others, breathing and other mindfulness skills, cognitive restructuring, skills for tolerating inescapable distress, expressive writing, and an understanding of ways to pursue post-traumatic growth. After his department cleared him, he became an advocate of teaching resilience skills to all staff, openly sharing with his agency administrators that the resilience skills he'd learned and had personally begun incorporating had felt like life and career savers.

"A smooth sea never made a skilled sailor."

-Franklin D. Roosevelt

Correctional employees in all facets of correctional work–in probation, parole, jail, or prison settings–have always dealt with occupational challenges. However, since the COVID-19 pandemic, some employees are being stretched to unprecedented degrees, often with higher loads of high-risk clients, making the teaching of resilience skills more indispensable than ever before.

Psychological resilience has been defined as the ability to experience an adaptive stress response, rapid stress recovery, and low susceptibility to stress-related psychopathology (Wu et al., 2013). Consequently, psychological resilience is a critical component of functioning for those serving in high-stress work environments, such as corrections. A study during the COVID-19 pandemic found that teaching healthcare workers resilience-promoting skills improved levels of resilience, stress, anxiety, and burnout-exhaustion (Yi-Frazier et al., 2022). Yet another study reported that online group coaching of women physician trainees decreased burnout and increased well-being measures (Mann et al., 2023). Similarly, simulation-based resilience-promoting training of police officers was reported to improve levels of the officers' physiological stress response (Andersen et al., 2015). These findings support the expectation that resilience skills are helpful, teachable, and can result in improved well-being even under highly stressful conditions, such as the extreme stress that Tom experienced. While his exact circumstances may not be the norm, dire challenges of one sort or another are too often encountered in correctional settings. Resilience training is therefore imperative, not only for seasoned staff but also for new staff, to prepare them to some degree for what they may encounter and experience during their careers. Like any complex construct, resilience has several layers and facets, and it is best taught incrementally, with more advanced skills, such as skills that promote post-traumatic growth, building on more foundational elements, such as Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy skills (Beck, 2019), and self-regulation through breathing exercises, meditation, and other mindfulness skills (Linehan, 2014). Additionally, repetition, through reviews, reminders, and opportunities to practice, is known to strengthen skills acquisition (Kluge et al., 2010).

THE PURPOSE OF THIS ARTICLE IS FOURFOLD:

- Give a brief overview of what resilience is understood to be.
- Present reasons why resilience needs to be promoted in correctional work.
- Discuss skills and conditions that promote resilience.
- Discuss best practices for teaching skill-based resilience-promoting behaviors to correctional staff to increase the likelihood that staff will incorporate these behaviors in their personal and professional lives.
- We are professional counselors and educators working on equipping correctional professionals so that they can improve their well-being and correctional agencies by implementing wellness-promoting work conditions. We recognize that we are addressing complex issues here in a limited space, and we welcome our readers' comments and feedback, so we can continue learning from those in the field.

WHAT IS RESILIENCE?

We have a friend whose hobby is growing bonsai trees. If you're unfamiliar with this, bonsai is a Japanese art form in which a tree is grown and "trained" within the confines of a small container (Relf, 2020). It is a decades-long process that aims to create what looks like a full-sized tree in miniature form. The bonsai needs regular care, shaping with wires, and extensive and thoughtful pruning. Because there's little space in the container for reserves, the bonsai also needs regular, even daily, water and fertilizer. Growing bonsai trees skillfully can have very impressive results. A bonsai is technically put through trauma as it grows. To survive, it must become resilient. And while it doesn't end up looking like other trees of its family, its adaptation to constraints helps shape it into something that commands admiration.

The term "resilience" derives from the Latin verb resilire, which means to rebound or to recoil. In early usage in the 180's it described the capacity of materials, like wood or metal, to endure severe conditions (Alexander, 2013). The term has since been used to describe properties of living organisms, such as ecosystems, individuals, and organizations (Alexander, 2013; Stanley et al., 2018).

Psychological resilience can be defined as the ability of persons to adapt successfully to disruptions that threaten functioning (Masten, 2014); recovering relatively rapidly following adversity or even positive change (Luthans, 2002), experiencing low current psychological distress in the context of high degree of exposure to high-stress events and conditions (Pietzrack & Cook, 2013), and being relatively resistant to the effects of stressors on health and functioning (Wu et al., 2013). Characteristics of resilience that have been identified are determination, endurance, adaptability, and recuperability during or following a disruptive exposure to a sudden or extreme stressor or after sustaining damage, injury, or psychological trauma (Taormina, 2015).

Consider the bonsai tree here; consider Tom himself as a metaphorical bonsai–someone who "trained" through extreme stressors, adapted to constraining conditions, and "grew" with an amazing outcome.

Psychological resilience is not viewed as an all-or-nothing characteristic of an individual–being either present or absent. Rather, it is defined in relative terms, as degree of resistance to the erosion of well-being and/or impaired functioning, despite exposure to events that tend to affect well-being and functioning (Wu et al, 2013). To use an immune system analogy, more resilient staff may still suffer from infection, and their immune system may be taxed, but it will be taxed significantly less than the immune system of staff who are less resilient, and a faster and more complete recovery will result.

When addressing correctional staff, a distinction must be made between true resilience and false resilience. False resilience can be characterized as looking good on the outside but falling apart on the inside. This façade of toughness may eventually collapse as unprocessed psychological pressures mount (Friedman & Higson-Smith, 2003). False resilience can be based on staff's denial, to themselves and others, that they are distressed or malfunctioning in some areas as a result of how they were affected by work-related stressors. Practically, you may hear false resilience playing out in statements like, "No, this did not bother me; I'm fine," or "We're tough! We can handle anything!" On the other hand, true resilience entails facing challenges with self-awareness coupled with self-honesty regarding their impact and what it will take to overcome the difficulties encountered. Admiral James Stockdale's statement regarding his resilient mindset as a prisoner of war comes to mind as an illustration of true resilience. As he stated in what has become known as the Stockdale Paradox, "You must never confuse faith that you will prevail in the end—which you can never afford to lose—with the discipline to confront the most brutal facts of your current reality, whatever they might be" (as cited in Groysberg & Abrahams, 2020, para. 9).

The difference between true and false resilience is significant. In workforce cultures where false resilience is celebrated and even expected, the consequences on staff's mental health can be highly detrimental and even deadly. That happens when staff falsely believe suicide is their only honorable option when they are struggling with mental health issues, rather than reaching out for assistance. Therefore, the quest for true and enduring resilience is of primary importance, as lives may depend on it (Friedman & Higson-Smith, 2003). Studies have repeatedly reported that the rate and risk of suicide among correctional officers is disturbingly elevated compared to those in most other professions, even police officers (New Jersey Police Suicide Task Force Report, 2009; Stack & Tsoudis, 1997; Violanti et al., 2013). The suicide rate for Massachusetts Department of Correction Correctional Officers was found to be over four times higher than the nation's highest risk demographic for men aged 25-64 (Frost, 2020). Elevated rates of suicidal thoughts have been reported in samples of correctional officers (Lerman, 2017; Denhof & Spinaris, 2016; Spinaris & Brocato, 2019). We'd like to pause at this point and say that if you, our reader, are experiencing suicidal thoughts or urges at this time, please dial 988 to contact the Suicide & Crisis Lifeline 24/7 and/or contact your agency's Employee Assistance Program and/or Peer Support Team to begin to receive the help you need at this time. We want you well!

One more key construct related to resilience is that of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), which refers to personal growth due to how one responds to stressors in the aftermath of traumatic experiences (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 1996). This PTG may result in increased appreciation of relationships, discovering previously unidentified personal strengths, involvement in new pursuits, increased spiritual growth and involvement, and increased appreciation of life (Alper et al., 2022). In addition to helping traumatized people bounce back, PTG can also operate as a protective factor, rendering people more able to withstand and overcome future stressors.

WHY DO CORRECTIONAL STAFF NEED RESILIENCE?

Recently, there has been an increase in the attention paid to correctional staff's wellness needs, and particularly their need for resilience, given inherent occupational stressors (Smith, 2023). Correctional staff in all job roles and ranks are continually and relentlessly bombarded by multitudes of occupational stressors, which can be viewed as falling in three broad categories: (a) operational stressors (technical aspect of the job, such as, staffing, equipment, and certain policies); (b) organizational stressors (the "people" aspect of the job, such as leadership styles, an "us against them" mindset, and personality conflicts); and (c) traumatic stressors (incidents of violence, injury and death, such as the suicide or murder of justice-involved persons, to which staff are exposed either directly, in real time, or indirectly, at a later time, electronically or otherwise). Elements of these three broad categories of occupational stressors may co-occur and interact with one another, making each other worse. For example, short staffing may increase the likelihood of an assault in which staff are injured, resulting in some staff going on medical leave. Conflict may ensue between frontline staff and administrators and between staff

and justice-involved persons, with some staff quitting and others calling in sick, worsening the short-staffing difficulties. Moreover, exacerbation of the "us against them" mindset increases the probability of future conflict and assaults.

In this conversation on promoting resilience, it is important to point out that corrections work has a high probability of repeated traumatic exposure, both directly and indirectly, and staff's own safety is also at risk (Ferdik & Smith, 2017; Spinaris & Brocato, 2019). The term "burnout" (Maslach et al., 1996; Schaufeli et al., 2009) does not adequately describe negative consequences of correctional occupational stressors, because burnout only addresses the consequences of operational and organizational stressors; it does not include the consequences of traumatic stressors. Similarly, the terms Vicarious Traumatization (Pearlman & Saakvitne, 1995; Saakvitne & Pearlman, 1996) and Compassion Fatigue or Secondary Traumatic Stress (Figley, 1995) do not capture the consequences of occupational stressors of correctional staff, as these terms only address indirect traumatic exposure in situations where the safety of those exposed (typically mental health providers while at their offices) is not at high risk. They do not address direct traumatic exposure, being at risk oneself, the impact of operational or occupational stressors, and the interactions of all these factors.

The term Corrections Fatigue was coined to address these nuances and better address wellness needs of correctional staff (Spinaris, 2000). This umbrella term attempts to capture the consequences of all types of correctional occupational stressors. It refers to cumulative negative changes in staff's personality, health, and functioning and cumulative negative changes of the workforce culture as a result of combinations of these stressors (Spinaris, 2020; Spinaris & Brocato, 2019). Causes of Corrections Fatigue are cumulative exposures to occupational stressors in the context of insufficient or unhealthy coping strategies or resources at the individual, team, and/or administrative levels. Although not a clinical diagnosis, but rather a descriptive term similar to burnout (Finney et al., 2013), at the severe end of the continuum Corrections Fatigue may involve diagnosable health conditions such as depression, post-traumatic stress, or high blood pressure (Spinaris, 2020; Spinaris & Brocato, 2019).

WHAT ARE KEY INGREDIENTS OF RESILIENCE?

For correctional work environments to be healthy, three areas need to be targeted to pursue enhanced staff resilience: (a) initiatives involving individual staff (bottom-up), (b) initiatives involving peers/teams (horizontal), and (c) initiatives involving administrators and supervisors (top-down). All three are essential for successful outcomes.

By bottom-up initiatives we mean self-care and other health-promoting behaviors that individual staff can practice on their own, independent of anyone else, on and/or off the job. These include self-care practices that employees can do themselves and that no one else can do for them. They and only they can make these behaviors happen, and often only they know whether they have disciplined themselves enough to follow through with these activities.

By horizontal initiatives we mean training and role-modeling regarding values as well as interpersonal and self-regulation skills that help coworkers interact with one another in constructive, supportive ways. Coworker/peer horizontal activities include the ways staff treat one another, especially staff of the same rank/level, and the workforce culture that emerges as a result ("the way we do things around here"), with formal or informal leaders setting the pace.

By top-down initiatives we mean programs, resources, and system-wide policies instituted and implemented by administrators in order to promote employee wellness. Organizational, top-down activities are those most directly accomplished by agency leadership through a broad variety of system-wide approaches. Examples of these are implementation of strategic well-being initiatives, increase in staffing levels, messaging about and recognition of Corrections Fatigue issues, provision of specifically-targeted training courses, intentional role modeling, new policies that address Corrections Fatigue risk issues (such as mandatory overtime, excessive caseload size, and the ever-present exposure of staff to traumatic stressors), management performance objectives and evaluation criteria, budget and resource allocations, and creation of new positions with support personnel such as wellness coordinators, staff psychologists, or staff chaplains.

Meta-analyses of studies among physicians that compared the efficacy of bottom-up and top-down interventions regarding reduction of burnout reported that both bottom-up and top-down interventions can reduce burnout levels, but top-down interventions tend to have a bigger impact (Panagioti et al., 2016; West et al., 2016). This suggests that reducing or eliminating the negative impact of a stressor through a top-down intervention, such as a policy, tends to be more beneficial regarding promoting resilience than providing coping strategies, such as training physicians to apply mindfulness techniques, to deal with the effects of that stressor. That is important to keep in mind as agencies design programs to boost employee resilience in the workplace. Regarding the influence of horizontal interactions, a study of correctional professionals concluded that coworker relationships significantly impacted staff's well-being (Spinaris & Brocato, 2019).

Researchers have identified protective influences that increase resilience. Some examples are positive coping, positive thinking, positive emotions, realism, behavioral control, family support, positive command climate in work settings, and belongingness (Meredith, et al., 2011; Coulombe et al., 2020; Vanhove et al., 2015). Effective approaches for fostering resilience involve the promotion of such influences through strategies that target both prevention and intervention at all three levels—bottom-up, horizontal, and top-down.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN PREVENTION?

At both the bottom-up (individual) and horizontal (work-team) levels, prevention methods are inoculation-type, long-term approaches, in which strategies are taught and skills are trained before high-stress workplace events happen. Prevention includes embracing health-promoting practices as habitual behaviors that foster health and wellness and practicing values that promote a positive culture, with the goal being to neutralize the negative consequences of stressors. At the bottom-up (individual) level, prevention strategies include teaching staff ways

of thinking that counter negativity and boost optimism and ways to tend to one's physical, psychological, and spiritual health and overall well-being. For example, staff may be taught to correct thinking distortions (Burns, 1980) that lead to emotional distress, or engage in meditation or gratitude practices to promote self-regulation. At the horizontal (work-team) level, prevention strategies include teaching staff positive values and interpersonal skills (such as communication and conflict management) and educating staff on the impact of social support on health and well-being. Such values include the Big 7 values promoted in "From Corrections Fatigue to Fulfillment™," a course offered by the Desert Waters Correctional Outreach nonprofit agency. At the top-down (organizational, administrator) level, prevention includes training administrators and supervisors to adopt positive leadership styles and supportive management practices (Cameron, 2012), wellness-promoting policies and their implementation, provision of appropriate resources, such as education and healthy nutrition, and advocacy for staff wellness at legislative levels.

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN INTERVENTION?

Intervention methods, on the other hand, involve strategies to counter the negative consequences of high-stress events and promote wellness following exposure to them—that is, after a high-stress incident (Everly & Mitchell, 1997). Such strategies may be rather brief and may be implemented in the short term, but they work best when based on wrap-around efforts to offer staff support, and they promote positive workforce cultures that protect staff's psychological safety (Everly & Mitchell, 1997). Interventions are easier to engage in if the groundwork has already been laid to some degree through long-term and habitual resilience-promoting behaviors. Staff members who are well versed in practicing positive behaviors before a high-stress incident will likely be at an advantage compared to staff members who are not. Intervention methods also include the use of appropriate resources, such as corrections-specific, affordable, adequate, sufficient, and easily accessible treatment options.

Prevention and intervention strategies can be likened to two mechanisms one might use for withstanding a torrential rainstorm. Raincoats, hats, and umbrellas are intended to keep one dry (prevention). Yet, if the storm is significant enough, one will get wet anyway, despite the protective gear. As a result, towels, hair dryers, and dry clothes will be necessary afterward (intervention). Both prevention and intervention have necessary functions and will be needed independently or simultaneously at various points in time, depending on the circumstances.

Corrections staff will benefit from the ongoing incorporation of both prevention strategies as well as intervention strategies in the effort to boost resilience.

WHAT ARE SOME FOUNDATIONAL ELEMENTS TO CONSIDER WHEN TEACHING RESILIENCE?

As described earlier when addressing false resilience in law enforcement and military workforce cultures (Friedman & Higson-Smith, 2003; Spinaris, 2020, 2022), individuals in such cultures are trained implicitly and/or by example to "play through the pain" and to deny, minimize, or ignore their own feelings, needs, or reactions.

Psychological resilience is a fairly new (in corrections, at least) and a specialized training topic. During the last two decades or so, there has been increased interest in the possibility of teaching resilience in workplaces to improve the well-being and functioning of employees, especially those working in predictably high-stress or high-trauma environments (Vanhove et al., 2015).

Resilience-promoting curriculum is best when based on the latest valid scientific evidence and understanding of correctional workforce cultures. Resilience training aims to help staff build a greater capacity to withstand stressors, bounce back relatively unharmed, and even grow positively as a result of the experience, further increasing their capacity for resilience.

WHAT SHOULD BE CONSIDERED IN PREPARING A RESILIENCE TRAINING CURRICULUM?

Since this is a specialized and ever-evolving area of learning, the curriculum and ways to teach it should be compiled by Subject Matter Experts (SME) in the areas of psychological trauma, cognitive-behavioral therapy, and positive psychology who also have an understanding of the correctional workforce cultures that the training addresses. Such a curriculum could be put together from scratch, or an existing program could be used or expanded, as long as it meets the criteria of being skills based, corrections specific, trauma responsive, and based on current research findings.

Agencies might be best situated to offer two distinct curricula on resilience, one addressing the subject from the perspective and needs of seasoned staff and the other addressing the subject from the perspective and needs of new staff. Theoretical information is important to include in the training to start, explaining the concept of resilience and its nuances and its necessity if correctional staff are to remain healthy and functional. In the case where resilience training is mandatory, rather than just being given to staff members who elect to take the training, there is always the possibility that some staff who are mandated to attend do not have a "felt need" for such a training. These participants may be of the opinion that they are already resilient and that they are coping well both in their professional and their personal lives. If such participants express a negative opinion about the course—for example, indicating that they regard the class to be a waste of their time—they should be treated with respect and commended for doing well in their lives. The instructors may ask for them to share some of their coping strategies in class and may suggest to such reluctant attendees that they themselves may not need this material at this time but might be able to share it with a coworker in need and/or might find it useful for themselves in the future.

The resilience curriculum is best when it is skills based, presenting a variety of resilience-promoting behaviors step by step, like recipes in cookbooks. This allows the learners to understand how to put the skills into real-world practice. Several such skills are necessary, as not all suggestions resonate with or fit all learners well. To make resilience training, including skill-building, more suitable for the audience, it would be advisable to include, with permission, pertinent brief examples or quotes by staff working in similar roles as the learners.

When compiling the curriculum, the SME is strongly advised to point out that resilience is not only an individually based attainment. It is also very much a team-based and agency-based goal to be pursued. It is imperative to highlight that resilience must be pursued throughout the agency by staff at every level, exercising their authority to boost resilience in the ways that they are able and authorized to do.

Helping staff during the training to identify their spheres of influence (i.e., who or what THEY can impact) is critical, as it empowers them to BE the change they want to see in their corner of their work world. For example, individual probation officers have control over how they treat their clients/probationers and coworkers, but they do not have control over budgets voted on by the legislature.

Ideally, resilience training should be divided into weekly or every other week sessions, including scenarios to discuss and exercises to practice assigned skills that can be worked on between sessions. Outcomes and experiences can be reported in the following session. Classes should be fairly small, comprised of approximately 12 to 15 learners, to allow appropriate time for reporting out and discussion.

TO WHAT EXTENT IS RESILIENCE TRAINING EFFECTIVE?

A meta-analytic review of resilience-building training studies in organizational workplace environments (Vanhove et al., 2015) examined the effects of resilience-building training on measures of well-being (e.g., life satisfaction, job satisfaction, optimism), prevention of deficits in psychosocial functioning (e.g., negative thinking, anxiety, depression), and work performance (e.g., supervisor-rated performance, successful task completion). Individual coaching was found to be the most effective method of resilience-building training, followed by classroom-based training. It was also found that organizational resilience-building training resulted in enhanced training effects that increased over time for workforce populations at greater risk for exposure to highly stressful and/or traumatic work conditions and who had had no prior such training, contrary to workforces not exposed to such conditions. (In fact, training benefits in the latter group diminished over time.) Correctional work environments certainly fall in the category of highly stressful and/or traumatic work environments. Indirectly, these findings also point to the importance of review of the material and reminders of principles through "refresher" training, and the encouragement and role modeling by supervisors of personal application of resilience-building principles and strategies (Kluge et al., 2010).

WHAT IS INVOLVED IN OVERCOMING ROADBLOCKS TO RESILIENCE TRAINING IN CORRECTIONAL WORKFORCE CULTURES?

For many understandable reasons, correctional workforce cultures have admired and sought after the appearance of invulnerability and toughness among the staff, especially uniformed staff. As a result, staff who admit to struggling emotionally may be ostracized. This mindset must be tactfully overcome if learners are to be open to receiving resilience-promoting material and acknowledging that we are all fragile human beings who need constructive strategies for dealing with stressors.

STRATEGIES THAT HELP REDUCE APPREHENSION ABOUT THIS TYPE OF TRAINING INCLUDE:

Explaining to staff that, yes, they need to keep their emotions at bay while responding to high-stress or traumatic events, but there will come a time later on when they need to process that material for the sake of their well-being. If they do not, negative consequences of exposure to such events will continue to accumulate, eventually reaching a critical mass that is hard to overcome.

Affirming that it is much more courageous and admirable to face one's struggles than to deny them by keeping a "stiff upper lip." In our experience, staff are more receptive to such self-help material when the need for it is explained to them in this manner.

Pointing out to staff the positive aspect of keeping an open mind as they go through the course, because they may not need this material at this time but their colleagues might, or the material may become relevant to them personally later on.

Including stories of staff overcoming adversity and regaining their well-being through the application of resilience-promoting behaviors.

Training instructors to briefly share personal stories of experiencing and working through adversity through the application of resilience-promoting behaviors.

Training instructors to remain respectful when challenging comments are expressed by learners in class or outside of class. Compassionately validating the emotions behind staff concerns about the material without agreeing with the content of the comments is an art form that can be taught. When applied, it can win naysayers over.

Training instructors to protect learners' psychological safety by respectfully yet firmly intercepting critical or ridiculing statements made when a learner shares about having struggled with work-related stressors. Instructors must be trained to affirm that correctional work poses unique challenges, which is why such material is taught to staff.

When such steps are taken and done well, the classroom experience becomes one of "bonding" and forming a community. This is augmented when learners are given ample opportunity to ask questions, discuss the material both as a large group and in small groups, and provide input and solutions to work-related and home-life challenges.

Even though resilience training tends to be positive and empowering, the subject of trauma may be touched upon periodically. Consequently, there is always a possibility that learners may feel "triggered" by a memory and experience emotional distress. Instructors must be trained to respond to learner "meltdowns" in class and at a later time and have a number of resources and referrals available.

WHAT ARE SOME BASIC MEANS OF ENGAGING THE LEARNERS?

Since this is a primarily skills-based training (a cookbook with several recipes) it is important to apply these skills

at even a rudimentary level in class through the use of scenarios and role playing. In addition, for long-term benefit the training team of the agency should provide reminders of resilience-promoting behaviors. That can be done through group emails, newsletters, bulletin boards, or posters or by disseminating the information to supervisors to discuss with their team.

WHAT TOPICS ARE COVERED IN RESILIENCE TRAINING?

Important topics in resilience training include:

How well-being can be gradually eroded by work stressors–the nature and process of Corrections Fatigue,

How resilience-promoting behaviors can reduce Corrections Fatigue and even reverse it,

The fact that resilience-promoting skills can be learned, and

The process of brain "rewiring" through repetition (based on current knowledge about nervous system changes when we learn).

ADDITIONALLY, IT WOULD BE IMPORTANT TO PRESENT SKILLS RELATED TO:

- Positive social interactions and social support
- Self-regulation (emotions, thoughts, behaviors)
- Cognitive reframing
- Positive meaning making
- Logical problem-solving
- Managing inescapable distress in healthy ways
- Self-care
- Mastery/Overlearning
- Correcting cognitive errors
- Optimism
- Gratitude
- Post-Traumatic Growth

This article is merely an overview with broad brush strokes that presents the big picture for teaching resilience skills. Like the proverbial layers of the onion, after instructors at an agency start to offer this type of training, they may seek and discover ways to proceed deeper into the subject by progressively building on existing blocks of learning, while also keeping the big picture in mind.

CONCLUSION

Let's return for a moment to our bonsai analogy. What correctional agencies have in their (metaphorical) hands is staff who, like the bonsai, are being repeatedly subjected to uniquely taxing environments. As a result, they are continually shaped by occupational stressors. Opportunities available through resilience training are comparable to expert pruning, watering, and fertilizing. Skillfully managed, exposure to highly stressful circumstances can become a springboard for growth. What is the potential outcome of the intentionality of resilience training throughout this transformation process? As with the bonsai, it can be simply amazing.

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INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAINING AND COLLABORATION IN COMMUNITY SUPERVISION:

Optimizing Technology, Communication, Identity Transformation, and Desistance with External Partners

By Phil Galli, Shawn Trusten, and Jason Mereness

INTERDISCIPLINARY TRAINING AND COLLABORATION IN COMMUNITY SUPERVISION: OPTIMIZING TECHNOLOGY, COMMUNICATION, IDENTITY TRANSFORMATION, AND DESISTANCE WITH EXTERNAL PARTNERS

The world has changed dramatically since early 2020. Necessitated by the worldwide pandemic, individuals were forced to find ways to communicate and work remotely. Absent access to traditional brick-and-mortar buildings, resources, or supervision approaches, some community supervision agencies across the world still found ways to be responsive to their clients' needs and to meet their promise to promote community safety, though a difficult endeavor (Viglione et al., 2017). Most of these changes in community supervision were built around the use of technology, specifically the use of video and other digital tools to eliminate the need for clients and community correctional officers to be together in time and space (Dominey et al., 2017). Today, digital tools and video conferencing are becoming more commonplace in community supervision offices than in-person, face-to-face visits (Galleguillos et al., 2023). Agencies are finding themselves more accessible to those they supervise and more equitable in how they supervise, and they are eliminating barriers to being truly inclusive (Dauria et al., 2023).

For case planning to be truly impactful for a client, it must involve others outside of the formal justice system. That is, discussions surrounding crime cessation and the future must not be limited to a justice system professional and the client. Instead, these conversations must be interdisciplinary, drawing in practitioners from adjacent fields (behavioral health, education, social services, etc.) to best serve client needs. These interdisciplinary teams of individuals must work together, not with an adversarial approach toward each other, in order to provide the client the necessary tools for success. Even before the team starts working with a specific client, this type of interdisciplinary teamwork can develop by means of training and other experience-building opportunities for community correctional professionals. Because of the continued advancement of technology, many of these education opportunities are available remotely in both synchronous and asynchronous formats.

It is interesting to look at how these foundational and technological changes to community supervision have translated into the ways we support and train those who do the work as well. To do this, we must ask ourselves the question "How have the changes of the past few years informed how we train community supervision professionals and our partners?" Community supervision professionals are most commonly probation and parole officers, but may also be social workers, case managers, or individuals with other specific job titles who have a court-ordered expectation to supervise or work with individuals in the community. Community partners are the agencies and people who make up the ecosystem of our community supervision and support efforts. These partners include various entities such as social and human services, emergency services, health departments and hospitals, law enforcement, pretrial services, attorneys, courts, and community-based organizations, including local non-profits that provide housing, medical, basic needs, substance use/substance use disorder treatment services, and mental health services. Such efforts to promote the use of technology in supervision and monitoring include offering cross-training and other collaborative efforts involving both community supervision professionals and community partners. Some jurisdictions are bringing in outside vendors to provide cross-training and collaboration, while others are relying on community justice collaborating councils (also known as criminal justice coordinating councils, or CJCCs) to facilitate these cross-agency training and collaborative discussions, bringing in stakeholders who indirectly and directly provide support services to foster increased quality of life and community safety (McLearen et al., 2023; Nugent-Borakove & Beeman, 2013). Many of these opportunities offer the chance to break down some of the traditional solitary "silos" in which departments typically operate (Manchak et al., 2023; Nugent-Borakove & Beeman, 2013) and instead utilize training in the use of technology as conduit for collaboration. While CJCCs more commonly work collaboratively on initiatives that will impact the larger community, including supporting technological advancements to increase connectivity, it can be helpful to think of community correctional professionals collaborating with external service providers in a similar way to support their clients.

Consider a situation where multiple agencies (i.e., probation, health, and human services) are involved in the case planning for a particular client. The relevant individuals from each group, if provided with training and technology, can set up a video conference meeting where all members meet with the client at the same time. This can take place without having to physically reserve a space, bring everyone together, or consider commute times, challenges with parking, or potential barriers clients may face in attending multiple appointments, among others. Team members might also be trained on the use of "break-out rooms" within the meeting, allowing individual discussions with a client to take place privately, between each provider. However, the reality is most of these changes and technological advances are happening in relative isolation, without coordination. In partner-to-partner, agency-to-agency, department-to-department, and division-to-division interactions, we often find ourselves doing similar things but separate from one another. Compound this with the fact that our community supervision professionals and partners often do not know what each other is doing, and you have a recipe for misunderstanding, miscommunication, and less client success.

Training and collaboration throughout the world have become more dependent on technology--specifically, the video and digital tools described above. We are also seeing an increase in the amount of asynchronous training being made available; especially outside of college institutions and universities who have optimized asynchronous distance learning for well over a decade now (Kimura et al., 2023). Asynchronous is defined as (a) of two or more objects or events not existing or happening at the same time and (b) computing-telecommunications of/or requiring a form of computer control timing protocol in which a specific operation begins upon receipt of an indication (signal) that the preceding operation has been completed (Varkey et al., 2022).

This is promising news at face value. Since departments no longer need to consider the expense of physically sending someone for training or, as has been necessary in the past, have the training completed at the specific set time when it is offered, resources are freed up and schedules optimized. The transportation, housing, and per diem costs are not necessary with technology and remote training. Some may argue that a key piece of our work is lost with remote training, as the networking and socializing that takes place at local, regional, and state conferences cannot be replicated in a digital or distance format. While some of this may be true, training and collaboration are becoming more inclusive and available to resource-strapped agencies, and these advantages may outweigh any shortcomings. The answer, overall, may be to offer both in-person, online, and hybrid formats when offering training, putting

on conferences, staffing client cases, or providing a way for clients to meet with their team of providers. This represents a responsive or individualized approach--meeting people where they are. If we are to be successful in our community supervision efforts and to promote identity transformation and "desistance" (very generally, the process of ceasing criminal activity) for clients, we need to be working in collaboration with, and providing training for, our community supervision professionals and partners (Appleton, 2023; Rocque, 2021).

PROVIDING EDUCATION ON DESISTANCE TO ALL

Research suggests that increasing both social and human capital and supporting client identity transformation (Paternoster & Bushway, 2009; Best et al., 2017) are most likely to lead a client to desist from offending. To increase the likelihood of desistance occurring, we can assist clients in finding long-term personal support (social capital), skill development (human capital), and reasons to start viewing themselves differently in their individual lives (identity transformation), that will carry them forward post-supervision (Appleton, 2023). One area in which our field can improve client outcomes is by ensuring that desistance-related information is shared among community correctional professionals and service providers who support our clients. Probation and parole staff and agencies might benefit from asking themselves some pertinent questions in this regard. For example, what do your system and community partners know about the desistance process? What do the client and their prosocial family and friends know about the desistance process? Have you explicitly shared with them the important role they will play?

One proposal is that community supervision agencies reach out to other departments and people who can support the client across all three areas, beginning a dialogue--that includes the client--on how to successfully desist. Because the process is individualized, it is incumbent on us as practitioners to collaborate with the clients to find out what may work for them and then seek out avenues to have those needs met. For example, if a client is lacking in prosocial support, it makes sense to seek mentorship programs in the community. However, instead of taking time to broker the service and then check in with the client, what if agencies proactively contacted such programs and shared how they can be a source of social capital for a client? At the very least, imagine a world where all community partners were familiar with terms like social capital, human capital, and desistance, a world in which community correctional professionals and service providers spoke the same "language." What could it mean to a client to be in a space with their probation officer, chemical dependency counselor, and a family member, with all of them discussing not just the requirements from the court but, arguably more important, who the client could reach out to in, say, two years if an urge to relapse emerged? Moreover, if all the individuals in that space cannot name someone, they can collectively plan to find such a person. This keeps the client (and everyone else involved in the planning) future focused, which is essential for desistance. It shows clients that the finish line for their supervision is not simply to "get them off paper," but that client success goes beyond simply no longer being under community supervision—that success extends to having a successful life.

The idea of reaching out to businesses, employers, and schools in the clients' community is even more compelling. How many employers near where your clients reside are aware of the importance of a client's view of themselves shifting from that of an "outlaw" or "outcast" to that of a "parent" or "employee"? How many are aware that they should seek to provide ten positive pieces of feedback for every one negative, because that leads to behavior change (Wodahl et al., 2011)? The way these questions are posed here may come across as tongue-in-cheek, but they are in fact significant. All practitioners have seen clients who may be on supervision and who are actively engaged in the identity transformation process needed to desist. It is important to provide education to employers about what identity transformation means and how to find the client a prosocial mentor at a job to provide social support for the human capital they are learning from their employer.

TRANSFORMATION IN ACTION

A recent study conducted by the Minnesota Department of Human Services about the experiences of those receiving mental health, addiction recovery, and specialty medical care via video or telephone found that most of the respondents were satisfied with those services received. Additionally, researchers discovered that several of barriers to treatment attendance, such as transportation and access to services, were removed. According to one study, "Two-thirds of survey respondents who received telehealth services in the past year (65%) said that telehealth made it possible for them to access the health care they otherwise would not have received" (Minnesota Department of Human Services, 2023, p. 8). Most probation officers would agree that transportation and access to services are similar barriers to our clients' successes. Given the personal nature of the work in mental health, addiction recovery, and specialty medical care, one could argue that the successes found in this study could transfer to our field.

One proposal is not to merely view the necessary adjustments we all made during the COVID-19 pandemic as a temporary period in our history and practices but, instead, to view them as an opportunity and a source of new approaches on which we can capitalize to better serve our clients and the communities in which they reside. Likewise, transportation and childcare costs are consistent issues for the clients we serve. We have all observed that the traditional brick-and-mortar approach to providing services to clients has shifted and that services can be individualized and thereby responsive to client needs and barriers. However, one critical aspect of implementing technology in the workplace is the ability for clients to receive no-cost, or at least low-cost, access to technology to support their journey of desistance. Digital equity is more important than ever when it comes to accessing resources such as programming and training (Aguilar, 2020). Instead of lamenting these facts and hoping it will shift back, we must be proactive and seek ways to support our clients and community partners, as they will need to be digitally connected now more than ever.

Most of us utilized video visiting during the pandemic. Most of us use smartphones to communicate with friends, family, and co-workers daily. Nonetheless, some staff, clients, and community partners may have just a rudimentary understanding of the full potential of these digital tools, and others might even be using these technologies for the first time. Ensuring that the necessary skills are developed and utilized is important, because clients deserve the best services possible–services that meet their needs and reduce barriers to participating and achieving success. This is dependent on the interdisciplinary training, collaboration across adjacent fields, and use of the technology outlined above.

CONCLUSION

The bottom line is that using technology in community supervision to connect with clients and external service providers is both possible and valuable. This much has been shown to be true as we have advanced on over four years from that abrupt early pivot to remote work and learning caused by the pandemic. We must

continue to increase our understanding of how to maximize the beneficial aspects of the tools at our disposal. We must continue to advance in connecting with clients and community partners remotely, in using technology to cross train with mental health professionals and others working in adjacent fields, and in taking advantage of interdisciplinary teamwork to build case plans that best meet the needs of clients. The years ahead will reflect our best efforts in this regard, hopefully quite positively.

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