

Example:

A guy continuously jogs between you and the curb you are doing push-ups off. You get upset because you feel the guy is being disrespectful because he is running in your lane. If you think about it, perhaps the guy did not know you were doing push-ups, because every time he jogs by you are just standing there, perhaps, taking a break. As far as he believes, you are just standing there. If you moved closer to the curb where you are doing push-ups, perhaps he would not run in your lane. That way he will know you are doing push-ups and run around you. Think.

Example two:

You are washing up or brushing your teeth in the sink and a guy comes in and hawks in the sink right next to you. The first thing you do is get upset and want to do something terrible to him, something criminal. But if you were to think about it, perhaps you would be encouraged to believe the guy is sick, or you can just step out of the restroom until he is done. Thinking is critical to keeping our behavior in check. Besides, just like you have the right to brush your teeth, the next guy has the right to do as he pleases.

If we have the power to think, why not think positively? We can achieve change by way of actually thinking and not allowing the restraints of prison, stress, anger, negative behavior, aggression and violence hold us back, through positive self-talk, learning, growing and changing. Have confidence. Think positively about others and self.

Criminal Thinking

Here is a criminal thought...if you think about it. Because we are all fallible, we make mistakes, which is no excuse. The first thing we do after meeting someone new is to peer in their eyes, scan their face for scars, evidence of a broken nose, crooked teeth or even a limp in their walk; seeking just a little hint of a weakness, something we can use against this person, perhaps, later or maybe right away...criminal thinking at its best.

The old you was a criminal thinker, whether you know or believe that or not. When you look back and reflect on all those individuals who wanted to be just like you; do those things you were doing illegally, those were the criminal minds at work. You unwillingly played a role in helping to turn those individuals into criminal minds and possibly were responsible for destroying their life. Just because you believe it is not harming anyone, yourself included, do not make it a noncriminal thought/action.

These are the things you are encouraged to address and deviate from, have remorse and think of never repeating those acts or having those criminal thoughts that can be put into action.

Here is the thing about criminal thinking. You would not willingly run a red light because common sense reminds or alert you of the consequences you may face if you do. Using that same common sense, you would willingly challenge a yellow light before it turns red, making it your excuse when caught, but it still does not excuse the criminal aspect of it all. Both aspects require thinking on our part, but understand the challenge of the yellow light attempt...it is our criminal thought that persuades us to move forward; to do something we know we should not do, something that is wrong; your excuse to break the law. Criminal thinking negatively affects behavior and encourages bad behavior. Take the thief for instance. The one thing a thief is afraid of, above consequences for his actions, is getting robbed himself. This action would fuel and encourage his criminal thinking even further. He will contemplate revenge in the way of how to get even. Instead of further criminal thinking, followed by a criminal action, he should take that experience and grow from it, institute and practice positive coping skills to help him refrain from criminal thoughts...had he taken the time to develop any coping skills.

Prior to your crime:

What were you thinking about, consequences or simply committing your crime and getting away with it? During the commission of your crime, who did you think about, your victim or yourself? After committing your crime, who or what should you have been thinking about, getting away, committing the perfect crime, your victim, victim next of kin, how to be a better person or what made you commit your crime?

You are the only one who can answer those questions and they need answering in order to heal, correct and understand who you were verses who you need to be or are right now and also to learn a different way of thinking. Then think about the rest of what you read as you read on. Realize you are not a bad person, but that you were not a very good one. Instead of having criminal thoughts, why not think about how you will confront the social stigma over your violent behavior and incarceration. Think about what your realistic anticipation of how you will handle that; integrate coping skills that will address those potential personality liabilities you will face upon your release. Then separate healthy, normal anger; appropriate expressions of it, and how you failed to do that in the past. Clarify what you want to convey about yourself and how it relates to the violence you perpetrated in your crime. Then internalize pro-social values and morals, with regard to the challenge of being pro-social in society and having day-to-day practice in non-conflict resolution skills and improved communication abilities with others.

Have the courage to become the positive shadow under your own fig tree of helping others. When you are asked to do a simple task and your first thought is that you need a drink to get started...that is a criminal thought. First, you should not be drinking at all because you are on parole; haven't you learned yet? Even when you say, "I thought about bussing his head down to the white meat," that is criminal thinking. We can talk ourselves out of doing negative things but we talk ourselves into doing things that are wrong way more than doing positive things that will help or benefit us in a positive manner. We continuously rob ourselves of positive thinking every time we have a criminal thought...that is something to be afraid of. We repeatedly excuse ourselves from thinking positively every time we get emotional, angry, and jealous or move too fast; to our own beat. Some excuse, huh? The art of thinking for us should not be of consequences. We already know the consequences of our actions. If we have to think of consequences, that means we are still having inappropriate criminal thoughts. When we slow down and take our time we will not have to worry at all about the consequences of our negative actions but we must open our mind to see we are not perfect but we can do things perfectly. We've all heard the line "*oh, I'm not so bad, once you get to know me.*" You may have even said to someone, or heard someone else say, "Do you know who the hell I am?" the question is, do you really know yourself? Sure, you may know your birthday or where you were born, but, do you know you? Do you know your family, your friends? If not, strengthen the link in your social circle by getting to really know yourself, your family and friends, not just by name. I'm speaking about favorite colors, number, what makes you, family, friends happy, sad, angry.

What kind of music do they like, what they like to eat, watch, etc., whether they love the rain or if lightening frightens them, hopefully, when you think about someone else, the criminal elements of your thought process will begin to change and will be replaced with the joy of making others happy, instead of incredibly disappointed.?

Your dad gave you life, without a criminal thought. Your mom carried you through the developing stages of your life without a criminal thought. Then, the first thing your mom gave you afterward, as an embryo, was nourishment from her own body...without a single criminal thought. Your parents, together, gave you your name; your identity. Then, together, they helped you process your non-criminal thinking nature. When you were being taught how to speak; say mommy, daddy, you had to *think* of how to formulate and repeat what was being said to you and what a joy it was for your parents to hear. You were not only taught what the word no meant but you also got a taste of its consequences, hand slapped, bottom spanked, etc.

So, you went through all those stages, were taught, learned and yet, somewhere along the line, you overlooked what you were taught and turned the basic learning of thinking into your own way of criminal thinking. That is the true origin of the criminal thinking. You defied your parents and said that one word "no", even after you were served samples of its consequences. So, here you sit. What to do? Where to go from here?