



**Building a Better Life**  
by Pamela M. Yates &  
David S. Prescott

## **Building a Better Life** *A Good Lives and Self-Regulation Workbook*

*Building a Better Life: A Good Lives and Self-Regulation Workbook* is a comprehensive guided workbook for sexual offenders. It is designed to accompany *Applying the Good Lives and Self-Regulation Models to Sex Offender Treatment: A Practical Guide for Clinicians* by Pamela Yates, David Prescott, and Tony Ward, published by Safer Society Press, and for use in treatment programs utilizing the Good Lives Model. *Building a Better Life* is the first client workbook using the Good Lives and Self-Regulation models of sexual offender treatment.

Although *Building a Better Life* involves considerable self-study, it is not a stand-alone curriculum for sexual offender treatment. Rather, the intension is that it will be used as a part of an integrated treatment program. The best use of the workbook is as part of an ongoing, progressive dialog with clients. While clients' complete assignments on their own outside of treatment sessions, it is intended that clinicians review these assignments in either individual or group therapy sessions. Because the purpose of the exercises is for clients to explore their lives, and because the Good Lives Model itself is inherently collaborative, the workbook exercises should not be graded as though they were homework assignments but should be used to augment treatment. The structure of the workbook allows for clients to return to previous exercises and add information as they progress in treatment and develop a deeper knowledge of themselves and their goals.

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The first part of the workbook examines motivation for change and borrows directly from the literature on motivational interviewing and enhancement. The purpose is to set the stage for the work that follows, to allow therapists to work with clients' on motivation early in treatment, and to provide written work to which clients can return in the future. Client work on motivation then moves into sections on common life goals (known in the Good Lives Model literature as "primary human goods") in order to explore goals that are important to them and to begin to formulate a treatment plan and, ultimately, a good life plan.

Next, information and exercises pertaining to risk factors are provided and the relationship between risk and the clients' attempts to attain primary goods is explored. This is followed by self-regulation, including a brief, structured autobiographical exercise, explorations of the clients' offense progressions (offense chains), and determining offense pathways. These exercises facilitate understanding of self-regulation, its influence of behavior, risk, offending, and attainment of life goals, and to contribute to skill and strategy development to meet goals and manage risk.

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Clients next return to review their work and motivations for change, revising their knowledge as needed, and then move to the concluding parts of the workbook, which focus on the integration of the various constructs presented in the workbook and during treatment. Clients then develop comprehensive risk management and good lives plans designed to achieve the two objectives of the Good Lives Model: to reduce and manage risk to re-offend and to work toward attaining a better life. Lastly, these plans are integrated and their application in practice in the community is explored.

*Building a Better Life* emphasizes the establishment of desirable goals toward which the client can work. This builds on the fundamental principles of the Good Lives Model and on research findings that not only are approach goals inherently more attainable than avoidance goals, but that people who organize their lives around approach goals tend to be happier and less distressed than those whose goals are based in avoidance. It is recommended that treatment planning both within and outside this workbook take place in a fashion that the client experiences as motivating and in a manner that is collaborative. Goals imposed by others are rarely desirable and unlikely to be attainable.

Because of the collaborative nature of the Good Lives Model, *Building a Better Life* requires certain therapist characteristics in order to be most useful to clients. Research in the past decade has shown that—just as in traditional psychotherapy—effective therapists are warm, empathic, and rewarding, as well as directive. Rather than imposing behavior change on clients, this workbook elicits the clients' internal goals and motivations for change. A major task for clinicians is guiding the client toward greater understanding and skill building. For this reason, clinicians using confrontational methods will likely have difficulty with *Building a Better Life*. Because

these methods are often difficult to measure in one's own performance, it is useful to obtain feedback from clients and others and to ensure that the therapeutic alliance—which research is clear plays a vital role in successful treatment—is functioning optimally.

As a final note, newcomers to the Good Lives and Self-Regulation models often have the misperception that, by virtue of its name, the Good Lives Model promotes lofty visions of an unrealistic future. Although *Building a Better Life* will quickly disabuse clients and clinicians of this notion, it is important to highlight a fundamental premise of this workbook: clients can and should work to develop a healthy, satisfying, fulfilling, and harm-free life. As with any other goal or set of goals, each client's good life plan should be realistic, clear, achievable, and measurable.

### **An Invitation to Our Online Resources**

*Building a Better Life: A Good Lives and Self-Regulation Workbook* is designed for a wide variety of people who have sexually abused. We have strived to make this workbook as accessible as it is comprehensive. To this end, Safer Society Press is making available extended versions of a number of the exercises contained in the workbook at

**<https://safersocietypress.org/store/building-a-better-life/>**

The extended versions provide additional space for those clients who may need more than is provided in the bound book.

We are pleased to be able to present this workbook to you, and are looking ahead to how we can best adapt future editions to meet the needs of clients and clinicians alike. We hope that as you explore this workbook you will send us your ideas for how it can be improved. We welcome your comments via email to [info@safersociety.org](mailto:info@safersociety.org).

We wish you all the best as you use this workbook!

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