

# Awakening Motivation for Difficult Changes

David S. Prescott and Robin J. Wilson



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# Table of Contents

<b>Forward for professionals and clients</b> . . . . .	2
<b>Introduction</b> . . . . .	3
<b>Section 1: Just notice...and see what happens next</b> . . . . .	7
<b>Section 2: Barriers to change</b> . . . . .	13
<b>Section 3: Stages of change</b> . . . . .	17
<b>Section 4: Setting aside the issue of treatment, what about your life would you would like to change?</b> . . . . .	21
<b>Section 5: Strengths</b> . . . . .	25
<b>Section 6: The decision matrix</b> . . . . .	29
<b>Section 7: “Approach” goals</b> . . . . .	33
<b>Section 8: Values</b> . . . . .	37
<b>Section 9: Balance</b> . . . . .	41
<b>Section 10: Self-monitoring</b> . . . . .	43
<b>Section 11: Think, act, evaluate</b> . . . . .	45
<b>Section 12: Now that you have begun to think about your goals, let’s look at how people actually change</b> . . . . .	49
<b>Section 13: What to expect when you enter treatment</b> . . . . .	55
<b>Section 14: A quick word about hope</b> . . . . .	63
<b>Section 15: Other features of treatment programs</b> . . . . .	65
<b>Section 16: Key activities in treatment</b> . . . . .	73
<b>Section 17: Next steps</b> . . . . .	81

# Foreword for professionals and clients

What have recent decades taught us about how people change, especially in the criminal justice system? We have learned:

- That punishment on its own does not reduce crime or build better lives.
- That meaningful treatment *can* work.
- That a good working relationship between therapist and client is vital to successful treatment.
- That although many clients are forced into treatment by circumstances, they ultimately find their own reasons to change and to stay changed.
- That people are happiest when they have goals in their life that they approach rather than avoid.

The best efforts at change involve careful planning and preparation. Sadly, far too many treatment programs, in their rush to build healthier lives and safer communities, overlook the preparatory steps to change that are outlined in these pages. Just like a hardwood table that has been painted over several times, underneath all that paint lies a beautiful wood grain that is almost yearning to shine through. Bringing out that richness and beauty, however, will require a lot of hard work. It will require scraping and sanding before it can be successfully refinished. Similarly, we believe that inside every person who has found themselves labeled “offender” is a good person yearning to shine through. However, the process of personal change also requires hard work, and we need to be sure that clients are ready and willing to engage in that process. To this end, this workbook very directly uses elements of motivational interviewing, feedback-informed treatment, and cognitive-behavioral therapy. The book builds on and extends our earlier works in the treatment of people who have sexually abused, including David Prescott’s 2009 book titled *Building Motivation to Change in Sexual Offenders*, and Robin Wilson’s 2003 workbook (co-authored with Murray Cullen) titled *TRY: Treatment Readiness for You*.

The audience for this workbook is anyone age 16 or older (and in some cases possibly younger, with help from a supportive professional) who has gotten into trouble with the law or who is facing serious life challenges in his or her life.

This workbook builds on the work of many friends, colleagues, and mentors. The influence on this workbook of these people will be more obvious in some places than others. We are grateful to them all. They include Bill Miller, Steve Rollnick, Kurt Freund, Pamela Yates, Tony Ward, Ruth Mann, David Thornton, Bill and Liam Marshall, Steve Berg-Smith, Scott D. Miller, Robert Emmons, Paul Amrhein, Jim Prochaska, Drew McWhinnie, Andrew Harris, Joel Porter, Donald Pake, Murray Cullen, Ron Langevin, and others too numerous to mention. We are grateful to the communities of the Motivational Interviewing Network of Trainers, the International Center for Clinical Excellence, and – of course – the Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers. Specific thanks go to Shoshanna Must and Donald Pake for their excellent feedback on the first draft of this workbook, and to Marjorie Ryerson, our outstanding Project Editor. Thank you all.

Good luck as you go forward!

David and Robin

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# Introduction

This workbook is for you if you're not sure you want to enter a treatment program, even though others have told you that you should. If you're already interested in starting a treatment program, and you are looking for an introduction to treatment and preparation for it, this workbook might also be of value to you. If you're already in treatment and doing well, then you've already reached many of the goals we write about in this workbook.

You're likely in a very difficult place in your life, and things are probably not turning out exactly as you had hoped. Sometimes, being in such difficult situations causes most people to make quick decisions without fully considering all the available options. For this reason, it's probably best if you don't make any decisions about entering treatment until you're at or near the end of this workbook. That way, you will have given yourself the time to make the best decision for yourself, and if you choose to begin treatment, be better prepared for it. If you're uncomfortable with your situation and/or with the people around you, such a reaction is not only acceptable, it's to be expected. This workbook is about exploring what's important to you as well as what your options are. You can use this workbook just for yourself; you don't have to share it with anyone. It can be a useful tool to prepare yourself for a deeper stage of treatment, wherever you are in your journey.

Between us, we two authors have about 60 years of experience working with people who have gotten into extremely serious trouble with the law across North America. The majority of our efforts have been with people who have sexually abused. These people have been involved with just about every other type of crime as well. But many of the people we've worked with have gone on to lead healthy, happy, and meaningful lives. Others have given up, and sadly, some were still trying to figure out how to live a better life when they died. Our experiences working with people whose goals are to change their lives and behavior have convinced us that all human beings should have the right to build better, more meaningful lives for themselves, even if they will never get out of prison. We also believe, from the bottom of our hearts, that building a better life has everything to do with a person's putting that effort in, and very little to do with what we as clinicians can make happen. All that we can provide is the challenging but respectful environment where change is possible.

In order to make changes, people also need to have a keen understanding of what it means to look inside themselves and to discover what is in need of change. In addition to the work we clinicians do with people who have sexually abused, we also do a lot of training and consultation with professionals who offer similar treatment programs or who work in related fields. Consider this quick but powerful training exercise we use with our fellow professionals, in order to ensure that they understand just exactly how difficult treatment and the process of change can be:

*In order to understand what we ask of our clients, I want all of you in the room to close your eyes and think of the last time you were sexually intimate with someone. I want you to think about who you were with, where you were, and what you were thinking at the time. Was this someone new or a familiar partner? How did you meet? How did your relationship start? Now, specifically remembering your sexual relationship, exactly what did you do to your partner and what did he or she do to you? How many times? How did it feel? How long did it last? Now that you've thought long and hard about this, I'd like someone to volunteer to share his or her experiences with the rest of the room.*

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How many volunteers do you think we get? Not surprisingly, talking about something really personal in a room full of virtual strangers will make anyone feel very threatened and uncomfortable. Yet, that's often what is expected of participants in treatment. That's why it is so critically important that both treatment providers and participants prepare themselves for the change process before jumping in with both feet. We'll talk a lot about the need to be ready for treatment throughout this workbook.

We'll also talk a lot about motivation, healthy alternatives, and strengths. One of our favorite concepts is that of the "balanced, self-determined lifestyle." This phrase may sound a bit like psychological mumbo jumbo, but it actually includes a good deal of what people need if they are to be successful. Human beings are complex organisms, physically and emotionally, with many systems and parts. For people to feel good, and for their lives to go well, all humans need these many parts of themselves to work together in partnership – with each getting a fair share of the attention and exercise. That's balance; it's something everyone needs.

The second part of the concept focuses on self-determination. How many people do you know who like being told what to do all the time? We don't like it when others make our decisions for us. Making *good* decisions, however, can be a lot more difficult than it seems. Self-determination is the process of making your own decisions for yourself. Going through a course of treatment may help you to learn how to make sure that your decisions are the right ones.

This workbook will help you to:

- Explore what's important and meaningful to you.
- Examine ways that you might want or need to change as well as the abilities and reasons you have to make those changes happen.
- Think about how other people make goals and explore the most effective ways you can set new goals for yourself.
- Assess your own personal values as a human being.
- Discuss ways that people actually change.
- Know what to expect when you're in treatment.
- Understand a bit about how therapists work and learn how to recognize when things are going wrong.
- Learn tips for how to get along in treatment.
- Learn what participating in treatment looks like.
- Learn to build and make the most of positive relationships in your life.
- Get back in touch with your powers of observation.

Completing this workbook will not be easy. You may feel as though we are asking too many questions. The reason we do this is that as you find your own answers to these questions, you will start looking at your life a little bit differently. Our experience has been that people understand why we ask things the way we do only after they've done some of the work and have begun to see the results.

The goal of this workbook is to provide you with a self-guided experience that has a logical flow from beginning to end. We have included a few additional exercises as well, that we hope will help to deepen your therapeutic experience as you consider the changes you might want to make to strengthen and better your life. These additional exercises can be stand-alone self-improvement activities. You will find them very easy to accomplish.

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It may be that you believe that you did not commit the crime for which you were convicted or that you don't believe it was as serious as others have made out. In that case, this workbook can help you to explore how to move forward in your life. Just as importantly, this book can help you get to a place in your life where no one can accuse you of a crime again. Whatever reasons you have for opening this workbook are okay with us. It may be that you simply wish to ask yourself:

*Okay, let's say for the sake of argument that I really am completely innocent, and that I did nothing wrong. Look at where I am. I'm locked up, facing a long sentence with little chance of early release because the Parole Board is unimpressed by offenders who fail to take responsibility for their actions. Maybe, just maybe, I have experienced thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that have influenced my life, ones that I might want to re-examine—maybe even change—so that even after I am eventually released, I don't end up back in jail, again.*

Ultimately, we hope that this workbook helps you to make the best possible choices for yourself, particularly at a time when you have a limited number of choices available. Remember, balance and self-determination are just the beginning. You have many tools to help you build a life worth living.

We wish you all the best as you get going!