**Psychotherapy with Criminal Offenders:**

Psychotherapy is a process by which you examine your thoughts, feelings, actions and relationships, evaluate where problems exist, and learn how to make whatever changes are necessary to achieve better life adjustment and satisfaction. Counseling and psychotherapy are interchangeable because they describe the same process, and have similar goals.

Many criminal acts are linked to psychological problems that can be treated. In fact, if more psychological treatment was provided to offenders, we could reduce the crime recidivism rate considerably. Within correctional institutions, psychotherapy services for inmates have been mostly abandoned because of cost and poor results. Recently, in New Jersey, the courts have ruled that correctional institutions have an obligation to provide psychological treatment to inmates with diagnosed psychological disorders. Those services are provided by the correctional institution. Psychological treatment provided privately, on an outpatient basis, either as a condition of probation or parole, can help convicted individuals learn how to interact appropriately within society, while shifting the cost to the offender. Obviously, not all offenders are enabling to treatment, but if a psychological evaluation indicates that treatment would reduce recidivism, then it can be provided on court order. Violent offenders, sexual offenders, and some individuals who commit crimes because they do not empathize with victims are potential recipients of this psychotherapy. For some offenders, the presence of personality disorders demands long term treatment to achieve results. For juvenile offenders, psychotherapy is frequently indicated, and can be especially helpful in the rehabilitation process.

Hard-core criminals are trapped in a vicious circle of their own thinking. Cognitive treatment of offenders can show them a way out of that trap. With effort and practice, even the most serious offenders can learn to change their thinking about other people and themselves. They can learn to be good citizens, and feel good about it. But in most cases the criminal justice system doesn't present them that opportunity — not in a form that offenders recognize as genuine.

**CBT:**

Perhaps no other intervention has attracted more attention across the criminal justice system than cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT). CBT is a class of therapeutic interventions based on a common theory about the connection between our thoughts, attitudes and beliefs — cognitions — and our behavior. The core premise of CBT is simple: The way we think about situations shapes our choices, behavior and actions. If flawed or maladaptive thoughts, attitudes and beliefs lead to inappropriate and even destructive behavior, then changing those thoughts, attitudes and beliefs can lead to more appropriate, pro-social behavior. That is the therapeutic promise of CBT.

In correctional treatment, cognitive therapy has evolved to include cognitive skills training, like how to solve problems, how to deal with social situations, and how to control your anger.

The idea is to change the thinking that lands offenders in trouble, like "I'll never snitch," "I'll never back down," "I'm going to take what I want," and "If anyone disrespects me, I'm going to attack." Forms of cognitive treatment have become the predominant treatment for offenders in the U.S. and Europe. Underlying it is the realization that criminal behavior is the result of criminal ways of thinking, and that for offenders to change their behavior they must change the way they think.

**EMDR**

EMDR is a recognised treatment option for anxiety, PTSD and other conditions

EMDR (eye movement desensitisation and reprocessing) was developed in the 1980’s by a psychologist who was interested in how our brains could be ‘reprogrammed’ to overcome distressing memories and thoughts. The EMDR therapy uses bilateral stimulation, right/left eye movement, or tactile stimulation, which repeatedly activates the opposite sides of the brain, releasing emotional experiences that are "trapped" in the nervous system. This assists the neurophysiologic system, the basis of the mind/body connection, to free itself of blockages and reconnect itself.

As troubling images and feelings are processed by the brain via the eye-movement patterns of EMDR, resolution of the issues and a more peaceful state are achieved.

Whilst there has been much in the press about the effectiveness of EMDR, it is recognised by many (and the UK’s National Institute of Clinical Excellence) as a successful treatment option for many people struggling with conditions such as post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety, panic attacks, complicated grief, abuse and personality disorders.

**Compassion Focused Therapy:**

Compassion-focused therapy (CFT) aims to help promote mental and emotional healing by encouraging people in treatment to be compassionate toward themselves and other people. Compassion, both toward the self and toward others, is an emotional response believed by many to be an essential aspect of well-being. Its development may often have the benefit of improved mental and emotional health.

Trained mental health professionals may offer CFT in their practice to help and support individuals in treatment who wish to explore ways to relate to themselves and others with greater compassion.

**Dialectical Behavioural Therapy (DBT)**

It is a Cognitive Behavioural treatment developed by Marsha Linehan, PhD, ABPP. It emphasizes individual psychotherapy and group skills training classes to help people learn and use new skills and strategies to develop a life that they experience as worth living. DBT skills include skills for mindfulness, emotion regulation, distress tolerance, and interpersonal effectiveness. DBT was originally developed to treat chronically suicidal individuals diagnosed with borderline personality disorder (BPD). It is now recognized as the gold standard psychological treatment for this population. In addition, research has shown that it is effective in treating a wide range of other disorders such as substance dependence, Juvenile Criminals, Sex offenders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and eating disorders.

**Acceptance and Commitment Therapy:**

The objective of ACT is not elimination of difficult feelings; rather, it is to be present with what life brings us and to "move toward valued behaviour". Acceptance and commitment therapy invites people to open up to unpleasant feelings, and learn not to overreact to them, and not avoid situations where they are invoked. Its therapeutic effect is a positive spiral where feeling better leads to a better understanding of the truth. In ACT, 'truth' is measured through the concept of 'workability', or what works to take another step toward what matters (e.g. values, meaning).