

**Achieving Successful Outcomes with Justice-Involved Women**

Presented on July 12, 2011 as part of the BJA NTAC's Webinar Series

To see a video recording of this presentation, visit [www.bjatraining.org](http://www.bjatraining.org)

**National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women**  
A project of the Bureau of Justice Assistance and the National Institute of Corrections

[www.cjinvolvedwomen.org](http://www.cjinvolvedwomen.org)

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**National Resource Center on Justice Involved Women**

The National Resource Center (NRCJIW) was recently established by the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Assistance in partnership with the National Institute of Corrections.

The NRCJIW will advance evidence-based, gender-responsive policies and practices for *all* women involved in the justice system.

*Ultimately, with the aim of reducing recidivism and improving the outcomes of women involved in the justice system.*

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**The Resource Center Partners**

The National Resource Center is administered by the Center for Effective Public Policy ([www.cepp.com](http://www.cepp.com)) and its partners:

- CORE Associates (<http://coreassociates.org>)
- Orbis Partners ([www.orbispartners.com](http://www.orbispartners.com))
- The National Center for Trauma-Informed Care ([www.samhsa.gov/nctic](http://www.samhsa.gov/nctic))
- The Moss Group ([www.mossgroup.us](http://www.mossgroup.us))
- University of Cincinnati, School of Criminal Justice (<http://www.uc.edu/womenoffenders>)
- Women's Prison Association ([www.wpaonline.org](http://www.wpaonline.org))

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**Mission and Audience**

*Provide guidance and support to criminal justice and other professionals who work with justice-involved women.*

Such as:

- Criminal Justice Stakeholders
- Law Enforcement
- Courts
- State and Local Corrections
- Community Corrections and Supervision
- State and Local Government Officials
- Service Providers

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**Primary Activities**

- Targeted technical assistance
- Training and webinars on key topics
- Centralized referral for evidence-based, gender-responsive research, knowledge and resources
- Policy and practice briefs, coaching packets
- Professional network

See our website at:  
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**What Does the Term Gender-Responsive Mean?**

- "Understanding and taking into account the differences in characteristics and life experiences that men and women bring to institution corrections and community supervision AND adjusting correctional strategies and practices in ways that appropriately respond to those conditions."

Bloom, Covington and Owen, 2003

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## Why Be Gender-Responsive?

- To achieve the same outcomes that corrections' systems want for **all offenders and for our communities**.
- Safer communities: Promote law abiding behavior and reduce recidivism.
- Harm reduction: Improve the physical, social and economic well-being of women, their children and families.

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## Why Focus on Women?

- More than 1,000,000 women are currently involved in the criminal justice system (1 out of every 109 adult women) and now account for 7% of state and federal prison populations
- The number of women in prison has increased at nearly double the rate of men since 1985 (404% versus 209%)

The Sentencing Project (May 2007); NCCD (July 2007)

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## Understanding Women Offender Population Growth

- Mandatory prison terms for drug offenses
- Parole revocation rates, for both new offenses (often drug use) and technical violations
- Similar rates of increases in all corrections' settings – jails, prisons and community corrections

### Question

- What patterns of growth do you observe in your jurisdiction?

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## How are Women Different from Men?

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## Different "Pathways" to Crime

- The pathways research looks at women's life histories in order to understand the connections between critical child and adult experiences and criminal behavior
- The research of the past 15 years has opened the door to understanding women offenders' unique risk factors and life circumstances

Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003; Chesney-Lind, 1997; Daly, 1992; Dehart, 2005; Green et al., 2005; Lapidus et al., 2004; Salisbury, 2007

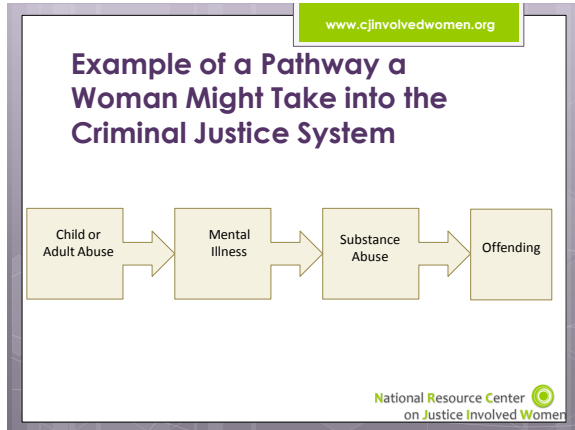
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## Frequent Pathways for Women

- Women who have experienced childhood **victimization** resort to drugs as a coping mechanism to numb the pain of abuse and other stressors (adult intimate partner violence, sexual assault, grief over the loss of their children)
- Strong interconnections between victimization, mental illness (depression, anxiety and PTSD) and self-medicating **substance abuse behaviors**
- **Poverty** and economic marginalization

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## Differences Between Males and Females in Prison

DIMENSION	WOMEN	MEN
Victimization and Abuse	57% past histories of abuse 32-47% physical abuse 22-39% sexual abuse	6-13% physical abuse 2-6% sexual abuse
Mental Illness	73% report mental health problems 23.6% diagnosed	55% report mental health problems 15.8% diagnosed
Substance Abuse	60% have a history of substance abuse	53% have a history of substance abuse
Primary caretakers of children/families	2/3rds are parents of minor children	Less likely to serve as primary childcare provider
Poverty and Economic Marginalization	50% unemployed prior to incarceration	30% unemployed prior to incarceration

For citations, see CEPP, 2010

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## Substance Abuse

- High rates for both women and men
- Women more likely to suffer from co-occurring substance abuse disorders and mental illness
- Differences in onset and use are critical
- Women who abuse drugs have higher rates of childhood physical and sexual abuse than men

CEPP, 2010

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## Mental Illness

- Significantly higher rates of mental illness
- Women are twice as likely to take prescription medications for problems
- Women with mental health problems have higher infraction rates in prison
- Different types of mental illness than men: depression, anxiety disorders, PTSD, and eating disorders

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## Physical Health Concerns

- Reproductive health and pregnancy concerns
- Higher rates of STD's and HIV infection
- Impact of post-traumatic stress disorders on self-harming
- Histories of poor health and poor access to medical services
- Effects of chronic conditions associated with poverty and poor nutrition, such as asthma, obesity, diabetes, hypertension, anemia, seizures and ulcers

Richard Mauery, GW University, 2007

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## Poverty and Economic Marginalization

- Most women earned lower monthly incomes than men prior to incarceration
- Men are more likely to be employed full time
  - 60% of men vs. 40% of women
- Previously employed in low wage, entry level positions
  - 2/3 earned a maximum wage of \$6.50 per hour
- Financial demands of supporting children upon release

Greenfield & Snell, 1999; The Sentencing Project, 2007

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## Family Roles

- Women are much more likely to serve as the primary caretakers of children prior to entering prison
- 28% of children of female offenders in prison live with the other parent, while 90% of the children of incarcerated fathers live with their mothers
- Ongoing concern for children's welfare and the potential loss of custody, due to provisions of Adoption and Safe Families Act of 1997
- Difficulties and barriers of parenting from prison

Mumola, 2000; Hairston, 2002

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## Importance of Relationships

-- Relational Theory --

- Females are motivated by their connections with others and develop their identity, self worth and sense of empowerment through relationships with others.

Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003; Covington, 2001

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## The Relational Context is Critical

- Reasons why women commit crimes
- Relationships with abusing or criminal partners
- Substance use and efforts to regain sobriety
- Responses to corrections interventions
- Need to create "family," even in prison
- Relationships with children, families, and significant others
- Past histories (trauma, violence, substance use) often inhibit a woman's ability to form and sustain appropriate, healthy and trusting relationships

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## Gender-Responsive Strategies

- National Institute of Corrections publication:  
*Gender Responsive Strategies: Research, Practice and Guiding Principles for Women Offenders*
  - Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003
- Summary of multi-disciplinary research drawing from literature on physical and mental health, corrections, developmental psychology, employment and legal studies of women

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## Gender-Responsive Strategies

- Acknowledge that gender makes a difference
- Create an environment based on safety, respect and dignity
- Develop practices that are relational and promote healthy connections
- Address substance abuse, trauma and mental illness in an integrated way
- Provide opportunities to improve women's socio-economic conditions
- Establish a system of reentry with comprehensive and collaborative services

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## New Developments in Addressing Women's Risk and Needs to Reduce Recidivism

A Quick Overview of the Emerging Research, Tools, Programs and Services

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## How Did We Get Here?

### Gender-Responsive approaches are influenced by two models of effective correctional treatment

1. "Canadian Model" Don Andrews, James Bonta, Paul Gendreau, Robert Hoge, and others.
2. "Feminist/Gender-Responsive Model" Barbara Bloom, Barbara Owen, Stephanie Covington, Meda Chesney Lind, Joanne Belknap, Merry Morash.

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## What We Learned

### Canadian Model: What Works?

- Impressive research support
- Developed a picture of what works to reduce offender recidivism

### Feminist Model Critique of Canadian Model:

- Most of the research was conducted on men and applied to women
- There are few studies conducted on women
- Ignores pathways theories and research

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## Canadian Model: What Works?

- **Risk Principle:** Target services to medium and high risk offenders
- **Need Principle:** Target risk/need factors
  - Programs should address problems (risk/need factors) that lead to recidivism

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## Canadian Model: What Works?

- **Need Principle:** Address programs to:
  - Antisocial attitudes, values and beliefs
  - Antisocial peers
  - Antisocial personality
  - Substance abuse
  - Employment
  - Education
  - Family/Marital
  - Financial

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## Feminist Model Identifies New Risk Factors and Treatment Targets:

- Abuse
- Trauma
- Unhealthy relationships
- Parental stress
- Mental health, especially depression, anxiety and PTSD
- Strengths, e.g., family support, self-efficacy

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## Two Assessment Instruments were Created

### Gender-Responsive Trailer

#### Canadian Risk/Needs

Criminal history  
Education/employment  
Financial  
Family/marital  
Accommodation  
Leisure/recreation  
Companions  
Alcohol/drug problems  
Emotional/personal  
Attitude/orientation

+

#### Gender-Responsive Risk/Needs

Parental stress  
Dysfunctional relationships  
Housing safety  
Mental health history  
Current Depression (symptoms)  
Psychosis (symptoms)  
Victimization  
Strengths: Family support; self efficacy, educational assets



Identify high, medium, low risk AND identify treatment needs

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## Gender-Responsive “Stand-Alone” Assessment Tool

- Criminal history
- Criminal thinking (sample variations)
- Antisocial associates
- Vocational/educational
- Financial problems
- Low family support
- Housing problems
- Substance abuse
- Mental health history
- Depression/anxiety (symptoms)
- Psychosis/suicidal (symptoms)
- Victimization/trauma
- Relationship dysfunction
- Parental stress
- Housing safety

And *strengths* (self-efficacy, family support, parental involvement, and educational assets)

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## Other Gender-Responsive Assessment Tools

- COMPAS for Women, Northpointe
- Service Planning Instrument for Women (SPIN-W), Orbis Partners
- Promising research emerging on development of gender-responsive pretrial release assessment tools

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## Risk Factors

- Conclusion: Consideration of *both gender-responsive and gender-neutral* factors will increase accuracy in predicting misconduct and re-offense, and improve the quality of case plans targeted on the highest risk factors for individual women.

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## Critical Information to Collect When Assessing Women Offenders

### FACTORS

1. History of abuse
2. Relationship status/issues
3. Self-efficacy/self-esteem
4. Mental health (particularly depression, anxiety, PTSD)
5. Parental stress (number of children, current arrangements, issues sense of competency in managing children)
6. Level of family support or conflicts
7. Financial status/poverty
8. Safety concerns (personal safety from violence/abuse)
9. Strengths and protective factors

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## New Developments: Evidence-based, Gender-Responsive Programs and Services

- The field has suffered from a lack of evaluative research on gender-responsive programs.
- However, this situation is changing...

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## Moving On (Van Dieten)

Program components consider:

- Setting the Context for Change
- Women in Culture
- Stress Management
- Family Messages
- Relationships
- Identifying and Changing Negative Self-Talk
- Problem-Solving
- Assertiveness and Communication Skills
- Moving On

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## Other Effective Programs and Services

- Dialectical Behavioral Therapy (PTSD) (Learner)
- Seeking Safety (abuse, PTSD) (Najavitz)
- Helping Women Recover (Covington)
- Forever Free (California Institute for Women)
  - Implements the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) guide for treating women offenders, Kassebaum, 1999
- Female Offender Treatment and Employment Programs (FOTEP)
  - Implemented within 13 counties in California

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## Women Offender Case Management Model (WOCMM)

- Case management with wrap around services
- Gender-responsive (strengths-based, trauma-informed, culturally competent, relational)
- Team approach
- Continuity of care
- Individualized; woman participates
- Enhance motivation
- Outcome-based

(Van Dielen)

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## NIC's Gender-Informed Practice Assessment (GIPA)

### What:

- A detailed assessment process to gauge level of adherence to sound principles of EBP and GR programming and practices...the first of its kind

### Objective:

- Build agency and facility capacity to enhance EBP and GR policies and practices

### How:

- Conduct intensive multi-day onsite assessment visit
- Review documents and files
- Conduct broad range of interviews and focus groups with staff and women
- Observe of programs, services and operations

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## GIPA

### Assesses strengths and challenges in 12 domains

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| 1. Leadership and Philosophy | 7. Offender Management (Sanctions and Discipline) |
| 2. External Support          | 8. Assessment and Classification                  |
| 3. Facility                  | 9. Case and Transitional Planning                 |
| 4. Management and Operations | 10. Research-Based Program Areas                  |
| 5. Staffing and Training     | 11. Services                                      |
| 6. Facility Culture          | 12. Quality Assurance and Evaluation              |

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## Implications of Emerging Research and Best Practices

- ✓ Use evidence-based AND gender-responsive research to inform the development of tools and interventions
- ✓ Target women's risk factors
- ✓ Emerging gender-responsive programs are working
- ✓ Recognize the low risk women generally present to society
- ✓ Create environments that are safe, supportive, respectful and dignified
- ✓ Avoid re-traumatization and assure that interventions are trauma-informed

Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003

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## Implications of Emerging Research and Best Practices


- ✓ Recruit staff who have both the interest and knowledge to work with women under criminal justice supervision
- ✓ Cross train staff regarding women's needs, trauma-informed approaches, relationships, risk, mental health
- ✓ Acknowledge how relationships affect women's lives:
  - Motivations
  - Children
  - Dysfunctional relationships
  - Reentry issues
- ✓ Build partnerships with a wide range of community organizations to establish multi-dimensional, wrap around services

Bloom, Owen, & Covington, 2003

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## Translating Knowledge into Practice

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## What I Have Learned from Working with Women

- Women are most successful at achieving their goals when the goals are important to them.
- We can help women identify their existing strengths and resources as the foundation for creating their vision for a better life.
- This approach requires that we see women as equals in the dialog about their lives.

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## Translating Knowledge into Practice

**Goal:** Implement a strengths-based, relational approach to partnering with women to develop goals and strategies for their achievement

To achieve the goal, how do we apply the research findings in everyday operations? What does it look like in action?


1. **Identify and implement a gender-specific risk/needs assessment**
  - Provides information about the factors that reduce and increase a woman's risk for continued criminal justice involvement, often including employment, mental health care, safe housing, family support, addiction treatment, education, and assistance with parenting
2. **Ask women what supports will help them be successful**
  - When we ask a woman what they want and need, their list usually includes the same things, commonly safe housing and employment

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## What Do We Do with the Information?

3. **Use professional knowledge and experience to develop a case plan**  
It's true that:
  - We DO know what is available in the community and
  - We DO know what is most likely to address the issues that are related to criminal behavior
 BUT, a plan will NOT be viable unless it reflects her priorities and the resources she is able to access
4. **Again, talk to women about their goals and aspirations**  
When asked, women identify a range of goals that are interdependent, and we must be willing to help them address these goals simultaneously

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**SUCCESS IN THE COMMUNITY:**  
A Matrix for Thinking about the Needs of Criminal Justice Involved Women

Success in the community is about more than a job or housing, or even staying clean and out of trouble. It is about all of that, and more. Whether returning to the community after incarceration or living in the community pretrial or as an alternative to detention or incarceration, a woman's success is related to the degree that there are adequate provisions in six domains of her life: livelihood, residence, family, health, criminal justice compliance, and social connections. The other basic human need is for encouragement, orientation to new things, and to be recognized as valuable by others. The domains are interdependent. A viable plan must include provisions in each domain that can be reconciled with each other.

PHASE	BASIC LIFE AREAS					
	Livelihood	Residence	Family	Health & Sobriety	Criminal Justice Compliance	Social / Civic Connections
<b>Survival</b>	Get money Public assistance Soup kitchens, pantries Personal care kits	Shelter Family or Friend Street	Find children Make contact	Continuity of medication Relapse prevention	Report to supervising authority (court, probation, parole, etc.) Comply with requirements	Receive peer support
<b>Stabilization</b>	Public assistance / Workfare Employment/Education Training Circles for interviews	Transitional Residence Family or friend	Supervised visitation Get rehabilitated Trial discharge	Drug treatment and treatment of urgent health and mental health issues Counseling	Earn reduced supervision	Join support group or nurturing community Volunteer work
<b>Self Sufficient</b>	Job that pays a living wage and provides benefits	One's own apartment with public subsidy, if necessary	Reunify Participate in family counseling Contribute to others	Regular health visits paid for health insurance Ongoing support: 12 step, therapy, community activities	Satisfy conditions of supervision	Help others Contribute to community life
<b>GOAL</b>	Adequate money for food, clothing, transportation, and personal and family expenses	Safe, clean, affordable home that accommodates household consistency	Reunification with children Reconciliation with family members	Physically and mentally healthy, or recovering Affordable quality care including needed prescriptions	Abide by laws Live without community supervision	Healthy friendships and network of supportive adults Opportunities to give back, civic participation (voting, etc.)

WPA's healthy and ATI plans include provisions in all of these areas. However, funding available for needed services is too often restricted to special needs populations (like the mentally ill or people who are HIV+). Further, there are more supports for families than for single adults seeking to live on their own. In fact, it is usually most difficult to find supports for the single woman or man without mental illness, HIV, or a substance abuse problem.

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## Working in a Gender-Responsive Way... Pushes Us to Rethink our Roles as Staff

When you meet with a female client, what do you see?

- An offender, an addict, or someone who is too emotional and unstable to make sound decisions?
- Or, do you see a person you can help to meet the same basic needs as any other person?
- Do you feel optimistic that she can make positive changes in her life and end her criminal justice involvement?
- Can you imagine her living in the community, without criminal justice supervision?

A woman's view of herself is influenced by her relationships with others. She will look for cues from others. If you convey a sense of optimism and possibility, you encourage her.

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## Supportive Relationships with Staff have a Positive Effect

Pay attention to the language that we use, focus on listening to her, and join her in setting the goals that are important to her.

- Our words are important, and help to set a tone.
- If we are not careful we can alienate and belittle:
  - What's wrong with you?
- Or we can encourage and engage:
  - Tell me about something that works well for you – now or in the past.
  - Is there something about your life that you want to be different?
  - I know that we can figure out how to get you on your way to making the change happen.

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## Helping Women Develop Supportive Relationships has a Positive Effect

- Relationships with criminal justice staff are powerful, but it is not our goal for these to be her most important relationships
- Explore all of the relationships – good and bad – that are important to her
- Telling a woman that she should eliminate all of the bad relationships is generally not effective and could make her less inclined to be open with staff
- Encourage her to explore what she derives from her relationships – the benefits and the costs to her. Does the balance work for her?

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## Provide Ongoing Support:

### Help her implement her own plan:

- ✓ Use opportunities to encourage and support her, but be careful not to take over
- ✓ Explain what she can expect when she is in anticipated situations and environments; reducing the mystery will alleviate fear
- ✓ Take time to model ways to do things that she may not know how to do:
  - ✓ Script and practice phone calls
  - ✓ Role-play difficult conversations
  - ✓ Offer honest feedback that will help her develop competence and confidence

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## Provide Ongoing Support

Help her see everyday situations as opportunities

- ✓ Allow her to experience approval and disappointment
- ✓ Support her as she experiences the usual range of emotions without the aid of drugs to take away the discomfort

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## Provide Ongoing Support

Help her figure out what works for her

- ✓ Encourage her to talk about how things are going.
- ✓ Encourage her to explore what worked and what didn't get the desired results. Push her to think about what could work better next time.
- ✓ Acknowledge her progress and encourage her to reflect on her experiences as a means for helping her to identify her strengths and the role she plays in her own successes.

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## How Can I Be More Effective in Managing Women on my Caseload?

- Pay attention to your reactions to women and their stories.
- Remember HOW we relate to her is important to her success:
  - If something makes you uncomfortable, dig a little deeper to figure out why.
  - Be aware of your feelings and find ways – outside of your interactions with clients – to process your own experience. Showing disapproval can be discouraging.

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## How Can I Be More Effective in Managing Women on my Caseload?

- Look for examples of women who have desisted from criminal activity and are living safely in the community.
  - When you have doubts that your clients can change their behaviors, remind yourself of those successes.
- Think of something you've done that made you feel ashamed. What if everyone held onto that one moment in your life and judged you by it forever?
  - None of us should be judged solely by our worst (or best) act.

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## Questions?

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