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Enhancing offender recall of their crime as a strategy to improve treatment responsivity

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Abstract

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Enhancing offender recall of their crime as a strategy to improve treatment responsiveness

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Three principles are now accepted as indicative of best practice in Forensic Psychology: the Risk Principle, which directs the clinician's attention toward those offenders who pose the greatest risk of reoffending; the Need Principle, which asserts that the focus of intervention should relate to those offender variables which have a direct impact upon their offending behaviour; and the Responsivity Principle, whereby intervention is tailored to match the characteristics of the offender and the setting in which intervention is delivered (Bonta, 1997). Research into offender responsiveness is in its infancy, although work is in progress to develop methods of accurately assessing different responsiveness factors (Serin, 1998; Serin & Kennedy, 1997). One aspect that repeatedly concerns clinicians is offender motivation to change, often referred to in the literature as 'readiness to change' (Prochaska & DiClemente, 1986, 1996). Clearly one variable associated with readiness to change is the offender's attribution of personal responsibility. Attributions that minimise personal responsibility are likely to be associated with poor treatment responsiveness. Such attributions are inextricably linked to the offender's memory of the offence. This paper discusses threats to the accuracy of offender recall for their own offence and strategies which might be employed to enhance recall and thus treatment responsiveness.