

# To Help A Criminal Go Straight, Help Him Change How He Thinks

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**NPR:**

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.

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In the 1950s and 1960s, psychiatrist Aaron Beck discovered that his depressed patients had habits of thinking that kept them depressed. ("I'm no good.") At about the same time, Albert Ellis found that patients with a wide range of neuroses held what he called "irrational beliefs." ("Everyone must like me all the time.") Both based their psychotherapy on leading their patients to change that thinking.

Read the whole story: [NPR](#)