

Presentation title:

Disrupting the negative loop: relational processes enhancing treatment readiness among individuals convicted of sexual offending

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Several meta-analyses and systematic reviews conclude sex offender treatment is associated with decreased risk of re-offending. Nevertheless, a substantial number (often a majority) of individuals convicted of sexual offenses (ISO) do not enter and complete treatment programs in prisons, which limits effective rehabilitation and prevention of recidivism. Treatment readiness is suggested as an important construct when addressing this problem. Readiness is a multifactorial concept referring to the preparedness of the client and the treatment provider (Ward et al., 2004). Hence, readiness not only encompasses internal motivation of the client but also contexts and processes that facilitate or hinder treatment engagement. However, such underlying processes are not well studied and even less is known regarding readiness in the ISO sub-population. This presentation aims to describe an exploratory study of psychosocial processes and contextual factors related to treatment readiness from the vantage point of ISOs lived experiences. In-depth interviews were conducted with 19 ISOs in Swedish prisons (treatment participants, N=13, as well as non-participants, N=6). The (preliminary) thematic analysis illustrates readiness obstacles in terms of antagonistic, non-rehabilitative, forces in the correctional system, conceptually understood using Goffman's (1961) term looping. Nonetheless, relational processes appeared to reverse such negative, punitive, loops and mitigate fear as well as mistrust, contributing to the mobilization of treatment readiness. Implications for theory, policy and practice will be discussed.