



## Consequential Thinking

They know

Young people do know there are consequences to wrong actions, e.g. they can get caught and punished. So why do they still do them? Why do they fail to stick at things that will help them achieve good goals? As a mentor, your job is to help them end up in positive outcomes, so how do you do that? There are two ways to work this through with them; 1) Finding The Spark and 2) Consequences. For young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties, the first is usually the best, but both can work.

### 1) Finding The Spark

Talk to them and find out what the spark is in their life. Ask them what they want to be in the future. Ask them what interests them. Then keep talking about that, week after week, and develop opportunities to get to wherever they want to go, e.g. a job as a mechanic, learning golf, joining a football club, being a DJ, getting into college, being able to read and write, see their father, etc.

As you help them stick at it, they will learn that positive effort can get them to a goal / a prize. It will also become an alternative to crime and bad decisions and may steer them away from crime and absenteeism, etc.

This approach requires a lot of time to work with them and encourage them. In a simple graphic, here is what you do:

Spark > Action > Prize
------------------------

Feel Good

The aim is to help them to feel good about what they do. Young people in criminal situations often don't know how to feel good in a right way; they often feel good through drugs and wrong acts. They don't see worth in themselves. Ask them for a time when they did well at something and ask how they felt then. Tell them that good feeling is what we are aiming for.

### 2) Consequences

They Don't Always Think

Often they don't really think – they just react, as they run on ingrained impulses that have become habits and a second nature. When you ask them what they think or thought, they will genuinely say “nothing” because they reacted rather than stopped to think. However, we can help them by identifying these habits and making them positive.



Note: Often their upbringing has not taught them to think very well, so be patient with them.

Note: Often they have poor recall of any events further away than a few days ago, so stick to recent events.

### Beliefs

Here are some probable beliefs they have that create ‘stinking thinking’:

1. They don't think the law will catch them / denial.
2. They are used to getting away with consequences and are willing to take the risk.
3. They are used to punishment and so it doesn't stop them
4. They see authority as the enemy that deserves disrespect
5. By refusing to obey commands, they think they have a degree of control.
6. The pressure to follow negative peers is greater than the pressure to follow authority.
7. Punishment can be a form of self-harm.

### Three Steps

Look at bad outcomes that have recently occurred and ask them what were the three key stages:

Step 1: Something happened

Step 2: They thought / felt something wrongly and reacted

Step 3: They ended up with negative consequences

Listen to them as much as you can, and don't tell them what to do.

Action < Reaction < Consequence
---------------------------------

### Alternatives

Then ask them “how can you make it different / have a different outcome next time?”

### Conclusion

Troubled young people are often shame-based and it is best to try the positive approach of 1) Finding The Spark. Talk about ‘prizes’ / good outcomes to aim for, rather than punishments to avoid, i.e. positives rather than negative. However, it can still be worthwhile to try 2) Consequences as well – all young people are different and some times one method is better than the other. Our overall aim, though, is to encourage and to avoid blame.

5-10-15