

Desistance capital of people with mental illness who offended

CEP-EuroPris workshop on “Mental health in prison and probation”
December 6th, 2017

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Introduction (1)

December 6, 2017

- Range of different interpretations of ‘desistance’

→ Conceptual unclearness

- Static approach

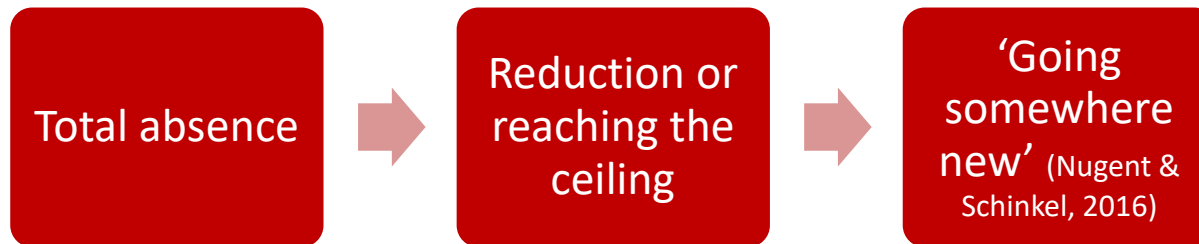


- **Dynamic** approach

- = process of change to non-involvement in crime

(Bushway, Thornberry, & Krohn, 2003; Laub & Sampson, 2003; Maruna, 2001)

- ~ gradual process
- Different ideal destinations



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Introduction (2)

December 6, 2017

- Desistance research
 - “offenders” > specific groups
 - ~ drug users (Colman & Vander Laenen, 2012)
 - ~ drug using offenders (Van Roeyen et al., 2017)
 - ~ sex offenders (Harris, 2014)
- Mentally ill offenders + desistance = 0
 - High presence in criminal justice system
 - Dominant risk approach
 - Dangerousness
 - Risk > mental illness (Lamberti & Weisman, 2004)

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Research design (1)

December 6, 2017

- Central research question: How can *factors*, identified by people with mental illness who offended as important in their desistance process, be *fostered*?
- Strengths-based approach
 - Capacities (Farrall & Maruna, 2004)
 - Positive experiences (Ronel & Elisha, 2011)
 - Good Lives Model (Ward & Brown, 2006)
 - Desistance central
 - > (criminal) interventions (Maruna, Immarigeon, & Lebel, 2004)

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Research design (2)

December 6, 2017

- Qualitative research
 - Phase 1: explorative focus groups
 - Phase 2: in-depth interviews
 - Lived experiences
 - Central: people with mental illness who offended (strengths-based)
- People experiencing internment
 - Belgium, N = 4000
 - Mentally ill offenders can be interned
 - Indeterminate measure of safety \neq punishment
 - Irresponsible or 'severely diminished' responsible (Vandeveldde et al., 2011)
- No definition of 'desister'
 - Focus on person, not on offence(s) (strengths-based)



Research design (3)

December 6, 2017

- First phase: 7 explorative focus groups, 42 respondents
- Second phase: 72 in-depth interviews

Heterogeneity

- Gender
- Age
- Setting
 - Prison
 - Forensic psychiatric centre
 - Inpatient forensic mental health
 - Inpatient mental health
 - Outpatient forensic mental health
 - Outpatient mental health
- Mental illness
 - Psychosis
 - Personality disorder
 - Substance abuse disorders
 - Paraphilic disorder
 - Anxiety disorder

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Results: desistance

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What helps you to stop committing crime?

- Majority not involved anymore

“I don't commit offences anymore, so I am not busy with that.”

- Reserve/restraint

- Even when formulated in past tense
- ~ offence(s) long time ago
- ~ no criminal career

- Individual and dynamic process

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Results: desistance capital

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- Different factors influence desistance process
- ‘Factors’ → Desistance capital
 - Inspiration: recovery literature
- Internal & external resources that make initiation or maintaining of desistance possible (recovery: Granfield & Cloud, 1999)
- 3 types of desistance capital:
 1. Structural desistance capital
 2. Social desistance capital
 3. Personal desistance capital
(recovery: White & Cloud, 2008)

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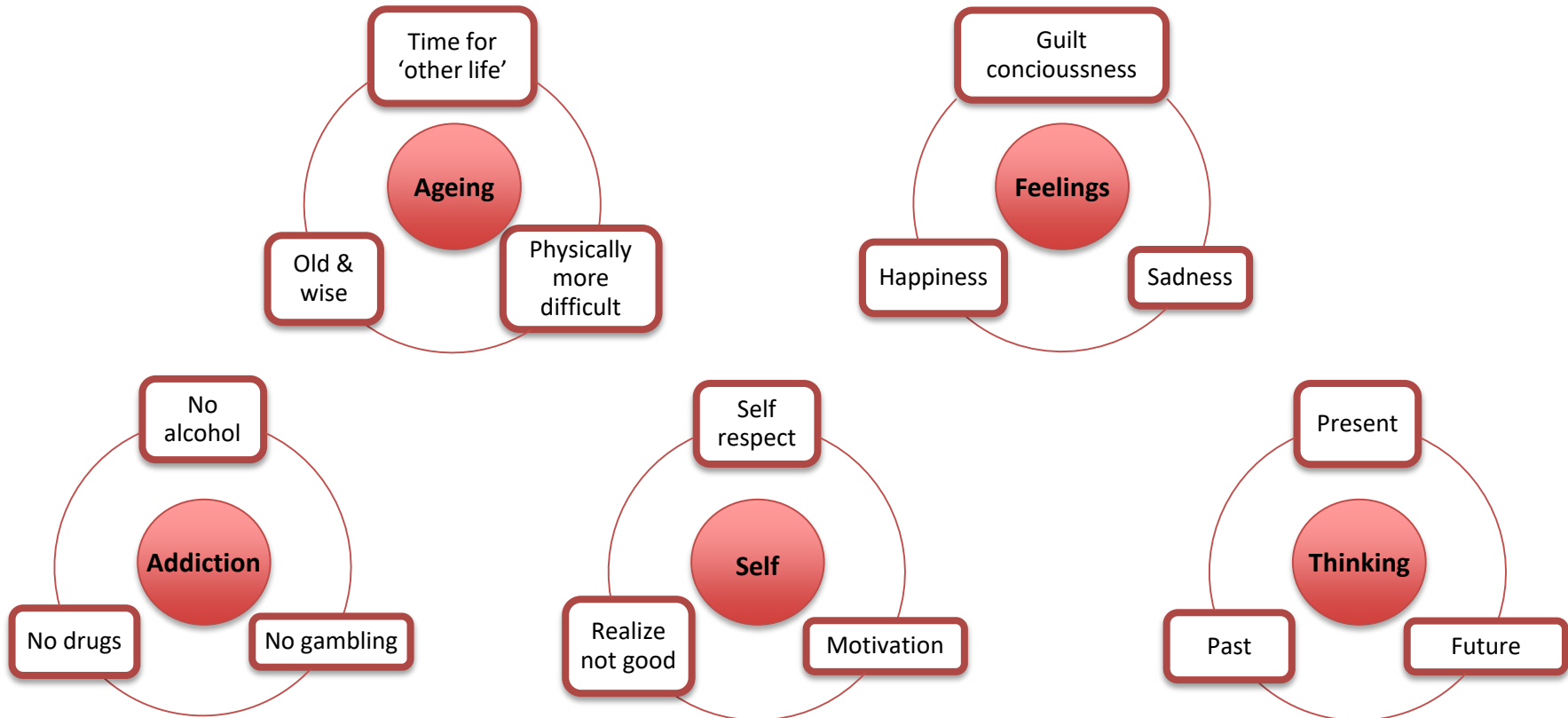
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Results: personal desistance capital

November 16, 2016

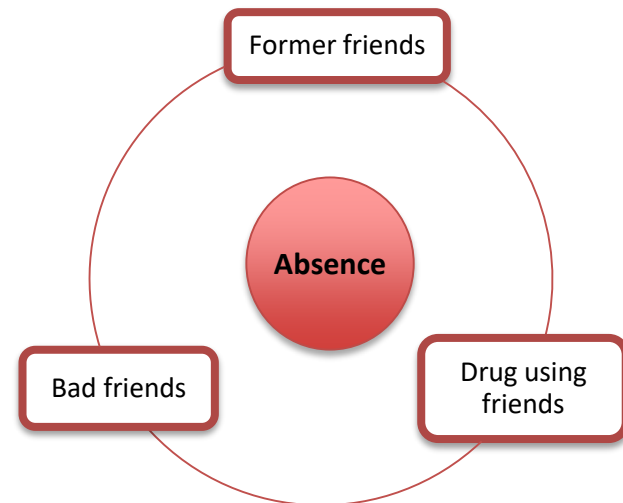
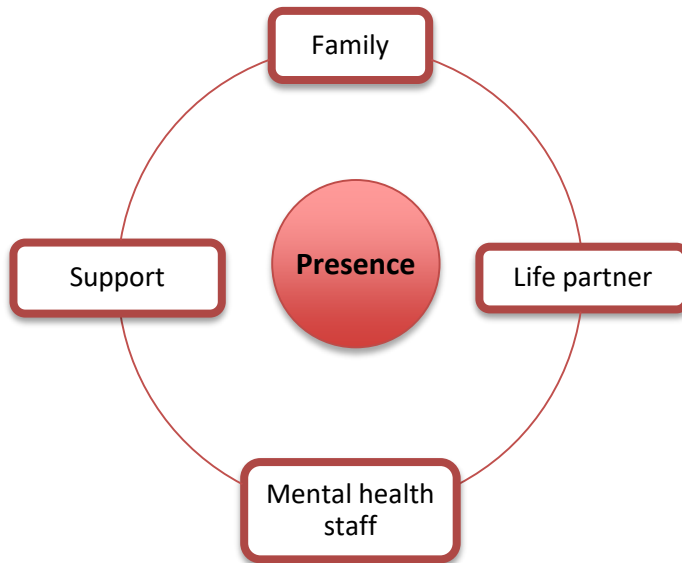
“Yes, being alone for a while. Once just reflecting. I am a lot in my cell, and when I am alone, I can think about how I will resume my life, what I want to do with my life.”



Results: social desistance capital

November 16, 2016

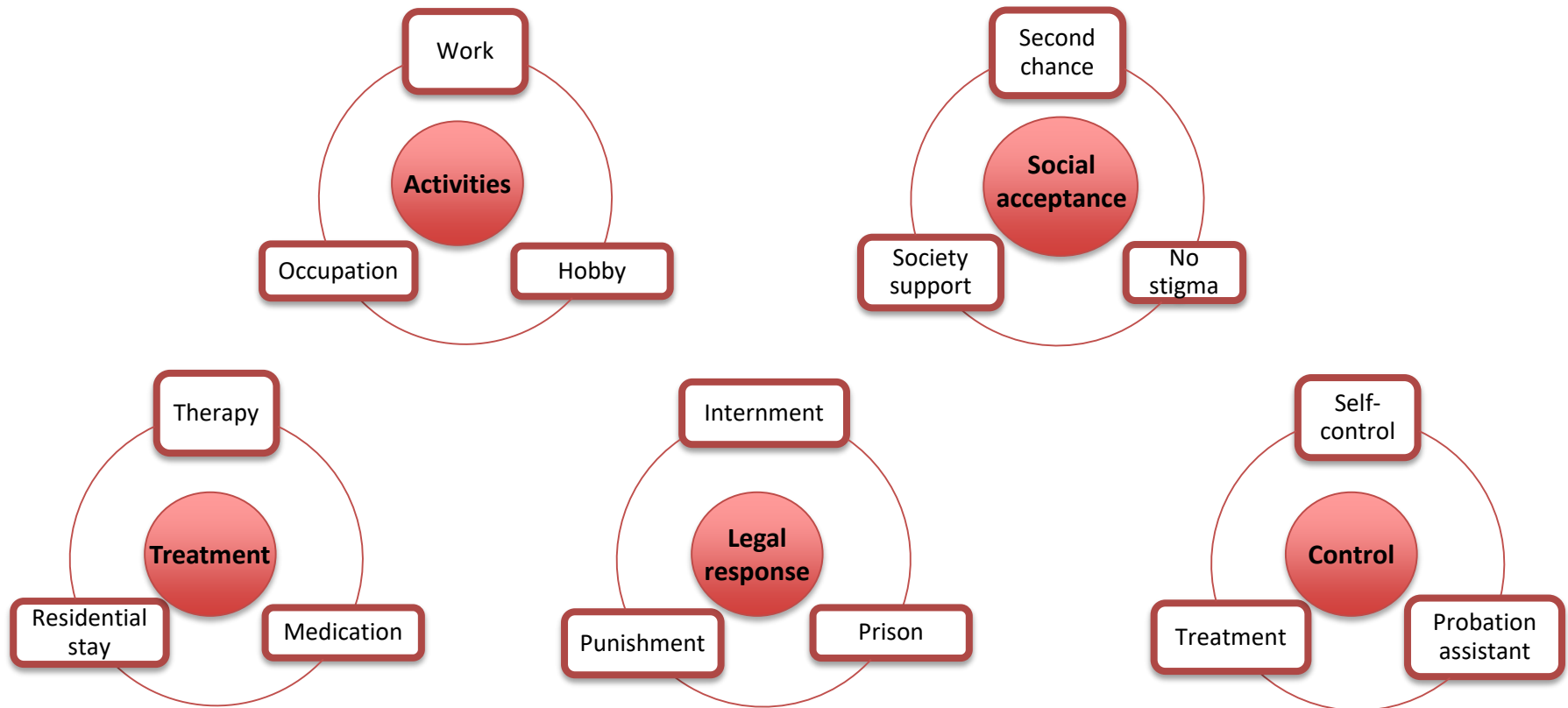
“Network. If you don’t have anybody outside, you can’t fall back on anyone, and that’s life threatening.”



Results: structural desistance capital

November 16, 2016

“You can also have hobbies, things to do when you are not able to work. You have to make sure you got something to do in life, because if you don’t do anything all the time, then I think you’ll become crazy.”



Results: comparison “offenders” (1)

December 6, 2017

Same desistance capital as general offender population, but:

- Desistance undermined by difficulties
 - More problems or absence
 - Hardest: structural desistance capital
 - ~ Multiple stigma

“Society will never accept or reaccept people that come out of prison. You will have difficulties finding a job, society will have less trust in you. You are a lost bag, a bag that floats through the air and that goes nowhere. A bag that flies by the air. It’s a pity, but it does float nowhere. You keep looking, and keep looking and running circles, but you can’t find a job.”

- Desistance mortgaged by the internment
 - Indeterminateness of control
 - In correctional or forensic settings
 - Conditions ~ return

“What doesn’t help me, is the endless patience you need to have before you can say “Finally, I am somewhere, where I am totally done, where I don’t have to think about it anymore.” But now you continuously have to think about things that have to do with your internment, and that does not help you.”

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Results: comparison “offenders” (2)

December 6, 2017

Same desistance capital as general offender population, but:

- Exceptions
 - Medication
 - Treatment
 - Internment

 - Desistance related to recovery
 - Individual change processes
 - Same kind of capital
 - Interrelated
- ~ mental illness & legal status
- ~ (self-)stigma

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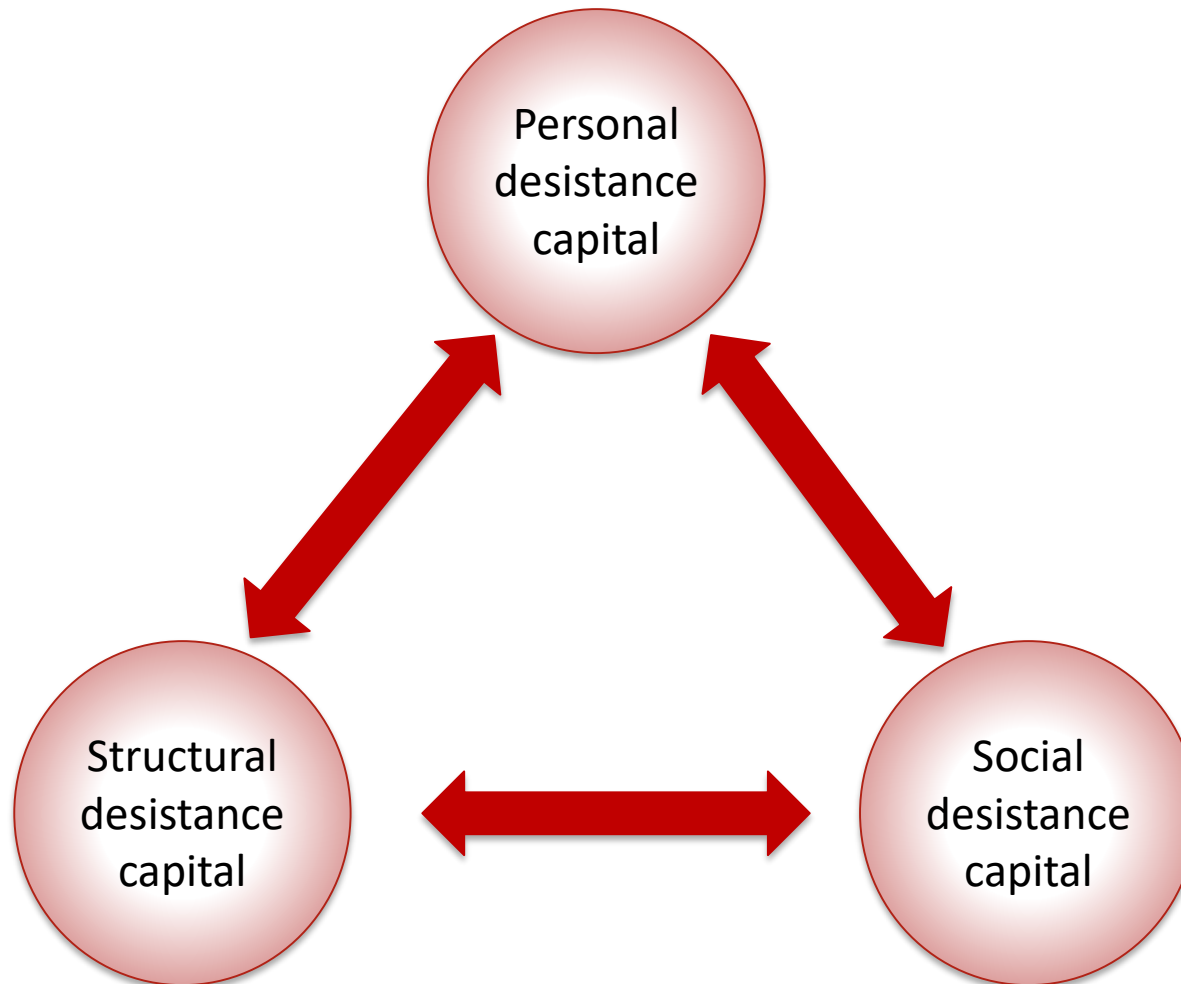
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Discussion (1)

December 6, 2017



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Discussion (2)

December 6, 2017

- **Structure > actor** (Giddens, 1999)
 - ~ internment
 - ~ stigmatisation
- **Desistance is mortgaged by internment**

“But now you continuously need to think about things related to your internment. And it does not help us progress.”

→ Indeterminateness? (Tonry, 2000; Vandeveldde et al., 2011)

→ Realisation



Macro

Meso

Micro

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Discussion (3)

September 5, 2015

- Legal desistance > personal desistance
 alternative conceptualization 'desistance'
 traditional: socially desirable
 inspiration: recovery (Slade, Amering, & Oades, 2008; van der Stel, 2013)

clinical recovery



legal desistance
 = abstinence of
 criminal activities

desistance as purpose
 desistance from

personal recovery



personal desistance
 = individually experienced
 process of getting another life
 ~ positive experiences
 ~ (re)integration

desistance as concept
 desistance into something

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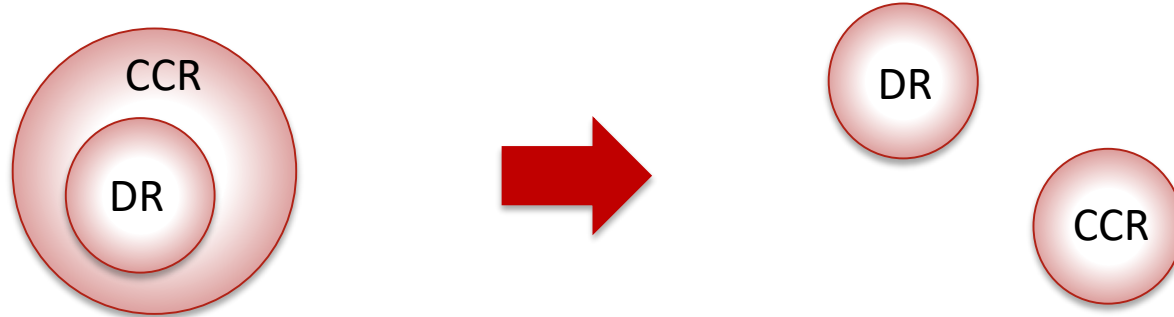
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Discussion (4)

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- Making desistance research more strengths-based
 - Lived experiences
 - Macro, meso and micro
 - Focus on change
 - > absence ~ critique on own research
 - Apart from criminal career research
Life course > criminal career



Discussion (5)

December 6, 2017

- How can *factors*, identified by people with mental illness who offended as important in their desistance process, be *fostered*?
 - Avoid imprisonment
 - Breaching conditions → try to avoid sending back to prison (Seynnaeve & Beeuwsaert, 2017)
 - Progress from the beginning → avoid hopelessness
 - Provide necessary care from the beginning of internment
 - Dynamic individual care programme (Seynnaeve & Beeuwsaert, 2017)
 - Attention for macro, meso and micro
 - Avoid absence or more problems with capital
 - Attention for recovery (or other change processes)

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