



# PPROMPT

Peer Pro-Social Modeling in Probation

**LITERATURE REVIEW:PRO- SOCIAL MODELING**

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## FOREWORD

This Train the Trainer Manual was developed by European Strategies Consulting, a partner in the project Peer Pro-Social Modeling in Probation – PPRMPT – No. 2017-1-TR01-KA204-046684, financed by ERASMUS + programme.

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**Developed by European Strategies Consulting**

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## BACKGROUND

The project Peer Pro-Social Modeling in Probation (PPROMPT) aims to structure a peer pro-social modelling, through the development and implementation in probation systems enhancing both the competencies of management and probation experts to address offenders' needs.

This project **seeks to explore and implement an approach that builds social capital and resilience** within people that are under probational measures. **Specific goals include:**

1. **To develop andragogical materials** (manuals and programme contents) that support training for both staff and management in the field of peer training and pro-social model interventions;
2. **To develop and pilot a "train the trainer" course for probation workers in each country**, giving them the ability to train, continuously, selected well- behaved offenders on peer training and pro-social modelling;
3. **To train the selected poll of inmates in each country on pro-social modeling and peer training**, under the supervision of the probation trainers
4. **To analyse the pilot sessions and revise the manuals** accordingly before disseminating the programme.

PPROMPT project aims to develop the following Intellectual Outputs:

- IO1 - Literature review on best practices of adult peer training in probation systems;**
- IO2 - Meta-analysis on best practice of pro-social modeling in probation systems;**
- IO3 - Preparation of the Peer-Social Modeling in Probation Curriculum;**
- IO4 – Preparation of "Peer Trainer's Manual";**
- IO5 - Preparation of "Pro-Social Modeling" Manual;**
- IO6 - Preparation of the Train the trainer course material for probation experts;**
- IO7 - Train the trainer course for the offenders.**

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Overall, this literature reviews covers the pro-social modeling. By ‘pro-social modeling’ we mean ‘a way in which probation officers, or others who work with involuntary clients, model pro-social values and behaviors in their interactions with clients’ (Trotter, 2009: 142). In this review we take a rather narrow view whereby pro-social model includes modeling, positive reinforcement and confrontation with OFFENDERS.

The ultimate aim of this review is to draw the learning points from the existing literature for designing the Peer pro-social modeling manual.

The learning points could be tactics, technics, approaches, good practices or anything that could enhance the effectiveness of these two technics (see the concluding section of the report).

## 2. INCLUSION CRITERIA

The literature reviews includes:

1. papers that deal with the topic in the sense defined above, everywhere around the world, especially Europe, North America (including Canada) and Australia,
2. papers published after 1970, when the researchers become aware of the impact of positive or negative reinforcement on the offender’s behaviour and the importance of training,
3. papers describing good practices on the topic,
4. papers published in Turkish, English, Spanish, Portuguese and Romanian language.
5. papers or website posts that describe previous projects dealing with the topic (so-called grey literature),
6. research papers that include an evaluation of the topic in terms of desistance or reducing reoffending will be given priority.

## 3. EXCLUSION CRITERIA

This literature reviews does not include:

1. papers published before 1970,
2. policy or normative papers,
3. student papers (PhD papers are accepted).

#### **4. WHAT IS PRO-SOCIAL MODELING?**

By pro-social modeling we understand the modeling of pro-social behaviour in the involuntary clients by reinforcing pro-social expressions and actions and confronting pro-criminal actions and values (Trotter, 2009).

As mentioned in Trotter (2015), pro-social modeling is based on the learning theories that suggests that people's behaviour is influenced by others through positive and negative reinforcement. The basic learning principles that are used in pro-social modeling are:

- behaviour is more likely to be maintained if rewarded,
- the promise of reward does not work as well as the reward itself,
- rewards are working better if they are not greater than they should be,
- rewards work better if they are perceived as legitimate and fair,
- intrinsic rewards work better,
- variable rewards – awarded on an irregular basis – work better than those that are applied continuously.

As suggested in the literature, pro-social modeling covers: modeling, positive and negative reinforcement and confrontation.

#### **5. HOW IS PROS-SOCIAL MODELING PRACTICED?**

In simple terms, what a probation officer or a peer trainer/ worker should do in practice is to:

- identify positive or pro-social comments and behaviours,
- reward those comments and behaviours whenever possible,
- use praise as often as possible,
- model pro-social expressions and actions,
- challenge anti-social comments or behaviours.

##### **A. IDENTIFY THE POSITIVE COMMENTS AND BEHAVIOURS**

The probation officer in the course of the interviews could identify the pro-social comments or behaviours. Usually, these aspects are pretty easy to identify. They can be: regrets regarding the offence, empathy for the victim, regrets regarding the family reaction to the crime, desire to change, intention to find a job, intention to become a responsible parent etc.

It would be useful to identify those pro-social comments and behaviour that are related to the crime and reinforce them.

## **B. REWARD PRO-SOCIAL COMMENTS AND BEHAVIOURS**

The next step in practicing pro-social modeling is to reward the positive comments and behaviours. The most effective reward is the praise. In order to be most effective the praise should be directed towards a specific comment or behaviour and not made in general terms. Also, the client should perceive the praise as genuine and not fake. Another way to reward a good behaviour is to hold appointments in another place outside the office: it can be in the park, in the client's home etc. It is important, however, for the client to understand that this is not part of the routine but something special dedicated to him and his progress.

In the probation work, the workers can use other ways to reward good behaviour of progress: decreasing the frequency of the appointments, making notes to the court to end some obligations, writing letters of recommendation for clients to apply for jobs etc. It is important to pay attention that these rewards are perceived as rewards for some concrete behaviours and are not working the other way around. For instance, it would not work well as a reward to decrease the number of appointments if the client is difficult.

## **C. MODELING PRO-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR**

This aspect of pro-social modeling could be summarized very simple as: be and act as a model !! In other words, the probation officer should be a role model for the client. This can be achieved by:

- respecting the client,
- be punctual,
- return calls,
- be available when needed,
- inform the client when not available or on holiday,
- show empathy
- do what you promise you will do etc.

In order to model positive behaviour, the probation officer should be respectful and reliable.

Self-disclosure could also be used to stress the idea that the probation officer is also a human being and experienced problems in the past. The so-called modeling works quite well, according to Trotter (2015).

## D. CHALLENGING UNDESIRABLE BEHAVIOURS

In many cases, the clients are trying to minimize or rationalize their anti-social behaviour (e.g. what I have done is nothing; the victim has anyway lots of money, what if I stole some of them? etc.). It is important for the probation officer to identify these anti-social comments and provide some negative reinforcements. These negative reinforcements are verbal reactions which express the disagreement of the probation officer related to those anti-social comments.

Care should be taken to express this disagreement in a supporting way. The message should be: 'I accept you but I reject some of your behaviours, comments'.

Another important point is make sure that disagreement is expressed verbally and non-verbally. As Trotter (2015) noted, sometimes the non-verbal communication contradicts the verbal message and therefore send a contradictory message to the client. This practice should be definitely avoided.

While is important to express disapproval and confront negative behaviours, it is equally relevant to avoid overwhelming the client with negative messages. As demonstrated in the literature, positive reinforcement works far more better than confrontation. Therefore, Trotter (2015) recommends the rule 'four to one'. This rule suggests that four positive reinforcements should be used for each confrontation.

Confrontation should be used with great care and at the right time in the relationship. If it is used too early it can have a negative impact on the outcome (Shulman, 1991).

Apart from these skills described by Trotter (2004, 2015), other authors have focused on other aspects of PSM. Sally Cherry, for instance, has published a book - 'Transforming behaviour: Pro-social modeling in practice' - drawing on the her own experience as a practitioner and trainer. In her book, Sally Cherry provides may case studies, anecdotes and stories to demonstrate what pro-social modeling can look like in practice. In one of the first chapters, the book deals with the central pillars of the pro-social modeling – **respect, reflective listening and empathy**.

Colorado Probation Research in Brief<sup>1</sup> published a summary of the Trotter's article (2009) and presents some useful 'practical applications':

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.courts.state.co.us/userfiles/file/Administration/Probation/ResearchInBriefs/RIB-Modeling-Apr10.pdf>

### Practical Applications

- ✓ Start simply: be punctual, be reliable, be non-judgmental, respond to phone calls, be attentive, use praise, be positive, express empathy, and listen carefully.
- ✓ Give positive feedback to probationers when they demonstrate pro-social statements or actions.
- ✓ When rewarding pro-social behaviour (such as reducing the frequency of office visits) ensure the probationer understands the reward is clearly connected to the pro-social behaviour (history of regular attendance).
- ✓ When utilizing pro-social modelling be mindful of cultural differences. For example, not all cultures place the same value on time or educational achievement.
- ✓ When the probationer fails at pro- social behaviours (for instance, having a college application turned down or not securing a job after an interview) positive reinforcement, not confrontation, should be used.'

## 6. HOW EFFECTIVE IS PRO-SOCIAL MODELING?

Research such as Sarason and Ganger (1973), Fo and O'Donell (1974, 1975), Andres (2000), Andrews and Bonta (2003, 2004) and Trotter (1993, 1996, 2004, 2012, 2013) demonstrate convincingly that pro-social modeling is one of the most effective method of working with involuntary clients. One of the first studies that looked into the effectiveness of PSM is Andrews et al (1979) in Canada which demonstrated that the use of PSM can contribute to decreasing in the recidivism but only if the probation officer has high levels of empathy. Trotter (1993, 1996) evaluates the practice of probation officers in Victoria/Australia and concludes that supervision characterized by pro-social approach, use of problem solving and use of empathy is related to lowering recidivism by between 25-50%. Pro-social approach seems to have more impact on recidivism than problem solving or empathy. It seems that when probation officers are using pro-social modeling or score high at the socialization scale they tend to have clients with less recidivism. Furthermore, their clients seem to progress better and have higher satisfaction rates

regarding the supervision process. A summary of the Trotter's studies can be found in the Annex.

Bonta (2004) evaluated the practice of probation officers in Canada and concluded that pro-social modeling is an important structuring skill that is not very often used in practice. It seems that 2/3 of the probation officers are using positive reinforcement while only a few use confrontation. However, if trained, probation officers tend to use more techniques that target changing behaviour such as pro-social modeling, problem solving, cognitive restructuring etc. As a consequence, the clients of the trained probation officers tend to have a recidivism rate lower by 15%. Furthermore, if probation officers follow the clinic feedback and the refresher courses after the training, their clients have a lower recidivism rate by 19% (see The STICS Experiment, Bonta et al, 2011).

What is also important to note is that by using reinforcement, clients learn new behaviors and this can be noted even after four years after the probation order ends (Trotter, 1996). Positive reinforcement seems to work far better than the negative one. Trotter (1996) and Burns (1994) found that most successful probation officers focused more on positive reinforcement than the others.

Ghui and Chan (2013) evaluate the perception that 113 male juvenile probationers have of their probation officers and note that most of them are considered relatively authoritarian and punitive. This is the case for women probation officers, in particular. They conclude by recommending probation officers in Hong Kong to employ pro-social modeling approach in their interaction with probationers. Therefore, pro-social modeling may be viewed as an approach that moderate the punitive or authoritarian approaches among probation staff. This recommendation comes in line with another study conducted in Turkey on the role of leadership style on pro-social behaviour (Ipek and Ozbilgin, 2015). According to this study, it seems that pro-social behaviour could be motivated more by paternalistic authoritarian and democratic leadership style and not by the authoritarian leadership style. This could have important implications for the organizational culture of the probation service that intends to use pro-social modelling.

## **7. LIMITS OF PRO-SOCIAL MODELING**

McCulloch (2010) conducted a study in Scotland on how pro-social modeling impact on community service and concluded that, although pro-social modeling training can improve the practice and the service outcomes, most often offenders need much more than that. They need a motive for change and opportunities to practice their new skills.

Trotter and Ward (2011) covers among other subjects the issue of ethics of PSM. PSM was often criticized that is a manipulative technique. This comes in line with another criticisms captured in Trotter (2015) which argue that pro-social modeling is sometimes superficial

as it does not challenge structural or other issues associated with offending. However, the authors argue that all communication is manipulative to some extent and therefore what PSM practitioner should do is to be aware of this and use it in a positive direction. Obviously, the ‘positive direction’ is not a value free concept but it can be defined as a direction that improve the life of the individual and keeps him in line with the law.

## 8. CONCLUSIONS. LEARNING POINTS

Searching some academic databases – Google Scholar, Sage and Taylor and Francis – a large number of outcomes was produced for the keywords ‘pro-social modeling’. However, after comparing these outcomes with the aims of this literature review, a small number of papers were selected.

Databases	No. of outputs	No. of useful outputs
Google Scholar	23,500	1
Sage	51,688	5 (only 4 retrieved)
Taylor and Francis Online	110,027	2
By hand – books	3	3
By hand – articles	4	2 (from Turkey)

Based on the impact studies, it seems that PSM can indeed contribute significantly to the reduction of reoffending (Sarason and Ganger, 1973; Fo and O’Donell, 1974, 1975; Andrews et al, 1979; Trotter, 1990, 1996, 2004; Andrews et al, 1991; Andres 2000; Andrews and Bonta 2003; Bonta, 2004). According to Trotter (1996), for instance, those probation officers who used PSM had clients with 25-50% less recidivism than the others. Besides reductions in recidivism, PSM has proved to increase the client satisfaction and support progress towards desistance (Trotter, 2015).

However, as many studies have stressed, it is important to use PSM in combination with empathy (Andrews et al, 1979) and other interventions that target the structural dimension of crime (Trotter, 2015; McCulloch, 2010). Therefore, pro-social modeling should be part of a wider package of correctional interventions. Usually, pro-social modeling comes together with building up a working alliance or with problem solving (as in Trotter, 2015). Other programs include pro-social modeling in a more complex structure that involves relationship building but also cognitive behavioral interventions. Such a program is Skills for Effective Engagement and Development (SEED) which was developed in UK by NOMS for one to one interventions. SEED was designed in line with Risk-Need-Responsivity (RNR) principles and brings together: relationship building, pro-social modeling, motivational interviewing and cognitive behavioral techniques. The

program was implemented in UK and Romania and found successful (for more see Sorby et al, 2018).

McCulloch (2010), McIvor (1998) and Trotter (2009) suggest also that PSM has to be practiced by probation officers who are perceived by the clients as legitimate and fair. Based on her experience, Cherry (2005) stresses that PSM should be used alongside with respect, reflective listening and empathy. Organizational culture seems also important as pro-social modeling appear to work better in organizations with a more liberal and democratic leadership styles.

Limitations and ethical issues are discussed in great length in Trotter and Ward (2011) and Trotter (2015). Overall, the authors admit that PSM can be considered sometimes superficial or manipulative but suggest also that PSM should be used together with other complementary interventions and always in helping clients build up a better and law abiding lifestyle.

Although the concept and the practice around PSM are developed in the corrections after the 90s, there is little literature available on the impact of PSM and the contextual factors that seem to facilitate the positive impact.

Research is missing almost completely on the impact of different parts of the PSM and the organizational context that could facilitate or frustrate the impact of PSM. More research should be done also to identify the personal characteristics of the POs who are most effective in using PSM (besides empathy). It may be also useful to look into the personal characteristics of offenders that can mediate the impact of PSM. It is not yet clear if the PSM works better on women, juveniles or different minority groups. It maybe also that PSM works in different ways with different categories of offenders (e.g. persistent, sex offenders, violent offenders etc.).

To conclude, PSM is an effective working tool but works at its best only if it practiced together with other transformative interventions by respectful, empathic and fair staff in a democratic organizational culture.

## **OTHER USEFUL RESOURCES**

One useful resource for the future is a short video posted by study.com on what is behind pro-social modeling: <https://study.com/academy/lesson/the-effects-of-prosocial-and-antisocial-modeling.html>

In this video, the trainer explains in great details and with relevant examples how PSM is using the Bandura's learning theory. However, the video is available only on a five days trial or upon payment.

Also related to training, quizlet.com has published a very useful page on what are the basic principles of PSM and how it can be implemented in practice: <https://quizlet.com/80158493/pro-social-modeling-flash-cards/>

The great merit of this page is that, besides theory, it contains also flashcards, tests and other interactive tools.

Also as tools, the Pro-Social Tendencies Measure tool can be used when selecting the participants in PPRMPT project ([http://www.tubitak.gov.tr/sites/default/files/2204\\_tubitak\\_kitap\\_2014.pdf](http://www.tubitak.gov.tr/sites/default/files/2204_tubitak_kitap_2014.pdf))

In terms of training, there are few universities and private companies that offer training on pro-social modeling. One of these companies is Innovative Minds which was set up by Trotter and others and offers training on pro-social modeling, mindfulness, aggression replacement training, collaborative family problem-solving and speak-up (for more visit: <http://innovativeminds.com.au/wordpress/professional-development/pro-social-modelling>).

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## ANNEX 1

### TROTTER STUDIES<sup>2</sup>

Outlined below are summaries of two studies I have undertaken in Victoria, Australia, the first in probation (Trotter 1993, 1996a) and the second in child protection (Trotter 2002, 2004). The corrections study was based on the hypothesis that probation officers who make use of the skills of role clarification, pro-social modelling and reinforcement, collaborative problem solving and empathy will have clients who are more likely to experience reductions in their problems and less likely to reoffend than clients of officers who don't make use of these principles. A group of 30 probation officers was offered a training course in these skills. Twelve probation officers agreed to make use of the skills with their next ten clients. The remaining 18 did not continue with the project for a number of practical reasons, for example they left their positions or took extended leave. The study sample was selected using a systematic random method. It consisted of 104 clients of those probation officers who undertook the training and agreed to make use of the model. The sample also included a control group consisting of 157 clients selected from the same offices as the experimental group but with different probation officers. A sample of clients of those probation officers who withdrew from the project but continued in the probation service (105) was also followed up; however, the results for this group were very similar to the control group and are therefore not reported here.

Data was collected through a questionnaire to clients and an analysis of client files and police records. The study found that:

1. File notes suggested that probation officers who completed the training and agreed to use the model were significantly more likely to use the skills compared to probation officers in the control group. In other words, probation officers were more likely to use the principles after training.
2. Clients receiving supervision from those probation officers who did the training and agreed to use the model (the experimental group) were significantly more likely to report that their problems were reduced during the period of probation than clients in the control group. In fact almost twice as many clients in this group, in comparison to the control group, reported that their problems relating to drug use were reduced.
3. The reoffence rates for clients in the experimental group were significantly lower than for clients in the control group after one and four years. For example,

<sup>2</sup> Retrieved from: [http://www.unafei.or.jp/english/pdf/RS\\_No82/No82\\_06VE\\_Trotter.pdf](http://www.unafei.or.jp/english/pdf/RS_No82/No82_06VE_Trotter.pdf)

the imprisonment rate after one year for clients in the experimental group was almost 50 per cent lower compared with clients in the control group. This is illustrated in the Table below.

Trotter (1996a) Offender imprisonment rates after one year and four years

### **Experimental group**

1 Year (p = 0.04) 13/104 (12%) 4 Years (p = 0.02) 27/104 (26%)

### **Control group**

33/157 (21%) 61/157 (39%)

4. The model was most effective with young, high-risk, violent and drug-using offenders.
5. The use of pro-social modelling and reinforcement as revealed in file notes was consistently, strongly and significantly correlated with lower reoffence and imprisonment rates.
6. The use of problem solving was related to reduced reoffending, although it was most influential in improving compliance with the probation order (e.g. keeping appointments and special conditions).
7. The use of role clarification was correlated with lower reoffending but not at significant levels. This may be explained by the tendency of probation officers to discuss issues of role after the probation officer became aware of reoffending.
8. Probation officer empathy, as measured by a psychological test and by comments in file notes, was not related to client reoffence or imprisonment rates. However, judgmental comments in files (e.g. no-hoper, lazy, liar) were related to increased reoffending even when client risk levels were taken into account. Whilst officer empathy was not a factor in client reoffending, the extreme lack of it was.
9. The results of the study could not be explained by intervening variables such as frequency of contact between workers and clients, client risk levels, or the experience or education of the probation officers.

The results of this study are, I believe, persuasive, particularly given their consistency with the studies cited earlier and the replicatory nature of the study. The results confirm the importance of workers modelling and reinforcing clients' pro-social comments and actions, and the use of collaborative problem solving. Whilst the study is less persuasive in relation to role clarification, this seems to have been due to a particular intervening variable. The study does not support the value of empathy, although it does suggest that judgmental attitudes are related to poor outcomes. The second study (Trotter 2004) was

undertaken in child protection in the eastern region of Melbourne. The aim of the study was to consider the way in which child protection workers use the skills of role clarification, pro-social modelling, collaborative problem solving and relationship skills of empathy, humour, self disclosure and optimism, and how use of these skills relates to outcomes for clients. In order to gather the data, research officers interviewed 50 child protection workers, 282 clients and observed 13 interviews between clients and workers. The outcome measures included: (1) child protection workers' estimates of the progress of the families with whom they worked; (2) the extent to which the clients were satisfied with the outcomes of the child protection intervention; (3) how long the cases remained open; and (4) whether or not a child or children were placed away from the family in a departmental facility (e.g. foster care) during the period of contact with the worker. When the workers used the skills the outcomes were much better than when they did not use the skills. Some of the more interesting findings include:

- (1) The study supported the value of role clarification skills. For example, when clients saw their worker as both a helper and investigator, those clients had good outcomes. Workers who talked about their dual role as both helper and investigator and who were clear about their expectations, also had clients with good outcomes.
- (2) The study supported the value of pro-social modelling and reinforcement. For example, workers who modelled simple courtesies such as keeping appointments, being punctual and doing what they say they will do, had clients with particularly good outcomes.
- (3) The study supported the value of collaborative problem solving. For example, workers who focused on their clients' view of their problems, who worked with their clients' goals, and who carried out some tasks themselves had clients with good outcomes.
- (4) The study also supported the value of relationship skills. Workers who were optimistic, who listened to their clients and who were not afraid to use humour and self disclosure had clients with good outcomes.



# PPROMPT

Peer Pro-Social Modeling in Probation