

Shoplifting/theft

Offense: Theft, shoplifting, burglary

Shoplifting may be addiction

Shoplifting is usually less a gateway crime than a form of gambling that can easily become addictive. People do it to get the rush that comes from getting away with something. For many of them it's how they cope with stress or uncertainty in their life. This is true for teens as well as adults.

If they don't get caught, it's self-reinforcing. By the time they do get caught, it has often become a serious habit, even an addiction. Some experts say more than 25% of first time (caught) shoplifters have already developed the habit, or even an addiction to it.

As with other addictions, shoplifting has some positive function for the person who steals. Only rarely is it about economic value. More often, the process of shoplifting is a way to deal with a challenging life event or situation. It may make up for a sense of loss or deprivation, provide "payback" for perceived unfairness, or just be a way to escape boredom, or let off steam. With many juveniles it is initially about getting peer acceptance.

Link to depression

Researchers say about one-third of shoplifters are clinically depressed. As with depressed people with other addictions, they are vulnerable to their addictions during the holidays.

Treatment approaches

A good treatment approach is to promote problem solving and emotional self-regulation, as well as to strengthen honesty, responsibility and awareness of consequences. Restorative justice also requires repairing the relationship. In many cases, that would entail an apology to the place of business.

Limitations: professional thieves need more consequences than the training software

In a minority of instances young offenders are already professional thieves: drug addicts supporting a habit, or already hardened criminals who lack any conscience. *These offenders need more help than this software program can provide.*

Goals of intervention

Youth will:

- Develop stronger norms against stealing
- Recognize internal and external triggers for their impulse to steal
- Learn effective strategies to control impulses
- Learn Cognitive-Behavioral Techniques for managing feelings
- Develop the ability to stand up to peer pressure
- Understand the meaning of restorative justice
- Make apologies as appropriate

A suggested scope and sequence

SKILL TRAINING TOPICS

Self awareness*

Strengths
Values
Feelings
Risk factors
Resilience

Impulse control

Stopping reactions
Predicting consequences
Quitting habits

Managing feelings

Internal triggers
External triggers
Relaxation response

Assertiveness

Standing up for beliefs
Resisting peer pressure

Connection to community

Making friends
Restorative justice
Apologies

CHALLENGE TOPICS

Shoplifting Stealing

Addiction
Anger
Anxiety
Depression
Envy
Gambling
Loneliness
Loss
Mistakes
Money
Peer pressure
Recklessness
Self-image
Unfairness

***Topics in color indicate one of the seven core competencies**