

Case Example Of Using Visual Rating Scales

Aysha works in a youth offending team. She is carrying out an ASSET assessment with Jeb, 15. This assessment will enable the court to determine what kind of sentence Jeb should receive for the three burglaries he has committed with some friends. Aysha needs to learn more about what motivated Jeb to offend and what is likely to help stop him re-offending.

Aysha has explained clearly to Jeb the purpose of the assessment, but she is not finding it easy to engage with Jeb or to learn more about his views, concerns and intentions. She recognises that he is angry about having been caught and nervous about a possible custodial sentence. Jeb is also cautious about what to say to Aysha in case it makes matters worse. He says very little in response to her open questions.

Aysha spreads a large sheet of paper on the table and draws a line with numbers at either end.

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0	10
I won't ever re-offend	I will definitely re-offend

Aysha uses the rating scale to encourage Jeb to identify how likely he thought it was at this time that he would ever burgle again. She explains that '0' would indicate that he expected never to re-offend. Choosing '10' would mean he thought he would definitely re-offend.

Jeb selected 3/10. He wanted to signal that he intended not to re-offend but choosing this number also allowed him to acknowledge that he had some fears about re-offending.

Aysha asked what Jeb might have put had she asked this question 6 months ago, before he had been caught. Jeb acknowledged that it would have been around 8/10. He enjoyed the excitement and comradeship of breaking into houses with his friends and intended to continue. Aysha gave Jeb positive feedback for having moved so far down the line since then.

Aysha then encouraged Jeb to think about what might need to change for him to be able to position himself at 2/10, so there would be a bit less risk of re-offending. After some thought, Jeb suggested he might need to develop some different social activities which equally offered him excitement and comradeship. Together, he and Aysha then explored opportunities for developing these. This resulted in Jeb joining a local martial arts club where he made some new friends and enjoyed an activity which offered lots of excitement but also an opportunity to develop self-discipline.

Further Reading

You can develop further ways of using rating scales which children and adults of all ages through techniques from solution-focused therapy. See in particular:

- Corcoran, J. (1997) A solution-oriented approach to working with juvenile offenders. *Child and Adolescent Social Work Journal* 14(4): 277-88.
- Selekman, M. (2002) *Living on the razor's edge : solution-oriented brief family therapy with self-harming adolescents*. Norton, New York.
- Sharry, J. (2004) *Counselling Children, Adolescents and Families*. Sage, London.