

## Mentalizing in young offenders

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*Psychoanalytic Psychology*, Vol 31(1), Jan 2014, 84-99. doi: 10.1037/a0035555

<http://psycnet.apa.org/journals/pap/31/1/84>

In order to prevent relapse into criminality, it is important to understand what precedes criminal behavior. Two earlier studies found deficits in mentalizing ability to be related to violent and criminal actions. Mentalizing refers to the ability to make human behavior predictable and meaningful by inferring mental states (thoughts, feelings, etc.) as explaining behavior. In this study, mentalizing ability was assessed by rating 42 Adult Attachment Interviews with young male offenders with the Reflective Functioning (RF) scale. In addition, specific mentalizing ability about their crimes was assessed, as well as psychopathy traits (Psychopathy Checklist, Screening Version [PCL:SV]) and alexithymia (Toronto Alexithymia Scale [TAS]). Results suggest impaired mentalizing in criminal offenders. Examples of anti- and prementalizing reasoning about crimes are presented. RF scores were not correlated with the PCL:SV or TAS.