

# Last chance in texas

[Psychology](#), [Psychotherapy](#)



Hubner, John. (2005) Last Chance in Texas: The Redemption of Criminal Youth. New York, NY. Random House Inc. Last Chance in Texas is an eye opening look into the efforts of the juvenile justice system to rehabilitate youth offenders and integrate them back into society. The book chronicles the research of author John Hubner who heard about a facility in Texas that ran an aggressive and one of the most successful, treatment programs in America for violent young offenders. He was particularly curious how a state like Texas, known for its hardcore attitude toward crime, could be a leader in rehabilitating violent and troubled youths.

Through a p of over nine months at The Giddings School in Texas, Hubner discovered that making offenders understand their past and how their actions affected others was key to successful rehabilitation. By observing school's therapists and students, Hubner learned that the rehabilitation process was an intense self realization program that forced offenders to review and re-live their past experiences that led up to the crimes they committed. The staff at Giddings challenged offenders to step into their past and visualize their crimes before and after they were committed, as well as the impact of those around them.

Different techniques were used help the students remember their pasts that most have tried to forget. Forcing them to recall specific details of their lives and the pain they suffered allowed them to address these experiences that ultimately led to them to violent crime. In most cases, the offenders were victims of violence well before they became violent offenders themselves. It was an emotionally painful and time consuming program designed to

reprogram them and their behavior by understanding their own feelings and how their actions affected other people.

In the program at The Gidding School there was a specific gang member named Ronnie who was convicted of armed robbery and kidnapping of an elderly couple. Through intense therapy it was learned that he previously suffered from different forms of abuse throughout his life. Family fighting, drug use, poor parental guidance ultimately led to a life of anger and violence. As a child, his mother would often leave Ronnie and his brother Kenny alone while she went out to use drugs. On occasion, his aunt would look after the two boys while their mother was away.

Not only did their aunt physically abuse them, but later on their mother's boyfriend introduced them to using and selling drugs, stealing, and guns. Reliving these memories was as agonizing and traumatic as one could imagine but it was paramount in learning how and why he became the person he did. Many boys at Giddings were convinced that no one loved them, and Ronnie was no exception. Giddings therapists used these sessions to break through the wall he put up thinking that no one loved them or cared what happened to them. More often than not, they were successful reaching students this way.

One unique approach to developing self worth for the students at Giddings was the organization of a football program where they actually played surrounding schools. Hubner saw that this not only was a great release of aggression but also created a sense of trust and camaraderie among students based on mutual respect. Ironically, it was on the football field where they learned that there are alternatives to the violence they usually

used to resolve differences. Unlike many football teams with teenage boys, winning was not the ultimate goal for the players at Giddings. In fact, they lost their final game.

However, they all felt a sense of pride and recognition for starting and finishing the football season as a team. The girls at Giddings, on the other hand, were treated somewhat different than their male counterparts. They had different ways of expressing their emotional pain that led to the crimes they committed. Surprisingly, one hundred percent of them had been sexually or physically assaulted. With females, therapist had to dig even deeper than they normally would have with boys. This could be somewhat dangerous since the girls were much more emotional and measurably more violent during therapy sessions.

Oddly enough, female fights were more unexpected, viscous, and ended more painfully than those of the boys. One interesting approach in therapy was when parents of murdered children visited the program and told their stories. The idea was to appeal to the inner hearts of the emotionally withdrawn young female offenders. It was thought that females would better identify with the stories of these families and be able to tell their own story. It proved effective as many made great emotional progress and were able to tell their own stories in therapy.

One by one all the young women opened up, pouring out their feelings they had been holding inside for so long. It was an incredible experience to witness for everyone in attendance. Upon graduation from The Giddings School, each student goes their separate way. For many, going back to institutions and detention centers was their next stop in their journey. Others

went back to their respective homes with their families. Many of these students managed to change their lives for the better and become someone they never thought they could.

They are the rehabilitation success stories for The Giddings School. Sadly however, there are many that are not rehabilitated and eventually return to correctional facilities. This book is an intense story about rehabilitation and hope within the juvenile justice system. The young men and young women at Giddings can go through years of intense therapy and counseling. Only after they learn how to deal with their past and the pain they have endured, can they begin to heal. Most kids enter Giddings with no feelings of love, self worth, respect for others, or hope.

However, through very structured program administered by loving therapist and staff members, most students begin to realize that though they have made mistakes, they too are loved. This book would be an outstanding reference for anyone interested in learning about a more positive approach to rehabilitating violent youth offenders who seem to have no hope. The Giddings School consistently provides some of the best results in the county. At Giddings, kids with no hope they leave with feeling of self worth, love, and sometimes even a new family.