Cognitive Change Strategies

Control: control of decisions, control of self, and control of the future. A variety of cognitive-behavioral techniques have been devised to help children and young people develop control over their internal reactions and overt behavior.

Listed are three points in cognitive-behavioral theory:
A) cognitive events mediate behaviors, therefore, a focus on cognition can be an effective approach to changing behavior.
B) young people are active participants in their own learning and can exercise control over it.
C) cognition, behavior, and the environment are related. Each affects and is affected by the others.

A model was developed called, DECIDE. This model is specifically for improving the skills in general problem solving for at-risk children and adolescents.

DECIDE stands for the steps to be taken:
1) Define the problem - define clearly and will the goal address the problem?
2) Examine variables - identify feelings and thoughts of young person. Are there questions and suggestions from other students;
3) Consider alternatives - strengths and weaknesses of problem solving is evaluated. Allow brainstorming from other students.
4) Isolate a plan - narrow down to best solution.
5) Do action steps - encourage students to perform the behaviors that make up the solution plan.
6) Evaluate effects - children and adolescents analyze and evaluate outcomes.

Teaching at-risk children and adolescents these steps will contribute to a more internal locus of control which can improve self-esteem, increase a sense of self-efficacy and strengthen resistance to problem behaviors.

Cognitive Restructuring
When a belief is maladaptive, it can be unlearned to produce a new and better belief. As more adaptive beliefs replace incomplete or faulty ones, behavior changes too. The best known approaches to changing maladaptive cognitive patterns are rational-emotive behavior therapy (REBT) (Ellis, 1962, 1996) and cognitive therapy (CT) (Beck, 1976, 1991). These approaches are based on the assumption that faulty cognition cause detrimental self-evaluations and emotional distress and that these experiences lead to behavioral problems. The goal is to help people substitute positive self-statements for faulty ones and recognize them.

Students who learn these skills in cognitive strategies will improve their interactions with others, perform better in school and realize their potential for a more positive future.