

# KRIMINELLAS REVANSCH I SAMHÄLLET (KRIS) / CRIMINALS RETURN INTO SOCIETY (CRIS)

*Ali Reunanen\**

## I. INTRODUCTION

Hi, my name is Ali, and I am an addict and a former criminal. I want to start with that presentation, which we do at every group meeting we have at our local KRIS association. We do this because it is important for us to identify that we are addicts and that our drug freedom is not guaranteed. It's something we work on every day, one day at a time.

I would like to thank you very much for inviting KRIS to come here and present our organization, and we hope that our experiences can be useful to you. I will tell you a little about my own experiences, but as an organization we are always a “we-association”. Quite simply explained, it means that – “what I cannot do alone, we can do together”.



## II. EVERY CRIMINAL ADDICT HAS A HISTORY

This is me as a child one day that I may not have been in my very best mood, so the picture may symbolize the feelings that I often lived with already during my early life. Those feelings of guilt, shame, fear, anger, sadness and anxiety followed me to my adult life and were growing the longer my addiction continued. I will try to explain to you that every addict and criminal has a history, and it can be filled with things like bullying, abuse, trauma, segregation, poverty, alcohol and drugs, violence, war, crime and much more.

For my personal part it was about bullying, trauma and abuse. The hardest thing for me personally was that I was bullied by older kids and sexually abused by a paedophile when I was 9 years old. That made me angry and hateful when I got older. When I was 14 years old and with my friends, we came in contact with alcohol which for me became my first drug and which made me feel happy, free and helped me to be the Ali I wanted. I soon learned that I could get that feeling when drinking, which then became an important part of my life. Unfortunately, there was also a lot of violence and other consequences in connection with my use.

---

\* Secretary-General, RIKSKRIS, Gröndalsvägen 194, 117 69 Stockholm, Phone: +4686420006, Mob: +46702834051, E-mail: [info@kris.a.se](mailto:info@kris.a.se), E-mail: [ali.reunanen@rikskris.se](mailto:ali.reunanen@rikskris.se), Home: [www.kris.a.se](http://www.kris.a.se).

I felt sad and lonely and found alcohol and drugs the only way to help me deal with my life. I did not tell anyone about the sexual abuse that the paedophile did to me; it became a secret that I kept to myself for 30 years. This is something that no child should have to experience, and I feel sorry that there was no adult that I dared to talk to this about. I talked about it for the first time during my treatment in prison, and it made me understand what it means “to heal by sharing”. So what I mean is that every addict and criminal has a history and that I think it is more important to understand than to be understood.

### **III. IT OFTEN ENDS UP IN PRISON**

Many of our members have grown up with broken families or no families at all. They have often grown up in support families or orphanages and learned to survive but have not been taught to live. Many of our target group live or have lived a life with a criminal lifestyle, which also requires a lot of work to leave. When they come out of prison, it is usually the old friends and drugs meeting them, and it only leads them back to prison, institutions or death, unless something else enters life that can give purpose and meaning.

A lot of different bad consequences can bring you to end up in prison, and then it is up to yourself if you want to feed the white or the black wolf inside yourself. We in KRIS do believe that no one is hopeless and that if you get the right treatment and the right help anyone can succeed. Here are some of the ideas that can be useful in a life change.

### **IV. PRISON CAN BE A TURNING POINT**

A good beginning is if a person asks for help; that would be a really good start. Then we believe in treatment similar to the 12-step programme which can help you to change your mindset and give back hope and faith. Then you can work with self-help groups, to find a new supporting fellowship, and when you get out you will need a lot of support of people who already have done the change.

That’s what KRIS is offering. In KRIS, we see addiction as a lifelong and incurable disease that we can break, become drug-free and learn to live with one day at a time. We can change our criminal lifestyle with a programme called “challenging a criminal lifestyle”. I will return to this a little later in the presentation. For us, it is important to be drug-free one day at a time, and this applies to all drugs including alcohol. The more a person can work with himself already inside the prison, the easier it will be when he comes out.

### **V. A LITTLE ABOUT MY OWN EXPERIENCE**

I also want to take the opportunity to mention a little from my own life. I became drug-free and honest thanks to the police, the judicial system, the prison and the 12-step programme they offered at the institution where I served my last sentence. From 1 April 1994, when the police arrested me, I have not used any drugs or alcohol since, and I do it one day at a time. With that decision and the work I have done with my criminal lifestyle, I have lived honestly and tried to be a role model for others.

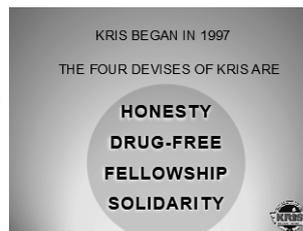
When I received my sentence, I was in custody, and I received the information that there was a prison that had started 12-step treatment. I got the possibility to apply for it, which I did. The decision came and I had to come to the institution and what was special about this institution was that not only rules and staff kept the institution drug-free, but also the inmates made sure that no drugs would enter the prison, which I was informed of by the prisoners' trust council.

In prison, I had to see how my addiction had taken over my life and that it had consequences in all areas of my life. I had turned my back on my family, I had no "real" friends left except some criminal addicts. I had come to the point where I accepted that I was a drug addict; I ignored it and basically was prepared to drug myself to death. It went so far that I started thinking about suicide. Fortunately, the police caught me before I had time to do something really, really stupid.

So when I came out and started to stand on my own two feet trying to live a normal life, many parts of life were difficult. I needed both time and support to be drug-free and honest. Then it was about housing, finances, education, family, social, physical, etc. And of course, to make amends for everything I had done during my active years. We grow as human beings by taking responsibility for our decisions and their consequences. When I do that, I start to gain self-respect, which in turn leads to self-esteem, and over time I start to trust myself and gain self-confidence as a human being. With the help of the 12-step programme, meetings, support groups and of course KRIS, I today have a fantastic life filled with both goals and meaning where I also can help others.

## VI. A NEW CHANCE

Prison with good content can be a really good opportunity to start a new drug-free and honest life. Then there will be more tasks and problems to solve when you are free. Then there will be a great need for support and help building a new life. And of course, KRIS is one of the supports that many really need as a complement to other efforts that a person may need to build a new and better life.



## VII. KRIMINELLAS REVANSCH I SAMHÄLLET (KRIS)

The reason KRIS started was due to a need for something that did not exist, which was some kind of group or association that understands our problems and that can both help and also set boundaries, not accepting all the lies addicts and criminals live with. CRIS in English means Criminals Return Into Society, and that means we get a second chance in society. Getting an opportunity to make amends for things we have done and the opportunity to be able to become role models in society and help others who want to leave

a life full of addiction and crime. Therefore, we have built our association based on four cornerstones which are:

**Honesty** – We do not commit crimes. We are honest with each other and with ourselves.

**Drug-free** – In KRIS we are completely drug-free, which also applies to alcohol, we use drug tests and breath tests to make our members feel safe.

**Fellowship** – We care about the well-being of our friends and respect our fellow human beings.

**Solidarity** – We help, respect and care for each other. 24 hours a day.

KRIS conducts institutional visitation activities where members from all our local associations make regular visits to give hope that there is a way out of addiction, crime and exclusion. In total we make about 1,500 – 1,600 visits a year, which are much appreciated by the inmates.

During these visits, there are different rules at the prisons. Sometimes we can meet whole wards with inmates and can then have nice group talks or lectures. At other times, it is the individual motivating conversation. Often it is the individual inmate who wants to get in touch with KRIS, which gives us an opportunity to meet them when they are released. It also happens that we get a possibility to hold study circles inside the institutions. Often, they include deep discussions about living honestly in society. I have not met any criminal addict who had a life plan – when he or she was young and curiously tried alcohol, drugs or snatched something in the store – to become a drug addict and criminal and would spend his or her life in prison.

KRIS local associations conduct daily structured activities where everyone has a responsibility to make it work. The associations organize specific study circles and groups in certain areas such as crime, violence, traditions, parent groups and also study circles on topics such as guilt, shame, anger, fear, grief, etc. We also organize KRIS days when we meet in pleasant conditions and socialize and work with those topics. When we are out visiting the local associations, they offer food which is always nice and is also part of belonging to a community; many of our members are not used to having food every day. We have some members who are homeless and who need special support, which we try to provide.

It has been and is a very unusual time in society in this last year when we cannot or may not get into the institutions, and we all hope that it will get better and that we can get back inside the institutions to give the inmates support and hope.

## VIII. CHALLENGING A CRIMINAL LIFESTYLE

Challenging the criminal styles of thinking and to see the motives and drives for a criminal lifestyle and giving the person a message of hope: There is a way to another lifestyle without criminality and the message is that you can have a new way of life and be a part of the society.

Most people commit some crimes during their childhood. For some, the problem becomes more serious, and they may need help to keep from going any further. Those who

have difficulty quitting, often despite severe consequences, can get trapped in a criminal lifestyle. In the end, it can be just as difficult to leave the criminal lifestyle as to break with a drug addiction. What characterizes a criminal lifestyle is, for the adult, irresponsibility, an image of oneself as an "outsider", criminal thought patterns and impulsive action patterns.

As early as the 1950s, researchers noticed that there were various ways in which criminals used to “speak to themselves” to silence their consciences. You could call it a form of a defence-mechanism. Later it came to be known as criminal thinking patterns. These thinking patterns are, according to Glenn Walters, the founder of the Criminal Lifestyle theory

- Justification
- Cut-off or shielding
- Power and control
- Entitlement
- Sentimentality
- Superoptimism
- Cognitive Indolence
- Inconsistent thoughts

The driving forces of crime are several. One basic thing is fear. Fear is about not believing in coping with life but what crime can bring: Belonging, status and confirmation. Other basic driving forces are lack of self-control, lack of inhibitions, emotional coldness and suspended emotions. In addition to these, there are other driving forces such as greed, shame, power and control, tension and lust. The goal of challenging the criminal lifestyle is to convey hope that there is another way of life.



## **IX. LIFE IS ABOUT MORE THAN JUST BEING DRUG FREE AND HONEST**

Getting a good start is to have a good home where there are no drugs and where there are people who have changed their life and one thing which is very important for a new life, that is to take care of themselves and to be able to make amends, to pay back the people you have hurt and to paying back continue society by helping others who need help and that’s where our slogan is handy. It is simply, “Help yourself by helping others!”

Another important part of life is to support your self-confidence. You really have to wish for an honest job and be able to keep it. KRIS started some social businesses for our members, as a possibility to learn a trade and to do some good work. Of course, they will make mistakes, and it is better that they do them at KRIS, instead of in an ordinary workplace. Some of our members have never had a job, so we have to teach them from the beginning, to be in time, to follow rules, to listen to a boss and so on.

Many with our background have had or no experience with either education or work, so it is difficult for our members to be able to compete in the labour market. So in order to get a good job and with the life experiences we have, we have created our own education called Lifestyle Coordinator. It is a basic training in working with addiction and crime.

The training lasts for 1 year and includes a lot of internships, and the course is based on the 12-step programme and challenging a criminal lifestyle. It is a process education, which means that the students go through all the elements in their own lives which means that their own experiences come in handy. In addition to addiction and crime, we spend a lot of time on working with shame, guilt, anger, grief, violence, early sexual abuse and other trauma treatment. Over 65 per cent of the students are offered a job already during the education, which we are very proud of.



## X. SUPPORT

As an organization, we have a great need for support from important people in society, both from business and politics, and some of those who are honorary members are the royal family. Here are two of our honorary members H.M King Carl Gustav 16th and Queen Silvia. A nice memory with Queen Silvia is when KRIS celebrated its 20th anniversary, and the queen spontaneously went up on stage and told about her memories where she participated in various KRIS events and told us how important the organization is and what difference we can make for our target group.

Thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to come here to tell a little about KRIS and our activities. I also want to take the opportunity to thank the Swedish police, the legal system and the prison service for the efforts they made to stop me and then to help me to a new life. And in conclusion, I want to say again, hello my name is Ali, and I am a grateful recovering addict and former criminal. Thank you.