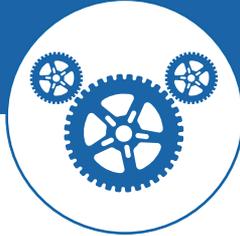


Justice Gears

A metaphor for: ensuring that the justice response is appropriate to the underlying situation



The story you're telling:

Just as a bicycle works best when it uses the right gear for the terrain, our criminal justice system should use different resources for different situations, instead of over-relying on the "prison gear."



Strategic way to redirect thinking away from patterns such as:

Criminals = Rational Actors; Essentialism;
Fairness = Uniformity; Fatalism;
Individualism; Moral Judgment



Concepts and ideas included in this frame element:

- **Criminal justice system as a bicycle with gears:** Helps to focus attention at the systems level, instead of on individuals: the system needs to be fixed so we can all benefit from its improved outcomes.
- **Criminal justice system as a bicycle in motion:** Channels thinking towards "destinations" or outcomes: increased public safety and lower crime rates are where we're trying to get, and we need working systems to get us there.
- **Alternatives to court involvement or incarceration as available, useful gears:** Helps to expand the public's understanding of the full range of possible and appropriate responses to various situations.
- **Gears work best when applied to the right situation:** Finding the appropriate "fit" between the circumstances and the chosen intervention will lead to positive results.
- **Selecting a gear based on terrain:** Provides a non-individualizing way of introducing context, or the various factors that the adjudication process should take under consideration.

Justice Gears

A metaphor for: ensuring that the justice response is appropriate to the underlying situation



Ways you might apply these concepts in communications:

- Our current criminal justice system is like a bicycle stuck in one gear—the prison gear—so it isn’t working optimally.
- A bike works best when it has, and uses, different gears for going uphill, downhill, or covering flat terrain. But the criminal justice system we have now is trying to deal with many different situations using only one gear: Stresses the importance of finding the appropriate “fit” between the circumstances and the response.
- For the system to work well, we need to use different responses for different situations—shifting gears to mental health treatment, addiction services, or age-appropriate responses for children and adolescents, for example: Enumerating these easily grasped exemplars can help to build public understanding. It’s good practice to include these before talking about moving into more specific, less common, or potentially more controversial areas for which alternative justice responses are needed.
- By using different gears to cover different ground, we can reach our destination with less wasted energy: Channels thinking towards pragmatic, responsible policies that are in the public interest, such as using resources wisely and enhancing public safety.
- Our system needs to be able to deal with various terrains: Can provide an opening to discuss contextual factors that the adjudication process should take into consideration.
- To improve the system, let’s think about ways to use all of the gears available to us: Explicitly pivoting to discussion of policies and programs that involve “different gears” fosters optimism and builds public awareness of available alternatives to prison.