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On The Knife's Edge: Using Therapy To Address Violence Among Teens

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The fight was over a pair of gym shoes. One teenager faces years in prison. The other — the 15-year-old grandson of Congressman Danny Davis — is dead.

We often hear stories about murders sparked by trivial disputes. And we also hear the same solutions proposed year after year: harsher punishments, more gun control.

But what if science can help us find new solutions? Can understanding how we make decisions help us prevent these tragedies?

In moments of anger, it can be hard to heed the advice to *take a deep breath* or *count to ten*. But public health researcher Harold Pollack says that "regret comes almost as fast as anger," and that five minutes of reflection can make all the difference between a regular life and one behind bars.

This week, Harold Pollack and Jens Ludwig tell us about the research they've done at the University of Chicago's Crime Lab. They worked with a program called BAM (Becoming a Man) to look at what happens when teenagers participate in cognitive behavioral therapy, or CBT.

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We hear from students in the program and examine the results of Pollack and Ludwig's research. They found that changing the way we think can change the way we behave — and changing the way we behave can change our lives. This week, we put that idea to the test.

Additional Resources:

"Preventing Youth Violence and Dropout: A Randomized Field Experiment," by Sara Heller, Harold A. Pollack, Roseanna Ander, and Jens Ludwig, National Bureau of Economic Research, 2013.

"Thinking, Fast and Slow? Some Field Experiments to Reduce Crime and Dropout in Chicago," by Sara B. Heller, Anuj K. Shah, Jonathan Guryan, Jens Ludwig, Sendhil Mullainathan, and Harold A. Pollack in *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 2017.

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