**Question 1:** Are boot camp-style detention centers effective for rehabilitating offenders?

**Answer 1:** Data are still mixed on whether or not prison boot camp programs are effective for changing criminal behavior. Beginning in 1983, boot camp programs have flourished in the United States as more and more jurisdictions seek effective and low-cost alternatives to traditional incarceration. The boot camp environment acts as a shock treatment and emphasizes discipline and physical conditioning. Early studies as to the effectiveness of boot camps has shown they work particularly well with first-time, non-violent, and juvenile offenders, but their effectiveness with older or more established criminals is limited.

**Question 2:** How important are addiction treatment programs in prisons?

**Answer 2:** For drug and alcohol addicted inmates, addiction treatment programs are paramount to successfully changing their criminal behavior. An addiction often drives an offender’s criminal behavior whether it is simply a need to continue buying and using their chosen substance or committing additional crimes to support and fund their addiction. Many studies estimate drug addicted offenders who receive treatment in prison decrease their likelihood of reoffending by more than 50% and decrease the likelihood they will use drugs again by more than 30%.

**Question 3:** What is operant conditioning and how does it apply to criminal behavior?

**Answer 3:** Operant conditioning describes the process of rewarding or punishing animals for their actions (i.e., shaping behavior through the learning process). Noted psychologist B.F. Skinner is usually credited with the most useful applications of operant conditioning. Skinner also introduced the terms positive reinforcement and negative reinforcement to our vocabulary. With this idea, it is easy to see where operant conditioning is used with human offenders. When an offender commits a crime, he or she is usually sentenced to some form of punishment (for example, incarceration). It is theorized that this negative reinforcement of their behavior causes criminals to think twice before committing another crime. Operant conditioning goes hand-in-hand with the Classical School of Criminology, which posits that crime is a product of free will and conscious choice, where an offender weighs the rewards versus the consequences of criminal action. If negative reinforcement is applied quickly and severely enough (according to the
Classical School), an offender will be conditioned not to commit crime.

**Question 4:** What role does aftercare play in the rehabilitation process?

**Answer 4:** Aftercare is the name given to the formal continued contact offenders have with the corrections system after their release from prison. Aftercare programs, often conditions of release or parole, continue to aid an offender’s rehabilitation. Aftercare can include psychological counseling, drug screening and counter-addiction support, employment assistance programs, and society reintegration programs. In those ways, aftercare continues to reinforce the rehabilitative measures presented to the offender while he or she was in prison, and it encourages further law-abiding behavior.

**Question 5:** What factors can work to counter efforts to change criminal behavior?

**Answer 5:** A variety of different factors can make the task of rehabilitating offenders more difficult. For example, the more violent the offender, the less likely he is to be successfully rehabilitated. Also, the more committed an offender is to criminal behavior, the less likely he can be effectively dissuaded from a life of lawlessness. Another hindrance to effective rehabilitation programs is a dependence on drugs or alcohol. Despite the things listed above, perhaps the biggest obstacle in preventing effective rehabilitation is a negative attitude or feelings of hopelessness on the part of the offender. The chances of success are low without a positive mental investment by the