

B2.2 Crime and Punishment

You can learn:

- How to discuss crime and punishment.
- How to discuss moral dilemmas.

1



Together with your partner decide on an order for the crimes in the box below. Give each one a number where: '1 = *the most serious*', '2 = *the next most serious*' and so on, until '12 = *the least serious*'.

murder

manslaughter

rape

assault

burglary

shoplifting

armed robbery

serious fraud

drug smuggling

drug dealing

drink-driving

slander/libel

Well, I think that drug smuggling and drug dealing are really serious because people get addicted and then go on to commit many other related crimes. So they should get at least a '3' or a '4'.

Yeah, I agree with you, but I think that crimes that involve violence probably should be considered as the most serious. So rape and murder must be numbers '1' and '2'.

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Now discuss the questions in the box, which are all related to the topic of crime and punishment, with your partner.

- Are high crime rates a problem in parts of your country? Where and why?
- Have you ever been a victim of crime?
- Have you ever witnessed a crime?
- What do you think of capital punishment?
- Do you think soft drugs should be legalised?
- Do you think prostitution should be legalised?
- Are punishments too strict or too lenient in your country? What would you change?
- Why do men commit more crimes than women?
- What are the primary purposes of prison?
- Is there such a thing as a victimless crime?
- What makes people turn to crime?
- Have you ever been tempted to break the law?
- Do you trust the police in your country?
- What are the most common crimes in your country?
- Which crimes do you think will increase in future?

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Imagine that you and your partner can decide the sentences in the court cases in the box. Discuss each one in turn and decide what the punishment should be. You can acquit the individual concerned (set them free) or set any length of prison sentence from a few days to a life sentence (where 'life' really means *life*).

Case One This woman has been found guilty of physically attacking a woman who she discovered in bed with her husband. She had suspected her husband was cheating on her, so came home early and went crazy when she found them together. She pulled out handfuls of the woman's hair then punched and kicked her. She has no other convictions.

Case Two This man has been found guilty of killing his mother by suffocating her with a pillow. His mother was 92 years old and had been suffering from senile dementia. The man had been looking after her, as her carer, for twenty five years. He had previously been of blameless character.

Case Three This woman has been found guilty of shoplifting. She claims that she did it to feed her children. She has four small children and is a single mother. She also has drink and drug problems. This is not her first offence. She has been arrested twice before, but previously, first received a caution then a fine, on the two previous occasions.

Case Four This man is accused of murder because he shot and killed a neo-nazi political candidate. The defendant is Jewish and stated that the man he killed had been distributing hate-filled literature and had been denying that the extermination of the Jews (the Holocaust) had occurred.

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Now answer the following questions as honestly as possible. What would you do in these situations?

Situation One You are lying in bed at night and you hear a banging noise coming from the living room. You are alone in the flat and suspect that it must be burglars. What would you do?

Situation Two A very violent gangster has been arrested and charged with a number of offences. The police are calling for witnesses to his crimes to come forward and secure a conviction. You are one of these witnesses, what would you do?

Situation Three You find a bag at the back of a bus with hundreds of pounds in loose notes inside. You look to see if you can find any personal identification, but there is none. The driver is bad-tempered and distracted by schoolchildren. What would you do?

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Tell your partner three pieces of information about yourself. Only one of these should be true. Your partner should then ask questions to try to discover if you are telling the truth by asking for supporting details. After five minutes or so, your partner should guess which fact is accurate. Then change roles.

6



Write a paragraph giving your views on capital punishment. Either defend it, or give reasons to oppose it.

Capital punishment has been abolished in my country, but the majority of people are still in favour of it. I think however, that they are mistaken. There are no ...

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Notes:

Lined area for taking notes, consisting of 20 horizontal lines.

*"Poverty is the
mother of
crime."
Marcus Aurelius*