

## Brief overview of NVR and glossary of terms

Concepts and interventions are explained here for the benefit of readers new to NVR. This is not an exhaustive list but covers terms which you may encounter in this book. NVR is a living practice and the NVR community is constantly evolving and changing and developing new practices. We like to think it is like an underground network of roots (called a rhizome) and you will find this metaphor used throughout the introduction.

Non-violent resistance is a form of political and social struggle in which people come together to resist oppression through their physical presence and embodied protest (e.g. occupations, sit-ins, marches and strikes). The concepts have been applied by Haim Omer and others to situations in which parents find themselves dealing with children who show extreme forms of violent, challenging, non-functional and (self-)destructive behaviour.

The most well-known exponents of political and social non-violent resistance are Mahatma Gandhi and Martin Luther King.

## Key concepts in Non-violent Resistance

### 1. Classic NVR ideas

- Parental presence: A child's or young person's sense that their parent is there for them, that the parent is a safe, solid and dependable person who can be relied upon. A child's sense that their parent knows their whereabouts and cares what they are doing. The child knows what their parent's values are and what they believe about right and wrong.
- Rebuilding the relationship: When relationships have become characterised by violence and coercion, there are very few opportunities for people to relate more positively. The relationship needs to be rebuilt based on acknowledging the

negative, escalatory patterns and committing to learn to adopt connecting ones.

- De-escalation: Parents learn to identify when things are escalating and to step out of the pattern. Two types of escalation tend to occur: one where the escalation ends in violence and another where the parent gives in. Parents often do both. Parents learn to wait until things are calm and *respond* instead of *react* using the maxim 'strike when the iron is cold'.
- Breaking the silence: Parents tell others about the child's difficult behaviour and how they feel hopeless and helpless about it and need help.
- Supporters: Parents identify individuals who can support them and their child; they are specific about how they want these people to help them resist the young person's challenging behaviours.
- Reconciliation gestures (or 'relational gestures'): Parents make regular small gestures of love and kindness towards their child. These are small gifts (items of food, repairs to things that have been broken, special messages, watching the child's favourite TV programme) which are made irrespective of how the child has behaved and without expecting anything in return or pointing out the act of kindness to the child. Reconciliation gestures are intended to help the parent enact feelings of warmth and love. If the gesture is spurned, parents do not react.
- Active resistance: Parents choose to resist attempts to engage them in escalation. They resist the temptation to have the last word. Or they begin to withdraw services and no longer respond to unreasonable demands (internet access throughout the night, bribing the child to attend school, unlimited taxi and laundry services).

- Announcement: Parents carefully construct an announcement that they will make to their child explaining that they are going to resist the negative behaviour that they want changed in the family, that they love their child and they want things to be better. They commit to a non-violent stance (verbal and physical). There are no threats or warnings. The announcement is short and specific. Parents practise making the announcement until it embodies and resonates with both their love for their child and their stance of resistance.
- Sit-in: If the child repeats the behaviour/s that were addressed in the announcement (for example, punching a sibling), parents will plan a sit-in. They will enter the child's bedroom and sit down, announcing, in a calm and quiet way, that they are going to wait there until the child can suggest a way of changing things. They offer to assist the child in thinking about ways forward. Then they sit quietly for up to an hour (depending on the age/ability of the child) to demonstrate their love and their commitment to working towards change in a peaceful way.
- Helping siblings and others: By taking time to listen to their experiences and explaining the changes in approach, parents support sibling and others, who have been impacted by the child's destructive behaviours.

## 2. Developments in NVR

What follows next is a collection of post NVR ideas. These build upon the original NVR concepts by laying the foundations for alternative evolving practices. Not everyone will use all, or even some, of the ideas listed here.

- Three Baskets (Uri Weinblatt adapted from Ross Greene): Parents prioritise unwanted behaviours by placing them in three differently sized baskets. The large basket contains the largest number of behaviours and is to be ignored; the medium-sized basket is for behaviours to negotiate over; and the small basket is for the one or two behaviours that the parent is going to resist actively. The small basket must not contain more than two things.
- New Authority: The new authority emphasises parents' self-control and persistence over control of the child, mutual responsibility for escalations over blaming the child as solely responsible for family break-down, resistance over punishment and transparency over secrecy. It is a new paradigm of authoritative parenting that promotes supervision, firmness and discipline replacing distance, power and hierarchy used in traditional authoritarian parenting. The metaphor of the anchoring function of the parent for the child and the importance of social support become central components of a secure parent-child bond.
- Vigilant Care: Vigilant care consists of three stages which can be compared to a traffic-light-system: The 'open attention' can be compared to the green light. Parents keep their eyes and ears open, stay vigilant for any warning signals during routine contacts with the child (school runs, meals). In the 'focussed attention' (=comparable to the amber traffic light), parents become more vigilant and talk to other people who are closely involved with the child (teachers, friends, grand-parents). In the 'protective action' (= comparable to the red light) parents and their supporters take action (announcement,

sit-ins, active resistance, increased visual presence, protective actions). Parents regularly shift between these three positions.

- The Four Core Parenting Values (Michael Grabbe):
  1. Safety of the child and of others
  2. Developing their full potential and abilities in order for them to have a good future
  3. Having good relationships
  4. Showing respect for themselves, their parents and others
- Graduate Parent Participation: Parents who have completed an NVR programme become actively involved in all aspects of the NVR projects (groups, mentoring, presentations, writing, research) to share their experience with new parents and others. They combine compassion, empathy, containment and support with the hope that others can overcome hopelessness and despair as well, which new parents to the approach can listen to, believe and accept better from them than from professionals
- Fourth basket or rainbow basket (sometimes also called the flower basket): The rainbow basket provides parents with the opportunity to re-connect with their unconditional love for the child by prompting them to recall special memories and forgotten qualities of the child. This enables the child to be viewed more holistically.
- Loss of Parental Presence: Parents are supported to acknowledge fluctuations in their levels of involvement and

presence they have in their child's physical, emotional and social life and how they relate to the development of unacceptable behaviours. By exploring their own experiences, unmet needs and developing an inter- and intra-personal awareness, parents affirm their parental values and become conscious how they communicate them. This enables them to (re-) build their parental presence.

- Connection before Correction: This maxim does not mean making a connection *in order* to make a correction. It means *prioritising* connection with the child *over* correcting the child's behaviour. We have moved away from focussing on correcting or resisting behaviours towards a relational stance.
- Connecting conversations (adapted from Uri Weinblatt's 'recovering conversations'): After the deconstruction of old patterns, parents can start developing new ways of being for and with their child and learn to respond rather than react. Once they are ready, they can rehearse with supporters some new ways of being with their child. Active responsive listening to the child, noticing and naming how the child feels, reflecting on their own or others' relevant experiences (without falling into lecturing and preaching), visualising or naming the child's unmet needs, putting themselves into their shoes and seeing things from their side, empathising, asking for forgiveness are all examples of reconnection. This is not an exhaustive or prescriptive list. Graduate parents' testimonies provide inspiration for new parents, who develop their own ways of applying the NVR principles.
- Self-Announcement: Parents and carers look in a non-blaming and non-judgemental way at the painful feelings and

experiences that stopped them from being effective in their parenting. They commit themselves to being present, aware and involved in changing their own part in the unhealthy escalatory patterns acknowledging their own capacity and motivation for bringing about change.

- Child's/ Young Person's Announcement: Announcements can also be made by young people to parents and carers when practitioners are working with them using NVR principles.
- Looking after yourself: Parents make time for themselves and for activities that they enjoy, restoring themselves and enhancing their capacity for giving to others.
- Use of mindfulness in NVR: Parents and carers learn different ways of mindfulness as a practice of clearing the mind of thoughts and judgements by being attentive to unconscious processes and bodily sensations thereby helping them reduce thoughtless and reactive tendencies which usually evolve from and maintain patterns of conflict. Mindfulness helps parents to cultivate their parental presence by allowing them to relax and take care of themselves in a constructive way and to develop a non-judgemental and non-violent stance towards themselves and others.