

Reflections on attending the Advanced NVR training

I attended the Advanced Level NVR (Non Violent Resistance) training in London in October and November 2016. The Advanced NVR training consisted of two practice days with Michelle Dadswell and four teaching days with Peter Jakob. The training was run by the Partnership Projects.

In my current role as a Systemic Psychotherapist in a general adolescent Inpatient CAMHS unit, I am involved in running an NVR group for parents as well as working with individual families using the Non Violent Resistance approach. The NVR approach is embraced by the unit I work in as a way of working with young people.

Attending the advanced NVR training has helped me to think about how as a multidisciplinary team we can respond to violence/aggression or self-destructive presentations on the wards in the least restrictive and least escalatory way, whilst also addressing issues of safety.

It was useful to be reminded throughout the training about how successful the NVR approach can be in dealing with safety issues, whilst enabling those involved to maintain positive, caring and non-punitive relationships with the young people.

During the two practice days, I had the opportunity to think about how NVR can be adapted to fit the needs of young people whose primary difficulties are not related to violence towards others but to violence towards themselves. In particular, I had the opportunity to reflect on how to apply the NVR techniques within a CAMHS inpatient unit. I particularly benefitted from exploring how the Sit-in and Announcement concepts can be adjusted for use by CAMHS professionals in a way that enhances the therapeutic relationship and which raises the staff presence at times where staff, like parents, feel most helpless.

During the practice days there was a lot of emphasis on the concept of support. This really helped me to think about the importance of working with the family's support network, which is something that in inpatient CAMHS can sometimes be neglected due to limited access to the community which surrounds the family. I have since paid much more attention on the importance of the support network in helping parents use the NVR techniques. I have noticed that this has indeed made a difference in the relationship that parents develop with the NVR concepts and techniques and in their overall presence as parents.

In the four teaching days Peter Jakob covered the use of NVR with traumatised parents and children. He extended the theme of support by discussing how to help parents choose safe supporters and how to negotiate the kind of support they need in order to successfully raise their parental presence. A particularly useful concept was the role of the NVR practitioner in helping the parent tell their story in a way in which parental competence is witnessed by critical others and which elicits compassion towards the parent.

Another key concept in working with traumatised families is the 'Caring Dialogue'. This involves speaking in such a way in which the child's unmet needs are being attended to by

the parent. Key elements of the Caring Dialogue are: tone of voice, posture as well as reconciliation gestures designed to respond to the child's unmet needs. The Caring Dialogue aims to merge the parent's internal image of the 'controlling child' with the image of 'child in distress' to help parents hold a caring compassionate stance whilst they attend to issues of violence and aggression.

I particularly like the use of narrative ideas in helping traumatised parents to re-author their own stories and to draw out stories of competence and hope by building on successes, even if these are fleeting. Use of others whose presence is soothing and calming is highly encouraged to help the parent hold on to self-compassion whilst they are trying to deliver caring dialogues with their children. This can be particularly useful to families, such as those who present in CAMHS inpatient settings, who often blame themselves for their children's difficulties and where self-blame frequently undermines their parental presence.

Thanks to FPSA for supporting me to access the advanced NVR course which was incredibly useful to me, the families I work with and my colleagues.

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