

**Keynote Address, Haim Omer: NVR and the New Authority. The both/and of overcoming aggression and maintaining a close and caring relationship.**

Non-violent resistance allows for the development of authoritative parenting in ways that are acceptable and practicable in a more democratic society and that agree with our ideals about how we want to rear our children. The elements that define this "new authority" in contrast to traditional authority are: presence instead of distance, self-control instead of control over the child, persistence instead of immediacy of punishment, support by the network instead of a strict hierarchy and transparency instead of secrecy. In contrast to traditional authority, the new authority is not only compatible with the development of the child's autonomy, but actively fosters it.

**Plenary Presentation, Peter Jakob: A child focus in working with violent young people: addressing the child's unmet needs.**

Without it being obvious, many young people with conduct problems are highly vulnerable: some struggle with the need to manage their impulsivity and inattentiveness; others, on the autistic spectrum, with the anxiety that is inherent in negotiating complex social interaction. Others have experienced insecure attachment, trauma, and/or serious disruption of family relationships, leaving them with incoherent and negative narratives of their families and themselves.

Aggression leads to alienation between these young people and their parents, carers, teachers, siblings and peers, leaving these significant others feeling remote and disaffected. This promotes even greater vulnerability: by converting difficult 'weak' internal states (which are associated with anxiety, sadness, feeling alone, insecure and overwhelmed or depressed) into anger, aggressive children become less aware of their own distress and do not signal it. Disaffected parents do not perceive the young person as a child in need. In addition, controlling young people avoid challenging situations, leaving them sensitized and even more anxious. The 'both/and' of NVR - resisting the young person's controlling behaviour, while de-escalating and seeking reconciliation wherever possible - opens the possibility for the previously unheard voice of the child to emerge: the voice of unmet need. Encouraging them to develop reconciliation gestures which address the young person's unmet need, helps parents and carers focus on a care orientation and (re)-sensitize themselves to the hidden distress of the child.

This presentation will familiarize delegates with research into aggressive children's vulnerability, identify constraints to parental care responses and different kinds of unmet need in young people, and outline ways in which reconciliation work can be used to develop a child focus in the process of effectively resisting controlling, aggressive or self-destructive behaviour.

**Main presenter workshop, Barbara Ollefs: When chronic disease dominates family life—de-escalation and social support in working with paediatric illness such as diabetes and asthma in difficult to treat young people.**

Requiring a high degree of self-discipline in the daily self-application of treatments and careful management of the disease, chronic illnesses such as asthma or adolescent diabetes will push not only insecure parents to the limits of their coping ability. Often, parents feel guilty about their 'contribution' to the illness or the poor course of the disease. They become anxious about using their parental authority (e.g. because they do not wish to burden their child any further), lose more and more of their own voice and become marginalized within the family, at the centre of which the child exerts greater power.

The significant loss to the relationship is not parental power or dominance, but parental presence . Psychologically, parents begin to disappear from the life of their child, losing their role as responsive adults who provide a secure base, protection but also guidance and orientation. Many NVR interventions have shown to be effective in chronic disease, as these can open the door to communication between parent and child and strengthen parental presence.

The workshop will use case examples of psychological therapy in a paediatric hospital to demonstrate different forms of escalation, and helpful interventions for regaining parental presence.

**Main presenter workshop, Haim Omer: The 'anchoring function' of attachment – feeling safe as the child of 'strong' parents.**

Authoritative parents fulfill an anchor function that furthers the growing child's security, stabilizes the parent-child relationship, and fosters internalization of a positive working model. The characteristics of authoritative parenting that enable these processes are detailed in the concept of "the new authority". The anchor function is a conceptual bridge between parental authority, non-violent resistance and attachment theory. It complements the safe haven and secure base as one of the basic conditions of secure attachment.

## **Main presenter workshop, Peter Jakob: Recognising and addressing unmet need in aggressive and self-destructive young people: a narrative approach to reconciliation**

Following on from some of the central themes of the plenary presentation - *A child focus in working with violent young people* - , this workshop focuses on how reconciliation work can help parents overcome their demonization of the child, supporting parents and their aggressive children to develop more positive representations of self and other.

Delegates will be introduced to specific methods for creating a child focus, enabling parents to become sensitized to their child's need. The starting point for the use of these methods is planning reconciliation gestures with the parent, which are responsive to the obscure or hidden distress of the child, and which enable the child to develop a more coherent and benign narrative of family and self. Practical exercises and case examples aim to deepen delegates' understanding of the child-focused methods, including

- Need-focused question sequences
- Interviewing the internalised child (in the parent)
- Child focused visualisation techniques
- Therapeutic network meetings involving a trusted adult as 'second voice' for the child.

Workshop participants will be invited to jointly work on the construction of a reconciliation gesture in one of the delegates' own cases.

## **Main presenter workshop, Uri Weinblatt: Different 'sit-ins' for different purposes: variations on a powerful therapeutic tool.**

The Sit-in is a core intervention for parental empowerment in NVR. This rich parent-child encounter disrupts dysfunctional interaction cycles and leads the relationship to become safer and more respectful. While the original Sit-in procedure remains relevant, other Sit-in variations have been developed over the years. These Sit-ins are tailored for the needs of different children, allow for more communication between parent and child, and encourage parents to use them in creative ways. In the workshop different Sit-ins will be presented and discussed through experiential activities. We will also discuss the emotional cycle within the Sit-in and explore how different parent-child emotional states can be utilized therapeutically.

Plenary presentation, **Liz Day, Elisabeth Heismann and Oxleas NVR Team:** Developing mutual support among parents - the multi-family group parent training programme at Oxleas Child- and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

The Oxleas NVR Team has developed an NVR - based psycho-educational parent training programme for multi-family groups, along with educational materials supporting parents' understanding of the principles of de-escalation and raising of parental presence. 'Guidelines for parents of children or adolescents with violent or destructive behaviours' were developed in the form of a booklet, supporting parents to develop attitudes and responses which both restore their authority and help prevent escalation, and guide them through the use of specific nonviolent strategies. A comprehensive collection of materials for training NVR trainers and for hand-outs to group members was developed and published as the "Non-violent Resistance Programme" by Pavilion Publishing, Brighton. The programme has been carried out for several years; it has been audited in regard to retention, improvement and service user feed-back. Parent feed-back has been elicited and utilised in the re-structuring of each subsequent group. Service user participation has been further developed in the form of training for 'graduate' parents to support other parents in the ongoing programme, thus building social support, one of the key features of NVR, into the programme's structure. A parent NVR blog is now being developed. The presentation will take delegates through the structure of the programme, illustrate how it has evolved over time, and share experiences in NVR-based group-work.

Plenary symposium with **Uri Weinblatt, Barbara Ollefs and Ifat Lavi-Levavi:** The emerging evidence base in NVR: behavioural improvement in children, improvement on parent variables, changes to family interaction.

**Weinblatt:** The first outcome study to evaluate training in NVR with the parents of children with acute behavior problems was concluded in Tel-Aviv in 2005. The purpose of the study was to examine the effects of NVR training at helping parents deal effectively with their helplessness, isolation and escalatory interactions with their children. 73 parents (41 families) were randomly assigned to a treatment group and wait-list control group. Measures were taken at pre-treatment, post-treatment and a one month follow-up. In comparison to the wait-list group, parents that received training in NVR showed a decrease in parental helplessness, permissiveness and escalatory behaviors, and an increase in perceived social support. The children's negative behaviors as assessed by the parents also decreased significantly.

**Ollefs:** In the first national German study on the effects of NVR -based parent coaching (Omer and von Schlippe), a parent group which had undergone NVR parent coaching (NVR group) was compared to a parent group which took part in a TEEN Triple-P parent programme (PPP group), and to a waiting list control group (WCG). In all groups, young people ages 11-18 showed oppositional, aggressive and anti-social behaviour and attention deficit. For measuring dependent variables, the study used the „Parental Presence“ Questionnaire“, Achenbach's CBCL, Beck's Depression Inventory, and Irvine's 'Parenting Scale'. Both treatment groups show significant improvement in „parental presence“, reduced „parental helplessness and depression“ and „improved parenting behaviour“. The NVR group, but not the PPP group, showed improvement in „externalising (problem) behaviour“. Die Ergebnisse zeigen in beiden Interventionsgruppen signifikante Verbesserungen in der „Elterliche Präsenz“. There were significant intercorrelations between the „Parental Presence Questionnaire“ and the other inventories.

**Lavi-Levavi:** 48 families of children with behavioral problems were allocated in a randomized block design to treatment and waiting list control groups. Treatment was held according to the Non- Violent Resistance therapy protocol. A circular questionnaire for the evaluation of escalation levels in parental- child interactions was especially developed and dealt with four characteristics of escalation: parental submission, lack of parental supervision, dominant thinking and power struggles and negative emotions. Additional questionnaires were: The Parental Escalatory Behavior Check-List, Parental Helplessness and a demographic questionnaire. Improvements were reported in all research variables at least by one of the parents: fathers reported decrease in parental submission, dominant thinking and power struggles, negative emotions and parental helplessness and an increase in parental supervision. Mothers reported a decrease in parental escalatory behaviors and parental helplessness. Non- Violent Resistance brought an improvement in escalation levels and parental helplessness according to the parents' reports but not according to children's reports. The study demonstrates immediate and short- term efficacy of NVR in improving escalation levels in parental-child interactions. Moreover, we found structural patterns that strengthen the choice to work with parents as clients, and may explain the difficulties in working with children with behavioral problems in individual therapy.

**Main presenter workshop, Barbara Ollefs: Announcement, de-escalation and utilisation of social support – cornerstones of raising parental presence.**

*Parental presence* und *nonviolence* are the key concepts of a new approach to therapy and counselling, which has been used in recent years in Germany to support helpless parents whose children show serious conduct problems. Parental presence – which can be understood as the parents' influence on the life of their child – can be lost, when inter-generational conflict has become so central to everyday family life, that parents no longer feel able to respond to parenting challenges in constructive ways. These conflicts are embedded in patterns of complementary escalation, during which parents acquiesce and give in to their child, leading to even greater demanding and controlling behaviour on the part of the child, und/ or symmetrical escalation resulting in mutual hostility. In these situations, parental helplessness and the loss of parental presence go hand in hand. *Coaching* parents in *Non Violent Resistance*, which is based on Gandhi's socio-political doctrine, offers an opportunity to support them in re-gaining their presence. The workshop use experiential exercises to introduce delegates to specific interventions and develop their understanding of the approach. The purpose of these interventions is to support a parental position, which is based on presence and disrupts patterns of escalation.

**Main presenter workshop, Haim Omer: Working with the parents of anxious, self-isolating and highly dependent adolescents and young adults.**

In the last years our team has adapted our work with the parents of young people with acute externalizing behavior problems to the parents of children of all ages with anxiety disorders. The concept of the anchor function has proved highly acceptable and relevant to these parents. A treatment protocol was developed and has shown itself effective. Diffusion of this work has led also to a high number of referrals of the parents of young (or not so young) adults with similar problems. It turns out that the condition of self-isolating, highly dependent and non-functioning young adults is spreading quickly in the whole of the industrialized world. We have developed a special version of the treatment for this population. This is probably the first treatment approach to this population in the literature.

**Main presenter workshop, Peter Jakob: NVR *Plus* – ‘complex cases’:** multi modal work in the family, school and with Social Services in overcoming aggression in multi-stressed families and looked after children.

Some families struggle with multiple stressors, which tend to inhibit therapeutic progress. These include trauma and child abuse, histories of serious child abuse in the parents, parental dismissive or avoidant attachment strategies and social isolation of the parents or family, disruption of relationships in the wider family and kinship network, domestic violence, poverty, as well as aggression, anti-social behaviour and crime in the neighbourhood . Whilst these ‘complex cases’ are often of great concern to CAMHS, Social Services and Education, and trigger high levels of multi-agency involvement and cost, professionals often feel as helpless as the parents do, when a young person exhibits on-going violence, absconding and criminal behaviour.

This interactive workshop will use one of the presenter’s case examples to illustrate pivotal, comprehensive NVR- based interventions in multi-stressed families, including:

- Creating a multi-agency professional support network: multi-modal intervention in family, school and in dangerous places
- Developing neighbourhood support networks
- Using NVR to restore relationships within the wider family and kinship network
- Restorying - moving from victim narratives to heroic narratives of resistance
- NVR in trauma-focused therapy.

Delegates will be invited to plan a comprehensive, multi-modal NVR intervention in one of the participants’ own cases.

**Main presenter workshop, Uri Weinblatt: NVR as emotional regulation therapy for child and parent.**

Shame is considered a core emotion responsible for aggression and escalation between parent and child. Although playing a major role in the regulation of power in relationships, few parent training interventions address this important emotion. NVR therapy and specifically the “Public Opinion” interventions provide a unique opportunity for parent and child to regulate emotions related to intense conflict such as shame, anger and fear. In the workshop we will learn to distinguish between the varieties of shame and anger and discuss the specific interventions for regulating each emotion. We will also discuss markers for improved parental emotional regulation during therapy sessions and how to transform the parents into a “regulating team”.

## Short workshop, **Parents of the Oxleas multi-family parent training programme:: Professionals ask parents: Q&A session**

I undertook NVR training as my son has A.S.D. and he was beginning to have the occasional rage. We wanted to have help and this was suggested as a first step before he undertook one-to-one counselling. Initially the concept of NVR is not readily understood and this can be a difficulty as some parents drop out as they cannot feel the security of a definite structure to support them. I found out that a technique can be effective, even if it feels somewhat intangible. Each person probably takes something different from this course, depending on what their successes and strengths have been to date. Some parts seem more pertinent to your situation. I am going to give my perspective on those parts of NVR that seemed beneficial to me.

## Short workshop, **Iris Shachar , University of Tel Aviv: Parental vigilant care in overcoming computer and internet dependency in young people**

The "digital revolution" has brought upon our society some powerful changes. The concept of "digital natives" describes nowadays' children that are "growing up online" thus developing different skills, communication patterns, interpersonal relationships and cognitive abilities. This cultural change has created a new situation in the family; children are "born" digital while their parents are "digital immigrants". This situation, known in various eras in history, is interesting and meaningful in terms of parental supervision and authority.

The workshop will shed light on specific issues in the parent-child relationship that has over gone a meaningful change in the digital age; delineating the challenges parents face, and the ways in which the use of the "vigilant care" can be of assistance. For instance:

- The "media tsunami" and the control illusion: The ubiquitous quality of the internet and the overwhelming amount of information raises questions about parents' ability to control the contents that enters their home; some parents describe feelings of helplessness in terms of parental supervision in the face of the media. Is there a different way to look at it?
- What is normal? How much time is too much time on the internet? Which content is age-appropriate and which isn't? This part will discuss briefly the phenomenon of internet overuse and NVR intervention program targeted at this phenomenon.

Short workshop, **Gail Rowen** , ReRun Dorset: : Groupwork with parents of young people who abscond - the Dorset runaway project.

Many young people become 'runaways' to escape from traumatising situations. However, there is a significant number who have developed controlling and aggressive patterns of behaviour towards their parents and other members of their families, and who abscond from parental care. They put themselves in dangerous situations, becoming vulnerable to harm, and often commit offenses. NVR is the first and so far only therapeutic approach, which has developed a coherent, specific methodology which can help parents and carers take action aimed at bringing their child back into their care. Unable to exact control, parents can use the 'Telephone Round' and 'Tailing' to develop protective authority and restore the relationship with their child by raising presence.

ReRun Dorset has developed an NVR-based multi-family parent groupwork project, aimed at helping parents 'leave footprints in dangerous places. This workshop will raise some of the dilemmas workers in Re-Run have faced in their attempts to help helpless parents, explain the structure of the groupwork, and use case examples to illustrate the nature of the change process and its results.

Short workshop, **Naama Gershy** , Long Island University, Brooklyn Campus N.Y: "Can we have the session without father?" A qualitative study of fathers' resistance and a data-informed model of fathers' recruitment.

Over the last decades there has been a significant rise in the involvement and participation of fathers in raising their children alongside a growing realization among professionals that fathers influence the mental development of their children in many ways. In spite of these changes, the cooperation and responsibility of fathers in treating their children's emotional and behavioral problems is still significantly lower than that of mothers.

The present study focuses on the presence of fathers in ten cases of parental counseling in non-violent resistance (NVR). The purpose of this study was to describe the influence of the fathers' presence on mothers and on the triangular communication: therapist- mother -father. In the study we asked to define the conditions that allow the presence of fathers to improve treatment, and the conditions under which that presence is damaging.

A qualitative paradigm was used to analyze interviews with therapists about fathers' recruitment and involvement in each case. The findings of this study outline three main issues concerning fathers' presence:

1. Fathers display a suspicious attitude towards the psychological treatment of their children.
2. The extent to which fathers have a constant presence and involvement at home has a large influence on their ability to take part and participate in the treatment.

The effectiveness of the participation of fathers in treatment is influenced by the way it is perceived by the mother. Mothers who experience the participation of fathers as a threat to their position at home or to their self-esteem may resist the fathers' actions and even discard them.

The findings reinforce the clinical impression that fathers are the most important partners for the mothers in parental counseling in non-violent resistance (NVR). However, the findings also indicate that when the father's cooperation is low and when his presence damages the treatment, his participation should be minimized or even stopped. The study findings suggest that therapists that invest treatment resources in enlisting the father's participation should also invest in enlisting the mother to accept the father's help. An improved model of fathers' recruitment was therefore called for and formulated.

Short workshop, **Mary Newman**, East Kent Hospitals NHS Trust: Love, war and control? Changing parental and professional discourses around aggressive behaviour in young people.

The introduction of NVR to East Kent 6 years ago brought mixed reactions from professionals across the child welfare and protection systems. For many, it provided the breath of fresh air needed to bring parents and professionals working together, for others it evoked confusion and anger that CAMHS were neither going to 'fix the child' nor agree that the parents are to blame. For myself, embedded in an innovative team that had championed NVR, it resulted in a cognitive dissonance, a recognition that the approach 'worked' while leaving an uneasy sense that the blame had simply switched from parent to child.

An analysis of the discourses in the only book then available on NVR helped resolve this dissonance, as '*love*' and '*war*' emerged from the pages, bringing clarity to my confusion. The idea of parents and young people being at war, with the child being the more reckless aggressor, was distasteful in a context, in which the innocence of 'childhood' is seen as a truth.

While I believe this discourse is necessary to bring about the paradigm leap that is NVR, the balancing *love* discourse had perhaps been marginalised within the professional discussions. Bringing this more out in the open at an early stage helped bring professionals and parents together in resisting the control of the young person.

Things are moving on, for instance with ideas such as 'Every Parent Matters'; however, the question of 'who should the parents control?' can still create professional disagreement. This workshop will facilitate discussion on working with other professionals as yet unfamiliar or possibly even hostile to NVR.

Short workshop, **Marin Lemme**, Bramsche, Germany: Behaviour Support in school using NVR principles. Practical examples of adapting the approach to educational environments.

Teachers increasingly experience daily life in school as strenuous and challenging. They report reduced motivation of pupils to study, and serious behaviour problems, opposition and defiance, truancy, bullying and open aggression. Often, they show resignation and helplessness in response.

The concept of „new authority“ has been developed in this context of increasingly difficult daily educational environments. It encapsulates a form of „presence“ and engagement with the child, which is not based on power and – primarily – having one's expectations met, but instead on relationship and cooperation. Such an attitude is incompatible with any form of symmetrical or complementary escalation. Instead, the teacher – child relationship is characterised by persevering and standing up to problematic behaviour. Specific interventions which have been developed on this basis restore lost teacher presence and renew or re-constitute damaged relationships, instead of primarily aiming for control or discipline. In this way, authority is seen as an attitude rather than a trait.

This attitude will be introduced in the short workshop. Participants will be familiarised with the resulting interventions by demonstrating 6 different options for action. These will be illustrated with case examples.

Martin Lemme is an independent psychologist who has used the model of adult presence / new authority for over eight years, six of these primarily working with teachers in schools. He is a senior lecturer in „Systemic Parent Coaching“ at the Weinheim Family Therapy Institute in Weinheim, Germany. Further information: [www.praxis-lemme.de](http://www.praxis-lemme.de), [info@praxis-lemme.de](mailto:info@praxis-lemme.de), [www.if-weinheim.de](http://www.if-weinheim.de)).

Short workshop, **Liz Day**, Oxleas NHS Trust: Life-threatening situations - working with multi-disciplinary systems to create positive outcomes.

The NVR approach can create a framework for bringing together multi-disciplinary systems to enable them to work with young people who have lost hope. One of the challenges of working with these young people is that the systems around them often end up in escalating patterns. The NVR announcement can be used to provide a focus for uniting different disciplines and organisations in a common statement about a way forward. The announcement is agreed and shared with family and professionals and the young person. Everyone makes an explicit commitment to work together to resist hopelessness and the violence it threatens the young person with. Connections will be made to narrative approaches and systemic storymaking.

Short workshop, **Ifat Lavi-Levavi**, Tel Aviv: The 'New Authority' in management and organisational consultancy.

Dr Ifat Lavi- Levavi, carried out her doctoral research under the supervision of Prof. Haim Omer. She was deputy head of the Parent Counseling Unit in Schneider hospital in Israel, where she treated parents and trained therapists and students in Non Violent Resistance. Simultaneously, she worked as an organizational consultant according to the "Managerial Presence" principles- an adaptation of the Parental Presence, New Authority and Non- Violent Resistance ideas into the world of management and organizations.

The adaptation of these theoretical and practical ideas to management makes sense- as for parenthood and management are similar in many ways. Managerial Presence goals are to build a constant, permanent, day to day present position of the manager. To resist and eradicate negative behaviors of employees, to use positive, non- escalatory communication to conflict resolutions and to base, in this way, the relationships on positive non- escalatory communication.

Managerial Presence constitutes a stance for the manager to lean on while managing relationships with his/her subordinates during their routine maintenance as well as at times of crisis. Examples of implementations of Managerial Presence will be presented in the workshop.