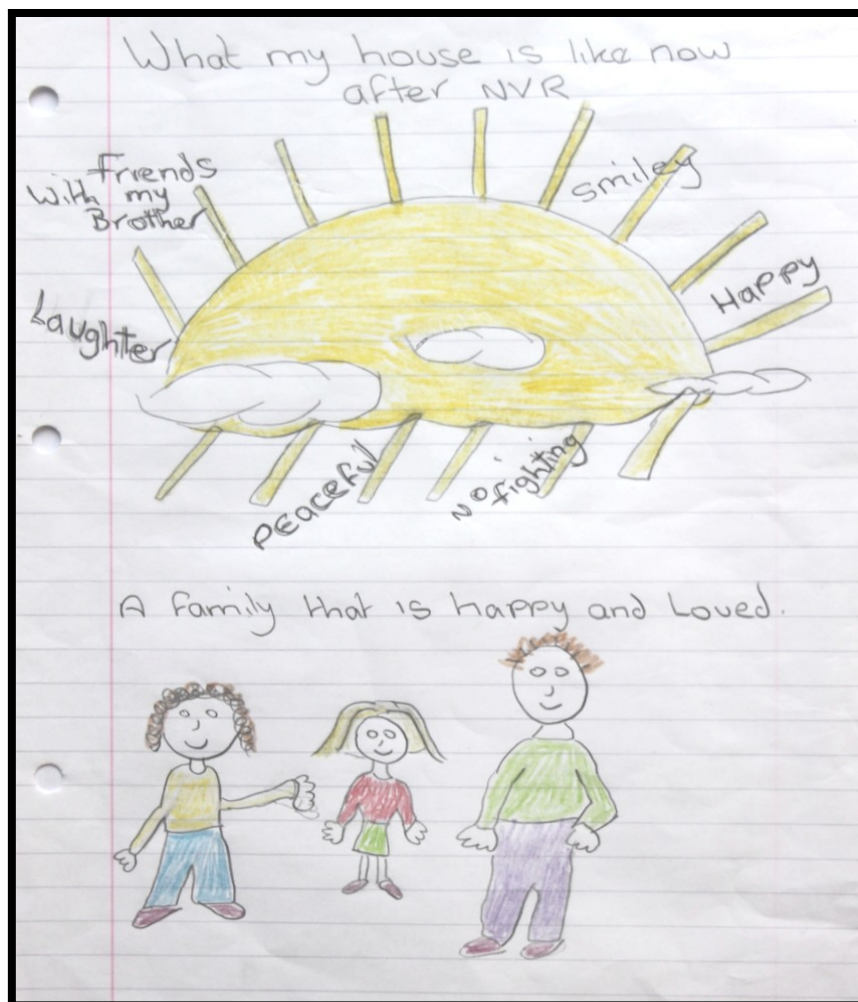


Non-Violent Resistance

NVR - REBUILDING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Testimonies from parents, family members and supporters



How NVR has helped to change life in my family

March 2013

The graduate parents from Oxleas NVR project would like to thank Professor Haim Omer for his encouragement and inspiration to write and collect testimonies from our experiences in applying NVR to our lives.

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Introduction

This book is a compilation of real life stories which allow the voices of parents to be heard. Our hope is to reach out and engage you as we bring the heart of NVR to the fore. We have chosen these examples because they struck a chord with us - written by those who were experiencing family difficulties but who have succeeded, using NVR techniques, in rebuilding their family relationships and home lives.

WHO put the booklet together?

Graduate parents who have attended the NVR course and believe in its effectiveness and success. We are passionate about NVR and continue to support each other in our campaign to restore family unity.

We have used a selection of testimonies and messages written by parents, grandparents, adolescents, children, siblings and supporters from the previous nine parent groups. These entries are unedited and reflect the wide-spread diversity of families and range of difficulties which exist.

These are genuine testimonies, written from the heart, which you may identify with – describing feelings of helplessness, fear, anxiety and frustration - you may well have mixed emotions as you read them. But there are also many positive quotes - expressing hope, love, re-bonding and happier family lives.

The testimonies and messages reflect the key elements of the NVR course: - **de-escalation, parental presence, supporters, the 'baskets', reconciliation gestures, and the announcement**; as described in the green NVR parent booklet – (guidelines for parents of children or adolescents with violent or destructive behaviours that was published by Oxleas NHS Mental Health Trust in March 2007).

All the beautiful illustrations have been drawn by a graduate parent's daughter. (see acknowledgements)

WHY did we do it?

We want to encourage and support every parent experiencing 'parent/child' problems and help you re-instate and rebuild your family relationships.

We want to show you that NVR does work AND that it can help you too!
Our wish is that you will realise you are not alone and will start to believe there is a brighter future.

HOW to use this booklet

The booklet is designed to support parents and family members during and after the NVR course; however, it can be read independently. We feel it illustrates the application and effectiveness of NVR techniques and is equally valid for parents, family members, supporters and professionals.

The booklet has been divided into chapters according to the key people affected by family difficulties. Thus, they are headed:

- Mothers
- Fathers
- Adolescents, children & siblings
- Supporters: grandparents, relatives, neighbours & friends
- Key NVR techniques

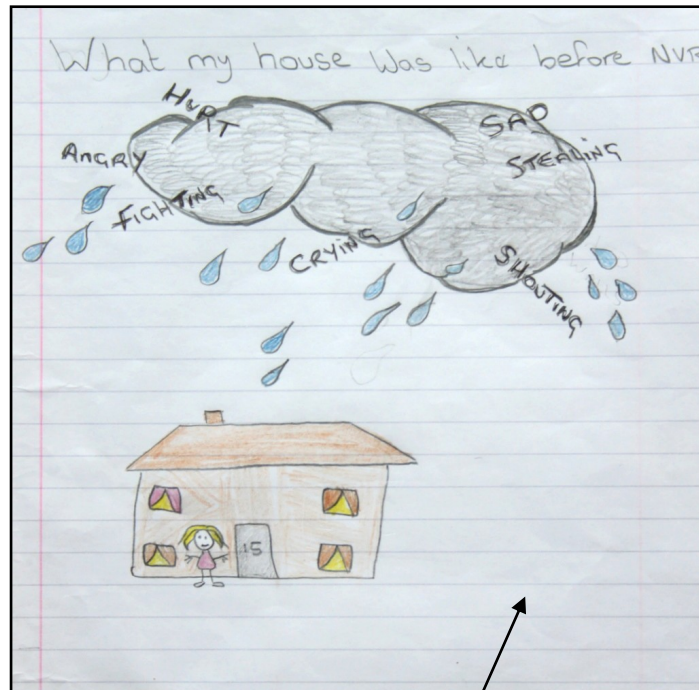
The chapters can be read in sequence or randomly selected as appropriate for you. We end our booklet with an inspirational selection of 'words of encouragement', from just a few of the many parents who have completed the NVR course.

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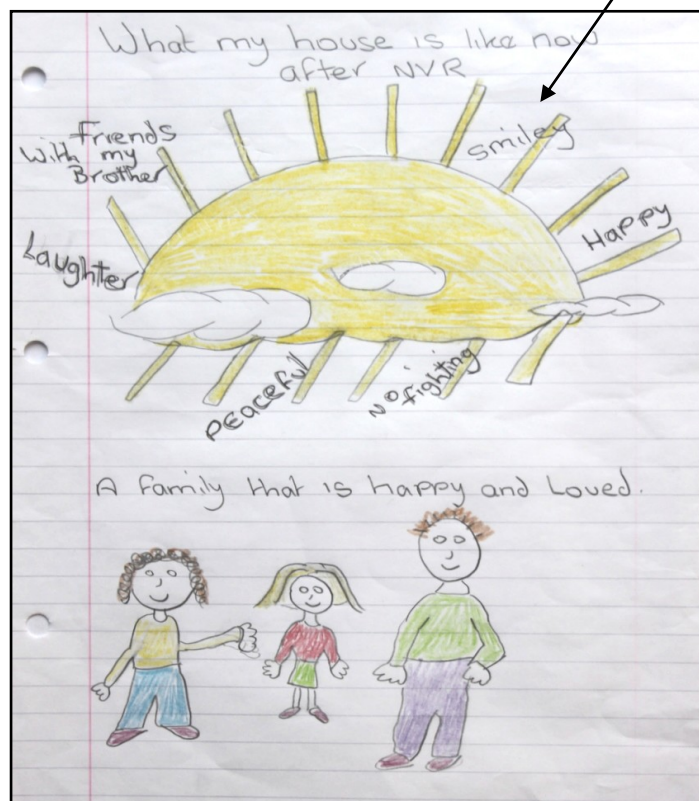
RESIST

PERSIST

REPAIR



NVR can take you from thisto this



Chapter 1

Testimonies from mothers

Introduction

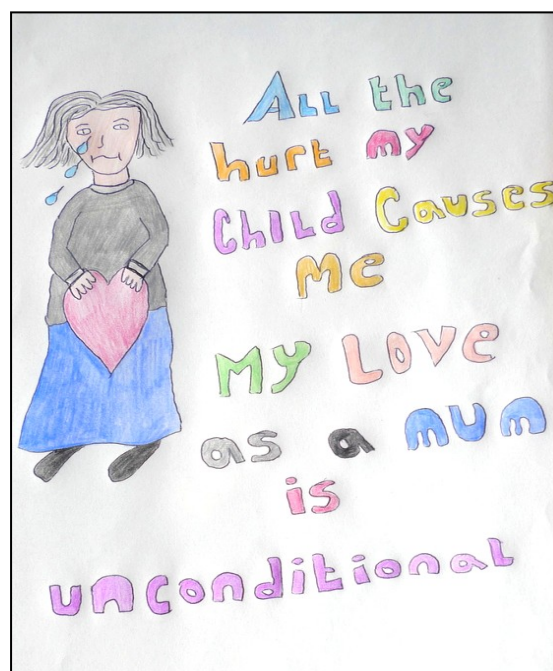
A mother's love for her child is unconditional and the strongest bond that you can ever have. But sometimes the situation changes and all the love and the close relationship you once had with your child seems lost due to their aggressive or out of control behaviour.

The following testimonies have been written by graduate mothers to inspire other mothers to find peace of mind and hope.

Mothers report that they have a more positive outlook for the future after attending the NVR course:

A mother states:

"Parents help each other and the best thing is that you are not sitting with 'perfect parents' who have 'perfect children'. You are amongst like-minded people with difficult children just like yours and that is so refreshing and comforting. This course should be available to all parents because we are responsible for future generations who would benefit from the help and advice available at NVR. I'd like to say thank you and look forward to the refresher courses."



We are a family again and NVR has given us our son back

"We joined the NVR parent group at a time when our 14yr old son was going through a very difficult phase. He had just been diagnosed with Dyslexia which he found hard to accept and was then subsequently diagnosed with Tourette's Syndrome and Autistic Spectrum Disorder. He was chronically tired and exhausted due to his insomnia, anxiety state and inability to cope with every day life. He had become withdrawn - spending hours in his bedroom alone.

Our son was in 'a horrible place' - confused and frustrated with his difficulties. This manifested in him becoming increasingly angry, aggressive and violent - both verbally and physically – to all members of the family and our home.

On reflection, we suspect he felt scared and frightened about his difficulties but we were all scared of him - family life had fallen apart! We recognised that he needed professional help but he rejected any form of support we offered - as parents we felt helpless!

NVR showed us the way forward! The 'NVR journey' has not been smooth; but it has gradually, with small steps, taken us in the right direction.

Using the NVR techniques we were able to make a 'breakthrough'.

*'De-escalation' reduced the aggression and violence in our home. Regular '**announcements**' and '**reconciliation gestures**' restored our '**parental presence**' and finally, with the help of our '**supporters**' and a '**sit in**', our son agreed to accept professional help.*

*In '**the calm after the storm**' we started to rebuild relationships and restore family life. The violence has stopped - our son now shares the experiences of his day, smiles and laughs again. His self-awareness and self-understanding have developed - he is now noticing how he feels, recognising his anxieties and forming strategies to cope with his difficulties and daily life.*

Where he had isolated himself from family life and seemed emotionally numb to our love before, he now shows us signs of affection and joins us for family meals and outings. Pleasant conversation and laughter have replaced angry exchanges and tears.

A year ago our 17yr old daughter had become tearful, frightened and

reclusive - hiding in her bedroom when her brother came home from school. But she took NVR 'on board' and practised the techniques with us; she now says she feels close to her brother again. So impressed with how NVR has changed our family life, she has written an NVR leaflet for brothers and sisters - to try and support other siblings going through similar experiences."



"We are a family again and NVR has given us our child back!"

NVR (combined with humour and empathy) helped me through an extremely difficult time

*"Having struggled for years with the behaviour of my daughter I can recommend the excellent experience of attending an NVR course 110%. Firstly and very common to all the parents I took part with there was a massive relief at being able to talk about the issues we had experienced with other people who understood and didn't judge or try and offer unhelpful advice to "fix it". **The support I felt throughout the course was fundamental to making the changes as per the NVR principles. It turned my view of parenting totally on its head** as I discovered that the principles really worked. But what was so touching and valuable was seeing each parent arriving each week in various states of anxiety or upset or conversely joy and satisfaction (depending how the week has gone) and gaining strength through the common purpose of the group - to find a better way to parent. It really works and I thank everyone involved for sharing difficult but also joyful experiences and **helping me through an extremely difficult time with humour and empathy.**"*

It's great to feel free from all the stress and upset

*"Our sons are now doing well. The twins are working in a packing warehouse and are enjoying the work and pay. Our oldest son is in his last year at college and doing well. Life has turned round 100% and **it's great to feel free from all the stress and upset.**"*

**When things get really bad
hang on in there
and be strong! NVR really helps!**

I have reclaimed the shed which is now used for storage

*"I was horrified when I discovered that my teenage son smoked cannabis almost daily and watched angst-ridden as he took over the shed as an orgy den for his dope buddies, coming and going as he pleased – as they all pleased. I was distraught as my husband and I floundered, unable to bring him under control. Then we were referred to the NVR course and gradually, we were able to improve our family life as we learned valuable skills and a structured method of coping. **At last my husband and I found a way to work together when dealing with our son.** I will never be able to get my son to give up his cannabis habit – I realise that at his age he must make that change of his own free will. But at least **I have re-claimed the shed – which is now used for storage** – and my son has confined his use of drugs away from our property, and visits and phone calls from his friends are limited: **At last I can protect and support our younger children. Now, my husband and I are on the same page and can support one another – and our son knows it.** But also, using NVR we were able to achieve this without alienating him any further from us. I even caught myself chatting to him about the programme we were watching on telly the other day. A few weeks previously I wouldn't even make eye contact with him. And on a camping trip, we all joked and laughed around the BBQ fire - it was especially rewarding to see him and his younger brother chatting amicably. **Using Non Violent Resistance is helping us to forgive and rebuilt our relationship with our son.** It is not just a parenting technique; it is a way of life that I use in all aspects of dealing with people inside and outside the home. "* (mother of a 16-year old son)

**NVR is not only just a parenting technique -
it is a way of life!**

“He took over the shed as an orgy den for his dope buddies”



“I have reclaimed the shed”



When you face challenging behaviour on a daily basis it is hard to believe that anything will change it

"When we started NVR our daughter was 15 years old and out of school. Her behaviour was on a downward spiral: she came and went from the family home as she liked, she was verbally abusive, physically threatening, she had 'trashed' our home several times and once we had her arrested and charged with theft - after she had stolen money, phones and jewellery many times before.

*Looking through the NVR booklet it was hard to imagine what we could achieve: would this really work? **When you face challenging behaviour on a daily basis it is hard to believe that anything will change it.** All our lives seemed very fragile and uncertain. Coming to the sessions and talking about the ways of dealing with our child as well as knowing that there were others in our situation gave us the confidence in ourselves to change our reactions to difficult situations. Looking back over the past few months the things that helped were giving firm boundaries, keeping rules simple, not letting situations escalate and presenting a calm, caring attitude. **The 'baskets' were a useful tool for focussing on the main issues that needed addressing immediately.***

We are not perfect parents. We still get frustrated sometimes and shout instead of talk, but there is a great improvement in the quality of all our lives and our time spent at NVR sessions were of enormous help and we are glad that we persevered.

*Our daughter is now in college and is much more settled. **We still find it hard to believe that we won't ever go back to how things were before, but we continue to build bridges where we can and slowly our confidence and trust in her grows.** We love our daughter very much."*

**Remember
the three
baskets!**



**I first had to change myself, to be a stronger person,
confident to deal with the problem**

"I was one of the last year's graduate parents. I would like to give feedback on my experience of the 10 week session I have received.

*First of all I came to the programme because of family circumstances. I needed solutions to my problems for which I found the program very helpful. Of course it was a difficult process. **I first had to change myself, to be a stronger person, confident to deal with the problem.***

The NVR programme, through the 10 sessions, helped me to avoid conflicts but made it clear to my child that I would not tolerate extreme behaviour. I follow one by one the advice and instructions been given and I can say with confidence that the situation at home has improved since the first time I attend the course.

I would advise new parents to give it a go, try new techniques as it helps to see things from a different point of view. What I personally enjoyed were the role plays, the relaxation, and that I met parents who shared my problems and gave advice without criticism and sarcasm.

Thanks to all the support, I have changed so much and I am grateful that I took part."

**I would advise new parents to give it a go!
Try new techniques as it helps to see things
from a different point of view**

Strike when the iron is cold!



**Just step back and take a break,
NVR will help you breathe more easily!**

Parental Presence outside the home—at the rail station!

"I am a graduate parent who would like to share a frightening experience and how NVR helped. First of all, I am sure most people have heard of grooming – a person **taking a sinister interest in a usually vulnerable person**. Our 15 year old daughter has suspected autism and doesn't always think in the same way as others, but she is at the same time desperate to grow up and do things on her own. This is why I believe someone targeted her. One day she got invited to a party for a 16 year old man. We were lulled into a false sense of security because we knew that her friend and her parents were taking the girls to the party and back to their home. After the party she became involved in constant face-booking, phone calls, in the morning, even in school and at night (long, long calls) from him. I know he was quite angry when she hadn't taken the phone to school one day. Calls soon became secretive behind locked bedroom door. He had some strange grip on her – my instincts were doing overtime! I knew she was besotted and almost being controlled by him. I needed to know what was going on, so I reluctantly listened into calls - soon the calls were referring to sex a lot and I could tell how uncomfortable she was. She was now beginning to look tired, confused and drawn. Obviously I couldn't say anything because she would have been furious that I had listened in, **so we did an Announcement saying to her that things were moving very fast and asked her to be careful**. We kept it short because we didn't want to be hostile and make her run to him. Twice she ran away to London (way out of reach) and he showered her with fake expensive gifts and took her to restaurants. During this time she was becoming more violent and isolated. The third time she tried to go to London with him I managed to catch her trying to buy the ticket. I stopped her by putting my hands all over the screen. She got very agitated and hit me hard in the shin. I blocked her from going down the stairs where he and a friend were waiting for her. Both young men cleared off on the train and she called the Police on me accusing me of attacking her on the station. The Police came but believed me when I said I had not attacked her, that she had kicked me and I asked them to play the CCTV back. **I guess that was very drastic Parental Presence outside the home at the rail station!** The next night I even slept on the door mat by the front door; I was so worried she would escape from the house and run to him. Throughout all of this I had spoken to the Police about 12 times but they said that they could really do nothing until a crime was committed. My main supporters turned out to be Barnados and an organisation called CROP (they were 99 per cent certain she was being groomed). They were brilliant and both said: 'Go by your instincts – if you don't, you might regret it for the rest of your life!' Also NVR proved helpful in all of this: Remembering not to rush in like a bull in a china shop and say 'You can't see him!' and making me think things through calmly. One day I actually found myself in New Look buying a pretty ring, a **Reconciliation Gesture!** I finally managed to speak to him and said: 'you can see our daughter but under Muslim culture rules – we will be there as chaperones' and 'would you like to come out to dinner with all of us at a restaurant as I want to learn more about you and your culture?' I also said to him I had spoken to a spiritual leader of his religion to learn more. Shortly after that he broke up with her - I believe I was asking too many questions. **So where are we now? My daughter hated me for a night and then changed quite quickly like a weight had been lifted off her shoulders. I could not stand by and do nothing when so many alarm bells were sounding**".



Parental presence outside the home

Chapter 2

Testimonies from fathers

Introduction

Fathers find it really difficult living with their child's violent behaviour. At times they may feel depressed and unable to focus while at work. They can also experience a lot of conflict with their partner which leads to marital problems. The difficulties may even result in the father walking out of the family home.

Graduate fathers have said how important it is to attend the NVR parent group with their partner and to work together as a team.

One father told us that ...

"Things are better now than they were because I am different. I see things differently."



To give up is not an option

*"The journey is long and tiring but there are no quick fixes. It is crucial to remain focussed and committed no matter what confronts you. **Keep the lines of communication open!** **Strike when the iron is cold** now makes perfect sense. To de-escalate the situation is to not react. Concentrate on only two things in the small basket but be prepared to shuffle those issues around as things can change almost by the hour, day or night. When negative thoughts have been embedded in your mind and are a constant threat to your commitment, it is at this time **you must never lose sight of the slightest positive** as this will eventually offer you the strength to continue when you feel like giving up.*

***To give up is not an option** as who will then help your child? More importantly you will miss the opportunity of change and the comfort or even elation it will bring."*



The reward is attaining the moral high ground

"I was brought up with 1950's style discipline which was reinforced at school - where the cane was still an option.

I tried to bring my children up with similar discipline but without the cane! We probably spoilt both of them materially.

One of our children has done extremely well with my clumsy attempts at parenting but the other, who has some psychological problems, became violent to his mother, his older sister and me. He would also deliberately damage our house when angry.

I found it terribly hard to watch him hurl his mother across a room, hit us, try to throttle us or throw chairs etc. It made me very angry and my response was to physically restrain him, by pinning his arms and getting him to the ground until he eventually calmed from his intense rage. I really, really hated this. I love my son and did not want any of this confrontation.

NVR gave us a different approach. Whilst we were de-escalating he would still hammer his fist into me repeatedly; but I now knew that I must not react physically. I think this is very hard for most fathers to do, but it works! Our son immediately noted the lack of response and with time- and the other methods of NVR- his violence has decreased enormously.

There is immense frustration in allowing your child (actually 5ft 11" and very strong) to hit you or put his hands round your throat and squeeze, but the reward is the huge satisfaction of attaining the moral high ground. Whilst he sees this as my weakness I know that it actually takes far, far more moral strength not to retaliate. It can, however, be very frightening and there were times when I thought I might have to respond to save myself from serious injury. Fortunately he has always stopped in time.

*A combination of NVR and recognising why our son explodes, has dramatically improved our home life. **To the Dad who thinks he can use retaliation to improve matters I would say: THINK AGAIN!***

NVR works and even being a tiny bit like Gandhi will improve your self esteem."

Real strength is shown by not retaliating to violence

Parents Messages for Fathers

- *Keep calm! The negative emotion will pass and you don't want to make things worse through escalating.*
- *Watch the way they react! Just notice it! Be aware of your feelings! Wonder what they are feeling, just watch!*
- *All behaviour is communication.*
- *It's not always as bad as it looks.
It's okay to take time to reconsider your opinion and to change your mind.*
- *Remember: What is most important is to maintain and sustain our family love.
Keep strong and have faith and hope for the future!
Things are better now than they were because I am different.
I see things differently.*
- *Remember: Life is what you make it!*
- *Remember: It is better to laugh than cry! Make sure you find something to laugh about, whatever!*



***“Pushing my baby daughter on the swings.
To remember her as a baby and in the middle of
the night giving her bottle (feed) as she is as
vulnerable now as she was then.”***

Chapter 3

Testimonies from adolescents, children & siblings

Introduction

At times children are affected in a big way by living with a sibling who is violent and they may feel isolated, not able to talk to their parents due to the parents only having time to notice the sibling who is violent.

These testimonies are important for parents to read and take notice of. In their testimonies the children tell about how much violent behaviour they have experienced from their sibling and how they felt at the time.

There are also testimonies from the violent siblings themselves explaining what caused them to be so angry and why they are so violent.

The siblings also say that they noticed changes for the better once their parents began to put the NVR tools and ideas into practice. They tell about how much calmer situations at home became, how the violence stopped and relationships improved with their siblings and other family members.



Letter of a 14-year old son to his Mum

Mummy

No matter what I do or say, I will always love you.

It actually makes me upset when I see you crying because of me.

I'm so sorry for making you and cry.

I don't know what I would do without either of you's.

"Mum

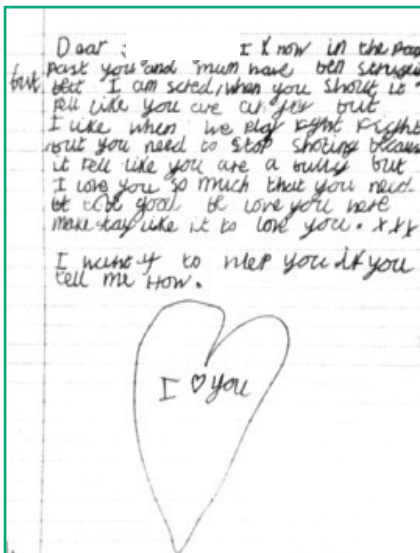
No matter what I do or say, I will always love you.

It actually makes me upset when I see you crying because of me.

I am so sorry for making you and my sister cry.

I don't know what I would do without either of you."

Letter of his sister, aged 8



"Dear..... I Know in the past you and mum have been struggling but I am scared when you shout it feels like you are angry but I like when we play fight, but you need to stop shouting because it feels like you are a bully but I love you so much that you need to be good. We love you here Make stay like it to love you. XXX

I want to help you if you tell me how."

Testimony of a 17-year old son

"Before me Mum started to do the NVR parenting course my behaviour was bad. I used to smash the furniture up around the house if I didn't get my way around the house. When me and me Mum had arguments I used to go up my room and punch holes in my room because at the time I was angry at her, so I punched holes instead of hitting me Mum. I was violent to my sister as well because she used to watch what I was doing. Then she would go to me Mum and tell her and then me and me Mum would have an argument. If my sister did something she shouldn't be doing and I would tell me Mum, me Mum would just tell me to leave her.

Yes, I did steal money off me Mum. That was wrong and I didn't think at the time because all I was thinking was how to get some weed. But that has changed now. I still smoke weed but I don't need to steal money. If I don't have money I just go without, just like you wanted a sweet but had no money., you would have to go without. That is what I do now.

After me Mum did the NVR parent course I can say that my behaviour has changed because I am more calm. But don't get me wrong, I can have my bad day just like everyone can. I say that me Mum has changed like she doesn't keep on at me like: "Do this, do that, are you going to do that etc." Now me and me Mum have a nice relationship. We can both sit down and have a nice chat without biting our heads off and that can go with my sister as well."

Testimony from his sister, aged 14

"After my Mum did the NVR parent course things are much better at home. My brother is nice to me now. He doesn't punch me and call me horrible names anymore and he doesn't shout and walls are not punched.

My brother talks to me when we are sitting together. Sometimes we giggle and laugh. I feel happy at home with my brother and I'm not scared any more when my brother is indoors."

Testimony from a 15-year old son

"Mum and dad left notes on the fridge saying how things will change but none of us listened. But things did change and I was surprised. After the change I started talking to my dad more. My behaviour was more calm and I felt better about myself."

Testimony of a 11-year old son

My thought about NVR

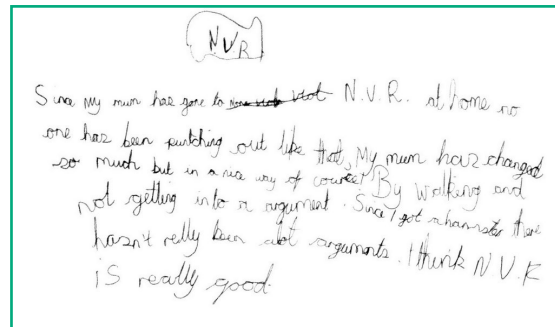
"NVR changed all our anger problems. It stopped people hurting one another, because you are putting yourself out of danger, because you are not aggravating the other person. It has changed all our problems at home. We are calmer and it is a nicer place to live."

My thought about N.V.R.

N.V.R. has change all are anger ~~problems~~ it stop people hurting one ~~the~~ other, because you are putting yourself out of danger because you are not aggravating the other person.

It has changed all are ~~pt~~ ^{problems.} ~~problems~~ at home we are all ~~calmer~~ and it is a nicer place to live,

Testimony from a 9-year old girl



"Since my mum has gone to NVR at home no one has been punching out like that. My mum has changed so much, but in a nice way of course. By walking and not getting into an argument. Since I got a hamster there hasn't really been a lot of arguments. I think NVR is really good".



Testimony from a 16-year old son

HOW NVR CHANGED MY LIFE:

I wasn't included in the NVR program. I was the reason my parents needed the training. There was a shed in the garden, which I had commandeered. It was my party pad.

I was drinking a lot, smoking a lot and generally having a grand time. I discovered that my brother had a stash of cash, which I began dipping into to fund my dope habit. All in all I stole around 200 pounds off him. After that I began filching from my moms purse. It didn't take long before my parents had had enough, and we ended up at Highpoint House.

That meeting was similar to an intervention, a Sit-in, as the NVR program calls it. It brought to my attention that my behaviour was unsustainable, and that some change was needed. That was the beginning of my life-long journey towards enlightenment. I had a one-to-one with a psychologist, which I found immensely entertaining.

I am not a person accustomed to confrontation, but as I proceeded to put my fists through doors, as a form of anger management, I must admit, I was quite proud of my holey door. Quite frankly I was surprised that I was strong enough to put my fist through wood like that and it served as sufficient intimidation to make people leave me alone to proceed with my business.

My parents began attending the weekly NVR sessions. I paid little attention to their doings.

I just enjoyed having the house to myself for an evening. At some point, I received a key ring. It was my initial made from a solid piece of metal. For some reason I really appreciated the gesture. It seems to reaffirm my right to hold a set of keys to the house, despite my previous transgressions. It wasn't until recently that I learned that this gift was part of the NVR program. When there is a rift in a relationship, reconciliation is an important part of the healing process. At the end of the day, we are family, bonded by blood, and we are stuck with each other till the day we die. So there is no point in fighting for the rest of our lives. Even though I was not included in the NVR training program, I have unwittingly incorporated their tactics into my normal behaviour.

De-escalation of conflict is particularly important: it prevents a disagreement from blowing up into a huge row. Anything that helps maintain communication, when it is in danger of breaking down, is an asset to any discussion. I learnt, by demonstration that speaking calmly to someone despite your own internal emotional state calms everybody down, as I have found to be the case when dealing with my little sister, who is just entering the volatile teenage years."

Testimony from his 15-year old brother

"It was through most of my early teenage years that the worst of the problems with my brother took place. Instead of extreme aggression or violence towards family members, my brother was involved with a self-destructive lifestyle. He would sometimes stay out all night, or even longer, going to parties, drinking and smoking (cannabis as well as cigarettes). These behaviours did not exclusively take place outside the home: He and his friends adopted the garden shed as a sort of den where they drank and smoked cannabis.

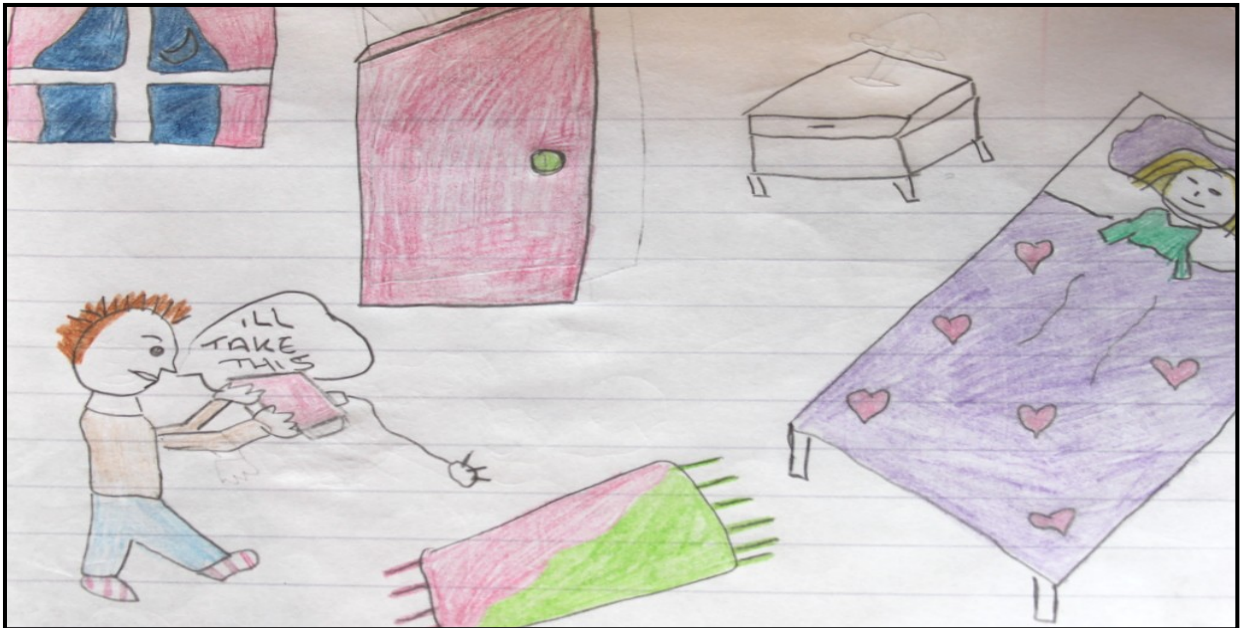
Of course to fund these habits he would demand money from my parents, who were left with a dilemma: to give him money and fund his unacceptable, self-destructive behaviours, or to refuse, which would often lead to arguments, which sometimes escalated to a level where my brother would destroy property around the house. As well as this, he would quite often steal my money, which I earned from a paper round, if he didn't get money from my parents.

My reaction to all this was mostly to try and just remove myself from the situation. I'd stay in my room and read, or later use my laptop or Xbox. I felt that I should try to cause as little trouble as possible for my parents because they were already having so much trouble with my brother. I tended to keep my own problems hidden, not wishing to bother my parents: you might even say that I became withdrawn. Sometimes I felt that my own needs were being overshadowed by the amount of attention that my parents had to devote to my brother, although I think I was able to deal with the situation in this way because I'm a naturally solitary and independent person.

When my mum started to use NVR to combat my brother's problems, I didn't actually notice any immediate change: or at least, not straight away. While I can't put my finger on any particular point in time when things started to improve, they have been a lot better for a long time now. Of course they are not entirely perfect, but there are almost no more violent arguments, and he is a lot more co-operative.

I'm not 100% sure of the techniques used by my parents, probably because I distanced myself from the whole situation and therefore didn't see these techniques in action, I can definitely say that they brought about a major change for the better."

Stealing



"Of course to fund these habits he would demand money from my parents, who were left with a dilemma: to give him money and fund his unacceptable, self-destructive behaviours, or to refuse, which would often lead to arguments, which sometimes escalated to a level where my brother would destroy property around the house. As well as this, he would quite often steal my money, which I earned from a paper round, if he didn't get money from my parents."



Testimony of a 17 year old sister

NVR and siblings

Life at home had become really difficult. My brother was becoming increasingly more aggressive and we could not see a way forward. He refused any help and day to day life mainly consisted of worrying about when the next violent incident would break out.

Mum and Dad told me that they would be completing the NVR course. Dad called it "failed parents club!". I could not see how it could help in any way as I thought that my brother was 'the problem' and that it was him who needed help.

At first, the only changes that I could see from NVR, were that he was getting his own way. From my point of view, he got away with everything and it seemed that he was even being rewarded for it with a chocolate bar (the 'reconciliation gesture'). My immediate reaction as a sibling was 'where is mine?'. Also, when Mum and Dad tried to talk to him on his own and asked me to leave the room, I refused. I wanted to know exactly why I had to suddenly leave the room when I had done nothing wrong. This of course, prevented them from moving forward using what they had learnt from the NVR course.

I eventually agreed to see a psychologist with Mum and Dad and NVR was explained to me. Suddenly, it all made sense and when I thought about it, we had actually come a long way. I then understood what Mum and Dad were trying to achieve. I could see everything from my brother's point of view and realised that his violent outbreaks were not just because he was a horrible boy, but as a result of the frustration he felt. For the first time, I really felt sorry for him. I could see that everyday life for him was a struggle and he was just taking it out on those he loved.

Once I was taught about NVR, we made more progress. I realised that I was just as much of a contributing factor to our previous family life as everyone else. As siblings do, I often deliberately 'wound my brother up', just to get a reaction; I was certainly causing escalation."

It can't be expected that NVR will instantly make things better. It takes a lot of courage to admit that it is often your fault that certain events occurred. I would encourage parents to involve their other children, where possible, explaining to them why they are parenting in slightly different ways. Siblings are naturally jealous of each other and if one sees that things are not fair, the previously 'good' child will cause trouble to be treated in the same way.

Explaining the purpose of NVR helps to eliminate this problem and so progress can be made. It takes months for the techniques of NVR to really benefit the family and we do still have a few bad days, but overall family life is so much better and I now have hope for the future."

Testimony of her 15-year old brother

"At first, I thought of NVR as something that I did not like. But it did get me to see people and it made me a lot calmer and it made home life a lot nicer. It also helped my parents be more relaxed and tolerant with me."

Siblings hating each other



Siblings getting on with each other



Chapter 4

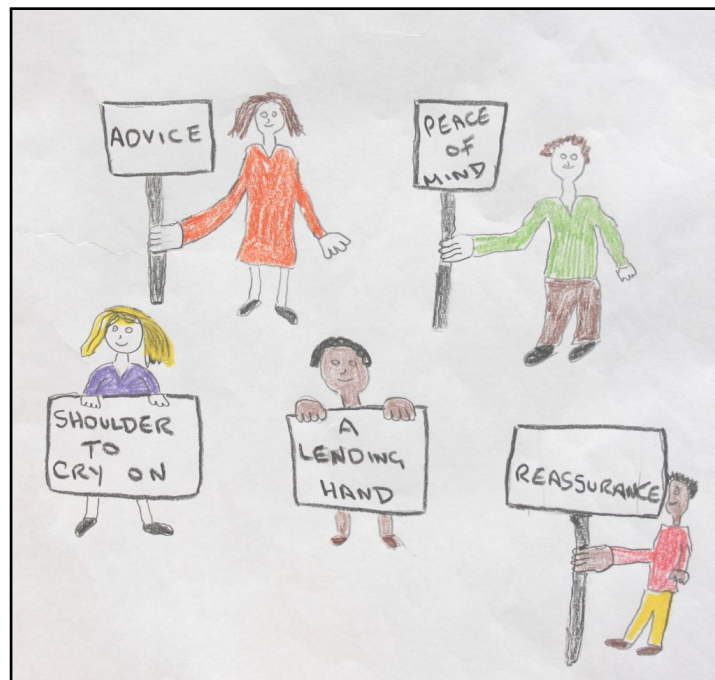
Testimonies from supporters: grandparents, relatives, neighbours & friends

Introduction

Some people may find it really difficult to open up and tell others outside the home how their child's behaviour has spiralled out of control. As a result a parent may have no support at all. This leaves the parent to face problems alone, become isolated and controlled by their child's violent behaviour.

When you read the supporters' testimonies you will begin to understand the reason for having supporters and why supporters play such an important role while the parents put the NVR tools and ideas into practice. Having someone to support you isn't a weakness, it is a strength!

The supporters tell us in their testimonies how they gave their support to parents and what changes for the better they have noticed in the child's behaviour .



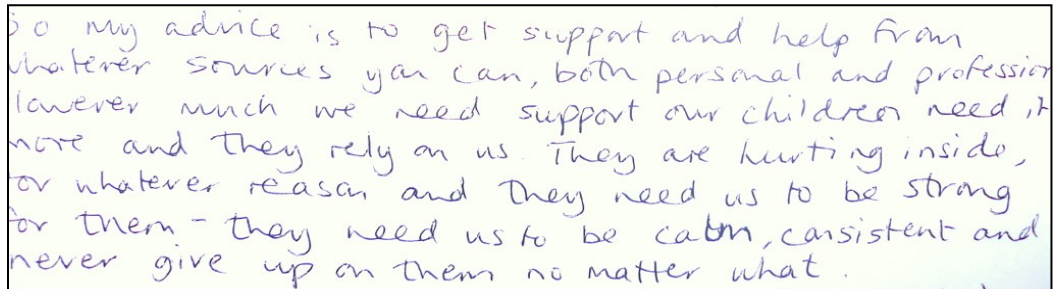
Never underestimate the value of sharing a problem!

In Times of difficulty we all need someone to turn to

Support

"In times of difficulty we all need someone to turn to. It is not a sign of weakness but more a sign of strength to recognise that no one can do it on their own. It is not always easy to ask for help and support.; some people are very quick to judge you as a parent or criticise you when you are trying to do your best.

I am extremely lucky to have the invaluable support of family, friends and colleagues. My mum accepts me for who I am, warts and all. I have a sister who lives too far away to visit but I can talk to her on the phone any time and know that she will always have kind words of strength and emotional support in spite of her own difficulties. I have friends and colleagues who provide support in many different ways: babysitting, shoulder to cry on, good listeners, sharing experiences and good advice. I only hope that if any one of them needed help they would feel they could turn to me.



So my advice is to get support and help from whatever sources you can, both personal and professional. However much we need support our children need it more and they rely on us. They are hurting inside, for whatever reason and they need us to be strong for them - they need us to be calm, consistent and never give up on them no matter what.

So my advice is to get support and help from whatever sources you can, both personal and professional. However much we need support our children need it more and they rely on us. They are hurting inside, for whatever reason, and they need us to be strong for them – they need us to be calm, consistent and never give up on them, no matter what."

**Never underestimate the value of sharing
a problem!
Shared trouble is half the trouble.**

A grandmother's love from offering support

"I attended the NVR group as many weeks as I could. My daughter was desperate. My granddaughter was becoming extremely difficult to control: she was running away, trashing her room, locking her parents out of the house and threatening to kill herself.

At the same time she was being explosive and unpredictable in school, on many occasions she would trash the head's office and be abusive and violent towards children and staff. My daughter was invited to attend the NVR group and I offered to support her through this difficult time.

We came to the first meeting and I can remember thinking 'I don't know how this is going to help', but we gave it a go and have been amazed by what we have achieved.

We both attended every meeting and as time went on we became part of a strong supportive group. Everyone had different experiences and as well as being given positive advice from the NVR team we began to share our experiences with each other.

In time I noticed that we had changed the way we responded to this challenging behavior, life became quieter and calmer.

My granddaughter told me one day: "I like you and mummy going to NVR, because mummy comes back happy and kind". I think that sums up what NVR has done to my family. We still have bad days now and then and my granddaughter is still struggling to cope with school, but at last we can see this wonderful little girl trying to make sense of the world."



Before we had support we felt isolated

*“When I did the NVR course, some of us had to be really creative when trying to come up with ideas for where and how we could get support. We first had to think what sort of support we needed and for some that was obvious practical help, but for others it was more complicated. Some of us had lots of friends and family and those of us who belonged to clubs and societies had people from there to ask for help. But for some of us, we only had our partners – we felt so isolated – but when we realised that, if they just backed us up instead of handling our kids differently to us, it really helped a lot. I also found that - **as things in our homes changed - the sort of support we needed changed**, so my support map that I first drew up in the NVR classes has changed many times. Some ideas for new supporters have been added and other supporters are not needed anymore and have been crossed out. I don’t know when I will ever put it away, now that I’m not worried about asking people for help when I need it.*

I remember ,when I did the NVR course, one of the mothers in my small group had a horrible neighbour who was always angry with her because of her children’s cheeky and disruptive behaviour on the estate. When it was time to look for supporters, she actually asked this neighbour to help by keeping an eye out (which she was doing anyway) and telling her all that she saw. The neighbour then realised that she wasn’t just a bad mother and she understood how difficult it was for this mum and how hard she was trying to change her family life. And this neighbour became much more friendly and supportive. Sometimes support can come about in ways and from people you would least expect it from.”

Sometimes support can come about in ways and from people you would least expect it from!

Testimony from neighbours and friends

Having seen grow up from a baby to a young man, we were only too pleased (as good friends and neighbours) to agree to be supporters when was diagnosed with his problems. There have been some difficult times during the past year but with the professional help (and his parents, have been given, things are improving. It hasn't been easy, but is now able to cope and handle situations better and has a clearer understanding of himself. He is more helpful and co-operative which makes home life more normal and pleasurable for everyone. We do applaud for the tireless effort they have put in to make everything right for :

"Having seen him grow up from a baby to a young man, we were only too pleased (as good friends and neighbours) to agree to be supporters when he was diagnosed with his problems. There have been some difficult times during the past year but with the professional help he and his parents have been given, things are improving. It hasn't been easy but he is now able to cope and handle situations better and has a clearer understanding of himself. He is more helpful and co-operative which makes home life more normal and pleasurable for everyone.

Support from a 'buddy'

To Buddy or Not To Be!

"I have just completed the NVR course – it really helped me and made me think about Buddies and if they work or not! I began to make connections with one particular person more on the course. We eventually exchanged e-mail addresses and began to just occasionally e-mail one another.

For us it seemed to work because we didn't try to advise one another (we knew that is more the Counsellors 'job) but just talked in very general terms about how each person was doing. My Buddy and I talked about a Chart. If we said we are up there today it meant we were feeling quite good but if they said "No, we are really down" meant things were not too good! Then we would just encourage one another and talk about things we had learnt from the course making sure we always remembered our sense of humour. We didn't go into too much detail (you are still getting to know that person and lots of things to you are confidential).

*It is just nice to have someone there. It seemed to be unwritten rule between us that we would not stress one another out (**one person should not load all their problems on to the other Buddy**). If one Buddy finds it too much they should be able to gently say I think you should talk to some counsellors - 'I am out of my depth here!' Your Buddy will have a lot of problems of their own, otherwise they would not be on NVR - the advantage of e-mail is you can get in touch with your Buddy and they reply if they can and if they want to. Never take offence if you don't get a reply - there will be a reason (perhaps the person is really up their eyes in a family crisis and just hasn't got time or the Buddy relationship is just not working for them!). I guess like in life you should move on and put it down to experience. Whether you end up with a Buddy or not I think as the NVR classes progress you begin to feel you have quite a few Buddies all around you in the class and you get encouragement from one another any way!"*



Ten weeks of laughing and crying together had built a bond between us

HOW ARE THEY GETTING ON NOW?

“Do you wonder how some of the parents you meet in your group are getting on now? If the answer is ‘yes’ we can help!

*We want to set up an e-mail ‘**Buddies**’ system to help parents keep in touch and to give each other mutual support.*

Often during the NVR course you ‘connect’ with another parent experiencing similar problems. After the NVR course there are ‘booster’ sessions and ‘Parent Club’ meetings available; but it can be difficult for some parents to find the time to attend – maybe because of work commitments or childcare issues.

I find my email ‘Buddy’ very supportive and comforting. We both have very similar difficulties, so understand the problems in our daily lives. We had shared many emotions during the course - parental helplessness, guilt, sadness and despair. Ten weeks of crying and laughing together had built a bond between us!

*For me the benefits of e-mail ‘**Buddies** are::*

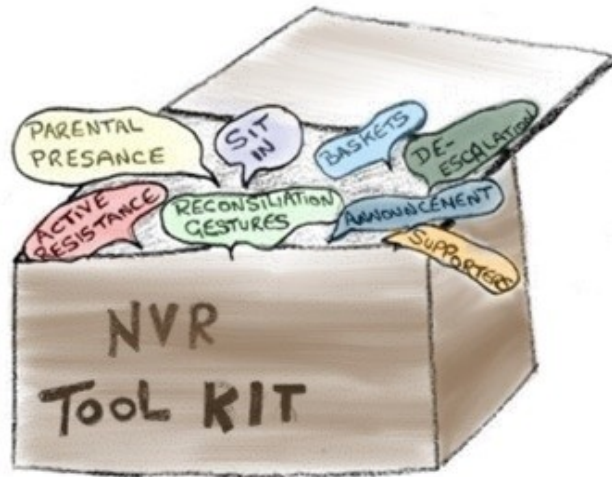
- *Mutual support – on a regular basis, once every 2-4 weeks*
- *Convenience – no pressure for an immediate response*
- *Knowledge that someone cares and is thinking about you and your family*
- *Sharing of problems and strategies to resolve any difficulties*
- *Reminding each other of the key NVR skills”*

You will always find another parent to hear your worries

***“The NVR Parent Club** is very friendly and offers all graduate parents support after the NVR course. If you’ve had a tough few weeks with your child, you will always find another parent with a caring attitude and a listening ear to hear your worries and concerns and will get advice and support. The parent club is not just about doom and gloom child troubles; sometimes we don’t even have a worry in the world but still go along, and have a laugh and a gossip over coffee and biscuits. **You should know that as a Graduate Parent you are always welcome to take part in the NVR Parent Club.**”*

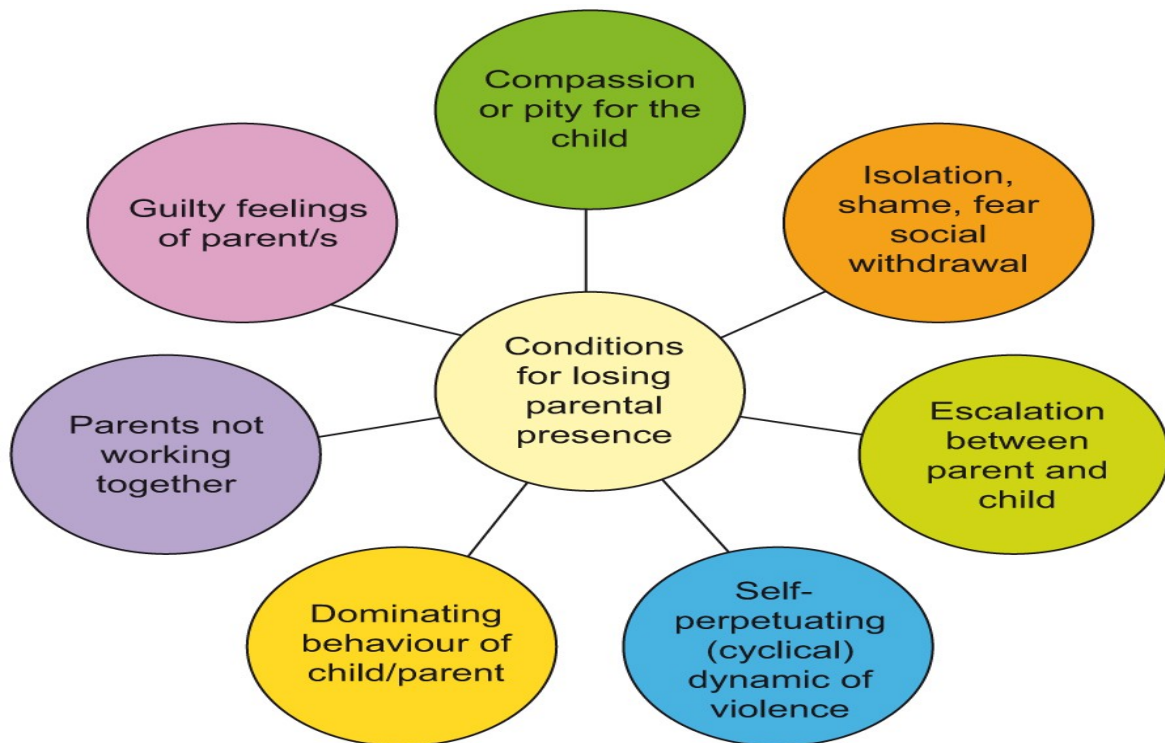
Chapter 5

NVR techniques: examples from graduate parents



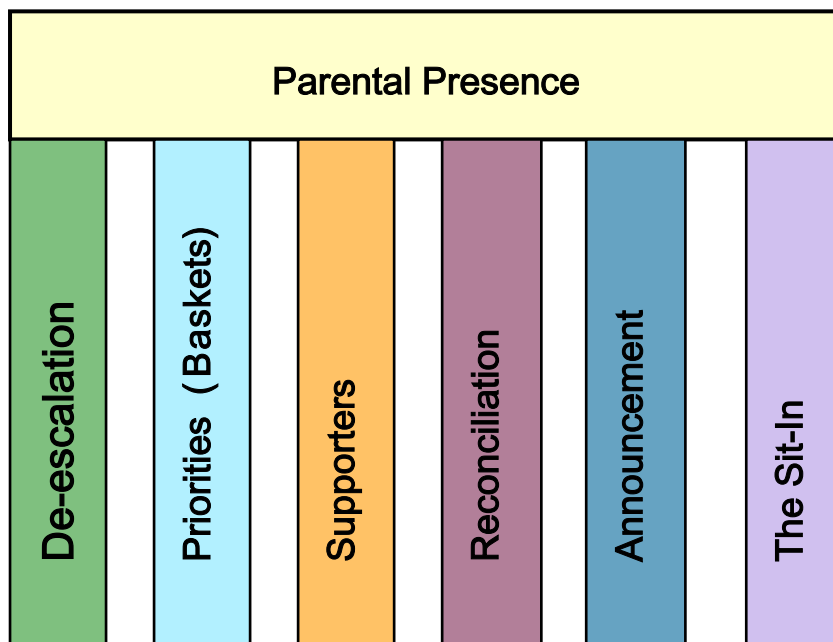
- Parental Presence: Parents extend their physical, emotional and moral presence in their child's life so that the child can make good decisions even in their absence, e.g. when offered drugs (See on page 42 and also the glossary on pages 55-56)
- De-escalation: Parents deal with bad behaviour at a more appropriate time and "Strike when the iron is cold!" (See examples on page 43)
- Supporters: Parents are not alone and can ask others for help (see chapter 4 on page 34-40)
- Reconciliation Gestures: Parents re-build the relationships with their child by giving little gestures and tokens of love despite the child's ongoing negative behaviour (see page 44)
- Baskets (See explanation on page 45)
- Announcement: Parents tell their child in a non-blaming but firm way that they will no longer tolerate the small basket behaviour (See examples on pages 46-49)
- Active Resistance: Parents show their strength and actively resist the child's negative behaviour (See examples on pages 50 and 51)
- Sit-in: Parents request a solution by entering their child's domain and sitting with their child after some negative behaviours have taken place again. (See also the glossary on page 56)

Conditions for losing Parental Presence



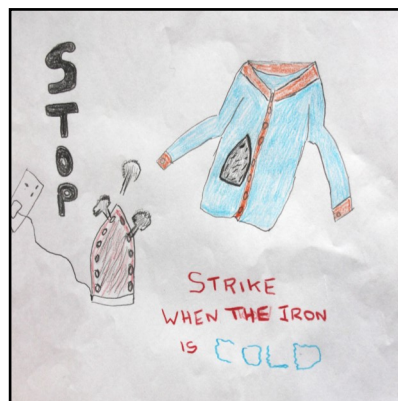
Translated from German: Omer H and von Schlippe A (2004) *Autorität ohne Gewalt: Coaching für Eltern von Kindern mit Verhaltensproblemen*. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht.

NVR pillars of strength



Suggestions for De-escalation

- *Try not to raise your voice, keep it calm and gentle*
- *Don't use sarcasm, threats or say hurtful things*
- *Try not to 'nag', argue or lecture*
- *Concentrate on just 'small basket' problems, don't try to solve everything at once*
- *Try not to use aggressive body language*
- *Try to identify 'triggers' which cause 'explosive outbursts'*
- *Be patient and try not to react*
- *Don't be verbally or physically aggressive*
- *Don't have 'the last word' but resist continuing an argument by refusing to respond, remain silent - thus taking a firm stand and defusing the situation*



**Don't attempt to resolve problems
in the 'heat of the moment' !**

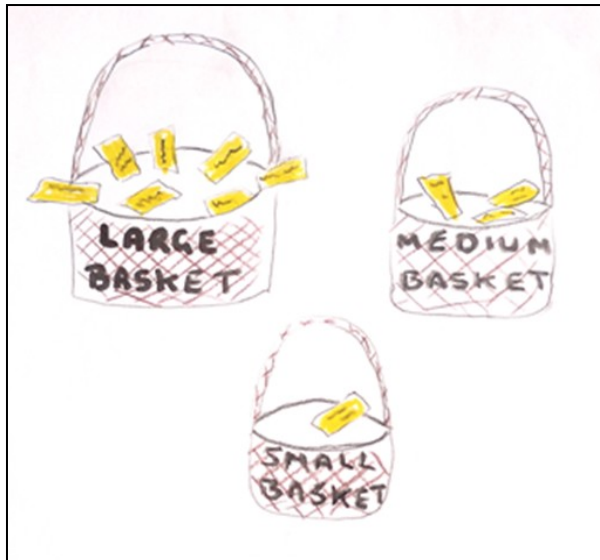
Examples of Reconciliation Gestures

- *Hot chocolate at our local cafe*
- *Mend bicycle*
- *A key ring with his name and meaning*
- *Allow his friend for a sleepover or suggest a sleep-over*
- *Play a board game*
- *Watch your child playing sport*
- *Help tidy their room*
- *Watch his/her favourite DVD/TV programme together*
- *Share an activity which the child enjoys*
- *Give him/her a lift*
- *Buy a magazine and put it on their bed*
- *Spend extra time just listening to your child*
- *Text a nice message*
- *Send an e-card or a card through the post*
- *Leave messages for him around the house to find*
- *Prepare a meal together*
- *Buy favourite biscuits, dessert, drink*
- *Cook their favourite meal*
- *Spend individual time with them*
- *Ask about her day*
- *Remember to tell him/her "I love you"*
- *Give praise for a task 'well done'*
- *Say "sorry" if I've sounded irritable*



Spend extra time just listening to your child!

The three baskets and the announcement



Large Basket:

Behaviours that parents will choose not to respond to

Medium Basket:

Behaviours that parents are prepared to negotiate about

Small Basket:

Behaviours that parents are going to focus on and prioritise



Tell your child that you will not tolerate the small basket behaviour any longer!

Example of an announcement from a mother

When you don't take your medication yesterday, it made you very ill. I can not accept this, I want you to be well, I will do everything I can to not become angry myself, I love you very much, and want you to be well, and as a parent I want the best for you. I do everything I can to make you take your medication. I will ask my brother's family to support me in this.

"When you didn't take your medication yesterday, it made you very ill. I can not accept this, I want you to be well.

I will do everything I can to not become angry myself. I love you very much, and want you to be well, and as a parent I want the best for you.

I do everything I can to make you take your medication.

I will ask my brother's family to support me in this."

Example of an announcement from a mother

As from today I am going to make changes.

I Will no longer tolerate your violent behaviour towards your sister and myself.

I Will no longer keep your violent behaviour a secret from family and friends.

Im not trying to Control you, I Want to rebuild our relationship and have a happy, Loving home,

Im your mum, I love you, and I Want the best for you.

"As from today I am going to make changes.

I will no longer tolerate your violent behaviour towards your sister and myself.

I will no longer keep your violent behaviour a secret from family and friends.

I am not trying to control you. I want to rebuild our relationship and have a happy, loving home.

I am your mum. I love you and I want the best for you."

Example of an announcement from parents

*"We love you and care about you **but** your bullying and aggression towards us and damage to our property is intolerable.*

We have been listening to you and understand your frustration with us and will do everything we can to help you stop the violence.

We will, also, get help and involve others if your behaviour towards us doesn't change. Domestic violence is not only unacceptable to us, it is illegal.

We want you to feel part of the family and for us all to have a happy home life again. Mum and Dad."

Example of an announcement of a mother

"I am so proud of you for the progress and effort that you have made since coming home, and I know how difficult the last few months must have been for you.

In the last two weeks there has been an increase of aggressive, intimidating behaviour towards myself and your sister and this has made life horrible at home for both of us. This is not fair and MUST STOP! I will not tolerate anyone having to feel afraid of you in our home and will continue to resist this behaviour and seek help to improve the situation. I will not hide this behaviour from people and pretend that it isn't happening.

Your sister and I love you so much and will continue to support you and make an effort in trying to help you manage this unacceptable behaviour. We have seen how good life at home can be when you make an effort also, and that home can be a much happier environment for everyone - this is all we want and ask for."

Love mum X "



Announcement of a mother whose son is member of a gang

DEAR SON

IN THE LAST 3 YEARS LIFE HAS BEEN UNBEARABLE FOR ME, YOUR DRUG DEALING AND GANG INVOLVEMENT MADE ME FEEL WORTHLESS, UNHAPPY & VERY CONCERNED. MY MAIN WORRY WAS YOU GOING MISSING & PUTTING YOURSELF AT RISK.

AS YOU KNOW THIS ISN'T ACCEPTABLE FOR ME. AS YOU ARE AWARE I HAVE BEEN DETERMINED TO TAKE ANY ROUTE POSSIBLE TO KEEP YOU SAFE AND PREVENT ME FROM BURYING MY OWN CHILD OR HAVING TO VISIT MY CHILD IN PRISON.

OVER THE LAST 5 MONTHS YOU HAVE BEEN MAKING RIGHT CHOICES FOR YOURSELF. I AM VERY PROUD OF YOU, OF COURSE YOU MAY DECIDE TO MAKE WRONG CHOICES FOR YOURSELF BUT GOING MISSING AGAIN AND PUTTING YOURSELF AT RISK WILL LEAVE ME NO CHOICE AGAIN TO DO EVERYTHING POSSIBLE TO KEEP YOU SAFE.....

EVERY PERSON WORKING WITH YOU - NORMAN (SOCIAL WORKER) (STAFF ICEY WORKERS) AT ALEX ROAD, [REDACTED] ARE HELP YOU.

THE DEEP CONCERN I HAVE ISN'T TO GAIN CONTROL OVER YOU, IT'S MERELY TO HELP YOU.

AS YOU KNOW I'VE ALWAYS & STILL AM HERE TO SUPPORT YOU SO YOU BECOME THE BEST PERSON YOU CAN.

I LOVE YOU SO MUCH, TOO MUCH TO EXPRESS!!!!

ALL I ASK IS FOR YOU TO UNDERSTAND & RESPECT ME & THE FAMILY SO WE CAN MOVE ON.....

'LOVE YOU SON'

Mum x x x x

Dear Son

In the last 3 years life has been unbearable for me. Your drug dealing and gang involvement made me feel worthless, unhappy and very concerned. My main worry was you going missing and putting yourself at risk.

As you know this isn't acceptable for me. As you are aware I have been determined to take any route possible to keep you safe and prevent me from burying my own child or having to visit my child in prison.

Over the last 5 months you have been making right choices for yourself. I am very proud of you, of course you decide to make wrong choices for yourself. But going missing again and putting yourself at risk will leave me no choice again to do everything possible to keep you safe.....

Every person working with you are equally concerned and will do everything possible to help you.

The deep concern I have isn't to gain control over you. It's merely to help you.

As you know I've always been and still am here to support you. So you become the best person you can.

I love you so much, too much to express!!!!

All I ask is for you to understand and respect me and the family, so we can move on.....

'Love you Son'

Examples of Active Resistance from parents

- *When my son is swearing in the car I pull over and stop until his swearing stops and then I continue the journey*
- *If my son is being difficult in the car I resist getting into an argument and change the subject - (this is also de-escalation)*
- *Say I'm too busy to do up child's buttons – when he is capable of doing the task – to help make him more independent*
- *Instead of cooking a meal every night of the week for my 18 & 29 yr old children - I go out and leave them to cook their own meal occasionally*
- *Carry my handbag over my shoulder wherever I am in the house – even when washing up etc – to resist my child stealing from my purse*
- *When my son is behaving badly - or in a controlling way - I resist responding to his behaviour and walk away/leave the room*
- *If my daughter leaves the house (after a dispute) I follow her and resist her freedom to run away - this also establishes parental presence and keeps the child safe*
- *If there are three tasks to do, preparing for the next school day eg:- pack lunch, PE bag & Food Tech materials. I will only perform two and leave one for my child to do – I resist being his 'servant' and help his independence*
- *Not always being available to take my 15yr old teenager everywhere in the car - sometimes I say “ sorry, I need the car, you will have to catch the bus this time.”*

Resist having the last word in an argument!
Actively resist continuing the argument!
Refuse to respond! Remain silent!
Take control of the situation!

Active Resistance



LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Examples from parents

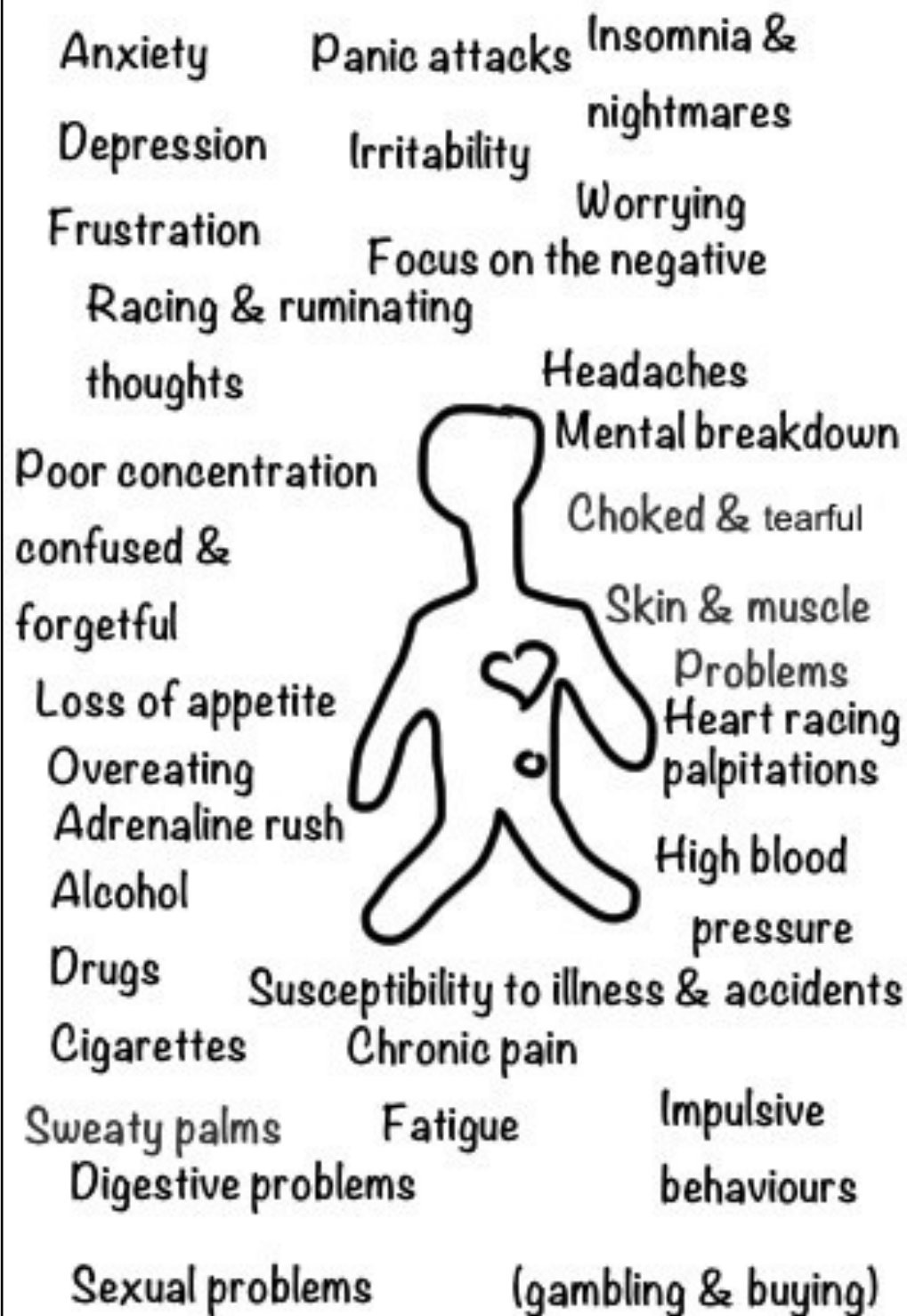
- *Relaxing bath with bubbles and candles*
- *Walk the dog and enjoy the fresh air*
- *Comfort eat – treat yourself to some expensive chocolates*
- *Watch a film, listen to music*
- *Take time out, quiet/reflective time*
- *Learn to put yourself first sometimes*
- *Get enough sleep*
- *Yoga classes, go to the gym*
- *Read a book, listen to audio tapes*
- *Meditation*
- *Retail therapy/shopping*
- *Go fishing!*
- *Weekend away without feeling guilty*



**Look after yourself,
so you can be there
to look after others!**

Fight or flight responses to stress

Stress diagram



Looking after yourself and stress management

Stress management diagram

Look after yourself so you can be there for others

Do things that make you laugh/ smile

Focus on the positive

Respite

Breathing, relaxation & visualisation

Help others & be compassionate

Make time to think

Attend NVR sessions

Strike when the

Say No!

Iron is cold

Quality time

Walk / exercise

Fresh air

Garden / DIY

Play music

Housework

Hobbies

Craft

Treat yourself

Go out



Cinema

Massage

Meditate

Yoga

Friends

Hot bath

Sleep & rest

Family

Cook, paint, write, draw, dance, play, read

Listen to music or audio books

Get more help for yourself & others

Use parent helplines & supporters

GLOSSARY

Key NVR terms

De-escalation

- Taking a calm and firm approach against your child's violence, risk taking and unacceptable behaviour.
- Always strike when the iron is cold.
- In the event of escalation - holding back from reacting physically or verbally.

Parental Presence

- The influence the parent has on their child, in the home and outside, which determines family values and acceptable standards of behaviour.

The 'Baskets'

- Identifying and prioritising one or two behaviours which need to be changed.

The Announcement

- A written statement which declares the behaviour the parents will no longer tolerate and which they will endeavour to help the child change.

Supporters

- Someone to whom you 'break the silence' and share your problems and concerns regarding your child.
- The supporter can be a relative, work colleague, friend or neighbour.
- Identify a specific way in which your supporter can help you.

Reconciliation Gestures

- A small act or gesture that you do to show you love your child and want to rebuild the relationship
- It is not only given after 'good' behaviour, it is not a reward

Active Resistance

- An action which firmly and calmly resists unacceptable behaviour and re-establishes parental presence in your child's life

Sit-In

- This will follow the announcement and sometimes an episode of unacceptable behaviour
- The sit-in allows you to show parental presence without escalating or losing control. It is an exercise in which the child is asked to suggest/find a solution to the problem

Chapter 6

Words of encouragement from graduate parents

Introduction

Below are a selection of messages - taken from 70 individual 'messages of encouragement' written by parents at the end of the NVR groups and after the booster sessions. These motivational messages are also used as SMS messages to graduate parents and to new parents during the NVR programme.

UNITE

RESIST

PERSIST

REPAIR

- *Persevere with NVR! It works!*
- *There is something in NVR that every parent will find useful*
- *NVR won't solve everything but it will help make some shifts*
- *The main focus of the programme is changing your own attitudes and behaviour*
- *Turn up for each session*
- *If you come each time you will see the difference*
- *You are lost in the desert – NVR is a map that will get you back to civilisation*
- *NVR will work but you have to want it to be positive*
- *The process has already started because you have come to the group*
- *The NVR group is only the beginning of a process*
- *Believe in yourself*
- *Believe that change is possible*

This book has been written by a team of graduate parents from Oxleas NVR project with illustrations by Rosie-May McClay (daughter of a graduate parent)

Elisabeth Heismann and Jim Wilson supported the parents in bringing this book to completion and publication



From left: Elisabeth Heismann, Jim Wilson, Fiona Law, Sarah-Jane McClay, Helen Weatherley, Rosie-May McClay

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