PROGRAMME OF NON-VIOLENT RESISTANCE
(TERTIARY PREVENTION)
(Germany)

1. Parent coaching based on non-violent resistance
(Source: Arist von Schlippe / Michael Grabbe: Werkstattbuch Elterncoaching, 2007)

Barbara Ollefs and Arist von Schlippe developed a support programme for parents which works on the basis of non-violent resistance.
With this programme, parents obtain an instrument to take de-escalating action.

The programme is aimed at parents whose children have shown problematic behaviour over a longer period of time and whose families have developed massive dynamics of escalation. The concept was first developed in Israel by Haim Omer, Clinic Psychologist at the university of Tel Aviv.

In a manual they introduce a concept of 6 family meetings where the therapists position themselves clearly and explicitly next to or behind the parents. This way they support them in regaining parental presence.
If more than 10 meetings are necessary, different therapeutic measures should be considered.

The focus of parent coaching is a basic disposition without accusation which simply considers observable problems between child and parents as existent.
It is not the fault of the parents – if anything, it is the escalation’s fault which forced both sides into their dynamics. It is important to reduce the feelings of guilt on the side of the parents because they weaken their parental presence. The conditions should just be taken as points of departure for changes.

The main point is that parents regain their dignity. Parent coaching wants to encourage parents to activate four skills according to non-violent resistance: Gaining self-control of their own behaviour, expressing protest and resistance against childish behaviour, activating social support and offering gestures of reconciliation.

The purpose of the first session is to build up confidence to the parents. Unlike conventional family therapy where the therapist shows neutral behaviour and does not take any side, the therapist positions him/herself close to the parents. The parents are supposed to feel the therapist standing behind them. This alliance with the therapist is in favour of the
child and not against the child. During the first session parents should be encouraged in their decision to tackle the problem to improve things.

At first it is important to find general aspects that led to the loss of parental presence (see pic. on page 55). After that, pieces of information regarding the child’s behaviour are collected (pic. p. 58). After describing the family situation, parents should be sensitized for their personal concerns during the coaching process in order to agree on common goals which then will be the basis for the announcement.

During the second session parents will learn to avoid escalations with the child and to build up a new relationship which does not conclude in never-ending fights for power. For this, parents prepare the parental announcement for the child and anticipate possible reactions. The announcement contains the new kind of presence the parents want to exert in the future, the things they would like to change and the kind of behaviour they will no longer tolerate. The announcement articulates the parental plan to get out of the escalation, to learn self-control of their own behaviour and to find a new position towards the child.

The announcement is a gesture of parental protest. Experience shows that about 20% of children show different behaviour afterwards. Children who need more structure and clarity in their lives as well as the parental announcement of a common goal benefit especially.

In the second session they also talk about gestures of reconciliation – the parents offer small symbolic gestures to their children independent of the child’s well behaviour.

The focus of the third session is the activation of social support systems. Experience shows that isolation and secrecy in affected families gives a basis for violence on the side of the children and also on the side of the parents. It is important to show the parents that their parental presence by itself might be strengthened by the knowledge of possible integration and interference of other persons.

Besides that, parents get to know the so-called “service strike”. This is especially relevant for mothers who are abused by their children. The parents find out which forms of refusal are suitable for a strike.

The fourth session introduces the “Sit-in”, one of the easiest and most clear forms of non-violent resistance. At the same time it is a strong form of parental protest. It allows
parents to show presence without escalation or loss of control.

During a sit-in the parents go to the child’s room, close the door and sit down in a way that makes it hard for the child to leave the room. Then they tell the child in a low voice that they will no longer accept the child’s behaviour. They ask the child to find a solution to the problem together with them. The parents do not go into a fight with the child. During this session the therapist acts out possible reactions of the child and tells the parents that this is a longer process.

The last two sessions should be organised individually. The focus of prevention of relapse means looking at the specific circumstances of the family, for example experiences of the parents, quality of escalations in the family and the child’s behaviour.

Even if the coaching has caused de-escalation and the biggest problem is solved, experience shows that „small problems“ between parents and children will remain. Arist von Schlipps calls this a „tragic attitude“ as counterbalance to an attitude which assumes the possibility of solution to all human concerns. A „tragic attitude“ sees the narrowness of human ambition and the tentativeness of all solutions.
2. Parents course: Strong parents – strong children (German Kinderschutzbund)

(Source: Michael Schnabel, research assistant at the State Institute for Early Pedagogics, Munich)

The Kinderschutzbund (child protection agency) has been agitating for non-violent education and upbringing since the 1970s. It offers courses for parents to strengthen their educational competences. The German Kinderschutzbund has developed the parents course „Strong parents – strong children“.

The standards of the courses are set and binding for all programmes and courses. This ensures a high quality for the offer. The following aspects are authoritative:

- Each parents course consists of 8-12 meetings (at least 16 hours, not as a weekend compact course). Group sizes can range from 8 to 16 participants.
- Target group is basically all parents, a specific addressing of a certain target group is possible (e.g. one-parent-families, patchwork families, certain age groups). Parents courses can also be offered as advanced training for professionals (e.g. educators)
- Access is based on voluntariness (no allocation by court, youth offices, etc.)
- Each course should be conducted by 2 parental course instructors. Collision of roles must be eliminated (a professional who is in touch with certain families is not allowed to be the course instructor for these parents). Follow-up offers to ensure sustainability and to advance self-help for parents should be supported.
- At the end of the course the parents evaluate the programme (feedback questionnaire).
- The parents courses are evaluated with standardised evaluation forms which are transferred to the State Association in charge.
- Course meetings consist of a theoretic part and a practical part. The parents are assigned homework after each meeting. It defines the behavioural patterns the parents will try or observe for the next meeting.

Objectives of the parents courses are strengthening of educational competences of the parents and at the same time preventing physical and psychological violence in the families.
Furthermore, co-determination, participation and co-organisation of children in their families should be made possible and extended. In order to achieve this, self-confidence of the parents must be strengthened and communicative skills must be improved. The parents get to know the „Model of guiding education“. This model wants to empower parents so that they find ways together with their children which cause less stress and conflicts in everyday life.
In detail, the following behavioural patterns are talked about:

- How do I have to talk so that my child will listen to me?
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- How can the needs of parents and children be balanced?
- What do parents expect of themselves?
- What do parents expect of their children?

Selected topics for single meetings should be:

- What is important in education?
- Psychic needs of children in general
- What kind of educator/parent am I?
- How do I use power?
- Talking about feelings
- Problem solving skills

Conversations and considerations of parents in small groups are not fixed on these topics, but range over all issues of everyday life in the family.

According to quality standards, the success of each course must be reviewed with the help of a questionnaire. Different empiric surveys have been conducted and published by expert pedagogues: According to these, parents are more patient with their children after the course. They make more arrangements with their children and pay attention that these arrangements are maintained.

The State Associations of the German *Kinderschutzbund* are training multipliers who then impart the concept „Strong parents – strong children“ to parents. In a course of several days’ duration, participants are introduced to the model of a guiding education.