

**Non Violent Resistance and a focus on the  
child:  
reconciliation in the service of restoring ruptured  
relationships while effectively resisting harmful  
behaviour**

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**Dr Peter Jakob, Consultant Clinical Psychologist**

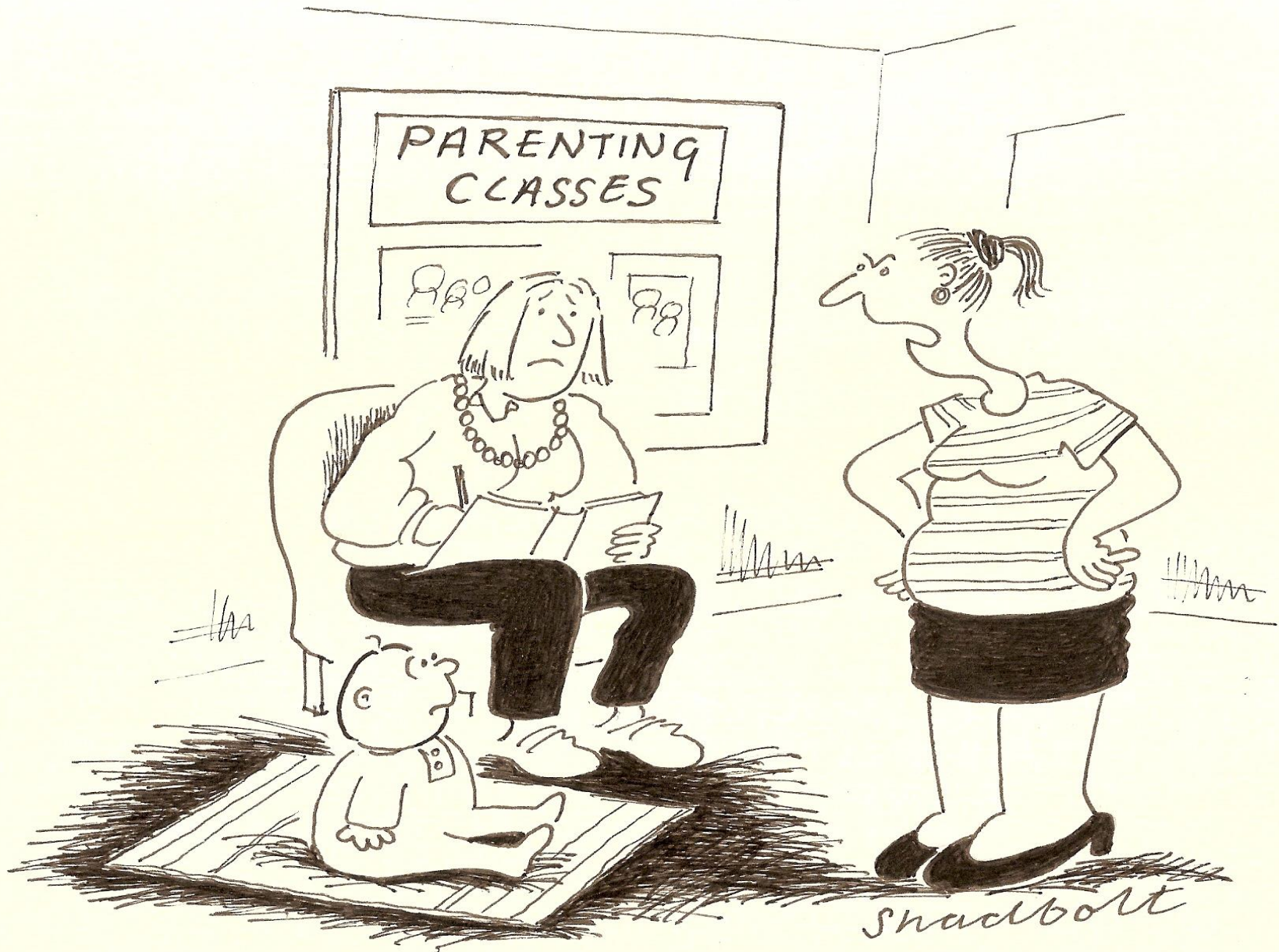
A stylized, low-poly mountain range graphic in shades of brown and tan, positioned at the bottom of the slide against a blue gradient background.

# Nonviolence is the active pursuit of peace

- Peaceful interaction: people or groups of people encounter one another without threat, fear or aggression. They are mindful of one another's needs, can empathise, and become proactive to alleviate distress in the other.
- De-escalation, reconciliation and dialogue are peace-generating forms of interaction.



"WHAT ARE YOU BLEEDIN' STARING AT?"



# Making the unheard – and unexpressed - voice of distress in the child audible:

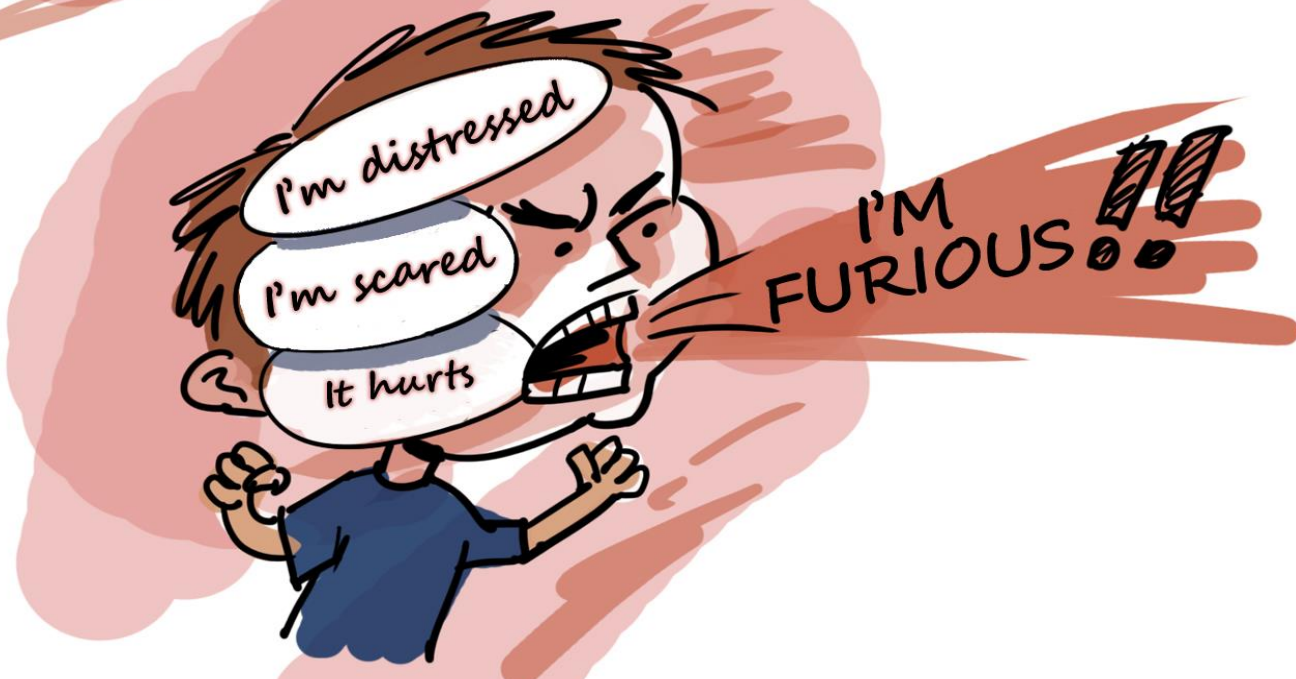
- The caring dialogue requires and generates mutual trust: distress signals by the child, parental sensitivity to such distress signals, caring responses and feedback to the parents about the outcome of these caring responses become one form of I-Thou in the parent-child relationship.
- The child
  - believes that the parent is internally strong
  - will be able to respond sensitively to his needs, rather than in an injurious or neglectful manner.
- The parent
  - is attentive for distress signals,
  - can distinguish between: basic physical and psychological needs, wishes and inappropriate or harmful demands of the child,
  - learns to respond to these different kinds of child signals in differential



# What happens when children dismiss their carers' or parents' care?

- Constraints to adults' care for their violent child:
  - Physically and psychologically avoiding the child – reduced parental presence reduces awareness of the child's distress.
  - Parents who have been abused in the past often respond with depression or posttraumatic stress to the child.
  - Negative internal representation of the child .
  - Vengefulness closes down the neural pathways for empathy
  - Dismissive child behaviour closes down neural pathways for care. Carers, whose foster children dismiss their attempts to act in caring and supportive ways, become less nurturing and more punitive over time .





# BOTH /AND: Parental Strength and re-sensitization to the unmet needs of the child

- When experiencing survival reactivity, parents cannot yet
  - attune to their child
  - activate their search system to locate distress in the child
  - empathise
  - be emotionally regulated in order to contain the young person and help them become emotionally regulated themselves
  - plan and carry out remedial action in order to soothe, support or protect
  - provide their child with positive attention, guidance, unconditional love and care

...in other words: be a parent!



The parent needs to be in a position of strength. This is enabled by active resistance against problem behaviour, and immersion in the memory of positive action.



# Moving to a child focus in NVR

- Wilson: What are the possible meanings in the child's outrage, anger and distress?
- Omer: The aggressive child has positive internal voices, requires love and guidance.
- Newman and Nolas: The 'family values' discourse in NVR opens the possibility for a child focus.



A child focus in NVR creates space for the unheard voice of distress: Parents address the child's unmet needs in their reconciliation gestures.



# Unmet needs and the unheard voice of distress in the aggressive child

- The need to feel safe and protected
  - Attachment and security
  - Developmental trauma
  - Post-traumatic stress
  - Avoidant anxiety problems
- The need for support in one's development
  - ASD, ADHD, learning difficulties
  - Just being a young person
- The need to feel a sense of belonging
- The need for a coherent and benign narrative of self and family – a positive 'attachment narrative'



# I will keep reaching out to you, no matter what you do... From reconciliation gesture to relational gesture


- Reconciliation gestures- acts of unconditional love and care, that re-assure the young person: “We care about you”. Instead of *saying* “we love you, we just don’t like what you do”, parents *act*. Acts speak louder than words.
- Reconciliation gestures can communicate a parent’s or carer’s awareness of the child’s unmet need and distress.



Planning reconciliation gestures that aim to address child distress helps parents and carers become re-sensitized to their the child’s distress signals and develop an internal focus on the child’s unmet needs.



# Imaginary caring dialogue

- Can we imagine together, that Jack might deal with what has upset him at school in a different way, and that you are able to help him with that?
  - So, you're going to do a sit-in for when he kicked his sister after school yesterday.
  - Once you've done that, can you imagine, one day, Jack comes home from school, and he's angry – just not as aggressive as usual?
  - OK, so he goes up to his room. Maybe you make him a cup of tea – can you see yourself bringing it up to him? Perhaps you're standing outside his half open door and looking in – what do you see?
  - OK, so, can you see yourself putting the cup of tea down next to him? You're quietly sitting there, and after a while, you ask something like: “Bad day at school, huh?” What do you see him do? What does he say?
  - OK, so what small gesture could you make, that would remind him you get it, so he can feel understood, but doesn't have to talk about it too much, so he can save his face?
  - “OK, so when you make that gesture - what will help you avoid the trap of expecting a positive response from him? So that you don't react with disappointment, or anger, or feel discouraged, when he doesn't respond positively?”
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***PartnershipProjects (UK) Ltd***

Pepperstitch Cottage, Bishopstone, East Sussex BN25 2UG, +44 (0)1323 873 147

[info@PartnershipProjectsUK.com](mailto:info@PartnershipProjectsUK.com)[referrals@PartnershipProjectsUK.com](mailto:referrals@PartnershipProjectsUK.com) [www.PartnershipProjectsUK.com](http://www.PartnershipProjectsUK.com)

