

NON VIOLENCE RESISTANCE

(NVR) PARENT HANDBOOK

Renfrewshire's guidelines for supporting children or adolescents with distressed & distressing behaviour

August 2023

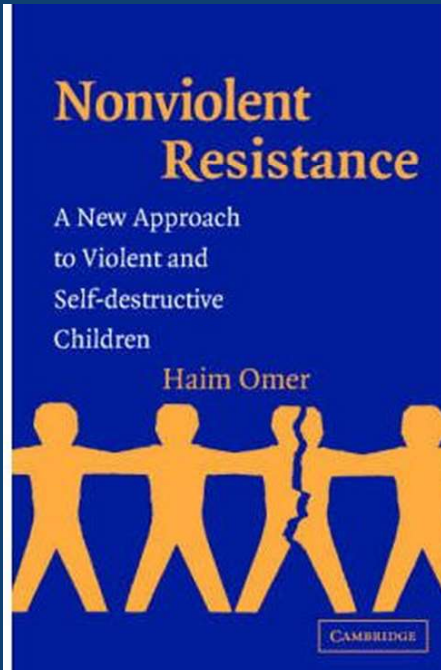


‘Get curious not furious’

CONTENTS

Chapter 1	Introduction	1
Chapter 2	De-escalation & hidden needs	4
Chapter 3	New Authority & Parental presence	15
Chapter 4	NVR Techniques	19
Chapter 6	Baskets	21
Chapter 7	Relational Gestures	23
Chapter 8	The Announcement	26
Chapter 9	Supporters	32
Chapter 10	Active resistance	34
Chapter 11	Vigilant Care	38
Chapter 12	Brothers & sisters	39

INTRODUCTION



Non-violent resistance (NVR) addresses violent, distressed, distressing and harmful behaviours in children and adolescents. The methods and ideas of non-violent direct action and resistance from Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks have been used in community and family settings to help parents and carers with their parenting.

NVR can help parents and carers overcome a sense of helplessness and regain a sense of presence in their parenting. It can support them to develop a support network that will resist violence and other distressed and/ or distressing behaviours and it can improve relationships between family members as well as with the outside world.





Key ideas in NVR parenting

DE-ESCALATING CONFLICTS

INCREASING PARENTAL PRESENCE



TAKING A FIRM STAND BY RESISTING ANY ACTS OF VIOLENCE
DONE BY YOURSELF OR YOUR CHILD

ANNOUNCING THIS COMMITMENT TO YOURSELF & YOUR CHILD

ARRANGING SIT-WITHS

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF SHAME & SILENCE

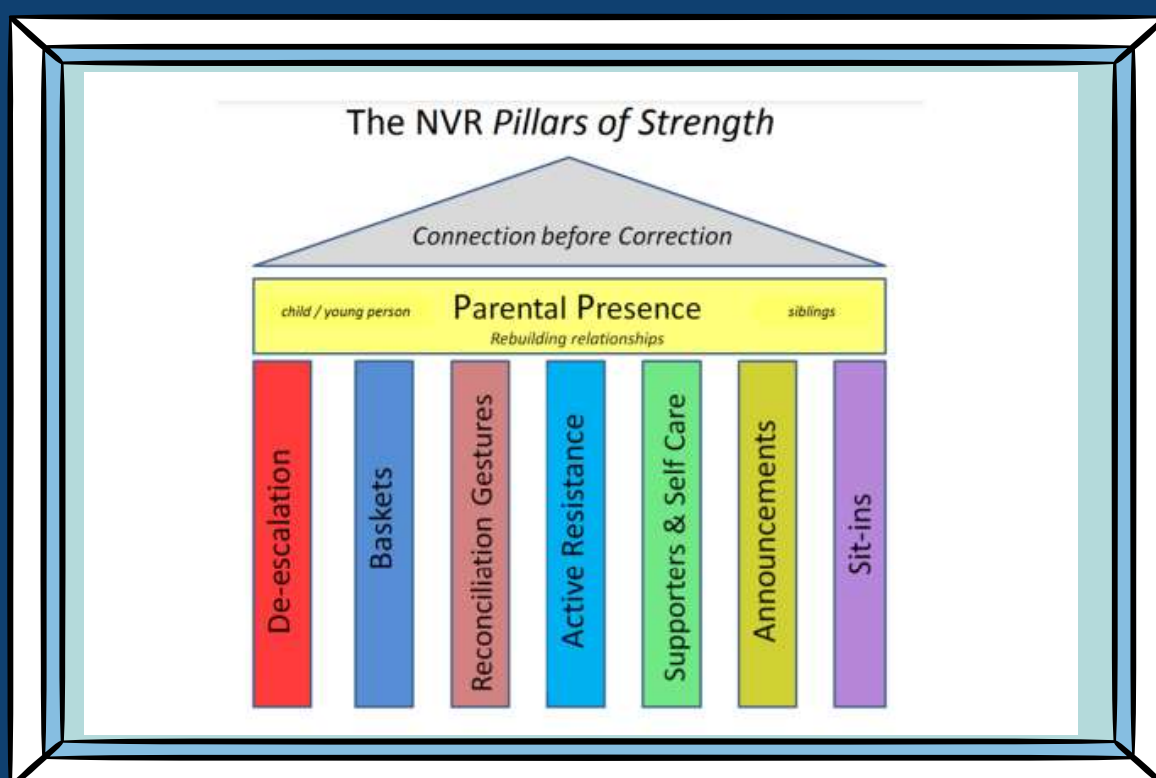
RECRUITING & UTILISING SUPPORTERS

CREATING RELATIONAL GESTURES THAT ARE NOT LINKED TO
YOUR CHILD'S BEHAVIOUR BUT INCREASE POSITIVE
INTERACTIONS BETWEEN YOU AND YOUR CHILDREN

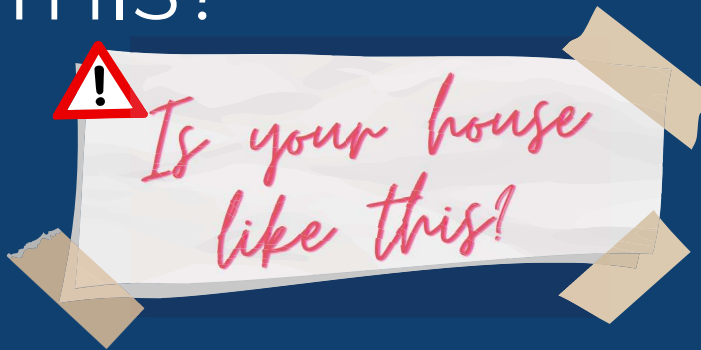
“ I am no longer prepared to continue with this situation and will do all in my power to change it - except by attacking you physically or verbally! ”

Non-violent resistance offers a different approach which aims to help you to stop the child's or young person's destructive behaviour and prevent escalation and violence. An NVR parenting approach involves:

1. Taking a firm stand against violence, risk-taking and anti-social behaviours
2. Holding back from physical or verbal violence
3. Increasing your positive parental presence in your child's life



WHY DOES MY CHILD BEHAVE LIKE THIS?



- What is happening?
- Who is in control?
- Where might it lead?
- How much more can you take?
- Have you had enough?
- Is it difficult to remember how much you love your child?
- Does it feel like you are losing your child?
- Are you afraid that someone might get hurt?
- Have you lost your parental presence?
- Are you prepared to try something different to change things?



What is really going on?



DE-ESCALATION & HIDDEN NEEDS

UNDERSTANDING PATTERNS OF ESCALATION

Things get out of hand because the arguments go up like an escalator and sometimes this may end in violence. Although you will be doing your best you could sometimes make things worse without realising it which is reducing your parental presence. How you respond to your child has a direct effect on what happens. There are two main ways in which things escalate between parents and children.

SYMMETRICAL

Joint escalation/ 'Meeting fire with fire':

Your child raises their voice, you raise your voice, your child shouts, you shout, your child shouts louder, you shout louder. The argument can end in violence on both sides. Parental presence is reduced.



ASYMMETRICAL

Giving in/ permissive escalation:

Your child shouts and demands, after a while you give in and let them have their way. Your child learns that they get their own way if they make enough fuss and will repeat this pattern as often as they can. When there are two parents one may use the first pattern (joint escalation) while the other uses the second pattern (giving in escalation). This makes the situation even worse because it is confusing for the child & parental presence is reduced.

So, what can we do to support ourselves to stay calm?

It's all about
SELF REGULATION
and
POSITIVE
RELATIONSHIPS

Looking after yourself
and being in a place
to stay emotionally
regulated supports us
to cope with the
challenges we face,
self-care is key

Understanding what
lies behind behaviour
including fight, flight,
freeze responses &
shame




"A dysregulated
adult can not
regulate a
dysregulated child!"

SELF-CARE

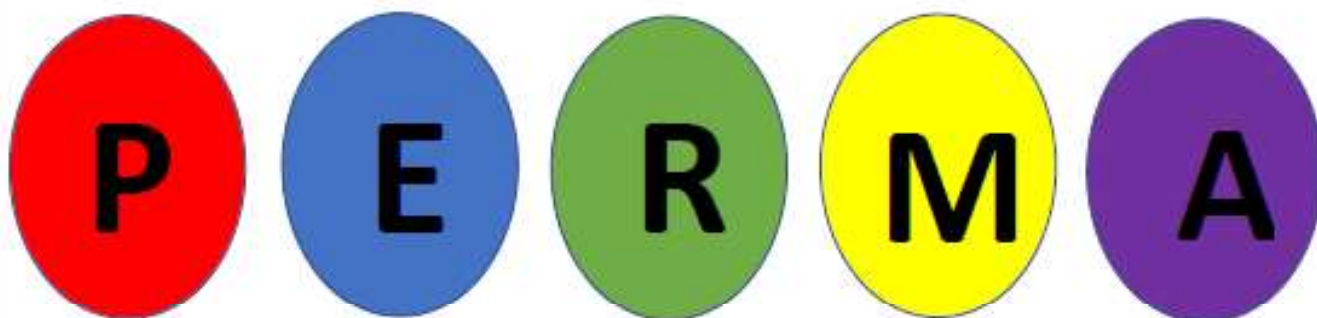
What fills your cup?

Try using the PERMA model to develop your personal self-care plan

Flourishing in stressful times: Ideas for self-care using Martin Seligman's PERMA model

EdPsychInsight 
<https://www.epinsight.com> | Twitter - @EPinsight

P	E	R	M	A
Positive Emotions What makes you feel good?	Engagement What "flow" activities make you lose track of time?	Relationships Who brings you joy, peace and support?	Meaning What causes and pursuits do you find important and worthwhile?	Accomplishment What are your goals? How can they be achieved?
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Favourite TV, movies and music which make you smile, laugh & relax. ✓ Playing games with family, friends and work colleagues. ✓ Physical exercise and breathing techniques. ✓ Getting out in nature and paying attention to the sensations around you. ✓ Reflecting on "Three Good Things" or "What Went Well" each day. ✓ Keeping a gratitude diary of the things you cherish. ✓ Making plans for the near and distant future. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Puzzles or board games. • Musical instruments. • Yoga or meditation. • Writing a story, poem or a blog. • Indulging in creative tasks such as drawing, painting or cross-stitching. • Taking part in individual or team sports. • Working on a new display in the garden. • Practising a new cooking or baking recipe. • Making a photo collage or video of a recent trip. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Catch-ups & get-togethers in person or online. ✦ Showing your appreciation for work colleagues. ✦ Sharing photos or souvenirs with others, to remind you of good times. ✦ Spending a few minutes chatting to a stranger. ✦ Using active listening & empathy when helping someone with a problem. ✦ Sending a thank you card or a message that shows "I'm thinking of you". ✦ Reminding someone that you love them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaging in spiritual activities. • Making a donation to charity. • Sending a care package to a family or friend in need. • Fundraising through an individual or group challenge. • Volunteering your time in a community project. • Sharing knowledge and teaching others about a special interest. • Commemorating a loved one's memory. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➢ Making a "To do" list and prioritise the tasks. ➢ Keeping goals S.M.A.R.T. ➢ Taking on new jobs and responsibilities - a different role at work. ➢ Starting a long-term project - some DIY at home. ➢ Learning something new - webinars and podcasts. ➢ Setting an exercise target - schedule the activities in a way which makes them rewarding and sustainable. ➢ Changing your work-life balance - use a planner to organise your time better.



<u>Positive Emotions</u> – what makes me FEEL good?	<u>Engagement</u> – what flow activities can make me lose track of time?	<u>Relationships</u> – what brings me joy, peace & support?	<u>Meaning</u> – What is important to me? What do I value?	<u>Accomplishment</u> – What are your goals? How can they be achieved?

Understanding stress responses

Fight, Flight, Freeze responses are natural ways that our bodies react to stress



If viewing online, double click the icon above to find out more about the Fight, Flight, Freeze responses & why we may lose control of our emotions.

You can also view this video by searching on Youtube "Why do we lose control of our emotions"

<https://youtu.be/3bKuoH8CkFc>

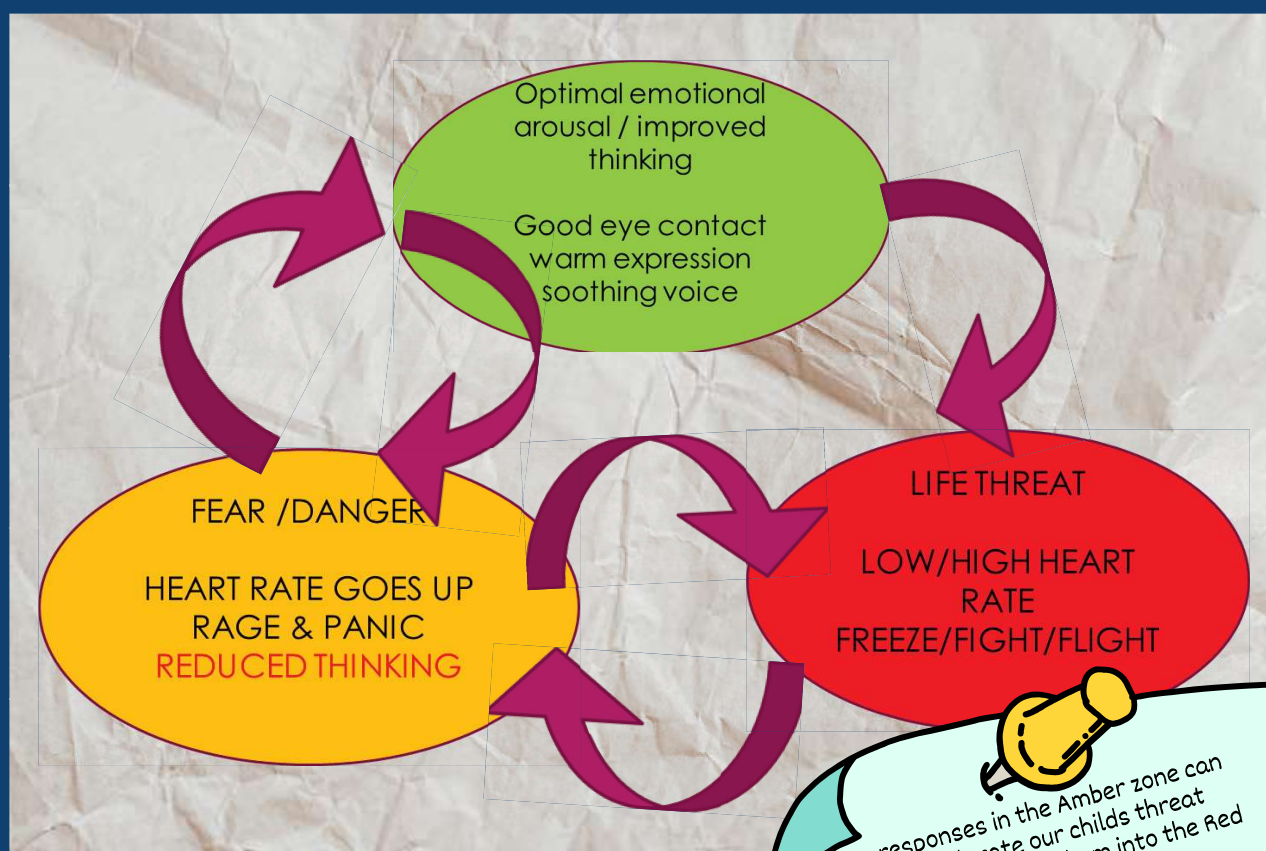
A traffic light model of stress

If our body judges that our life is in danger then our heart rate either increases or reduces and we go into Freeze/Flight or fight mode.

The fear response can accelerate or decelerate. If it accelerates too much it triggers the life threat system. This 'adrenal response' is a great survival system with just one problem...

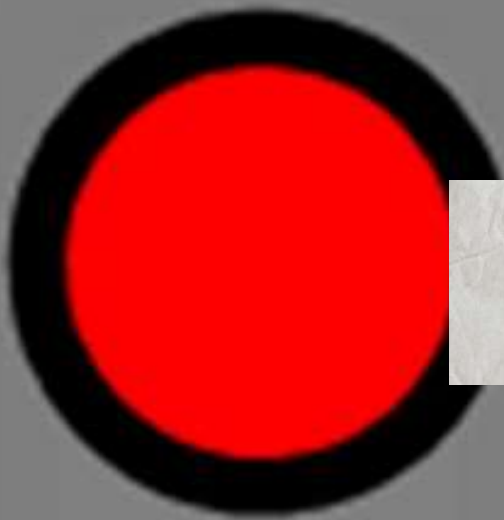
It diverts blood from the thinking part of our brain to an automatic reaction part of our brain. We don't choose this system, we inherited it from our mammalian ancestors. You and your child have this system, everyone does, and sometimes our parent-child threat response systems can interact with one-another.

If we can learn to identify where both we and our child is in this escalation cycle, we can learn to choose the best times to plan our responses. We can use traffic light zones to help us with this.



Our responses in the Amber zone can either accelerate our child's threat response and move them into the Red zone

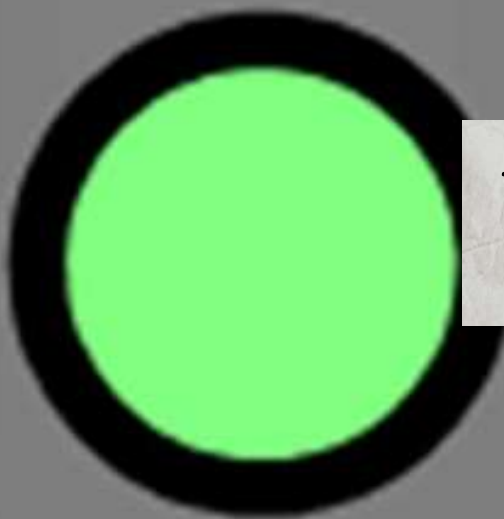
... or through connection & attunement, which are the opposite of threat, we can find the break pedal back to the Green zone & our parental presence is strengthened



The Red zone looks like big emotional responses, it is an intensely high threat state where there may be violence



The Amber zone is when we start to experience fear/danger. Our heartrate goes up, we may feel rage, we start to panic, our thinking reduces – this is how our body initially reacts to fear/danger/stress



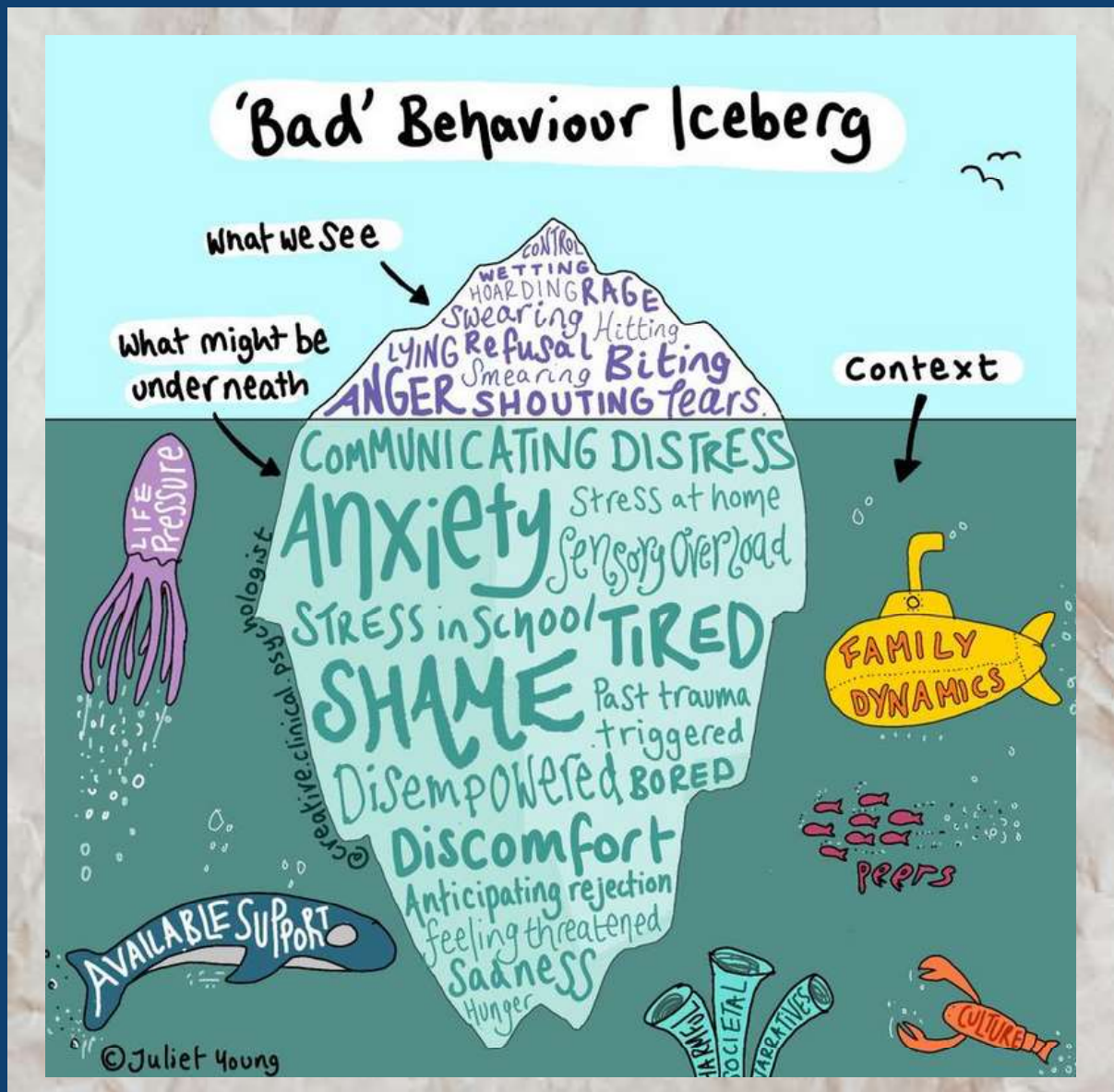
The Green zone is a calm emotional state. This is the optimal emotional state for learning

Looking behind behaviour

Our approach supports us to reflectively understand behaviour and therefore think strategically about our response. What hidden needs lie behind behaviour? What stress factors are there in this child's life?

"Get curious not furious"

Attempting to work out what could be behind behaviour increases our empathy for child's position helps us stay regulated & enhance our parental presence.



The shield against shame

Another crucial underlying need that impacts on behaviour is shame.

Shame is a part of healthy development, however dysregulated shame can pose challenges. Shame is a form of social punishment that activates the same areas of the brain as physical pain. We may respond in particular ways to protect ourselves from feeling the uncomfortable sensations of shame. This is our 'Shield against shame'.

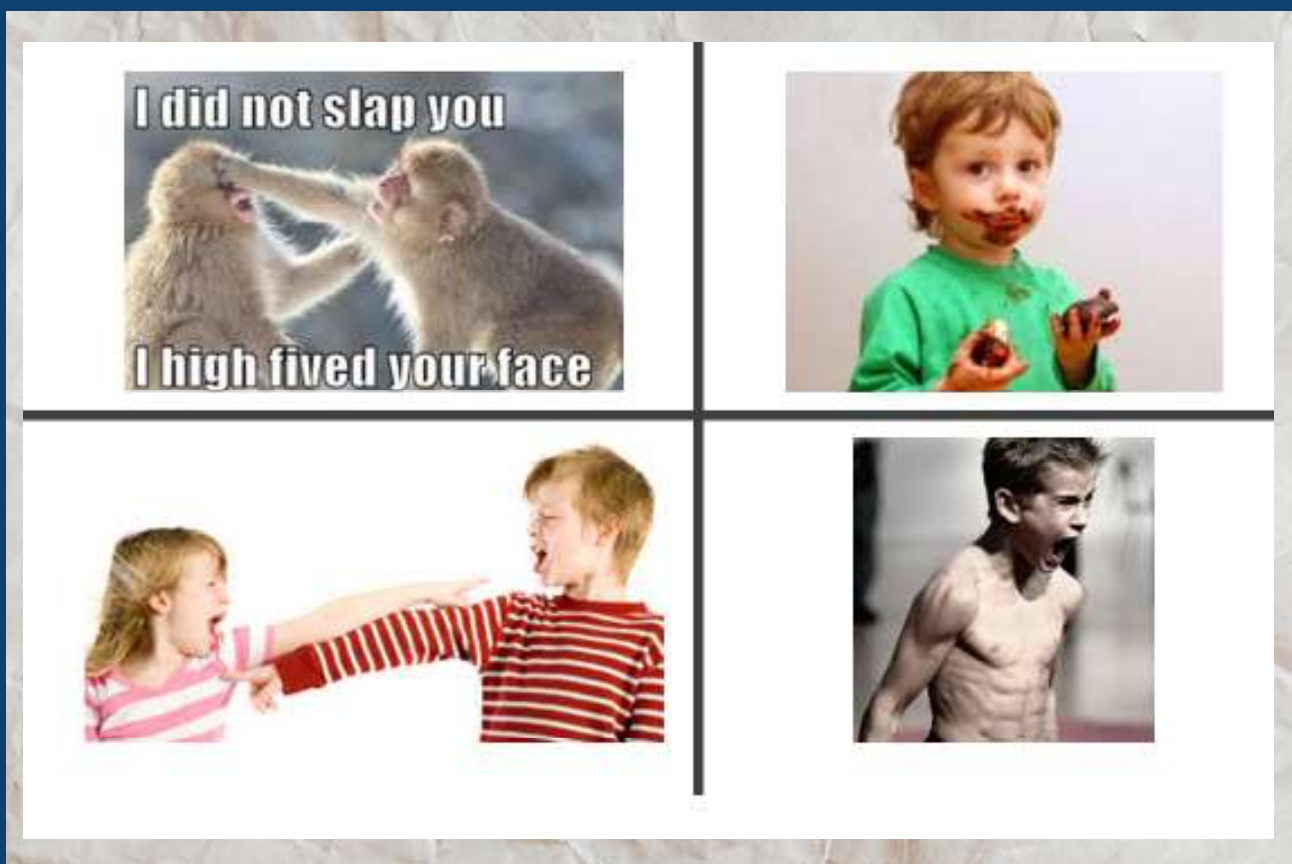
For children who have developed unregulated responses towards shame, they can struggle to cope with even small amounts. This can lead to a need to defend themselves which can present as lying, minimising, blaming, rage/anger.



Understanding the Shield against shame is helpful because:

- It helps us understand extreme behavioural responses to seemingly small requests or demands
- It allows us to build empathy for the child's position, stay regulated, plan responses that can slip behind the shield, maintain our parental presence and address the underlying need

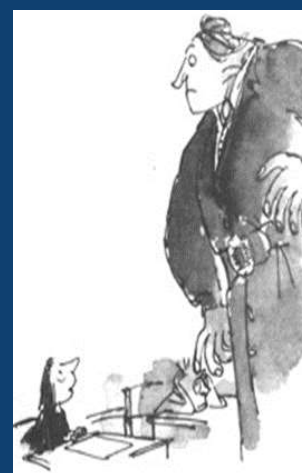
We can use our knowledge of the Shield of Shame to slip past resistance and defence to offer corrections in the child's (and everyone else's) best interests.



NEW AUTHORITY & PARENTAL PRESENCE

Think of a spectrum with Traditional Authority at one end; Liberal at the other and New Authority in the middle.

What is 'New Authority'?		
Old authority	Lack of authority	New authority
distance	Too close/ chummy	presence
Control	Giving in	Self control
Coercion	Permissiveness	Influence
Obedience (child)	Obedience (adult)	relationship
Power	Weakness	strength
punishment	No consequence	Resistance and restoration
What I want	What you want	What is right/needed (vigilant care)
urgency	Laissez-faire	persistence
Act now (reactive)	Don't act (ignore)	Chose your time to act (responsive)
Individual effectiveness	Individual ineffectiveness	Shared responsibility, networks, mutual support

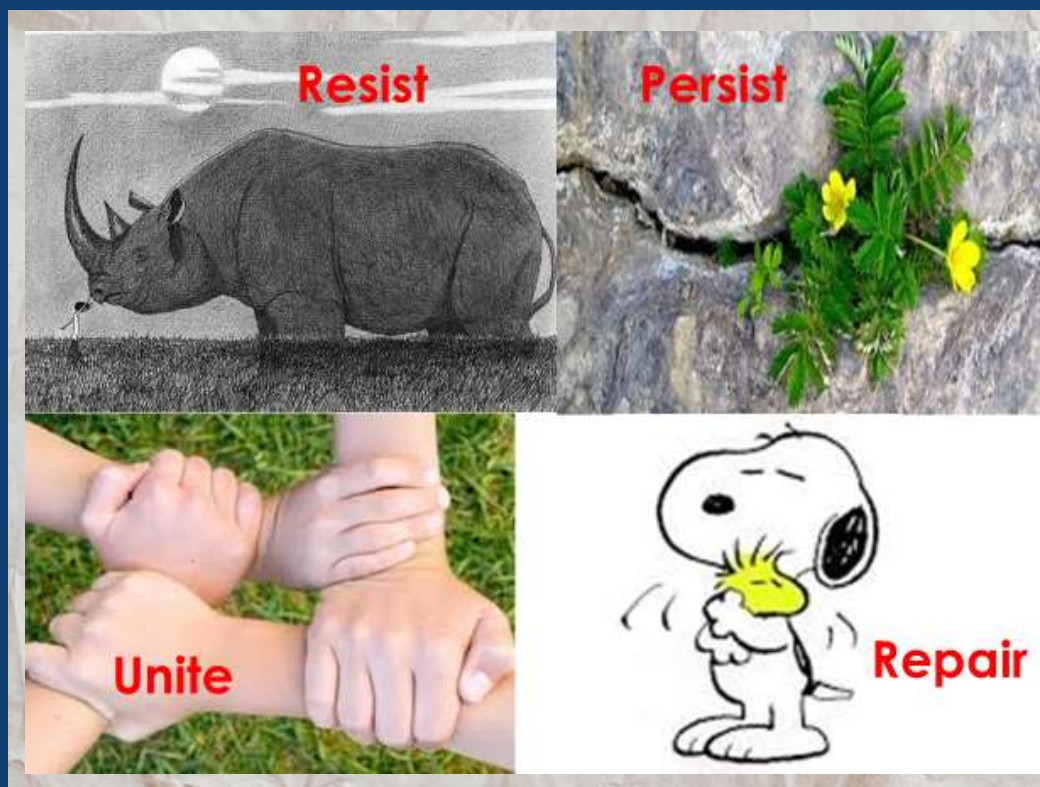


New Authority is...

- not about giving in to the child
- not about trying to control the child
- about de-escalation and strong resistance
- about rebuilding relationships
- about developing confident parental presence



4 Pillars of this New Authority approach:

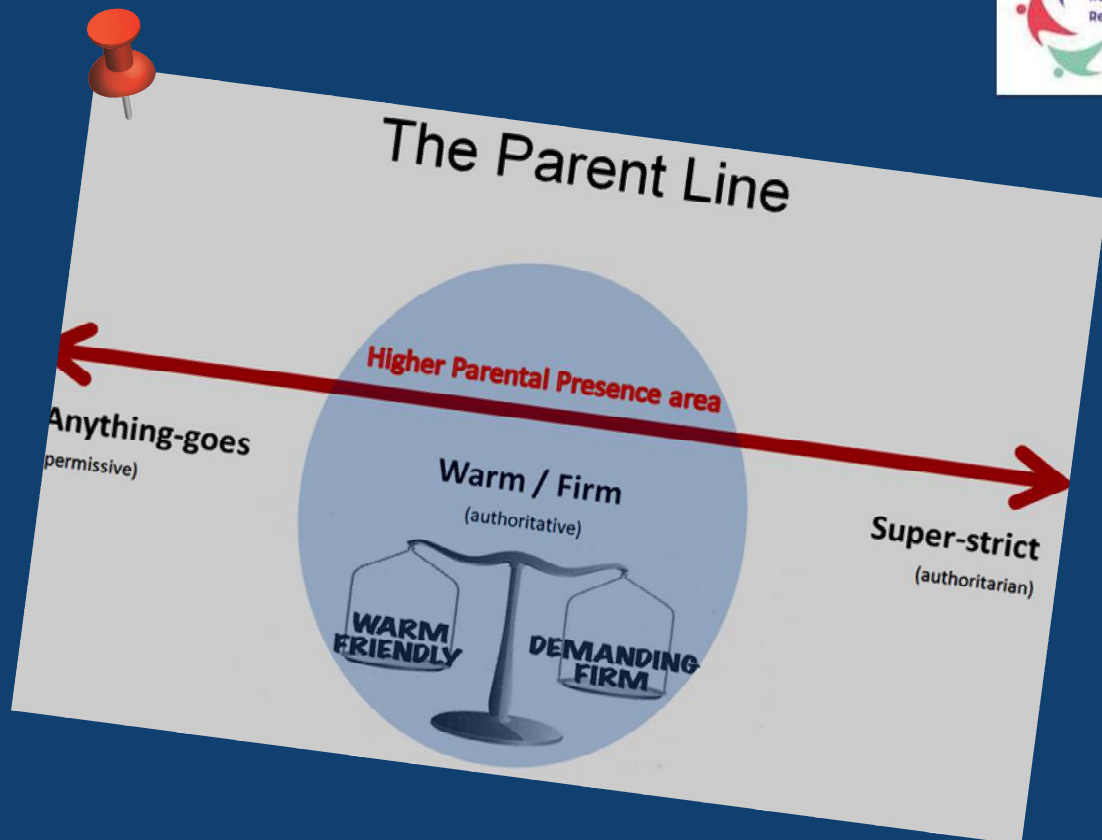


RESIST: we cultivate the strength to address and resist unacceptable behaviours without feeding the cycle of shame and fight/flight/freeze

PERSIST: We understand and accept that caring for young people is a marathon, not a sprint. Rome wasn't built in a day! We learn how to pace ourselves to avoid burnout.

UNITE: We recognise that you can not do this alone! Developing a trusted support network will help strengthen our resistance & enable us to persist.

REPAIR: It is natural that relationships can deteriorate under stress. Relationships can be ruptured but NVR gives us tools to repair those relationships.



Parental presence is the centre ground of the parenting line (parenting styles). This is the tricky finely tuned stance of managing both warmth and firm presence at the same time, whilst avoiding extremes.

As parents become more familiar with using the NVR tools within a New Authority approach, their sense of Parental Presence grows. As they use the tools of NVR to re-connect, choose their time to respond, & choose how they will respond, they will gradually begin to feel more confident in testing situations, and more 'present' in the child's mind.



This is about **persisting**, change takes time, but gradually you may notice subtle changes that indicate your parental presence has returned.

NVR TECHNIQUES

Reacting in the heat of the moment will escalate both the child and the parent & can move us closer towards the red zone. We need to both be regulated before responding and we need planning time. These NVR tools provide parents with necessary thinking space.

Strike while the iron's cold!

Resist escalation and go back to the issue when things are less escalated. Wait until you and your child are in the **Green** zone to discuss what happened, as children are less able to listen, process information and learn when in the **Red** zone.



Rule of one

Repeating ourselves over and over can move us towards the **Amber** or even **Red** zone. Resist escalation by saying one thing (clearly) and say it only once. This de-escalation strategy is about the adult keeping themselves regulated and demonstrating their presence – it's easy to lose our presence when we flip our lid.

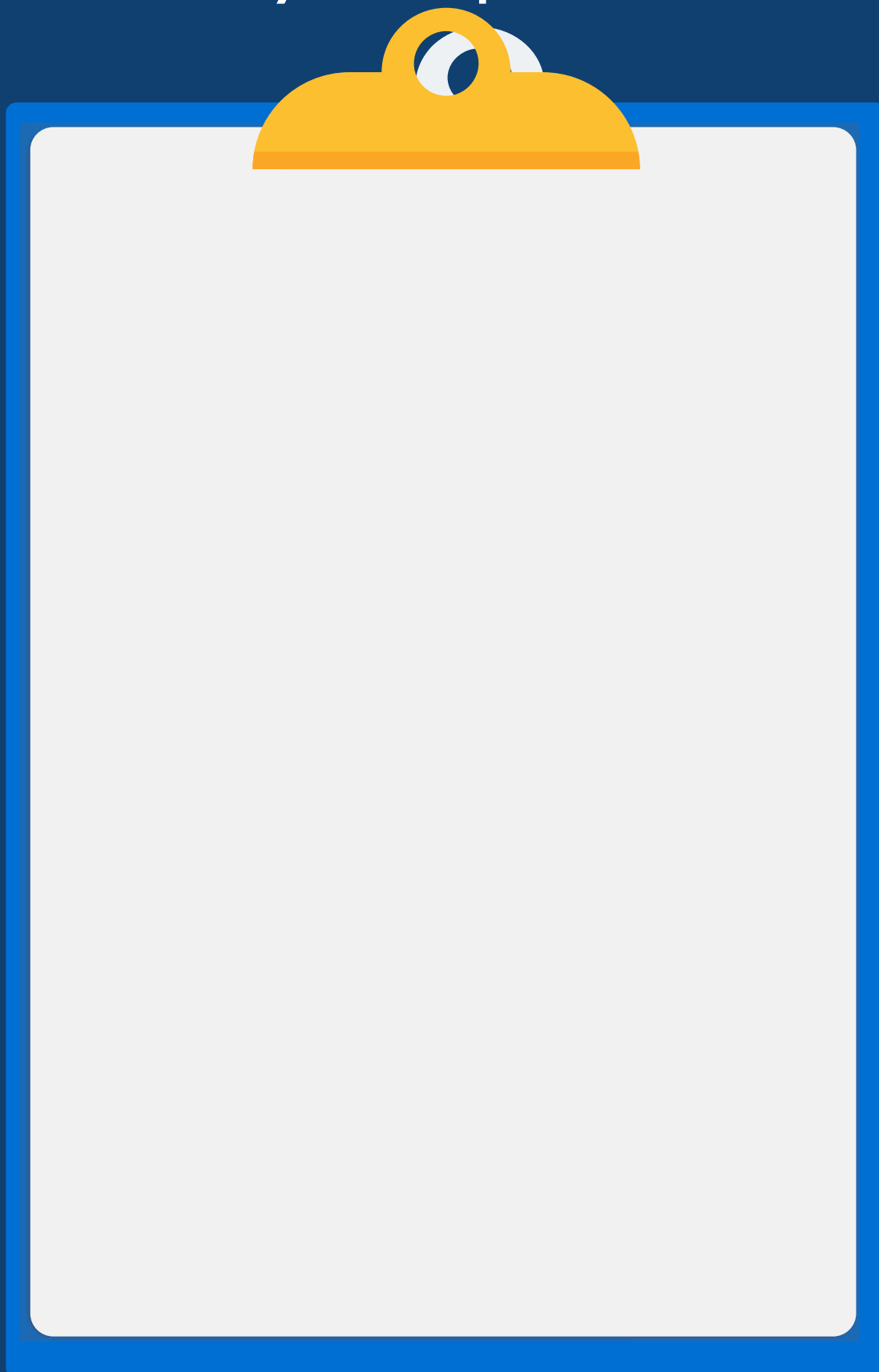


Autopilot statements

As we move into the amber or red zone, our thinking reduces so in the **Green** zone), pre-prepare mini-scripts/ one- liners to help you say the 'right thing', instead of relying on the ability to improvise. This allows us to Resist feeding into an escalation cycle.



You can write your Autopilot Statements here



BASKETS

Deciding which behaviour to focus on...

It is important to decide where to begin. There are so many things we need to change, where do we start? We can't possibly address every behaviour. For this to work we can only concentrate on one or two.

Behaviours can be prioritised by using the 3 baskets approach.

Prioritising:

Begin by writing every behaviour that you want to change on a separate piece of paper. Use the template on the next page to put behaviours into each of the baskets



This is the largest basket. Put all the things that you are going to ignore or deal with easily using standard de-escalation strategies. This basket is the biggest so should hold most of your pieces of paper.

This is the middle sized basket. Put the things in here that you will focus on once small basket behaviours are resolved.



This is the smallest basket. Put in here 1 or 2 things that you will no longer tolerate. You will prioritise these behaviours for your NVR strategies.



RELATIONAL GESTURES



Repair needs to be a focus prior to anything else. This can be very difficult when we are suffering from the effects of burnout and blocked care.

Taking control of the temperature of the relationship can be so powerful.



"Connection before Correction"

Children shouldn't need to earn our love, relational gestures are therefore different from rewards in that they should be carried out regardless of the behaviour. In-fact when things are so difficult, relational gestures alone can release oxytocin, the love hormone and bring us closer to the Green zone again.

Relational gestures show our children we love them unconditionally, they raise parental presence and open up possibilities for positive communication.



Relational Gestures are...



- Unconditional. It doesn't matter if there is no appreciation or if they are rejected
- Not rewards
- Not linked to the behaviour or anxiety of the child
- Small and symbolic
- About raising parental presence
- A useful tool to develop/ repair a bond with the child (they increase oxytocin the love hormone!)
- Even more important when there has been ruptures in the relationship -this is the time we least want to offer the relationship so pre-planning them when in the Green zone is a must!

Examples of Relational Gestures...

Making a cup of tea or a hot chocolate

Making their bed

Connecting comments, for example comments that show that you are thinking of child when not together

Giving compliments

Giving time to spend together - put the time aside even if it is not accepted

Post-it or notes left around to find

Playing a game

Taking an interest in their interests

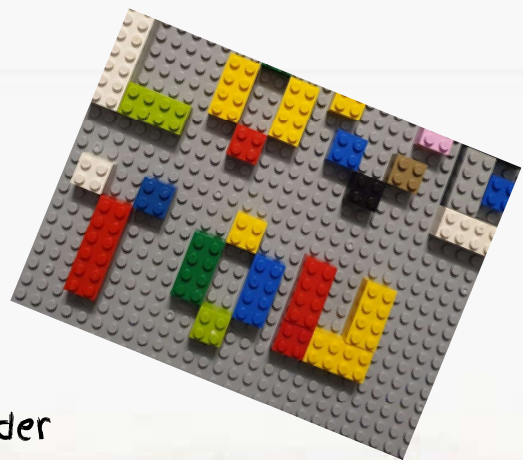
Watching them play their sport

Eating together

Going for an ice-cream

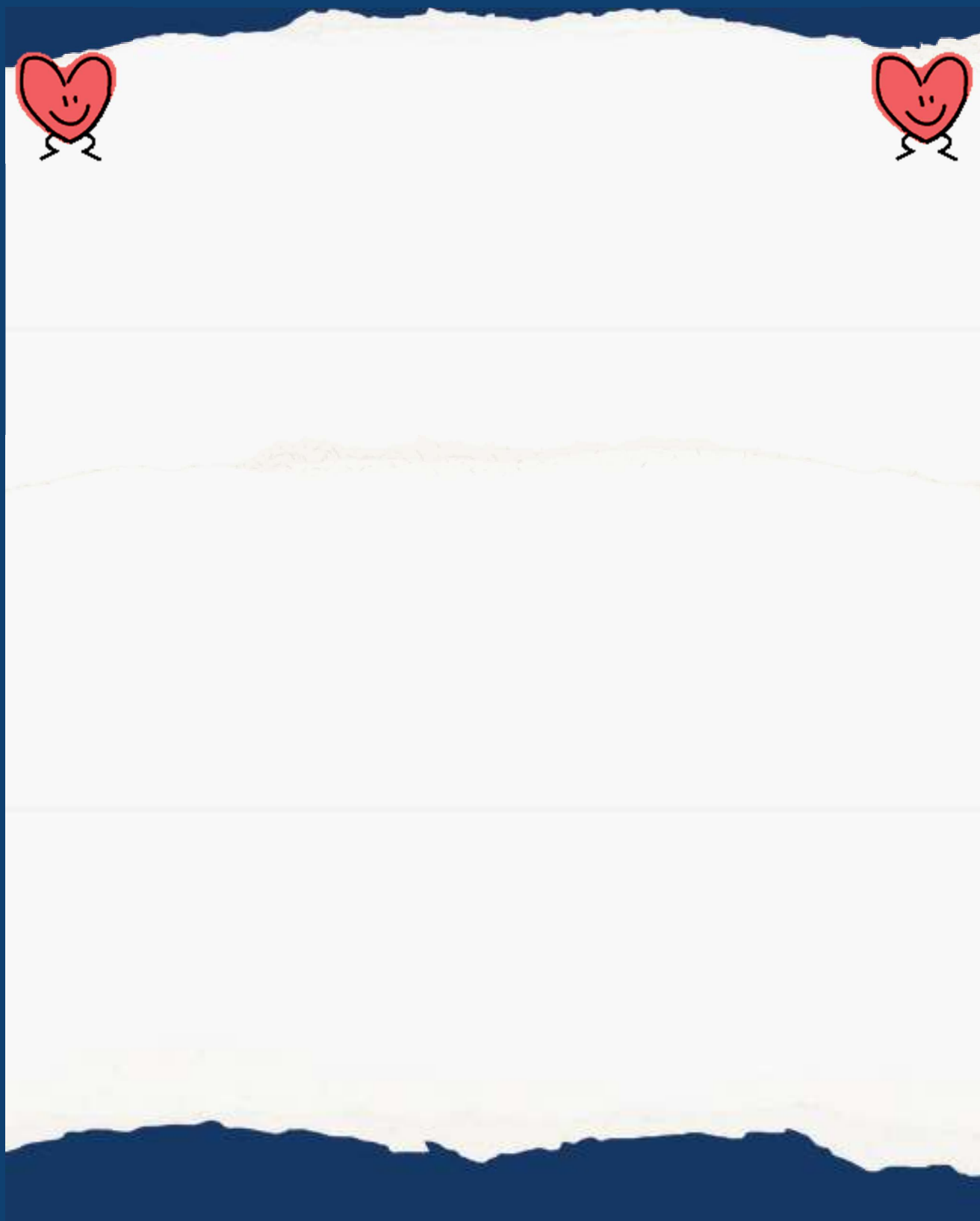
Getting their favourite dessert

A gentle pat on the back/ head/ shoulder



...what else?

You can write ideas for your Relational Gestures here:



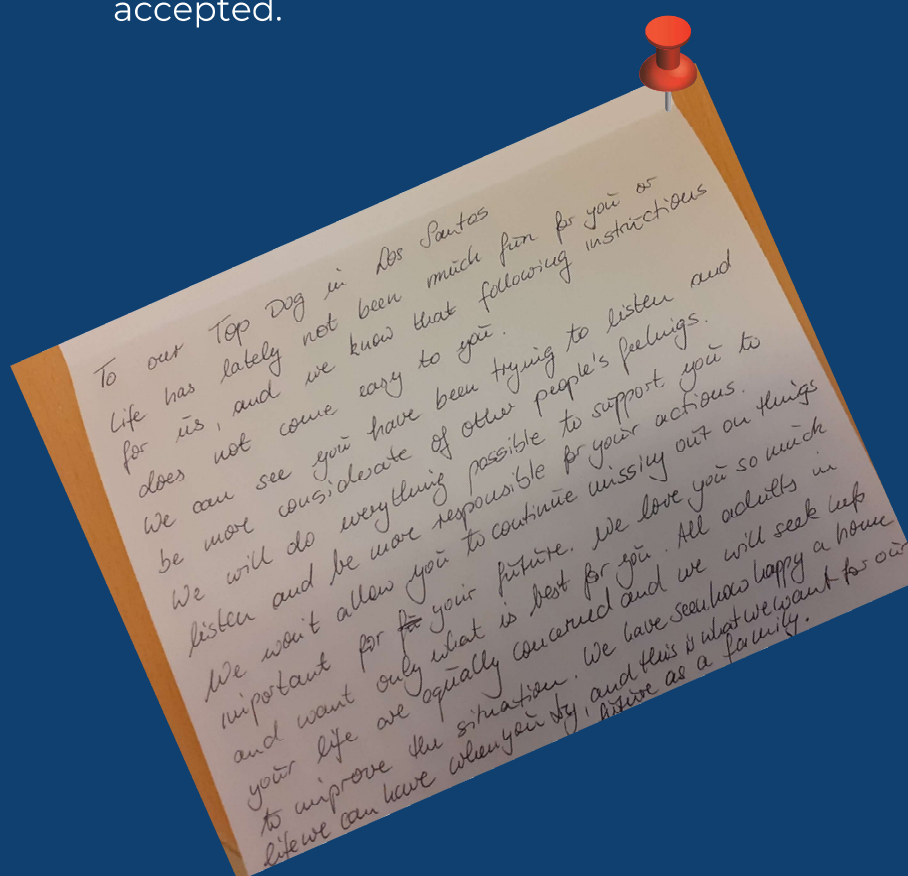
The form is a large, blank, cream-colored rectangular area with a torn paper effect at the top and bottom edges. It is flanked by two red heart icons with faces and legs, one on the left and one on the right. The background of the entire page is dark blue.

THE ANNOUNCEMENT



This is the pivotal point in an NVR parenting journey where the parent/carer informs the child of their determination to affect a change in the target behaviour. Parents tell their child about the stand they are going to take and about the commitment to resist their behaviour.

Announcements are not debates or arguments. They are not about convincing the other party of your side or about issuing ultimatums, threats or consequences. The adult is simply drawing a line and stating very clearly the behaviours that will no longer be accepted.



Like with other NVR strategies, Announcements are pre-planned when the adult is in the Green zone. This is so they say exactly what they want to say in a way that they have decided will work best.



Why an Announcement?...

In many cases parents have already tried to discuss the situation with the child often in the past, and have been met with resistance and distress. Attempting to repeat this again will more than likely make the situation worse. This where the written announcement is best used.

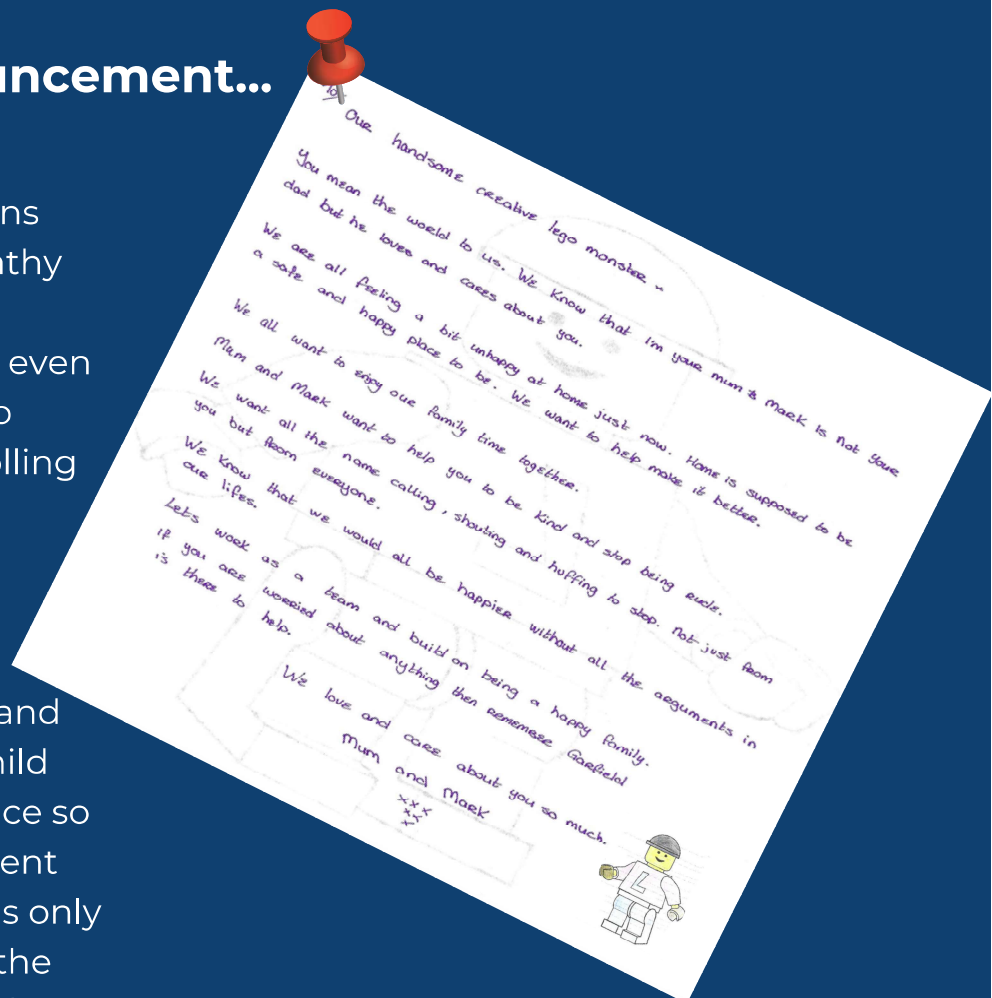
4 purposes are:

- To inform the child of the parents' intent without inviting an escalation
- To practice key adults in the child's life working together
- To create parental commitment and adherence to the process
- To allow parents to express their message precisely and concisely.

Writing an Announcement...

The Announcement begins with expressions of empathy showing the parents' compassion for the child, even as they are determined to battle the anxiety/controlling behaviours.

It focuses on the parents; expressing the parents' attitude, beliefs, feelings and plans. Focusing on the child can lead to more resistance so being focused on the parent reinforces that the adult is only in control of their side of the relationship with the child.

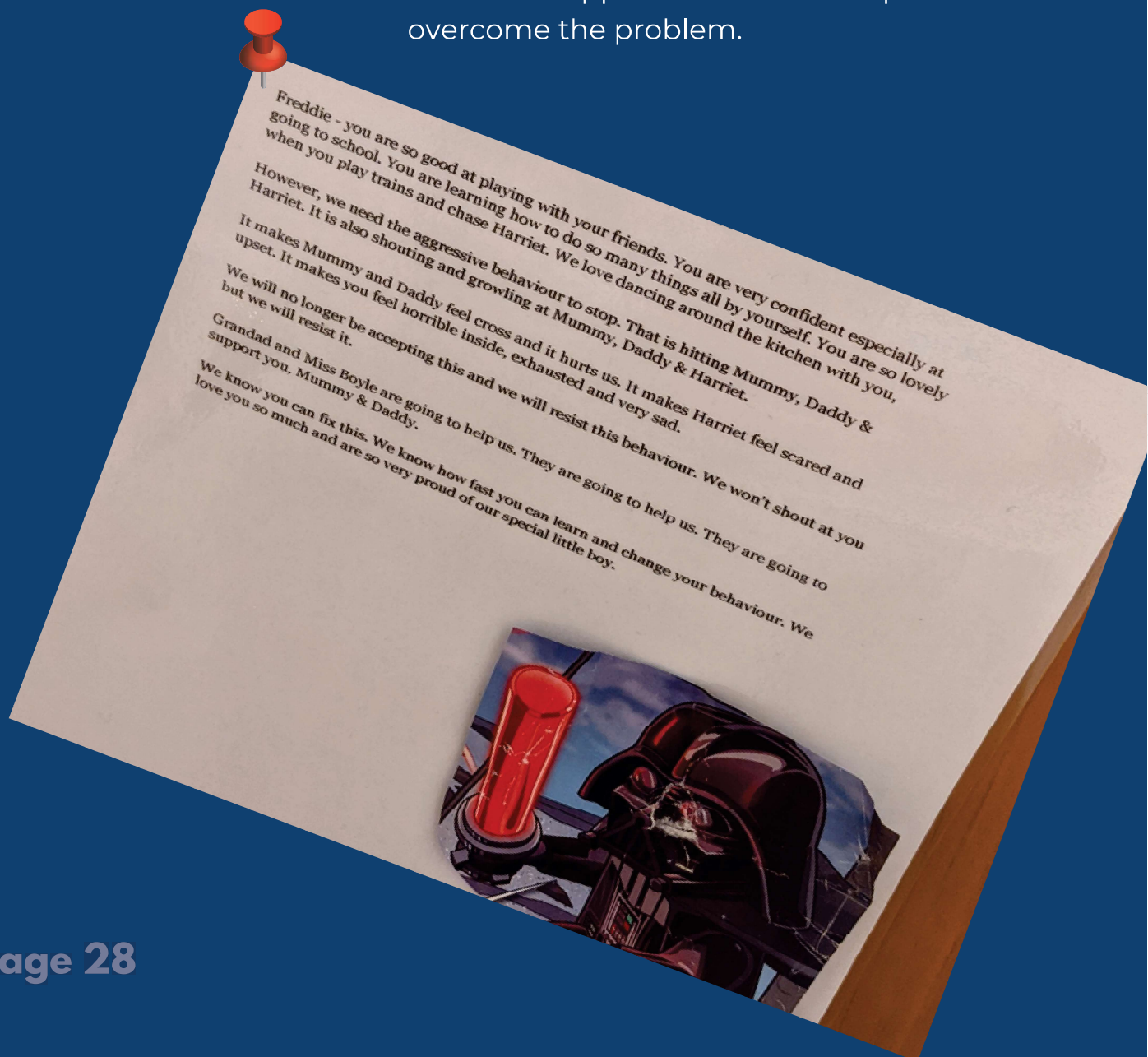


An announcement is clear and concrete describing explicit boundaries around the small basket behaviour. They can be creative and should be developmentally appropriate using language & communication approaches the child understands.



Involved supporters are mentioned in order to convey uniting with others. This can build parental presence and can be an effective way of minimising escalation.

Parents should state that their intention is not to embarrass the child but rather to enlist the support of others to help overcome the problem.



Why so formal?..

You prefer a more natural and spontaneous form of communication however it is the formality itself that amplifies the impact of the announcement.

Why in writing?

So you will say what you mean to say! Without it written down parents are more likely to get side tracked by the child's behaviour/ comments the child may make and potentially get drawn into an escalation cycle.

They won't listen to us...

The parents job is merely to make the announcement – not to shape the child's reaction. 'You do not need to make them listen. Simply enter the room and try to draw their attention. Read the announcement place it beside them and leave the room. If you did what you planned to do you were successful –no matter what they did.

It won't help!...

In itself, it won't!

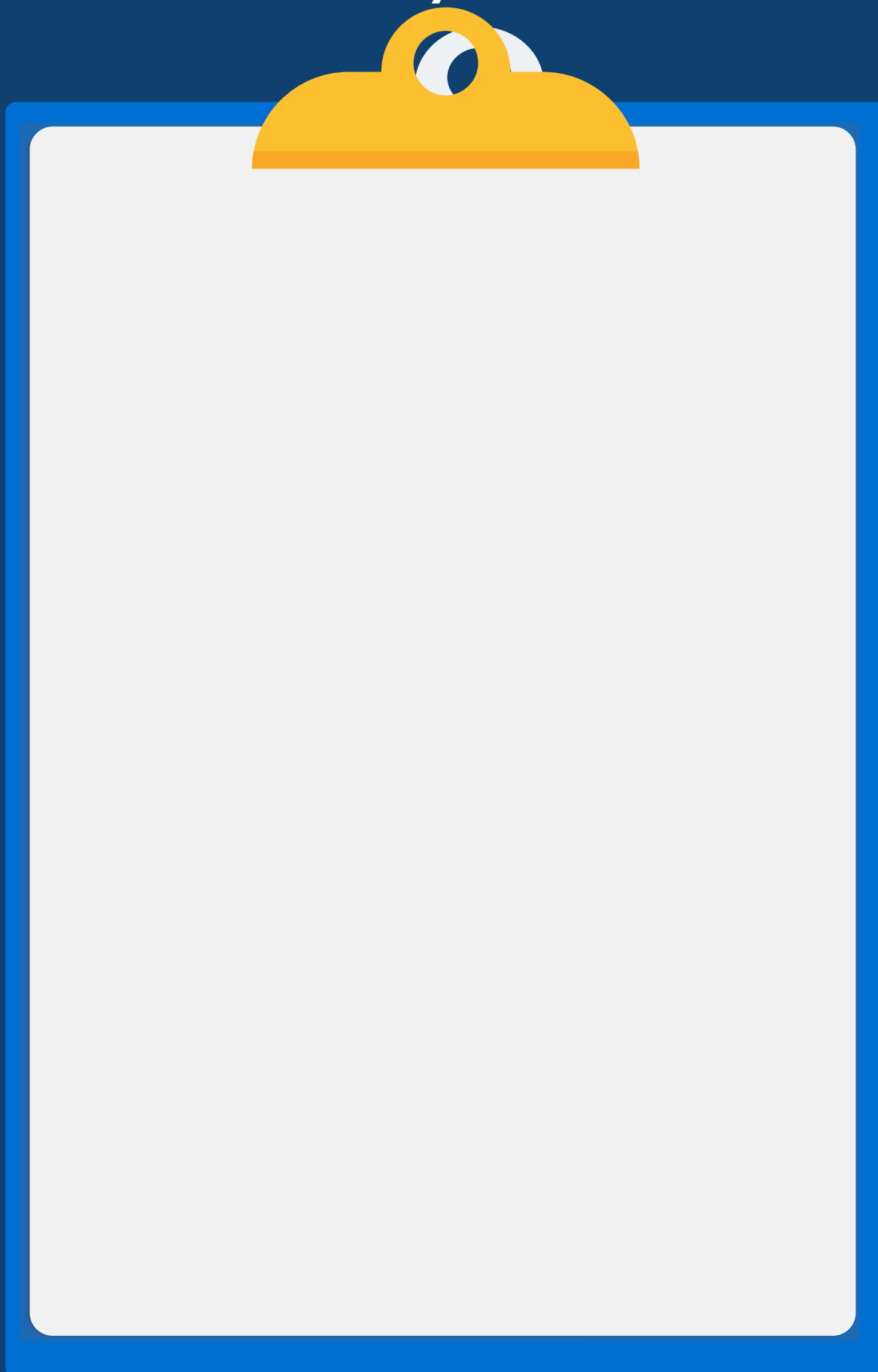
The purpose of the announcement is not to change the behaviour or to solve the problem. It is merely to inform the child in a clear and resolute way of the plan to address the issue. There is no expectation that it will 'help' in the immediate sense. We need to PERSIST with our NVR campaign & over time things should start to improve.



Suggested announcement structure

1. Open Announcement with sentence addressing the child in non-threatening way. Include what you love about your child/ pet names etc)
2. Sentence introducing a formulation of the problem – be specific. include acknowledgement of any wider contributing factors (e.g at individual/ family/ community level)
3. Include statement about effect on others and on child themselves
4. Name the concerns (small basket behaviour)
5. Pledge for parent to resist to best of abilities (not using violence)
6. Inform that others will be involved (supporters)
7. End with positive characterisation of child
8. End with aims for the family and child

You can write ideas for your Announcement here





SUPPORTERS

Parenting in today's society is hard. Unhelpful societal standards tell us it's shameful if we can't do it all ourselves. However..

"It takes a village to raise a child!"

Your support network should help strengthen your parental presence and can do this in many different ways either by supporting you, your child, siblings or through helping you with your delivery of conscious, mindful and strategic parenting messages.

Mobilising your supporters and managing what messages are delivered, by whom, and when is a big part of developing a New Authority parenting approach. Supporters come in all shapes and sizes, they could be partners, friends, family, neighbours or school staff. Parents need to recruit the right people for the right job.

Pick your villagers & unite around your child!



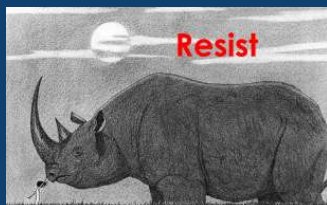
Write your ideas for supporters here



Who will be in your support network?
What support is needed/ wanted?
What roles will supporters take?



ACTIVE RESISTANCE



What is Active Resistance?

We can't control another person but we can try to push back against a behaviour and offer some resistance to it. We can also actively resist falling into old patterns of symmetrical/ asymmetrical escalation.

Active resistance are responses that are carefully planned in advance (when the iron is cold) and carried out at a time of our choosing rather than reacting in the heat of the moment. In the moment the appropriate response may well be to do nothing, in which case we are choosing to wait. This decision to resist being provoked into reacting increases our presence and provides strength for when we do respond at a later time.

Message Campaigns

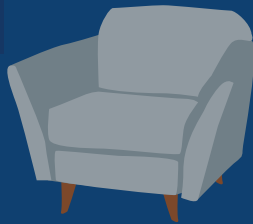
Active Resistance might involve message campaigns. In the green zone, supporters can be used to reinforce the message that the target behaviour is unacceptable and that there is a united effort to improve things. This shows a commitment to behaviours no longer being hidden away. Messages can be delivered in a range of ways (e.g. by card, texting, on the phone or verbally)

Appreciation messages recognising positive behaviour & relational gestures should also take place to ensure the balance of both connection & correction.



'I heard you lost your temper and kicked and punched your dad last night. That's not ok. I know you are working hard to control your emotions. I care about you and I'm here to support you. I know you can do it!'

Raising presence through 'Sit-withs'



Sit with's are about raising parental presence in a physical sense, thinking about the problems and being together.

In Renfrewshire, we have adapted a traditional NVR 'Sit-in' to a 'Sit-with'.

A Sit-in/ Sit-with allows the parent to show parental presence without escalating. The purpose of the sit-in is to address a target behaviour, facilitate the 'unsaid' and let your child know that you are resisting the behaviour.



An intensive way of manifesting presence in response to the occurrence of targeted behaviours (active resistance)

Not a punishment (the success criterion is the behaviour of the adults not the child.)

Can be used to tighten the network

Message of support for the child

Conveys hope; things can improve

Conveys message 'we are here, we are taking action, we are not alone'

Like other NVR ideas, the Sit-with conversation is carefully prepared in advance. It is a planned conversation often using a short prepared script to start the discussion.

'We are not prepared to put up with this behaviour any more (be specific – small basket focus). We are here to find a way to solve the problem. We will sit and wait until you suggest a solution'

TIPS to support this process:

- Create an imaginary magnifying glass to help spot any helpful comments from the child
- Create an imaginary parental shield to help protect you from insults and threats
- The presence of supporters who can adopt a neutral stance can help prevent escalation. Supporters can sit in a nearby room.



The traditional 'Sit-in' involved entering the child's room & waiting for the child to come up with a solution, however the adapted 'Sit-with' can take place on neutral ground e.g. in car, while walking to get an ice-cream, in school or in a quiet community setting.

The Sit-with doesn't have to last a long time, is about raising adult presence rather than reaching a solution and has 3 main functions:

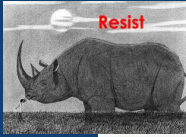
Connecting, correcting and co-regulating.

'We are here to see how we can get along better'

**'We can work this out'
'I will not give up on you'**

'We are here to help sort out the problem'

Write your ideas for how you may 'Actively Resist' your small basket behaviours here:



A large, blank white rectangular area with a torn paper effect at the top and bottom edges, intended for writing ideas.

VIGILANT CARE

Supervision or monitoring of your child is an effective way of increasing your parental presence for reducing risky behaviour. In NVR this supervision is called vigilant care.

All children need vigilant care in their lives but this care can be more or less intense depending on the child's level of risk.

Vigilant Care involves three stages of parental attention that can be compared to a traffic light system.

In the "Open Attention" or the green light stage, this is the usual parental/ adult vigilance required in the everyday life and routine of the child. For example, the parent is vigilant in what they're hearing the child talk about with their friends on the phone or what they are posting online.

The next stage is "Focused Attention", the amber light in the traffic light system. Parents or the adults around the child adjust their approach to becoming more vigilant by for example talking to other people in the children's life. This might involve discussions with supporters, the child's school, grandparents, social work and medical professionals where the parent shares & discusses the concerns they have.

In the "Protective Action" stage, the red traffic light, parents, carers and supporters take action, they may increase their visual presence in the child's life (e.g through sit-withs) and other actions of active resistance.

BROTHERS & SISTERS



At times children are significantly affected by living with distressed & distressing events within the household. They may feel isolated and are not able to talk to their parents due to the parents' time, energy & attention being taken by the other child.

Brothers and sisters do have the right to speak out about the violence and expect their parents to support them. They should be made to feel safe reporting violence.



Brothers and sisters also might notice you are doing things differently and may not understand why, they may wonder for example why are you not dealing with things in the moment and relational gestures may be perceived as rewards, but as the parents persist, siblings should be able to notice changes over time.

Your child needs to know how they are affecting their brothers and sisters and there are ways you can plan to do this. For example including this in the announcement & resisting comments & actions (Active Resistance techniques)

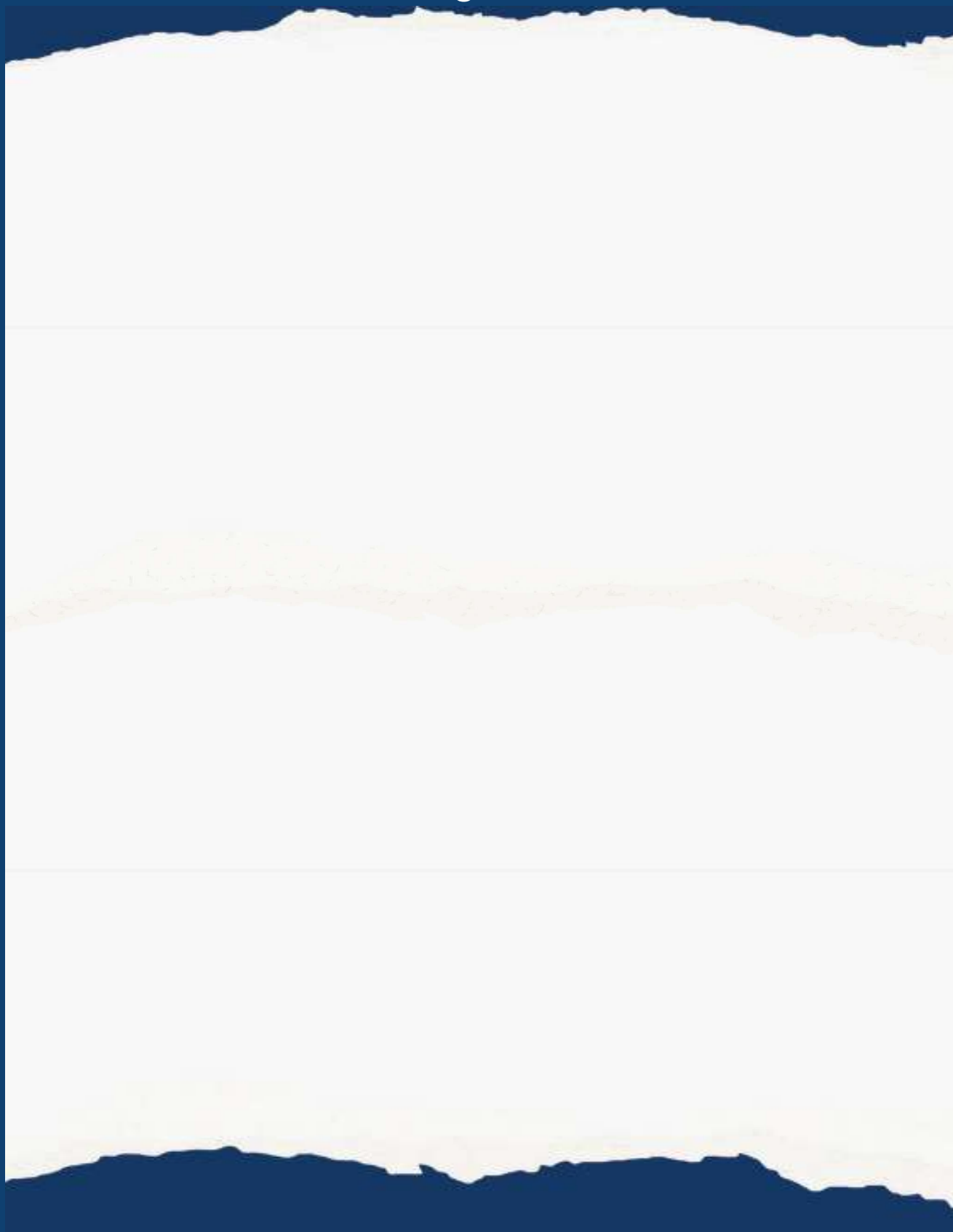


Active Resistance techniques for supporting brothers & sisters:

- Listen reflectively to brothers & sisters about what it's like for them and then have a short talk about ways to do things differently. This might involve them suggesting how things could change, or the parent offering suggestions or a combination of both.
- In the Green zone, write down a plan with them to help them remember what to do when a heated situation arises.
- If age appropriate talk to them about the de-escalation strategies that the parents are using to help them understand why you may take certain approaches.
- Older brothers & sisters can be helped to avoid confrontations, by planning to move away when things are escalating and then moving back when things have calmed down.
- If a child is hurt, arrange a talk with them and write down the incident in detail. Share this with your child who has been violent when the iron is cold.
- Provide a supporter for siblings
- Increase parental presence
- Notify supporters so they can implement the message campaign
- Carry out relational gestures for the sibling too



**Write your ideas for how you may support
siblings here**





This handbook has been developed by Renfrewshire Educational Psychology Service. Some content & images adapted from Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust

