

Written bij Veerle LISABETH

www.nieuweautoriteit.be

info@nieuweautoriteit.be

Being creative with 'The announcement'

As a conflict coach, I try to find different ways to support clients in dealing with their conflicts.

I offer my clients the 'out-of-court-way' and therefore the non-violent-resistance path is often the way we follow.

It was Ghandi who inspired me a long time before I discovered NA/NVR.

After having worked with the NVR-NA model in parents-children relationships and especially in family-mediation, I felt the desire to use some of these tools in other client-settings too.

So I was pleased to hear about the NVR-in reverse. The testimony of some ladies at the Malmö Congres 2016 about their wonderful results with the reversing method was very interesting.

I felt confirmed, stimulated and inspired now that what I already did with children in school contexts was more or less what they were talking about.

Back in Belgium I was immediately confronted with a situation of a brother-sister conflict in which I could use 'the announcement'. I was astonished by the result.

I don't mean that it wasn't very hard to find some positive messages, nor that the network was very far-reaching, nor that the brother gave a specific reaction or really changed his habits. But after working on it for a few weeks, the letter could be handed over and the sister almost immediately felt better and stronger. She even gave up in urging to change her brother but changed her way to react on him.

This positive result stimulated me to make 'the announcement' to an all-round tool to be used in all kind of situations.

The ritual and ceremonial character of the announcement is enormous.

Lots of people in our materialistic world react resistant on everything that's connected with religion. And only a minority is still bringing some kind of rituals in their live.

That implies that you have to be careful in using words as 'ritual'. It also means that giving them a kind of substitute for it, fills up the gap left after the banning of religious rituals. By the way I'm convinced that because there are so little ceremonial moments left, the ones sneaking in have more effect.

But first there's the important exercise of preparation.

Before they can really start to write, there's a network to look for, there are some lists to be made.

Solution-focused coaching is very effective in putting them to work and meanwhile giving them a broader view on the situation they feel trapped in.

Going through these processes has a catharsis-effect on everybody.

It not only makes them stronger to resist, it makes them wiser, more able to see the reality, to select priorities, to find out what they want. Nonviolent resistance really works for everybody in all kind of circumstances. You get the same outcome : feeling stronger in a changed situation

Yes, If you look good, even this person they really hate, has some positive characteristics. Yes, it feels better to have some people around supporting you.

Yes, it is possible to see that after all changing only one of the terrible habits of your enemy would already change a lot.

In some situations, the letter is not even given to the counter-party. The client has – only by writing the letter - become stronger and more certain about how to act/react. 'The announcement' is meant to have an effect on the writer after alle.

Of course, some creativity is important.

The different subdivisions of the announcement are not always exactly those of the original model and even the ritual itself of reading it out loud, is sometimes replaced by for example handing over a special-looking document. This handing over can be done by a network member or can even be posted. It's even so possible to choose for a ritual fire moment in which the document is burned.

But the positive start and ending, the selection of THE ONE-red basket – behavior – formulating your will to set boundaries from now on – changing your own behavior are the three basic ingredients for this 'space cake'.

CASESTUDY: CONFLICT BETWEEN NEIGHBORS

(By reasons of professionalism and the protection of my clients, this is a mixture of a few cases. The names are randomly chosen..)

George is 64 years old. He lives already more than 40 years in the same village, in the same street and in the same house. 10 years ago his wife Angela lost her fight against cancer. His two sons live abroad, they visit him a few times a year

Arthur and Susan who bought the house next to George have 3 children: Jonas is 3 years old, Jason is 5 and Jeremy 8. Three years ago they came to live there.

George consulted me, not knowing what he could do anymore. He was frustrated and tired and angry not only on his neighbors but on everybody – even police and lawyer - he asked for help and have let him down.

He wants the family next door gone, he wants them to move as far as possible and that from tomorrow on.

There's nothing they seem to do right. Their dog is always barking, the children always screaming, the music too loud, the chickens flying over the fence, the garden a mess, the garbage all over attracting all the cats from the village.

After having listened to Georges story for more than an hour, I asked him if he was willing to handle this in a completely other way than he did before, namely not to concentrate any longer on the neighbors but on himself.

I explained him the general idea of escalation and NVR and what it does with people changing their own habits and writing this all down.

Especially the handing over of a letter seemed impossible for him so we choose for another technic he could live with.

By then, he was willing to take the risk to try it out. He could start with the preparation of his letter'. I've asked him to work on it, on different days and moments so he could reconsider.

I've asked him to :

- 1) Make a list of all their bad habits and divide them in three groups from worst to not so bad.
- 2) Try to find a few positive things about the neighbors even if it seems impossible now to find them.
- 3) Think about people whom you can talk about this, people who understand you.

We started by putting a few habits in each basket. I gave him some possible paths to follow in order to find some positive characteristics of his neighbors, by asking him lots of questions, suggesting all kind of possibilities.

It took a few more meetings before we came to THE ONE – red basket habit : being noisy (even this included still a lot of different habits we decided to catalogue under noisy)

The second list was even more difficult because George switched every positive characteristic into a negative one.

For example : *'The children are saying hello to me but why do they have to scream my name so loud. The mum is playing a lot with the children but my god, why isn't she working a bit more in her garden instead of being so lazy.'*

I had to be very persistent to make him give a positive trait without a 'but'... We ended up with 'The children keeping hem company with their stories about school and about their friends and the parents letting them come over after everything that happened between them.

The third task seemed impossible.

Nobody wanted to listen to him anymore. Nobody understood what he was going through. So here I made a little switch. I asked him who were the people he liked to be with 'without' talking about his neighbors. He really had to test this out. It was as if he did not talk about anything else during the last 3 years. We brainstormed about places and organizations he could visit and about new people he could meet. . So he had to go out with only one task : NOT talking about his neighbors.

The first excursions were disappointing but after a month he came in with some positive stories. He was now a member of a fishing club and of a darts club. It seemed as he had met some persons he could get on with.

It was very interesting to see that the more he came, the less he complained about his neighbors. And so by the time I asked him to write the letter using as well the noise-complaint as the compliments about the children, I didn't seem impossible any more. The fact that he didn't have to

decide whether he had to give the letter to his neighbors or not brought him the necessary peace to write the letter.

He cancelled the next appointment but he put 'the announcement' in my mailbox. The letter was written in a very good NVR-style. I read it and send it back with some small comments.

It took him a month to respond. He wanted to thank me for the help but he didn't want to come back anymore because he was afraid I would push him to read the letter to the neighbors. He didn't want to do that.

But he told me that he had posted the corrected version in his neighbors mailbox. And after all, things really changed. The dog and the chickens were still there, the children were still screaming but George and his neighbors found a way to handle this noise.

He bought a bell and every time the noisy was too loud, he ringed the bell so that the children could lower the noise. Most of the time – not always – it worked. But after all he did not ring that bell so often. Now, he got help from a friend he met in the darts-club to maintain his garden. And so he is now trimming the trees and the hedges from Arthur and Susans garden as well, every time they grow over the fence.