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"Turning back the clock": A positive strategy for changing unacceptable youth behavior

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Abstract

This paper describes "Turning back the clock" (TBC)—an innovative strategy addressing unacceptable or coercive youth behavior based on nonviolent principles, inspired by the nonviolent resistance movement (NVR)—also called connecting authority or caring authority (CA) approaches to guidance and supervision of parents and other adults. Variants of NVR/CA have been evaluated as effective in RCT and pre–post designs. TBC has not been evaluated regarding its effectiveness but shows promising usability in case studies. The aim of this description of the TBC strategy is to encourage development and testing of its usability on large scale to improve it and pave the way for effectiveness evaluations. The core of TBC is to create possibilities for improving behavior without delay by negotiating the social timeline narrative. This allows improvement through reenactment of events immediately after having said or done something unfortunate or unacceptable instead of waiting for the next comparable situation. Adults introduce the strategy by modeling it before youths are encouraged to improve their own misbehavior immediately without waiting for a later opportunity. Finally, adults declare that a set of unacceptable behaviors will be considered disqualifying to any request or demand, but that attempting again as if it had not happened can be a possibility: Using the TBC strategy. This declaration is intended to increase youth's interest in using TBC themselves, and with successful use reduce escalation of conflicts into coercion and threats.

INTRODUCTION

This paper describes "Turning back the clock" (TBC), an innovative strategy that has not yet been evaluated for effectiveness beyond case reports of its usability and helpfulness related to negative behavior. Its description is being published to encourage clinicians and researchers to develop and evaluate its usability systematically as a step toward building an evidence base of effectiveness for its use–if it is effective in practice. TBC is not intended as a stand-alone treatment, but rather to be combined with other strategies as needed in individual cases.

The TBC strategy is inspired by books and manuals describing the NVR movement, an approach to strengthening parents and adults challenged by negative youth behavior. The names used on the approach have changed somewhat, from NVR (nonviolent resistance) and "new authority," to "parental presence," "connecting authority," or "caring authority" (CA). In this paper, I prefer to use the CA denomination because it accentuates the duality of the approach, the inseparable combination of care and clarity—connection and authority in adult–youth inter-action. In this paper, I will still use the term "NVR" when referring to the historical tradition and development and CA when referring to the present and future states of these approaches.

Independent of the background of and motivation for coercive behavior, it is experienced as highly unpleasant by those subjected to it, often as being oppression or tyranny. This is the basis for NVR/CA application of strategies from political struggles against oppression and coercion to more personal contexts. In families, fear and helplessness can lead to submission to or passivity reinforcing the coercive strategies and maintaining the dysfunction or disorders associated with them.

Youths cannot be imputed responsibility for their mental health disorders, but they are still considered responsible for their actions with a few exceptions: Most cultures do not consider psychotic persons legally accountable when seriously ill during action. However, persons suffering from more common mental health problems are usually considered responsible for acts driven or motivated by their mental health problems although it can be considered mitigating circumstances. This does not change the acceptability of the acts or the youth's responsibility for acts of reparation, reconciliation, and behavior improvements. Anyhow, they may deserve and need support and help from others learning to choose more constructive alternatives than coercive and threatening behaviors toward others.

The traditional strategy to stop the cycles of coercion and submission in societies as well as in families has been authoritarian punishment and counter-coercion. Although these strategies may show short-term effectiveness, a long-term side effect of such negative strategies is potential harm to the relationships between perpetrators and their peers and parents (Omer et al., 2013, 2016). Relationship deterioration is a serious cost in the treatment and parenting of youths, where positive relationships are considered both a basic value and a prerequisite for change, development, and well-being (Omer, 2001). Furthermore, punishment and counter-coercion are

likely to result also in emotional reactions such as anger, sadness, or anxiety, which may develop into youth disorders that seriously affect daily function and well-being.

Consequently, strategies to build, maintain, and strengthen positive relationships are often used to counteract this side effect of negative strategies and pave the way for more moderate or positive strategies (Leijten et al., 2019). Developing a wider range of positive strategies would be preferable, and in systematic treatment and parenting training, positive strategies such as reinforcing and encouraging wanted and nondisordered behavior are used more than in traditional parenting and social policy.

The conflict between using negative interventions and the value of positive relationships has motivated the development of more positive strategies for use in treatment and parenting. However, there is still a pressing need to develop effective positive methods to resist coercive behavior. One promising example is the NVR approach (Omer, 2004) which inspired TBC.

Nonviolent resistance—New authority—Caring authority

The NVR/CA approach to parenting was first developed by Omer (2004), inspired by nonviolent political resistance against political oppression and tyranny, in addition to attachment theory and family therapy (Omer et al., 2013). The NVR/CA approach has been developed further by many others including Uri Weinblatt, Barbara Ollefs, Idan Amiel, Eli Lebowitz, and Peter Jacob (Körner et al., 2019). This development has largely adapted the NVR/CA approach to specific challenges or arenas such as residential settings (van Gink et al., 2020), schools (Omer, 2021a), parent groups (Newman et al., 2014), and foster care (Van Holen et al., 2016). However, originally, NVR was utilized and coordinated across the arenas of school, local society, and families in broad alliances although often starting with parents (Omer, 2004).

Core aspects of NVR/CA

Authors differ in their structuring of and emphasis on the aspects of the NVR/CA approach. One structure is "7 Säulen der Neuen Autorität" by Körner et al. (2019):

1. Adult presence and vigilant care: Increasing contact, nondirective communication, and involvement.
2. Self-control and de-escalation: limiting adult verbal, behavioral, and nonverbal contributions to conflict escalation.
3. Collaboration and supportive alliances: inviting and initiating cooperation, support, and encouragement within a broad support network and between adults and youths.
4. Nonviolent resistance against oppression: abstaining from and resisting any use of violence, force, or coercion from adults as well as youths.
5. Relationship improvement and amendment: using symbolic, emotional, and practical gestures to prove positive intentions, attitudes, and contributions in adult–youth and within-group relationships.
6. Transparency and openness: changes and interventions should be announced in advance, prepared for, and explained to those affected by them.
7. Reparation and reconciliation: encouraging compensation for practical and material loss and damage, repairing harmed relationships, and choosing more constructive behavior in the future.

My inspiration

Some years ago, I encountered NVR as a strategy to reduce violence and coercion in an institutional setting. Soon after, I observed a father organizing an immediate reenactment of a situation

where his preschool daughter behaved unacceptably at home. These two experiences led me to think of how a combination of elements from these observations could be developed into an intervention strategy.

I considered it a weakness that the NVR approach left for future situations to improve behavior. Could it be possible to compress the process like the father I observed did? Could the reenactment I observed between father and daughter be utilized with youths to help them escape the trap of being a guilty perpetrator? To take part in a reenactment requires admitting an error at least implicitly, an "admission of guilt" could be more acceptable if motivated by the possibility of correcting it immediately. These ideas resulted in the strategy I present here; "Turning back the clock."

Possible utilization

Coercive behavior is a serious problem both for families and other groups subjected to it and for the perpetrators. Developing effective interventions against coercive behavior can serve to prevent antisocial development toward conduct disorders and severe personality problems and may counteract the maintenance of deadlocked situations associated with other disorders, although the presence of a psychiatric diagnosis is not a prerequisite for the potential benefit of TBC.

The risk for developing conduct disorders or an antisocial pattern is assumed to typically develop through cycles of submission and counter-coercion from others resulting in escalating and repeated rather than reduced threats and coercion (Patterson et al., 1989). Specific NVR/CA intervention strategies have been developed for coercive behavior perpetuating specific problems among children and adolescents such as anxiety (Lebowitz et al., 2014), suicidal threats (Omer & Dolberger, 2015), reckless driving (Farah et al., 2014), sibling violence (Hoffman et al., 2005), group climate (Visser et al., 2021), and aggression (Newman et al., 2014). Similar strategies have been developed for addiction problems (Attwood et al., 2020), OCD (Lebowitz, 2013), eating disorders (Shimshoni et al., 2022), autism (Golan et al., 2018), and adult-entitled dependency (Lebowitz, 2016). It is common for persons with addictions to attempt to use coercion if someone tries to stop or limit their addictive behavior or their access to addictive means which may be gaming, gambling, shopping, or sex. It is also common for persons with untreated OCD to expect and try to coerce family members to go along with their obsessive ideas and adapt to their compulsive behaviors. In similar ways, persons with eating disorders will often attempt to coerce family members to adapt shopping, cooking, meals, and physical activity to their disordered thoughts and behavior to allow maintenance of the eating disorder. Persons with high-functioning autistic traits may initiate intense conflicts with their peers or family over the meaning of words and how daily life should be organized in compliance with their rigid and absolute understanding of the world and their life. Persons with anxiety disorders often engage in debilitating avoidance of ordinary situations and activities to reduce their anxiety. Consequently, they may demand respect for their avoidance and try to force others to assist them in avoiding anxiety-provoking situations. Youths with personality disorders in development may use suicidal threats, self-injury, and other dramatic behavior to coerce those around them into serving their needs and wishes. These are all examples of how parental and network accommodation can develop into maintaining youth problems, usually also avoiding or neutralizing the challenges of treatment and development (Shimshoni et al., 2019).

The TBC strategy can be used in combination with other CA strategies in limited or extensive efforts to resist coercive behavior. It can also be useful in less serious challenges, but it is not suitable for more serious behavior involving violence. The TBC strategy builds on the same principles and attitudes as CA, and these principles and attitudes should be conveyed explicitly in or permeate what is said and done in the situations.

CA elements integrated with TBC

Two basic CA principles were retained in the development of TBC. First, clearly protesting against and refusing support to negative behavior. Secondly, I wanted to retain the CA principle "change your own behavior first if you want others to change," so using modeling rather than instructions would be preferable. The practical elements of TBC also include other CA principles: presence, collaboration, relationship improvement and reconciliation, transparency and openness, and amendment/reparation, but immediate rather than later behavior improvement.

As in CA generally, every person is considered responsible for their actions, but wrongdoing can be corrected and neutralized with amendments, reconciliation, and finding better solutions. Those doing wrong are encouraged to make reparations to and reconcile with those harmed by their negative behavior and find more constructive behaviors in practice.

Some of the specific principles communicated and demonstrated in TBC are that errors, wrongdoing, and moderately unacceptable behavior can be openly admitted without eliciting any punishment. However, it is expected to do better not only in the future but also at once. This is compatible with the basic NVR attitude but emphasized more strongly in TBC.

TBC STRATEGY DESCRIPTION

In describing the TBC strategy, parent–youth relationships will be used as illustrative examples. *Youth* will be used as a label for a person of any age with behavior problems including coercion of others. *Adult* or *parent* will be used to label the person initiating a need for behavior change, offering to assist and support the youth in doing so (*parents* do not imply that there must be more than one). However, a *parent* or *adult* may also include professionals such as teachers, institutional staff, and social workers interacting with youths or people of younger or older ages. Even adolescents taking a leading position may also find TBC useful in supporting change in their peer group or family.

In the examples, words in angle brackets <xx> must be adapted to individuals and situations.

The core of "Turning back the clock"

The core elements of TBC consist of a social exchange starting with a statement that a recent behavior was unacceptable and/or resulted in an undesirable outcome. Next, there is a suggestion to correct the behavior immediately based on an agreement to pretend that it is possible to "turn back time" and reenact the event to allow for more positive behavior and outcomes. Third, the situation is roleplayed from the beginning as if it were for real—reenacted—attempting to find a more acceptable way to speak and act. Finally, the improved version of the reenacted event is suggested to be considered the "actual" event—again depending on agreement between those involved.

The purpose of this maneuver is to allow behavior to be changed in an immediate reenactment rather than waiting for the next natural occurrence of a comparable situation or behavior sequence.

Such social redefinition of reality requires a voluntary agreement between those involved to make a social redefinition of reality possible. This depends on a minimal level of trust and collaboration between the youth and the adult. If lacking, trust and collaboration can be improved by relationship-building strategies initiated by adults—as described in CA but not detailed here. Trust and collaboration can also be built by practicing equality despite differences in position: showing that the same values and expectations are valid for parents and youths. In this context, this is demonstrated by introducing TBC in parent modeling before suggesting that youths use TBC. In short: the adult admits undesirable behavior, appeals for a chance to correct the error immediately, conducts a reenactment, and suggests that the later improved outcome of the situation is considered the "real" outcome.

The TBC stages and steps

The core steps in the TBC script used in all three stages are as follows: admission, wish to redo, agreement, reenactment, evaluation, and redefinition of reality. All humans make mistakes and say or do things that they regret and wish undone. Admitting mistakes can be the first step toward making this wish come true within the frames of social negotiations and redefinitions of reality.

These steps are used in all three stages of introducing TBC: (1) *Modeling*: the TBC steps are modeled by an adult, (2) *Suggesting*: youths are given the option to choose the TBC steps after having done something moderately unacceptable, and (3) *Disqualifying arguments*: building an expectation that youth should use TBC to correct specified negative behaviors defined as "disqualifying."

Modeling

TBC is intended to reduce adult helplessness, develop a culture of admitting errors, reduce unacceptable youth behavior, and ultimately lead to more positive adult and youth behavior in daily life. The new practice and culture should include both adult and youth attitudes and behavior, and therefore, the strategy starts with adult modeling of what we want to establish.

When TBC is modeled by an adult, the adult has to respond immediately when realizing to have said or done something stupid or wrong (not violent), while also having some ideas for improved behavior and outcome, and respond as in this example:

Adult: "I am sorry, but what I just said/did was <unacceptable/insensitive/stupid>. I wish it did not happen and that I could have done something better. Are you willing to let me try again to do it in a better way? Could we pretend that it did not happen, pretend that it is possible to turn back the clock, and then act like it was five minutes ago when <I came in the door>?"

When an agreement to try this is reached, the situation is reenacted, hopefully with a more acceptable outcome. The reenactment can, if necessary and if it is agreed upon, be repeated several times before the next step.

> "This was a somewhat/much better choice for both of us, don't you agree?"
> "Could we agree that this last version was what really happened?"

If such an agreement is not reached, the specific TBC should usually end there, but TBC by parents should be attempted again in suitable situations before the attempt to use it is terminated. Even unsuccessful or unilateral attempts to use TBC can still contribute to change by introducing the idea that admitting and correcting errors can be possible. If the immediate use of TBC is rejected, the traditional CA strategies of future reparation, reconciliation, and behavior improvement can still be initiated by the adult connected to the same event.

The modeling can first be attempted following minor and moderate errors and then in more demanding situations only after successful use. If the modeling stage succeeds several times so that a youth builds experience with parents using TBC, the possibility of the youth using TBC should be discussed with the youth, before the first actual suggestion that the youth use it.

Suggesting

The first actual suggestion that youths use TBC should immediately follow unacceptable or unwanted behavior—preferably related to an outcome that could be within reach using other arguments or after negotiating a balanced solution. This is because TBC should be experienced as rewarding by resulting in a better outcome from youth's perspective. Suggesting that TBC used by youth can start with a statement such as this:

"This was an unfortunate move to choose. I cannot accept that you use <yy> to get your will. Getting <xx> could have been possible, but not if you use <yy> as your argument. This

implicitly uses the logic of "disqualifying arguments,", but without having declared it as an absolute principle—as it is done later in the third stage "Disqualifying arguments."

The first goal of this announcement is to block reinforcement of moderate coercion and threats, prepare for the conclusion that these are not effective arguments to use, and motivate a wish to undo and change the event. The youth does not have to agree explicitly that it was unwise to use threats or apologize for doing so. This evaluation and decision should be presented as facts, not as something to discuss. This is showing authority without forcing or instructing alternative choices.

The following step toward TBC can be verbalized as follows:

> "Do you want to have a chance to turn back the clock and try another approach? Could we pretend that it did not happen, pretend that it is possible to turn back the clock, and then act like it was five minutes ago when you <entered the room>?"

When an agreement to try this is reached, the situation is reenacted once or several times until a more acceptable approach is used, and an improved outcome is within reach.

The intended result is that the youth use more acceptable arguments and can have their request complied with. If the request cannot be complied with in full, searching for possible halfway solutions by offering a partial compliance, compensation, replacement, or specifying requirements that must be fulfilled first can be experienced as rewarding.

If the youth refuses to try TBC, it cannot be carried any further. However, TBC can be suggested again in suitable situations. If the first reenactment with youth does not result in improved behavior, the reenactment can be repeated several times to enable an improved result. Sometimes the reenactment will have to be terminated with an unsuccessful outcome. Both refusals and lack of improvements can be responded to as follows:

> "This was an unfortunate choice. We wanted you to experience the value of admitting errors and being allowed to correct them immediately. You know that I cannot let you have <xx> if you use <yy> to get your will. <xx> could have been possible, but not if you use <yy> as your argument."

Regardless of youth success or failure, parent modeling can continue in suitable naturally occurring situations to convey more strongly the value of admitting and correcting errors. The youth can also be encouraged to engage in TBC later despite initial refusal.

If TBC succeeds by resulting in better behavior, this conclusion is called for:

> "This was a somewhat/much better choice for both of us, don't you agree?"
> "Could we agree that the last version was what really happened?"

Both the modeling stage and the suggesting stage should first be attempted following minor or moderate errors and only tried in more demanding situations after successful use. When youths have experienced successful use of TBC in less difficult situations, expanding the use and establishing an expectancy to use TBC can be more realistic.

Disqualifying arguments

This third stage involves establishing an expectation that the youth use TBC to correct specified behaviors. Before this can be meaningful, it is first necessary to establish these specified behaviors as unacceptable by declaring them as "disqualifying arguments."

Disqualifying argument is an implicit principle in TBC, but announcing it as an absolute principle can pave the way for the use of TBC in more heated situations and difficult incidents with highly unacceptable behavior (except physical violence). When declaring specific youth

behaviors to be disqualifying arguments, parents must be prepared to live by this declaration without exceptions. Declaring something a disqualifying argument can be suitable to be included in or presented as an announcement as used in traditional CA interventions or a less structured form.

In an announcement, the declaration is presented both verbally and in writing without any direct connection in time to actual behavior included among the disqualifying arguments. Such a declaration is not expected to block the behavior directly but rather to warn that it will not be reinforced by submission in the future. Adults cannot control youth's behavior, but they can control their own behavior, as stated in CA principles. To ensure the validity of this principle, all adults in the environment should support the declaration and be willing to respect the principle individually and collectively.

The introduction can sound something like this:

> "We have decided that we can no longer accept that you get your way by <screaming, shouting, or threatening to destroy things, attack us or harm yourself>. In the future whenever you try to do any of this to get what you want, we have decided that it will automatically disqualify you from getting it. Even if what you request is a small and ordinary thing or service, you cannot have it when using such coercive means."

> "We tell you this as a friendly warning now rather than letting you experience it as a surprise. We want you to have the chance to ask for what you want in more acceptable ways"

If the youth protest this new principle, the standard response is to repeat in a normal voice without any nonverbal power demonstrations: "That is our joint decision, and it cannot be changed." If the youth tries to subvert the decision by responding with one or more of the "disqualifying arguments," this will be the first test of firmness, and this can be explained to the youth as follows: "This is your first experience with our decision," and "We cannot change the decision because you try to achieve that using such disqualifying arguments."

The adults must be prepared to be firm in their decision, and not give in to pressure or threats of any kind. This is easier if supported by a broader alliance of adults (or youths) in the environment, as traditional CA suggests. The ultimate test of the decision to disqualify unacceptable arguments will follow the next time the youth makes a request or demand using disqualified arguments. Then, having used TBC in less challenging situations, the adult can suggest using TBC as a solution whenever the youth uses disqualifying arguments. TBC gives the youth the opportunity to try again using more acceptable arguments, immediately or after a short delay if needed to allow everyone to cool down from a heated situation.

The reason for not declaring disqualifying arguments earlier is that doing so has the potential to lead to escalating conflict to overthrow the decision. TBC is more likely to be consolidated as a new alternative after a youth has experienced its rewards.

If the introduction of TBC succeeds with both parents and youth, it can be brought into regular use in daily life and can be evaluated by the spontaneous occurrence of more positive behavior by everyone in natural situations across several weeks. With time, TBC may become unnecessary due to reduced misbehavior, or it may enter the daily repertoire of interaction between parents and youth.

The case of John

John was a 15-year-old boy who had gradually withdrawn from social life, often refusing to go to school, appearing quite depressed, neglecting his appearance and room, and yelling at and commanding his parents to serve his wishes and needs. He had all his meals brought to his room which he refused to allow anyone to enter. His parents had him referred by their family doctor

for psychiatric evaluation. However, John refused to come with them to the first session, so they went without him. The psychologist offered them preliminary advice on their own reactions and strategies without having evaluated John, suggesting TBC as a strategy.

The next day, his mother forgot to knock before entering his room, eliciting an angry outburst from John ending with "I refuse to eat your disgusting food when you cannot even respect my privacy!" She apologized and asked if she could leave and reenter the room in a more respectful way. His response was "Do whatever you like." She went out with the tray of food, waited half a minute, and then knocked on the door announcing that she was bringing him dinner. He let her in but did not respond in any other way than by receiving the food.

The following day, the father came into their living room and scolded John for wearing dirty smelly clothes on the sofa. John yelled back that he had no reason to live and did not care about anything, also mocking his father's old clothes and throwing a book at him. The father sat down, sighed, and said, "I wish I had not said that. Can we pretend to turn back the clock and act as if it did not happen so I can come in once more and do better?" John first rejected this idea: "Time is fixed and real and cannot be negotiated." The father agreed that physical time cannot be changed, but people can agree to consider events as only part of history without future relevance. After a long discussion on this, John allowed his father to try a reenactment. The father came in a second time and commented on John's dirty clothes, but continued by offering help in sorting and cleaning his clothes rather than scolding him. John again yelled back at his father's first comment but when he was offered help, he eventually accepted the offer and an hour later he let the parents enter his room and cooperated with them in sorting the clothes for cleaning or storing.

The parents later encountered more situations in which they regretted their initial utterances or actions and were allowed to redo them. John commented ironically on how remorseful they had become. Gradually, the parents also started to challenge some more of John's dysfunctional behavior and suggested TBC to him. He sometimes accepted to reframe his commands or undo yelling in the reenactment. However, he continued yelling and commanding on some occasions.

Eventually, his parents announced in writing and verbally after knocking on his door: "We will not tolerate any more your verbal abuse and treating us like slaves. We will not comply with your wishes or cooperate with you when you do this, however, you can be allowed regret and to try again in a better way." Later the same day, his mother invited him into the kitchen for his favorite cake and hot chocolate. He came to the kitchen and received a speech in which his parents declared their love and appreciation for him.

In the following weeks, all yelling and commanding were met with clear feedback and an offer to turn back time and use more acceptable means to obtain what he wanted. Increasingly, John was also told to do things himself. However, his parents also continued to do positive things for him unasked. In the end, both John and his parents developed a habit of correcting themselves after being led astray by their initial emotional reactions. During the entire process, his parents had biweekly sessions with the psychologist, addressing how they could prevent escalations and refusing to accommodate John without escalating conflicts if he fell back into his old habits of yelling and commanding.

During this process, John's mood and appearance improved, and he steadily attended school and resumed his social life. He gradually reduced his yelling and commanding and took increasing responsibility for his own needs and the well-being of other family members. Furthermore, his parents experienced their relationship with John as improving and finally saw no reason to resume psychiatric evaluation.

Other preliminary experience

John's case is included as an illustration also showing how parents often transform and adapt principles and suggestions to their own way of thinking and speaking.

TBC has been used in a few other cases including with autistic youth in foster care, traumatized youth in residential youth care, and adolescents in their family of origin. In some cases, combination with other interventions has been essential. TBC has been at least partly successful but has also been rejected as useless by some parents or youths trying it.

DISCUSSION

TBC and CA compared

The TBC strategy uses the CA elements of clear authoritative statements that are nonnegotiable with the invitation to cooperate in finding solutions acceptable to everyone. Other basic attitudes and assumptions from CA are also integrated into TBC. Only the immediate reenactment and the social negotiation of timeline and reality are unique to TBC. Events are allowed to be reenacted as if they had not occurred yet and the history of what has happened is negotiated afterward.

Following less serious negative behavior than violence, TBC can be used as a shorter road to behavior improvement than traditional interventions in CA. In contrast to CA, TBC leads directly to behavior improvement, whereas this is the desired endpoint of a long process in traditional CA.

TBC is not a complete treatment program, but rather a strategy that may be integrated with other intervention components into treatment programs for different target groups where coercive behavior is part of the picture. To be acceptable to youths, TBC requires at least an implicit admission of having made an error. Furthermore, there may be a need (before or beyond TBC) for exploring subjective experiences, amendments, and reconciliation gestures to repair practical, emotional, and relational harms that may have accumulated.

TBC weaknesses

The main weakness of TBC is that it takes for granted prerequisites that are specifically addressed by other CA strategies including negative relationships, lacking cooperative willingness, and lacking support from others. When these prerequisites are lacking, they are not contraindications for TBC. Rather, they may need to be improved before TBC or another CA approach can be effective.

Another major weakness is that TBC does not focus on the differences in subjective experience of the situation, including strong emotional reactions motivating the unacceptable behavior. This is often the case with traumatized adolescents and may require careful exploration of and dialogue regarding contrasting subjective experiences between those involved. Some cases may even require systematic trauma-sensitive care (Holmes et al., 2015) before any change can be possible. In such a context, careless use of TBC can be experienced as just another insensitive injustice.

Using TBC to correct physical or sexual violence can be considered unethical because using TBC in such situations can be experienced as trivializing such behaviors as something that can be forgotten if corrected. Physical and sexual violence are not suitable for immediate correction in reenactment. These behaviors require at least clear statements of their unacceptability, processes of exploring and exchanging subjective experiences, and acts of reparation and reconciliation to restore relationships if possible.

Programs with other CA strategies have been proven effective as parental training, influencing both subjective experience and actual parental behavior. Most of the effect studies on CA strategies use pre–post designs, although a few RCT studies have also been conducted (Omer, 2021b).

The parental effects often seem to be smaller than those on youth problem behavior, although both are often clinically significant. CA strategies seem to be most effective in resolving situations of blockage where youths deny having a problem and the need to change anything, often supported by parental accommodations (Shimshoni et al., 2022). In such situations, there is little room for self-correction or treatment. The initial problems are maintained and protected by coercion, threats, or violence. Consequently, there is no cooperation, and the adults may become submissive and helpless facing coercion. CA and TBC are therefore not primarily problem treatments but can be effective in enabling problem-solving or treatment. TBC is somewhat more focused on changing youth behavior than other CA strategies, primarily changing the coercive and defensive strategies, not the problems among youths that these strategies are maintaining and protecting.

TBC and CA cannot succeed without some degree of collaborative or positive relationship between parent and youth. This is not unique to TBC but is rather common in many methods aimed at behavior change (Leijten et al., 2019). Investing in improving the parent–youth relationship over time can be a necessary preparation and support for the use of TBC, at least before a youth is encouraged to use TBC.

It can be unrealistic to expect TBC or any other CA strategies to successfully correct behaviors that are accepted, encouraged, or reinforced by the youth group. A lack of broad support from other adults and, to some degree, the youth group will undermine the use of TBC and other CA strategies (Jakob, 2018). However, it is not a prerequisite to have full agreement on values or rules. The adult initiating TBC should represent and assert the underlying values and expect others to respect them but without imposing detailed rules on others. Dialogue about values can be necessary part of successful use of TBC. If the youth can agree that change may be needed, TBC is a possible strategy.

Behavior motivated by a desire for attention or applause from peers, by improving one's status from opposing adults, or by evoking interest from attractive peers can be difficult to change. When these motivators are present, the most effective response can be to ignore less serious behaviors when they occur and address them later when there is no peer audience witnessing the discussion.

There are several levels of negative behavior, from grave coercing others with threats and use of violence, via demanding retraction of statements or decisions or suspension of rules down to refusing to comply with rules and instructions. Sorting among the grave, the bad, and the less serious can be helpful to conserve energy, prioritizing issues requiring attention, and differentiating between available reaction strategies. Sorting and prioritizing can be important processes in building broad alliances for change between adults, but such processes are not discussed here. All three levels of misbehavior can occur not only as an aspect of disorders but also in association with subclinical symptoms of these or be based only on atypical social development. TBC may be best suited to the bad levels of negative behavior, not to the grave level of violent physical or sexual assaults.

If youths consistently reject TBC, adults can limit their change efforts to modeling: admitting own errors and attempting to correct them and using ample time to consider whether the next step of suggesting youths to use TBC is possible. Allowing for extended experience with adult change first can change the climate and the relationships and enable changes that were impossible earlier.

There are shared elements between TBC and the "truth and reconciliation commissions" used in South Africa and in other postconflict processes in valuing confessions and acknowledging responsibility, followed by apologies, amendments, or compensation but not by punishment. TBC also incorporates similar principles as in religious confession and absolution.

Dysfunctional development, dysfunctional adaptation, or disorders?

Unacceptable coercive behavior may occur without any connection to a mental health disorder, although such associations can often be seen. Coercion may also protect immaturity and refusal

to respect social norms and traditions. Some serious cases may match a diagnostic category, but the use of TBC does not require the presence of any diagnosis. Although development of conduct disorders is characterized by years of "coercive cycles" (Patterson et al., 1989), using coercion and other unacceptable behaviors is not a strong indicator of a conduct disorder or having any other mental health problem, and can be associated with several dysfunctional patterns including reckless driving, adult dependency, suicidal behavior, and self-harm (Shimshoni et al., 2019). Coercion and accommodation are the common factors upholding the interaction patterns mentioned in the introduction, allowing the negative strategies to continue instead of facing the challenges of development, change, or treatment (Shimshoni et al., 2019). Coercion and family accommodation are transdiagnostic phenomena and are common also in delayed development of independence and psychosocial functioning.

When a treatable disorder is present, specific evidence-based treatment can be obstructed by coercive behavior and family accommodation to the disorder. CA and TBC may therefore be effective as strategies enabling treatment, allowing continued development, or stopping dysfunctional interaction patterns. TBC's potential usefulness only requires that adults see the need for a change in youth behavior. Typically, consequences do not seem to be effective strategies or have led to deteriorated relationships.

An important idea in the NVR tradition is that it is not possible to force other persons to change their behavior, but it is possible to change our own responses and influence others to understand the need for change and support their search for less negative ways to cope with the challenges. TBC could be helpful to change some of these challenging situations, but this claim is necessary to prove in practice. Researchers and clinicians are therefore encouraged to evaluate this proposition and report their experience and results to an international audience. TBC should be evaluated systematically as a separate intervention, as an element of a broader CA approach, and as a supplement to evidence-based treatments for specific disorders.

CONCLUSION

In sum, traditional CA can probably achieve much of the same results as TBC. However, the use of reenactment and shorter timeline before improvement is achieved are unique to TBC. These are possibly TBC's most valuable contributions because they allow negative acts to be corrected immediately without waiting for the next natural occurrence. Completing TBC successfully can be a powerful reparative act focused on enactment of improved behavior. Furthermore, TBC reduces and may even eliminate the social stigma of having committed the acts. This aspect of the agreement to rewrite history resembles the emotional and social effects of reconciliation or absolution used in other traditions.

TBC is a promising strategy when facing coercive and unacceptable behavior from youths, and addressing such behavior as an obstacle to treatment of disorders that may be maintained by it. TBC is a direct strategy for use between adults and someone in their care. It can be utilized primarily through guiding, supervising, and educating parents and professionals with direct relationships with the targeted youths.

TBC may be applied to other settings and other ages and relationships such as teacher–pupil, staff–patient, social worker–client, relationships among peers or siblings, and adults working with groups of youths, not only single individuals.

TBC is not an evidence-based method although preliminary clinical testing of the strategy in single cases shows promising potential. It builds on principles and strategies that have been shown to be effective for similar purposes, but its effectiveness remains to be proven. This description of TBC is being shared to encourage further systematic testing of TBC's usability and effectiveness. This should be followed by improving and manualizing its steps, prerequisites, and considerations based on experience, before evaluating its usability and effect in larger groups and with

controlled designs. Those interested in systematic development and testing are invited to contact the author or encouraged to perform an independent evaluation.

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