



PREPSEC proceedings vol. 1, no 1, March 2015 pp 5-11

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From ART to AART : The Scandinavian Adapted version of ART

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Introduction

The A.R.T. program (Goldstein & Glick, 1987; Goldstein, Glick, & Gibbs, 1998; Glick & Gibbs, 2011) has gone through only minor changes through the years. This has been one of the strengths of the program indicating that the protocol should remain consistent in order to evaluate the effect of the program and also be able to replicate it in different countries. A strict protocol will also prevent trainers from making changes over time which could lead to program drift and a less effective approach. However, on several occasions Dr. Goldstein suggested that A.R.T. should be further developed according to newly available research and theory. In Norway, a 2 year post graduate education in Social Competence included students working with young people of different ages and diagnoses. This has led the approach in a direction where social competence has become a target of primary importance alongside aggression reduction.. Through the years students suggested small pedagogical improvements in how the programs were carried out and according to developments within the field of morality and aggression, concepts like setting events, character traits and elements of motivational interviewing were included. In later evaluations in Norway and Russia (Gundersen & Svartdal, 2010; Langeveld, Gundersen, & Svartdal, 2012; Kuposov, Gundersen, & Svartdal, 2014) these additions also were included in the research protocol. From Norway these changes have also been introduced in Denmark, Russia and, also in part, in Iceland.

In Sweden, program development has also included adaptations which, over the years, have led to changes to the original program, both pedagogically and with effort to include new research especially from within the field of CBT. Parallel to Norway, some elements of motivational interviewing and character education have been included. As with the original A.R.T., the program in Sweden has mainly been implemented in juvenile settings and institutions with young people with deviant behavior, but the approach has also been tried out within school settings. In Iceland the program has been implemented both in schools and institutions, but there are some differences in how it is carried out in these settings. One reason for this is that school trainers have had a Swedish master training, while the institutional master trainers have had a Norwegian education.

The main reason for writing the book is to standardize the practice of the ART program within all Nordic settings. We hope that this will consolidate how to carry out the program and avoid further drift from the original program. Different ways of conducting the program has led to confusion when trainers from Norway and Sweden work together. Most of the differences have only pedagogical impact and do not affect the principles of the program, but

may still lead to unnecessary discussions. Another reason is that by having authors from Norway and Sweden, the best practice from each country can be included. A third reason is that there is a need for adjusting the theoretical underlying principles of the program according to new research on behavioral analysis, CBT and morality.

Research Press owns the rights to written material that deals with ART. From PREPSEC's point of view, it is therefore of crucial importance that all manuals and books within this area be approved by Research Press. Some board members from PREPSEC, therefore, had a meeting with Research Press, and later an agreement was made between the University Publishing Company in Norway and Research Press on writing this adapted version of ART to be known as AART (Adapted ART). The agreement also included authorization by Barry Glick. An author's group consisting of Knut K. Gundersen, Tutte M. Olsen, Bengt Daleflod, Borge Stromgren and Johannes Finne was established and the book is expected to be published in 2015.

Some of the general changes

Emotions, action and thinking in all components.

Goldstein identified Anger Control as the emotional component, Skillstreaming as the behavioral component and Moral Reasoning as the thinking component. This is, of course, a simplification to express Goldstein's main purpose with the different programs. However, all three components have to have all aspects to be effective, and in Norway and Sweden efforts have been made to illustrate how we can increase the emotional part and behavioral part in moral reasoning and accordingly in the other components. In moral reasoning we suggest that participants may role play a solution as a means of actually trying out the solution to see if it is the best for all parties involved. When clarifying the dilemma we also may ask how the different people in the dilemma may feel in the situation. Like in Skillstreaming, much emphasis is put on the thinking steps, but it is also important to evaluate how the other person in the role play will feel about his/her own actions. In Anger Control aspects of emotion, behavior and thinking are already included, but with more emphasis on setting events we also consider how our own mood influences how one perceives a trigger and also how our own action affects others' moods and how to avoid this.

Further development of the theoretical underpinnings.

It has been criticized that manual-based programs can be conducted by everybody just by reading the book and following the steps. If this is so, we agree with the criticism. A program like ART and AART is actually an advanced cognitive behavioral approach and if trainers don't have sufficient knowledge of the concepts involved, there is a possibility that the desired effect will not be achieved. With this AART implementation guide, it is recommended that trainer education should not be shorter than 8 days and accompanied by subsequent supervision.

In anger control each session has an aim and includes approximately 2 pages of theoretical background. In Moral Reasoning there is an updated review of theory behind the concept of morality. To express the many aspects of social skills, we have also given a more profound description of 6 of the skills.

Within behavioral theory, the concept of setting events has been introduced. Setting events (Bijou & Baer D.M., 1961) are defined as background variables that indirectly alter an interaction. Setting events may be of an environmental, social or physiological nature. It is crucially important that trainers and participants do not confuse setting events and triggers. A setting event, a background variable may create a mood you take with you into a situation while a trigger is the stimulus that caused the provocation or frustration. In principle, the setting events should be introduced before the triggers, but in the book we introduce the concept as a special reminder before you go into a situation.

Within the field of morality, Kohlberg's theory still is important, however, lately more emphasis is put on the role of emotions, reputation, norms and attitudes. Also the role of character traits seems to be very important and elements of character education are therefore included in the training.

One of the theories that fits perfectly into the ART program is motivational interviewing (Miller & Rollnick, 2002). The approach focuses on exploring ambivalence as a means to change and shows how trainers, by their way of communication, can facilitate positive changes.

Relational skills

It is important to emphasize that a social skill is not an isolated action, but must always be seen in context.

Consequently, it is therefore as important to focus on how the co-actor deals with the skill, as it is on how the main actor performs the skill itself. During the role play, it is the co-actor who first reinforces the positive behavior, while at the same time practicing how he can reinforce positive behavior in real life. In the context of the skill of “resisting group pressure”, the relational skill of the co-actor is perhaps even more important than that of the main actor. The co-actor practices accepting the fact that his or her friend wants no part of it, and this can in fact have a more positive effect in real life than learning to resist group pressure. We therefore recommend also considering carefully how the co-actor should relate to the social skill, which can also help to maintain social skills outside the sessions.

Anger is also a feeling that should be adjusted towards others. It is important that the participants learn that it is ok to be angry and also to be able to express this. However, the expressed anger should be adapted or regulated to a level where it is functional. We therefore suggest, in agreement with Dr. Eva Fiendler, that the term anger control training be replaced with “anger regulation training”.

Functional analysis.

Participants in an AART group usually have different needs. Some are asking for help too often while others are too shy. Some are too considerate of others while there are those who only think of themselves. Training in social competence may therefore involve leading students in different directions (Gundersen, 2014). Aggression may have different functions and trainers have to be careful when choosing skills that actually have the power to replace aggression or other forms of behavior that seems to be dysfunctional but are nonetheless rewarded. It is therefore important that trainers know the participants well and direct their interventions at trainee’s special needs.

Pedagogical suggestions

Through the years trainers in Sweden and Norway have suggested small pedagogical changes that don’t affect the principles of the program, but can make it easier for participants to understand the program. Some of these are only recommendations for specific ages or target groups. The following are some suggestions.

- * Proposing of a horizontal way of expressing the “anger regulation sequence”

- * Using “stepping back“ as one of the anger reducers
- * Teacher/trainer uses character traits when giving supervisory feedback of the role-play. (You really acted considerately (as a good friend) when you stopped pressuring)
- * Distribution of observation tasks always followed by rationale for why these will be important for the specific skill (derived from the description of the skill)
- * Participants may set up and practice the role plays outside the room while the other trainer sets up tasks of the observers.
- * Teaching the participants to identify thinking errors in all aspects of the training
- * Use of dilemma cards and other rehearsals.

Conclusion

By August 2014 the authors of AART are still working with the book. The Publishing Company will have the first manuscript sent by November 1, 2014. We will ask members of the PREPSEC network to comment before it is sent for publishing. Hopefully this could be done before Christmas. We will also appreciate comments from those who are reading this paper.

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