

ART (Aggression Replacement Training) - State of the ART

ART is widespread and used in many countries around the world. ART has, over the years, been developed and modified in accordance with new research in the field. The ART conducted in Scandinavia has incorporated these findings. The Scandinavian update is called AART (Adapted ART).

In 2020, there are up to 40 published studies in scientific journals on ART made in different contexts and with different target groups. The accumulated research indicates that ART increases the occurrence of prosocial behaviors, control of anger, reduces impulsivity and reduces the incidence of antisocial and aggressive behaviors. It is important to note that there are no reported adverse or harmful effects of ART.

There are 3 well-made systematic reviews about ART (Brännström, 2016; Feindler, 2016; Ensafdarana, 2019). As a rule, the separate studies in these reviews report positive results. At the same time, the authors of these reviews note that there are methodological inadequacies and shortcomings that make it difficult to draw firm conclusions about the effectiveness of the method. The latest review (Ensafdarana, et.al, 2019) is interesting in that it also includes modified versions of ART that are not included in previous surveys. The conclusion drawn in this study is that ART can be an effective intervention to reduce aggression and improve anger control, social skills and moral reasoning in young people at risk. Here, too, the researchers stress the need for more rigorous evaluation studies. ART is currently not graded as a model program. What is required for this to happen is more randomized studies of high scientific quality.

Evidence-based practice

a) Best available knowledge

The overall research indicates that ART is a suitable approach for antisocial and criminal youth. ART is based on a strong theory foundation and lives up to the main principles of "What Works" research. ART addresses known criminogenic needs and risk factors.

CBT-based therapies are generally supported for this type of behavioral problem and for this target group. Several meta-analyses ex. Landenberger & Lipsey (2005) show this and that there is no detectable difference between different CBT programs. ART is a multimodal method based on social learning theory and CBT. The three components of ART are well documented and have reasonable support individually.

b) Professional knowledge

ART is a proven method with a solid knowledge base that is well suited for young people at risk. The way of working in ART is recommended by the scientific community. The overall perception of practitioners is that ART is well suited for children and adolescents with conduct problems and acting out behaviors.

c) The needs and wishes of the individual

ART training is based on individual treatment plans and goals. The learning style that is active, cooperative, concrete and well-structured fits impulsive and outgoing young people well. Overall, responsivity must be considered good. As a rule, the method is appreciated by the clients. The methodology and content of the training can be adapted to individual needs and different target groups.

Organizations and authorities recommending ART

- OJJPD (The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention's Model Programs Guide) ranks ART as an effective program- More than one study
- U.S. Dept. of Education recommends ART as "a promising program"
- The United Kingdom's Ministry of Justice has accredited ART as a program recommended for adult criminals.
- Netherlands Youth Institute considers ART to be effective
- Ungsinn (Knowledge Centre for Children and Adolescents in Norway) classifies ART at evidence level 3 – Measures with some evidence of efficacy
- In a systematic overview of treatment methods for adolescents with Conduct Disorders (McCart & Sheidow, 2016), ART is placed together with two other programs at the second highest level of the evidence as "probably effective methods". At level 1 "Well-established treatments" there are only two methods; MST (Multi Systemic Treatment) and TFCO (Treatment in Foster Care-Oregon).

References:

- Brännström, L. et.al. Aggression replacement training (*ART*) for reducing antisocial behavior in adolescents and adults: A systematic review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior*, Volume 27, Pages30-41.
- Ensafdarana, et.al. (2019). Efficacy of different versions of Aggression Replacement Training (*ART*): A review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior* 47230-237.
- Feindler, Eva, et.al. Program Evaluation Challenges: Is Aggression Replacement Training (*ART*) Effective? *Journal of Psychology and Behavioral Science*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 1-10.
- Landenberger, N. A., Lipsey, M. W. (2005). *The positive effects of cognitive-behavioral programs for offenders: A meta-analysis of factors associated with effective treatment*. *Journal of Experimental Criminology*, 1, 451-476.