

Winter, 2018



My name is Amazing Ace and I'm currently an inmate at Groveland Correctional Facility.

When I attended my first Basic Workshop, in early 2014, I was an emotional mess and desperately seeking help. My friend, Jukebox Joe, suggested AVP. So I decided to give it a shot.

Everything started off good when the facilitators introduced themselves and the program, and then moved on to the gathering question. Then I became a little confused when we started picking silly names and playing games, or light-'n-livelies. I was thinking, *"I came here for some serious help and these guys want to joke and laugh. What is this?"*

I began questioning the facilitators about my concerns and I was getting quite upset. I was told that it was all part of the AVP process and I felt disappointed and just opted to pass on most everything.

I finished the workshop feeling as though I received nothing I was looking for. I went back for an Advanced Workshop, thinking, *"I'll get something this time for sure"* but wound up getting the same results.

So I went and found my friend, whom, I forgot to mention was also a facilitator, and told him, *"Thanks for nothing!"* He then explained to me that AVP is a healthy balance of fun and serious and that I wasn't really being fair by not giving AVP a chance. He convinced me to go back and actually try and participate in all the exercises and light-'n-livelies and see if I still have the same opinion.

I agreed that I wasn't being fair, so I gave it another shot. This time I arrived with an open mind and participated in almost everything. I found that laughing and having a little fun actually helped me to break down my walls and barriers and the serious parts were so much easier to absorb. After my second Basic I could hardly wait to go back for the Advanced.

I learned that when you put something into AVP, you definitely get something back! I went on to complete the Training for Facilitators Workshop and began facilitating as an apprentice and eventually received my gold certificate [signifying full facilitator]. I've been to almost every workshop that Groveland has held since then.

I tell this story to others when I see them having some of the same doubts that I did at first glance and more than not, the outcome is beautiful.

I absolutely love AVP and all that it represents. AVP is more than a project to me. It's a way of life and it's made my life that much more worth living.

I've done a lot of things in my life that I'm not proud of and as a result I hated myself. My attitude during that time caused me to push away my friends and family and left me feeling alone and miserable.

But with AVP as my guide, I was able to find the things that are good about me and start loving myself again. Then, when I was finally ready to forgive myself, my family started noticing the positive changes in me and were happy to be around me again.

Not only has AVP helped me get my family back, but AVP became a part of my family as well.

Thank you to everyone who puts something into AVP and helps to make it what it is today and helps make me who I'll be forever.

AVP is AMAZING!!!

—Daniel Wall a.k.a. Amazing Ace,
AVP Inside Co-Coordinator,
Groveland Prison



North Americans at the AVP International Gathering, Kathmandu, Nepal, November, 2017.

AVP New Yorkers attending:

- Jill McLellan,
- Carolyn Polikarpus,
- Margaret Lechner,
- Valentine Doyle,
- John Scardina,
- Nadine Hoover,
- Robbi LaBelle,
- Deb Wood, and
- Ed Dabrowski

AVP Liberation Workshop: Reflections and Learnings.



In the days leading up to the AVP/USA Annual Gathering (May, 2017) (outside of Boston, MA this year), Nadine Hoover, Sarah Mandolung and Tom Martin led an AVP Special Topic Advanced Workshop on Liberation.

It is a new workshop and Nadine asked participants for feedback for further development and refinement.

Looking at the ways and times I have been oppressed and the ways and times I oppress others is not easy, but in my experience, when I do the work, it frees and empowers and energizes. This work is so vital in these times.

There were an abundance of “take-aways” for me that I have incorporated into some of the subsequent workshops I have been a part of.

Here is the short list:

The opening gathering: My affirmation name, where I am from, how long I’ve been with AVP and a power or gift for good I have is...



The AVP Approach or the assumptions out of which the work comes:

- Respect everyone’s goodness, capabilities and beauty.
- Respect the Earth’s goodness, generosity and beauty.
- Everyone’s a teacher and a learner.
- Learn through experience and reflections.
- Everyone’s journey is different.
- Focus on personal change in private and public life. (AVP is not only about private change.)
- Attend voluntarily, not required or coerced.
- Discern decisions together.
- Focus on learning, not on religion or therapy.
- Enjoy! Experiencing a culture of peace: playful, awestruck, surprised, hospitable, loving...

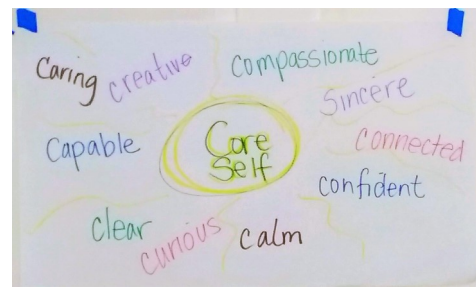
The Cooperative Agreements similarly, have notable modifications:

- Affirm self and others; no put downs or put ups (i.e. putting people on pedestals).
- Stop, listen, don’t interrupt.
- Speak simply, honestly, without fear of mistakes.
- Tell your own stories, not others’ without permission.
- Ask for and offer hospitality, feedback and help.

- Call for play or silence, as needed.
- Make friends, not enemies of people similar to and different from myself.
- Tend emotion, then speak directly if in dispute.
- Use what’s needed and share the rest fairly.
- Use your rights to pass and to consultation.
- Volunteer yourself only.
- Take care of each person, the group, the community and the land.
- Live in integrity with life’s transforming power.
- Cell phones off or silent.

We were invited to make a journal and to note areas for further exploration, post-workshop and thereby carry the workshop into our daily life. The process for debriefing exercises began with journaling: What are the implications for my life? Then, in triads, What did I notice, feel or learn about the material? And in whole group: What are the implications for us as a people or a culture?

The exercise Core Self is one that we now use at Cayuga Prison in the Basic Workshop following the Transforming Power Talk.



The core self is the origin of our unique goodness, capabilities and qualities that feels sincere, capable, courageous, compassionate, caring, calm, clear, curious, connected,

creative and confident. It stays constant yet matures over time with awareness and knowledge.

“Stop in your body and your mind. Relax. Feel your skeleton. Notice your breath, your heart beat, your Transforming Power that is right here. You do not need to close your eyes. This place is always available to you, in every moment. Open to the Transforming Power within you. Remember a time when you felt totally yourself, alive and engaged in your core self. Draw what your core self feels like. Start with your non-dominant hand.”

Then write three words on the drawing. We always have our core selves with us—a safe place, a touchstone. Practice going there. If we are to go to the hard places of getting in touch with the oppression we and others have and are experiencing, we need to first create some safety for ourselves and each other. That’s what this exercise can do.



When we post our core self drawings on the wall, we can recognize this is who we are individually and as a people.

—Shirley Way, a.k.a. Secure Shirley
AVP Outside Coordinator, Cayuga Prison,
AVP New York Office Administrator

Bellevue Elementary: Creating a Culture of AVP.

ACTS (Alliance of Communities Transforming Syracuse) has been working hard to make Syracuse a safer community. The Youth Violence subcommittee has supported hosting AVP workshops in areas where violence is an everyday concern. One mini workshop was offered in the summer, 2016 and two full Basic and Advanced workshops including teens in 2017.

We were invited to work with the 5th graders at Bellevue Elementary, after an initial meeting with the principal who had a vision of offering workshops to the oldest students in this K-5 school. We offered a two-hour mini workshop for staff the first day of school. We were told to expect 25 staff for the first morning but 40 came, and they were a mostly young, idealistic and energetic crowd!

A few weeks later we held a full Basic workshop with 5th graders (10 yrs.). The workshop was held two Monday through Wednesday mornings (2.5 hrs. daily) with one week off in between. We started with just over 20 students and two staff (also participants). All but three students completed.

We are grateful to Nurturing Noelle Granger who coordinates AVP at Franklin Central Schools for her guidance.

Some learnings:

- Light and Livelies are crucial, in between almost every exercise. They asked us to repeat favorites which we did as time allowed.
- It was important to have the option of leaving the workshop. A few chose that option.

- The students did particularly well in small groups and especially in the silent exercises like Cooperative Construction and Checkboard Design.
- Explaining a brainstorm as a “rainstorm with ideas”.
- Brainstorming “Things that hurt” and “Things that help” in small groups on the floor seemed especially effective.
- Students from special ed classes were included, and that worked well as long as we had enough adults so we could keep everyone on task.
- Staff reported that the exercises Feeling Faces and Three Question Interview seemed particularly meaningful for the students.

Staff also report that the students who participated have increased leadership and problem solving skills and there is a calmer atmosphere in the classrooms.

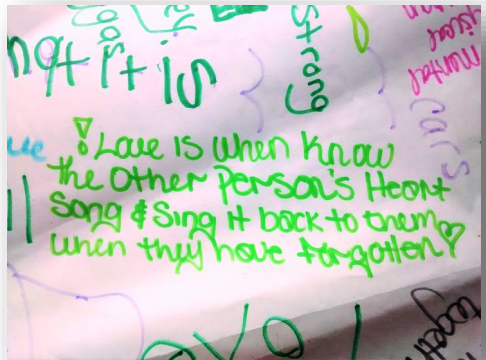
We plan to hold a second workshop with 5th graders, this time on a different schedule: 1.5 hr. sessions daily for eight afternoons, followed by eight weeks of every-other-day one-hour enrichment periods for students who have completed the Basic. In the Spring we will offer mini workshops for the 4th grade classes.

Our goal is to create a culture of AVP at Bellevue! We look forward to involving more local AVPers in this effort including some newly trained apprentices. Facilitators for these workshops were Jumpin’ Jill McLellan, Mellow Mike Miller, Xceptional Xenia Becher, Smiling Shiu-Kai Chin and Jubilant James Green.

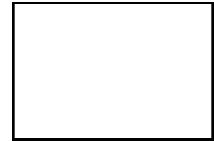
—Jill McLellan, a.k.a. Jumpin’ Jill
AVP Outside Coordinator Auburn
Prison, AVP/NY Co-President

Drawings and words from Bedford Hills Prison.

Participants in an Advanced AVP Workshop created drawings in small groups on the theme of Love. (Exercise: Group DaVinci.)



**A Basic AVP
Workshop with
5th graders and staff
Bellevue
Elementary,
Syracuse, NY
October, 2017**



AVP International Gathering, 2017

Kathmandu, Nepal. Over 150 facilitators from 39 countries.

Please support AVP!! Thank you very much !

Return Service Requested

ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT

Note: Printed on 100% post-consumer recycled paper.

ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT / NEW YORK

2016 Workshop Summary Report

Note: These statistics represent the workshops reported to the AVP/NY office.

<p>ALBION Prison (Women's) Workshop count: 6 Participant count: 68 Apprentices trained: 4</p> <p>ATTICA Prison Workshop count: 7 Participant count: 129</p> <p>AUBURN Prison Workshop count: 11 Participant count: 166</p> <p>BEDFORD HILLS Prison (Wmn's) English lang. wksp count: 10 Spanish or bilingual count: 2 Participant count: 117 Apprentices trained: 8</p> <p>CAYUGA Prison Workshop count: 10 Participant count: 137 Apprentices trained: 10</p> <p>EASTERN Prison Workshop count: 10 Participant count: 114 Apprentices trained: 39</p> <p>ELMIRA Prison Workshop count: 8 Participant count: 97 Apprentices trained: 7</p> <p>FCI RAY BROOK (Federal Prison) Workshop count: 7 Participant count: 123 Apprentices trained: 21</p> <p>GREEN HAVEN Prison Workshop count: 7 Participant count: 118 Apprentices trained: 16</p>	<p>GREENE Prison Workshop count: 6 Participant count: 55 Apprentices trained: 4</p> <p>GROVELAND Prison Workshop count: 9 Participant count: 122 Apprentices trained: 8</p> <p>OTISVILLE Prison Workshop count: 7 Participant count: 119 Apprentices trained: 14</p> <p>SING SING Prison English lang. wksp count: 32 Spanish lang. wksp count: 3 Participant count: 423 Apprentices trained: 13</p> <p>SULLIVAN Prison Workshop count: 5 Participant count: 67 Mini workshop count: 1 Mini participant count: 4 Apprentices trained: 3</p> <p>WENDE Prison English lang. workshop count: 3 Participant count: 34 Mini Workshop count: 2 Mini Participant count: 31 Apprentices trained: 11 AVP/NY's Forum Day: 18</p> <p>WOODBOURNE Prison Workshop count: 5 Participant count: 83 Facilitator Recognition Day: 10 Apprentices trained: 19</p>	<p>CATSKILL Area Council Youth workshop count: 1 Youth participant count: 13 Mini adult workshop count: 1 Mini adult participant count: 13 Youth apprentices trained: 13</p> <p>CENTRAL NEW YORK Workshop count: 1 Participant count: 9 Youth mini workshop count: 1 Youth mini participant count: 22</p> <p>GENESEE VALLEY AC Workshop count: 5 Participant count: 66</p> <p>NYC and LONG ISLAND ACs Adult workshop count: 5 Adult participant count: 57 Youth workshop count: 2 Youth participant count: 18 Apprentices trained: 6</p> <p>NIAGARA FRONTIER AC Adult workshop count: 2 Adult participant count: 14 Youth workshop count: 1 Youth participant count: 10 Adult mini workshop count: 2 Adult mini participant count: 25 Youth mini workshop count: 1 Youth mini participant count: 3</p> <p>WESTCHESTER Area Council Adult workshop count: 8 Adult participant count: 72 Youth workshop count: 1 Youth participant count: 1</p>	<p>WESTCHESTER AC cont'd. Mini workshop count: 1 Mini participant count: 12 Facilitator Days: 2 Facilitator Day participants: 19 Apprentices trained: 20</p> <p>AVP/NY PRISON WKSPs: Prisons served: 16 Workshops in English: 143 Workshops in Spanish: 4 All-facilitator workshop count: 1 Workshop count: 148 Participant count: 1,972 Mini workshop count: 3 Mini participant count: 35 Apprentices trained: 164 Inside facilitators: 256 Outside adult facilitators: 80</p> <p>AVP/NY COMMUNITY WKSPs: Community workshops: 26 Participant count: 260 Adult part't count: 218 Youth part't count: 42 Apprentices trained: 39 Adult apprentices: 26 Youth apprentices: 13 Mini Adult workshops: 4 Mini Adult part't count: 50 Mini Youth workshops: 2 Mini Youth part't count: 25 Facilitator Days: 2 Facilitator Day part't count: 19 Outside adult facilitators: 80 Youth facilitators (under 18): 7</p>
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