

Adapting our workshops for communities experiencing on-going trauma

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Marissa Saunders, Director of Community Engagement and Justice Strategies Associate with Center for Community Alternatives (CCA) for their Syracuse, Rochester and Brooklyn offices.

Notes by Shirley Way:

All AVP facilitators should have:

1. trauma-informed training *
2. motivational interview training *

* There are many trainings offered by local human service based agencies that are either free or low cost.

In communities with on-going trauma, the workshops can cause unintentional harm.

Participants may have:

- witnessed violent death or have been threatened with death
- experienced repeated and prolonged exposure to violence
- young people may be living with domestic violence

Signs of triggered participants:

- Flashbacks, fear, sadness, panic attack, physical pain, acting out, hypervigilance

Facilitators must:

- assess the room
- be involved, interacting with everyone
- have a plan for one of the facilitators to deal with or assist a person or persons who may be triggered

When engaging with people who have PTSD, we can experience vicarious trauma—signs: fatigue, emotional outbursts, burn-out, not knowing how to articulate our emotions. It is important to be self-aware and to STOP, take time off.

Triggers:

- Bringing up feelings or memories of traumatic events
- Can happen without the person being aware that they have been triggered
- We are harmed when we are triggered

When someone is triggered, we must STOP together to ask:

- What has happened to you?
- Is it okay if I touch you?
- What are you feeling?
- Is there anything I can do?
- Do a grounding with the whole group.

And the next day, do not behave as if nothing happened.

- Check in with the team—how is everyone on-team, before beginning.
- Ask the group—go around with a check-in.
- Be flexible.

Exercises, light and livelies, trust exercises, closings that are apt to trigger:

- Jail break—do not do this L+L in community settings—pretending that you are in jail.
- Injunctions of Childhood
- Dealing with Putdowns
- Back Massage—in some cultures touching someone who is not a family member or a spouse is not allowed.
- Anything with blindfolds: Trust Walk, Owl + Mouse e.g.

Gatherings:

1. A hiding place I had as a child was...

- Remembering danger.
- A possible re-write: *A fun place I used to go as a child was...*

2. My experience of violence when I was a child was...

- Maybe use this in concentric circles, not as a gathering where the circle would hear many stories of violence.

3. Violence has affected my life by...

- A possible re-write: *When I think about violence I... or, A negative experience that has changed me is...*

4. An early happy memory of mine is...

- A possible re-write: *Something I enjoyed doing as a child was...*

Our intention is to help heal and to bring about peace. Think about how and when to present the questions with that in mind.

Be authentic. We as facilitators must be as vulnerable as we are asking the participants to be.