

The TRANSFORMER

Newsletter of Alternatives to Violence Project/USA
Winter 2008

Supporting & celebrating facilitators of AVP workshops

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Dysfunction Transformed

By Carolyn Polikarpus

There was a period in our program when the principles and foundation of AVP went out the window...you could see them drifting around on the wind but couldn't catch them long enough to get through a facilitator's meeting without some kind of power play going on. The inside leadership team operated like a military junta...they'd go off to another room to meet and then come back with rules about dress code or some other irrelevant thing. T for Fs and training nights were operated on the boot camp approach...got to make these new facilitators tough so they are prepared for anything, mostly situations that would never occur particularly if you follow the ground rules, which were sometimes ignored as well. In short, Transforming Power had been transformed from TP to P.

It was a frustrating time for the two outside coordinators; because the inside leadership controlled the callouts, few of the insiders were willing to stand up to them and it was hard to rally support. Many of the most committed and respected facilitators stopped coming to our weekly meetings and to the workshops. Some of the participants in the T for F swore they wouldn't come to AVP after their experience in the training. We even discussed shutting down the program.

But instead each time we saw a disempowering practice in the circle, we'd bring it to the group even if much of the circle didn't feel safe enough to speak, we kept bringing up the principles as written in the manuals, we had personal conversations with the leadership team. One of the outside coordinators would sometimes sit in the corner and read her manual aloud while the monkey wrench training sessions were conducted. Several people, who came from other facilities to do a workshop, passed on their discomfort with what they saw going on. We had an All Facilitator Workshop led by 2 former prisoners from our facility that brought the dysfunction into the light.

We insisted on having an agenda for the training nights starting with a gathering, and ending with a closing. We reminded everyone that the Ground Rules apply to all AVP groups not just a workshop and did our best to stick to them. Our hope was to guide the group back onto an AVP path using Transforming Power instead of the manipulation, intimidation and control that was choking the life out of the program, and so to create a safe circle where each of us was free to speak our truth.

After a while the inside coordinator, who was selected more for his prowess in running things than his knowledge of AVP, began to listen, to loosen his tight control and let the circle breathe and speak. Those in the circle started to find their voice and more open discussion followed. Finally the members of the leadership team either went home, or were transferred. The new coordinator, who took over understood AVP, TP and leadership. It was as though the window had opened and fresh, clean air filled the room and our circle.

Throughout this all it was sometimes hard not to lose heart and give up. But we two outside coordinators supported each other, we turned to the

area council and the state board for guidance and to many experienced facilitators and coordinators for support and counsel.

It took all of the TP Guides but especially:

- Reach for the good in others
- Base your position on truth
- Risk being creative
- Be willing to suffer for what is important
- And most of all...Be patient and persistent.
- Oh yes, and Build a community based on honesty, respect and caring.

Carolyn Polikarpus, Ghent, NY, 12 years as facilitator at Green Haven CF, coordinator for the last 6 years. Her perspective comes from weathering the dysfunction through to the transformation that has taken place in this program. Retired after many years as a mainframe computer programmer, she now does administrative work for a theater group, as well as is vice president on AVP/NY board. Carolyn has four kids and three grandchildren.

10 Rejuvenation Basics for Groups

1. Hold onto and refer to the AVP Agreements and TP basics
2. Seek outside support and consultation
3. Bring in experienced people from outside
4. Consider retreats for stepping back and looking at what is going on
5. Celebrate what is already good and working
6. Look at the structure with the group, divide tasks into smaller pieces
7. Keep the group involved in the process
8. Cross-fertilize with other groups or facilitators
9. Use AVP agenda format for all meetings
10. Be patient and Trust the Process

Revitalizing AVP Facilitators

By Suzanne Reed

I have two purposes in writing this article for the Transformer. The first purpose will serve the second. This first purpose is to excite discussion: I believe that a lively discussion is itself revitalizing. The second purpose is to offer a simple suggestion for rejuvenating AVP facilitators in need of a fresh perspective on the important work we all do in sharing alternatives to violence with our fellow travelers. Two examples from my own experience illustrate my rejuvenation suggestion.

Remember back...

First, think about what the word 'rejuvenation' means. Literally it means "to make young again." In terms of rejuvenating AVP facilitators, it could mean taking us back to our "youth" in AVP, back to the time when we were first introduced to the notion that there are viable ways to manage and express our feelings and needs other than doing violence to ourselves, each other, or the earth that sustains us all. Can you remember those times early in your AVP experience? Can you recall how you felt...what you were thinking...what brought you to AVP...what role AVP played in your dreams and visions for your future?

Well, we've all come some ways from our first days in AVP. Some of us have come a long ways. Some of us have just begun. Chances are good that if you have stayed active or engaged with AVP for a long time—or if it seems like a long time to you—then you have known moments of flagging energy and interest, perhaps your commitment has waned at times. Perhaps you have even used your memories of what possessed you to do AVP work in the first place to bolster flagging energy.

Learn something new

Here's an additional way to bring renewed energy and passion into your work with AVP.. Take yourself into a situation where you are forced to operate with beginner's mind. Do you remember

how it felt for you to look at the world with your beginner's mind, when you were young? It happens for me every time I learn something new. So, I might suggest that you learn something new. And since I am making suggestions for revitalizing your work in AVP, let me suggest that you learn something new that can be used in your facilitating work.

In fact, two examples of "something new" have refreshed my view of my work with AVP. The first is called Appreciative Inquiry (AI), a formal process for eliciting transformational change in organizations. The second rejuvenating example is called Nonviolent Communication (NVC) by its founder, Marshall Rosenberg.

Appreciative Inquiry-building on your strengths
Appreciative Inquiry is a strength-based model (as opposed to a deficit model) for guiding transformational change. (Transforming power, anyone?) Developed by David Cooperrider et al. at Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, Ohio, U.S.A., it was originally developed for use in guiding change in business organizations/ However it is such a powerful approach to making changes that many people have adapted it for many different applications, including my own adaptations for use in the life coaching work I do. AI includes a four-step process of Discovery, Dreaming, Design and Destiny (the 4-D cycle). The power of Appreciative Inquiry derives from its positive approach. It does not seek to "make changes in order to fix problems." Appreciative Inquiry seeks to build on the strengths of past performance in order to fulfill ones highest destiny.

Relating AI to AVP

The seeds of Appreciative Inquiry are manifested in AVP workshops we all have facilitated. Whips and gatherings such as "Something I like about

(Continued on Page 4)

myself is...”, “I feel good about myself when...”, “Something I’ve always wanted to do is...”, “A value that is important to me is...”, “A good quality of mine that I’d like to strengthen is...”, and “An early happy memory of mine is...” all elicit the kinds of stories and ambiance that Appreciative Inquiry uses as a foundation for its change process. These whips show up in the AVP Basic Manual under the heading Whips to Lighten the Mood. That heading is an apt description of how AI proceeds; with a light mood, initiating change prompted by joy and our memories of what brings life to our lives; a revitalizing process for anyone, in any group, or self-applied.

In terms of AVP exercises that are similar to steps in the Appreciative Inquiry 4D process, Appreciation covers Discovery--the first step—while Image a Better Community guides the group through Dreaming—the second step of the 4D cycle—and the Next Steps portion of that exercise begins the Design phase—the third step of AI. It occurs to me that an Advanced level workshop agenda might even be built around—or guided by—the 4D cycle of AI if we had facilitators trained in or knowledgeable of Appreciative Inquiry.

Non Violent Communication

The second example of “something new” I’ve learned in the past year that has served to refresh my view of my work with AVP is called Nonviolent Communication. NVC, like AI, is a four-step process. NVC, however, addresses itself to communications that may carry the seed of conflict. It teaches the speaker to include: 1). What you observe (the behavior), 2). What you are feeling, 3). What you need, and 4). What you are requesting (the change) that will enhance your life. These steps may remind you of The Formula taught to AVP participants as part of the “I” Messages lesson: WHEN ... (observation, not interpretation)..., I FEEL ...(emotion, not a thought)..., BECAUSE

BECAUSE ...(explanation for your reaction)..., AND WHAT I’D LIKE TO SEE HAPPEN IS...(seeking win/win change)....

NVC differs from AVP...

The difference between the NVC formula and the AVP formula is in the third step, where AVP focuses on the cause of the speaker’s (feeling) reaction to the listener’s behavior, while NVC focuses on the speaker’s unmet need(s) that prompt the fourth step common to both AVP and NVC, the change of behavior sought to fulfill those unmet needs. NVC’s third-step focus on unmet needs is something that could revitalize “I” Messages in AVP. Author Rosenberg includes in his book (see Suggested Reading) a list of universal needs that may be prompting the speaker to ask for a change in someone else’s behavior; needs such as acceptance, understanding, autonomy, respect, harmony, challenge, celebration, self-expression, etc.

Similar to the feelings brainstorm I often include in my coverage of “I” Messages—for those who may not have learned to put names to the feelings they experience—it seems to me that adding a discussion or quick exercise of needs identification might help those who have had little experience identifying what they need in any given situation. The AVP whip, “What I need to feel safe in this group is...” shows that AVP expects its participants to express what they need. Early in each AVP workshop, when the facilitators solicit (in a Basic) or announce the ground rules, I have often seen “Ask for what you need” added to the usual list given in the manuals. Wouldn’t practice in identifying needs be useful to everyone in an AVP workshop?

As an AVP facilitator who has taught “I” Messages many times and a current student of NVC, I can tell you that both formulas elicit the same resistance. The formulas are too stilted and make

communications seem artificial. AVP addresses this resistance with the instruction, "The formula is NOT meant to be memorized for use every time you speak to someone about something that is bothering you. It is meant for you to use in preparation BEFORE you speak. You are asking yourself [these questions]:....(page E31 of 2002 AVP Basic Manual). I have seen such resistance to the NVC formula addressed with a discussion of formal NVC versus colloquial or "street" NVC, the latter allowing for less strict adherence to the formula. I wonder if Rosenberg would be surprised by the forms his NVC formula might take inside prisons around the world. Probably not, as Rosenberg himself has taken NVC into prison workshops.

I hope something I have written will pique your interest in learning something new that you could apply to your work with Alternatives to Violence Project. If nothing quite so rejuvenating as learning something new has occurred, perhaps I have planted the seeds for new ideas and prompted further discussion. Those are my hopes for this article.

*Suzanne Reed, reed5s@yahoo.com
Life Coach, AVP Facilitator (MT and NY, USA),
AVP Prison Coordinator (Elmira Correctional Facility, NY, 2000-2003), Certified in Positive Business and Society Change through Appreciative Inquiry, In training for NVC*

The 3 steps to Personal Renewal List

This is better than a New Year's Resolution! Keeping ourselves open to new ideas and trying new things happens in this personal practice.

- **On your next birthday, start a list by numbering on a piece of paper the number of years you are celebrating.** If you are turning 55, write from one to 55 down the left side of this paper.
- **Write down every time you do, try, approach or think something new.** (This can be a new menu item at your favorite restaurant, driving a different road, a fresh way of facing an old situation or actually doing something you never thought you would even consider.)
- **Finish the list by your next birthday.**

Suggested Reading

AVP/USA Education Committee. 2002 Revision. Alternatives to Violence Project Manual: Basic Course. AVP Distribution Service: Plainfield, Vermont.

Cooperrider, D. L. and Whitney, D. 2005. Appreciative Inquiry: A Positive Revolution in Change. Berrett-Koehler Publishers: San Francisco.

Rosenberg, M. B. 2003. Nonviolent Communication: A Language of Life: Create Your Life, Your Relationships, and Your World in Harmony with Your Values. PuddleDancer Press: Encinitas, CA.



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ED Delaware/Sloane Study	2.50	_____	_____
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Other Items

HI HIPP Manual (Published by AFSC)	30.00	_____	_____
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WS Walking Softly in an Alien World	4.00	_____	_____

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DI AVP Worldwide Contact Directory	1.00	_____	_____
RH Restorative Justice Pamphlet	1.00	_____	_____

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Invitation for 2008 AVP International Gathering

September 14 to 20, 2008

Bishop Stam Centre, Kakamega, Kenya

Dates: Sunday supper, September 14 to Saturday breakfast, September 20, 2008

Organizing sponsors: Friends for Peace and Community Development and the African Great Lakes Initiative of the Friends Peace Teams.

Venue: Bishop Nicholas Stam Pastoral and Animation Centre, Kakamega, Kenya.

Cost: Self-contained room is \$200 plus \$50 registration fee. Non-self contained room is \$170 plus \$50 registration fee.

Contact person: David Zarembka,
email: dave@aglionline.org,

From Nancy Shippen: Please let the International Committee know if you think you might come or might be able to help with funding for other countries. 23 countries were represented at the last conference and we know of at least 5 others at this time. NANCYSHIPPEN@comcast.net

Featured publication:

Nonviolence and the Community, Reflections on the Alternatives to Violence Project

By Newton Garver and Eric Reitan

This 43-page pamphlet captures AVP workshops from both a practical and theoretical vantage point in a way that not only newcomers becoming serious about the program, but experienced facilitators can resonate with and more deeply understand what these hard-to-describe workshops are all about.

Terry Kayser has been using it Minnesota for Staff Prison Coordinators and for apprentice Leads to more thoroughly understand what the dynamics of an AVP workshop are. Published by Pendle Hill the facilitator price with AVP/USA is only \$3.

Adoption Agency

As a small token of appreciation, inside facilitator Just John Piccirillo wants to share with you an exercise that he calls Adoption Agency. This exercise came to him during a state of post-workshop exuberance, and I was lucky enough to have been present when the AVP muse whispered in his ear. I found it delightfully entertaining to watch this very large and formerly non-AVP-like man expressing his thoughts and ideas with all the unbridled enthusiasm of a child. For my own part, I assumed the role of scribe and just kept asking him questions until John's vision coalesced in the exercise that follows. We hope you enjoy it! Exercise author: Just John Piccirillo, Facilitator in Correctional Training Facility, Soledad, California, with scribe -listener Judicious John Thibeault.

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ADOPTION AGENCY

- Purpose:** To assist participants in developing new attitudes in thinking that will help them interact positively with those they come into contact with.
- Time:** About 30 to 40 minutes (5 minutes for everyone to brainstorm and make a list of a new attitude they would like to adopt to help them to be a better person, 20-25 minutes to work within a small group, and another ten minutes to share with the entire group).
- Materials:**
1. Butcher block paper and markers for brainstorming.
 2. List of questions to be used in smaller group.
- Sequence:**
1. All participants take 5 minutes for brainstorming to make a list of new attitudes they can choose to adopt in order to work towards developing into a better person. This exercise incorporates one of the principles of Transforming Power (TP): "Expect The Best".
 2. After the brainstorming has been completed, have the participants form into groups of four.
 3. Each participant will assist their group in picking the attitude from the list of attitudes that they most want to adopt and tell their group. This will take approximately 20-25 minutes working in the small group.
 4. Each group will choose one of the attitudes to adopt and prepare to share it with the larger group.
 5. The designated speaker for each group should prepare to answer the questions provided about adopting their new attitude.
 6. Once the larger group has been reformed, the speaker for each group will briefly answer the three questions pertaining to the chosen attitude adopted by the group.

Pass out the questions below to each of the smaller groups.

Q1. How will I benefit by adopting this new attitude?

Q2. How will this new attitude affect those around me?

Q3. What steps do I need to take to make this new attitude a part of me?



THE FUTURE IS NOW

...at the 2008 AVP/USA Annual Gathering in Bellingham, WA

We face a changing and increasingly violent future that AVP has answers to and needs to explore within. Almost a decade into the 21st Century, it's time to deepen our non-violent responses, and foster those of our neighbors. What can we do within our world and within ourselves to face the future that's coming; is already here? The future is now. Join us as we:

- Listen to the voice of our troubled planet
- Hear the pain of the oppressed
- Find alternatives to a failed criminal justice system
- Break the barrier between victims and perpetrators
- Offer hope and success strategies to offenders in a new life
- Shape the evolution of AVP in a world of change
- Nourish and challenge ourselves for the future

The upcoming (May 22-26, 2008) Memorial Day weekend Annual Gathering will be the first ever held in the Pacific Northwest.

The site: The Firs Conference Center in Bellingham, WA (north of Seattle). Bellingham sits on the Pacific's Puget Sound, surrounded by mountains, lakes, and forests. The town is committed to green—both playing in the green and living green. Here, with a moderate climate from the Pacific current, and lots of vertical elevation

nearby, we can ski in the morning and sail in the afternoon. Bikes coexist peacefully with autos downtown and store clerks routinely say “you don't need a bag, do you?”). The Firs is an inviting, cozy and accessible site, nestled in the fir and cedar trees on the fringes of Bellingham, by a big, beautiful lake (kayaking and swimming from their private beach), and hiking trails.

Come early, and stay late: For the adventurous, there will be snowshoeing and hiking around imposing Mt. Baker and sea kayaking among the San Juan Islands. Seattle is a short hop south and cosmopolitan Vancouver, BC an even shorter hop north. Take a sight-seeing boat to visit our Orcas (we'll direct you to one that respects their “space”). Visit the very British Victoria, BC, and see Vancouver before the crowds arrive for the 2010 Olympics. If you're really ambitious, Bellingham is the southern terminus of the famed Alaska Inside Passage Ferry. Visit Juneau, gold-rush Skagway, and glaciers up close.

The Annual Gathering is a great way to deepen our understanding and heighten our skills. And, coming together with old friends, and building new friendships across the country is always a wonderful treat. Make plans now to join us over Memorial Day 2008. Remember: The Future is NOW.

<http://www.avpusa.org/annual08.htm>

A CALL FOR GATHERING FACILITATORS

We've got the site. We've got the theme.

What else would anyone want?

Oh, yeah: we need YOU. We need your ideas and sharing to make the conference work. Your insights and experiences are the heart of an AVP National Gathering. Come and be a part of a great conference, and especially, come and help facilitate a workshop, moderate a dialogue:

- Create a 1 to 3 hour (or up to 6 hours) experiential workshop to be offered by your team of facilitators for other facilitators.
- The topic is yours. What challenges you? What worked really well? What ideas/experiences would be stimulating for us to share? It can be part of the theme (The Future of.....), or ?? What is of compelling interest to you will make a good workshop and a the heart of a wonderful Annual Gathering.
- These breakout sessions are workshops. We encourage modeling them exactly as any other AVP workshop: teams, participatory methods, L&L's, etc.
- Send your ideas (Mail, Email, or phone) to:

Jan Krouskop
720 Sudden Valley
Bellingham, WA
360-527-3545
Jan@Krouskop.net



Become a vital part of AVP and be revitalized

Being Secretary of AVP/USA is a wonderful way to get a feel for how this incredible organization makes decisions and how much is accomplished. In one to-three hours a month, plus attending the annual gathering, you can make a substantial contribution to this vital support of the work of your national organization and become excited again about AVP.

From the By Laws:

The Secretary: The Secretary shall be nominated from the Communications Committee and shall normally be a member of the Communications Committee.. The Secretary shall be appointed by the Annual National Gathering and serve a one year term and can be reappointed for three successive terms. The Secretary shall keep records of the meetings of the Board of Trustees and the Annual National Gathering. including seeing that all minutes are posted on the website The Secretary shall have custody of the Seal of the Corporation and shall have charge of all records and papers of the Corporation.

So essentially, the time this position involves:

- 2-1/2 hours taking minutes for every Committee of Committees (conference call) Meeting including compilation time (this could be up to 15 hours/ year)
- Attending Communication Committee (conference call) meetings (up to 12 hours/year)
- Attending the annual national gathering and keeping minutes there
- Plus an hour of recordkeeping and paper shuffling

Please contact Clerk of Communications Committee, Diana Couch, diana.couch@lmco.com, if you are interested.

Welcome to the new face of your Transformer.

Not only does your Transformer look different this quarter, it has taken on a few other features that you requested in the survey done last Spring and recommended by the AVP/USA Committee of Committees and the Communication Committee.

Each issue's copy and theme is being initially created by a local group and then edited and laid out.

Your top selection for articles in the survey were:

1. New exercises/L&Ls or tweaking of existing exercises
2. Stories/hints about workshops from outside facilitators
3. Stories/hints about workshops from prisoners
4. Ethical issues on facilitation
5. Alternating columns on International AVP and Restorative Justice
6. Information on how a local council functions, handles problems
7. AVP challenges in a Letters to the Editor format
8. Brief lead-in stories with Internet addresses with expanded stories placed on the Internet

Your ideas are needed

Your ideas, letters to the editor and willingness to coordinate an issue with your local group are eagerly welcomed.

Upcoming editions

Spring 2008-Parolees in Community Workshops
– Linda Heacock, Virginia

Summer 2008 – Transforming Power - Marian Klosterman, Nebraska

Fall 2008 – Green Haven 32 years later – Carolyn Polikarpus and Green Haven facilitators

(Do you have a great topic? Sign up your group with Pat Hardy, 805/886-9773, avppat@earthlink.net)

If you do not have email access, mail to P.O. Box 3294, Santa Barbara, CA 93130

Remember to hold May 23-26, 2008 for AVP USA National Gathering in Bellingham, Washington at The Firs.

Go to <http://www.avpusa.org/annual07.htm> for up-to-date information.

See page 9 inside for more details.



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