



The TRANSFORMER

Supporting and celebrating facilitators of AVP workshops

Transforming Power

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Each issue is written by a different local group around the theme of their choosing. This issue was written essentially by prisoners in the Central Midwest Region and coordinated on the outside by Marian Klostermann.

TP Story: Cellie Challenge

By Kinetic Ken

The power to transform potentially violent energies and situations into nonviolent ones is a gift, freely offered to everyone if you choose to use it. Sound hard? At first it is. Remembering you have an option is perhaps the hardest part. We've been programmed by a specific set of paradigms, yet as humans we possess a remarkable ability to change how we think and behave. I like to think of this as *acting*, not *reacting!* Too often we respond to situations without taking the time to consider all the options available.

Transforming Power requires us to take an active role in how we behave, hence acting—choosing the best response based on reaching a desired outcome. I always believe there's a way out of any situation without resorting to violence. Consider this situation, which happened to me. . . .

As I walked into my first cell at Nebraska State Penitentiary, my new cellie jumped off his bunk and started yelling about getting another "f--ing cellie." Angrily he told me to stay out of the way or get socked-up. Going to the cell door, he yelled at the bubble, "What's up? Do I have to beat up this one, too? I will! I want him moved now!"

Continued on page 2

AVP in the Central Midwest

By Marian Klostermann

At our annual National AVP Memorial-Weekend Gathering in Tampa, Florida, AVP regional representatives were invited to take the responsibility for an issue of *The TRANSFORMER*. I volunteered the Central Midwest Region, consisting of Iowa, Missouri, Kansas, and Nebraska. Since then I've been consistently pleading for input from inside and outside facilitators. This was an opportunity to share personal convictions about Transforming Power with the National AVP community.

Expecting the best, I believe that this issue of *The TRANSFORMER* shows "the best" in the Central Midwest.

Marian Klostermann has been facilitating AVP workshops in Nebraska and Iowa for the past 11 years.

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Copy editor: Joan Cowan
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"Just deal with it," came the reply from the staff.

He looked back at me and shouted, "What ya' looking at? You think I'm kidding?"

"Nope," I replied meekly. Throwing my bag on the bunk, I jumped up and sat down. "If you like, I could just start screaming for help. It would save you the effort of hitting me."

He snorted a laugh and said, "No, I'd just go back to the hole."

After several hours of tense silence, I asked him what had been so bad about his last cellie. Why did he have to beat him up? He explained how his cellies have usually ended up making fun of him or talking behind his back. I listened, sharing about myself and relating to him when I could. Several hours later he had shared his whole life story. Remarkably, ours were very similar. We talked all night. I heard about how horrible the commission of his crime had been for him and how full of guilt and remorse he now felt, how he believed no one would give him the benefit of accepting that he felt that way. Instead, he thought most people saw only the crime. I discussed it; I allowed him to tell me how he felt; I even watched him cry and offered my support. By the next morning I had a new friend and the best cellie I've had yet.

By using humor to defuse the tense situation and then taking the time to really listen and get to know him, I turned a potentially bad situation into one of extreme benefit. I don't believe this would have happened without taking the risk of making myself vulnerable and choosing to really get to know him.

I don't expect every situation to turn out so positive, but I'm convinced violence can always be avoided. It's simply a matter of making this our goal and working to accomplish it in all our interactions.

Kinetic Ken is a facilitator at the Omaha Correctional Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

New Officers for AVP/USA

In addition to in-depth workshops on AVP, the annual gathering of your national organization, AVP/USA, selects the officers who will be serving you this year. They are as follows:

President: Peaceful Peg

peaefulpeg@gmail.com

Vice President: Listener Lolya

listenerlolya@gmail.com

Secretary: Daring Deb

daringdeb@gmail.com

Treasurer: Joyful Joann

joann@black-hole.com

To reach them by mail, send your letters to AVP/USA, 1050 Selby Avenue, St. Paul, MN 55104.

My Experience of Becoming a Man

By Intelligent Isaac

My experience of becoming a man is that everything you do is for real. As a kid you pretend a lot, but as a man you can't go around playing games. If you pretend to pay your bills, things get shut off. So everything is for real. When you get up in the morning to go to work, it's for real. You're either a man about life or a boy pretending to be a man.

Intelligent Isaac is an AVP facilitator at the Omaha Correctional Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

“The Best Way Out Is Always Through”

A quote from poet Robert Frost

By *Awesome Annie* and *Listener Lolya*

We knew we had a problem when so many of the “feeling” responses to Head Heart Hand were uncomfortable words like *irritable* and *upset*. The tension in the room was hard to ignore. Tremendous Tina, one of the inside facilitators who was leading this closing, faced the issue head-on and tried, in the few minutes remaining, to get the group to speak about what was going on.

This was an Advanced Workshop on Relationships, so no one was new to AVP; but the raw emotions that this topic exposed, together with a challenging group chemistry, worked together to create an undercurrent of tension that finally bubbled to the surface by the end of the day on Saturday. All of us on the team, the two inside and two outside facilitators, were committed to finding a way to rescue the weekend. We were determined to use what was going on as an example of what AVP is really best at—finding a way through conflict and tension, with respect for our different experiences and without violence. It felt like a very tall order at the time!

Since we didn’t have the option for the whole team to remain together in the prison to discuss how to go forward, we two outside facilitators spent the evening crafting an agenda for Sunday morning that we felt might allow us to deal with what may have been going on. We believed that Robert Frost had it right when he said, “The best way out is always through.” So our plan was to wade right in! We offered the plan to the two inside facilitators during our team meeting on Sunday morning, and they were on board. We were extremely grateful that they both had chosen to return. We didn’t take that for granted! Avoidance looked like a pretty attractive option to all of us at the time.

Here’s what we did

We started with a gathering, “Which guide to transforming power speaks to me now and why?”

Then we explained briefly how the process we would be following came into being. We stated we were going to assume that each person would be speaking her own point of view and that we would be respectful of it and let it be heard. We reminded ourselves that listening doesn’t mean that one agrees with what is being said.

We had written three questions on a page of flip chart paper and now showed this to the group. Each person in the group had been given a journal to write in early on in the workshop, so we asked each woman to consider these three questions by writing her own responses in her journal for about 15 minutes. We put on quiet music in the background. The opportunity to write first before speaking was designed to help us all reflect on what we had experienced and process it, to some extent, so that the conversation might be less raw than the point at which we ended the previous day.

The three questions were:

1. What’s been hard for me about this weekend?
2. If I think about AVP, this workshop or an earlier one, what has meaning for me?
3. How can I help make this workshop have meaning for all of us now?

Here is some of the thinking that led us to these three questions. We asked the first question to help us become aware of what emotions have been present for us this weekend and to try to understand the source of these emotions. To move through whatever was going on, we knew we had to start from where we were.

The motivation for the second question was to give us a chance to reconnect with the aspects of previous AVP workshops and ourselves that have given us strength and meaning in the past. Finally, the third question was designed to help shape the future. Our intent was to empower ourselves intentionally to shape an experience that would be meaningful and to become aware and articulate what that might take.

After the period of journal writing, we re-formed the circle. Each person had up to three minutes to speak her responses to these questions. We allowed 15 seconds after each person spoke before moving on to the next person to begin. Some took the whole three minutes, some only a small portion of that time, but each person had an equal opportunity to say what was on her mind. The third question put the responsibility on each of us to turn the workshop onto a new path.

The two outside facilitators took on the role of monitoring the time, using a timer that we had purchased the previous evening. We placed ourselves across from each other so that we could communicate nonverbally and so that our responses would be

distributed among those of the rest of the group. We also decided that, depending on where the participants who seemed to be the major source of the irritation sat in relation to the facilitator of the process, we would start the sharing in the other direction, so others would have a chance to speak first and shape the space. During the Head Heart Hand closing the previous day, the irritated participants had spoken first, and that had influenced the mood for the rest of the group.

This conversation turned out to be one of the most powerful that any of us had ever participated in. The most astounding aspect of what emerged was that the women who had seemed to be most responsible for promoting the tension in the group spoke to that, owned it and resolved to go in a different direction. No one had named them or blamed them, and that, I think, gave them the freedom not to be defensive and to accept responsibility themselves. Transforming power inhabited that circle and allowed us to get to a deep level of trust in each other. The most powerful aspect of this was that we all learned from a very real, and initially intensely uncomfortable, situation what is possible when we trust the principles of AVP and allow them to work.

Awesome Annie and Listener Lolya are outside facilitators at Iowa Correctional Institution for Women, Mitchellville, Iowa.

Read TP Stories

A fascinating collection of Transforming Power Stories by Hal Brody can be ordered from the AVP/USA Distribution Center (phone 888-278-7820 or see order form on page 7 of this newsletter).

Exercise: Affirmation Shield for Advanced Relationships Workshop

By Teachable Terry

Purpose: To build community by sharing about ourselves and giving each person a visual reminder about others in the group.

Time: 25 minutes

Materials: Newsprint, markers and masking tape

Sequence:

1. Hand out a sheet of newsprint and magic markers to each person.
2. Have each participant draw an outline of a shield on their newsprint. (Have one already drawn as an example.)
3. Write their adjective name across the top of the shield large enough to be clearly read from a distance.
4. Divide the rest of the shield into three sections.
5. In each section have participants answer the following:
 - a. three of my best qualities (top section)
 - b. three things I look for in people I want to have a relationship with (middle section)
 - c. My most important relationship with a person on this earth is . . .
Why? (bottom section)
6. Have each participant do a "show and tell" presentation of their shield to the group.
7. After the shields have been shown, have them tape them on the wall.

Processing: Don't take a lot of time. You might just want to state that "as you look at the shields throughout the workshop, take time to note others' qualities and the things that mean so much to them in their relationships."

Teachable Terry Reynolds is a facilitator in the Omaha Correctional Center in Omaha, Nebraska.

Editor's note: This exercise might also be used as an entering-the-workshop exercise in order to give the team a chance to finish planning while participants are arriving.

Post a sample shield with the three questions written in the sections. Explain to the first arrival, who then can share with others the task at hand. Encourage posting and circulating until the team is ready.

"Change the thinking that creates the
hatred that spurs the violence."
(Author unknown)

Cracking a Boulder with Feathers

By Practical Pat

Choosing life is an awesome privilege but a heck of a responsibility. At one moment in time, I was considered a “classic.” Now, I am far past an “antique” but not yet a “fossil.” If there is anything I miss since becoming a hostage in a restroom, it would have to be taking a drive and appreciating the experience of joy in the ride.

I was the car and the driver. My body structure was designed as slender as a sports car and as powerful as a NASCAR, and my hair has receded like a retracting convertible top. My journey through life has been like that of an 18-wheeler in tenth gear, hauling 40,000 pounds. I am full of high mileage and rough riding.

My cargo was a combination of addiction, failure, anger, lust and crime. Each was divided by partitions of pride and was covered with fear to mask the stench of my decaying spirit. Just say, I was asleep at the wheel and not all collisions were fatal, but all were tragic. Throughout my road rage, reckless discontent and failure to maintain control, I sideswiped others, only to blame them for the impact. Not once did I slow down to evaluate the magnitude of carnage left behind in my rear view mirror.

Knowing it was bound to happen, I was still apprehended unexpectedly. After 20 plus years of sleepwalking and daydreaming through blackouts of prodigal existence, I was apprehended under the influence of satanic toxins (drugs) and mineral spirits (alcohol). Captured and introduced to being a hostage in a restroom came not a moment too soon. In fact, it was long overdue and the best thing that could have happened for me and the general public.

Clearly, this life-altering act saved my life as it boosted the public’s confidence regarding safety from my possessed behaviors. At this phase of my life, I was introduced to an alternative to my violent persona. I believed that everyone was against me and no one cared what I had become. A war raged inside of me, and I battled all efforts of understanding. My first victory was the discovery that violence was not all physical. This was the eye-opening beginning of a transformation of which I was not yet aware.

Suddenly, it occurred to me that nearly all of my peers were mirrors of my own buffoonery. This was frightening for me but enlightening as well. I no longer felt comfortable around anyone who behaved as I once had. Those with character traits I now desired

to acquire were suspect. I was wedged between insanity and peace.

Feeling worse about the person I had allowed myself to become, monthly appeared AVP’s angelic individuals, armed with feathers of compassion. My skepticism had me questioning, “Who do they think they are?” Continually, they approached me with kindness, unconditional concern and a nonjudgmental attitude. I wanted them to stop trying to repair me because it was unnatural for someone to care for a person like myself.

Surely their families deserved their time more than myself and craved to have the quality time they chose to share with me. I felt selfish and undeserving of their presence but honored by their appearance. I braced myself for rebellion at each of their visits but craved their return after completing each workshop. I dared them to punish me with compassion and not ask for my permission. They entrapped me with hope and encouraged me with their commitment. Their cotton-candy voices embraced me into submission before strengthening me with peace and purpose. How had they managed to crack a boulder with feathers? Most of all, they helped me to enjoy the journey.

Talk about the potter and the clay. The facilitators of AVP have spun me into a realm so unfamiliar but one that is extremely exhilarating. When I am not attempting to encourage others or thinking of possibilities to enhance my own life, I feel guilty and useless. I am committed and grateful to the AVP facilitators and thankful for the opportunity to share AVP’s message with others. For once in my life, I have peace and purpose. No longer am I asleep at the wheel. I am enjoying the journey and appreciating the ride.

Practical Patrick Wynn is a facilitator in the Fort Dodge Correctional Facility, Fort Dodge, Iowa.

TP Stories on YouTube

Hear Transforming Power stories told on a section of YouTube set up by Mark Thomas, CA, at

<http://www.youtube.com/MarvelousMarkAVP>

From personal stories filmed by Mark to stories from history or film, Mark is interested in recording your story. Contact him.

Exploring Our Values

By Marge Schlitt, Lincoln, NE

Purpose: To clarify our feelings and beliefs about violent and nonviolent actions.

Time: 20–30 minutes

Materials: Place two strips of masking tape, string or yarn on the middle of the floor in the shape of an X (about 15' long). Put a piece of paper with the words *Violent*, *Not Violent*, *OK* and *Not OK* at the end of each piece of tape.

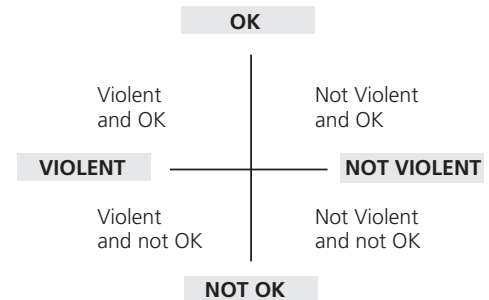
Sequence: **Review** the following commonly held definitions of violence, or ask the group to give their definitions of violence:

- Violence involves physical harm to another—and perhaps to property.
- Violence involves forcing another to act against his or her will.
- Violence involves severing a relationship; cutting off openness to communication. (Refusing to speak to someone may be perceived as more violent than slapping them to get their attention.)

Read some of the following statements and ask participants to think about where they think that statement belongs.

When you say “Go,” everyone moves to that spot. Don’t “follow the crowd.”

Discuss after each statement to understand the diversity of opinion.



- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Spank a child who is misbehaving. 2. Shoot a deer during hunting season. 3. In anger, call someone a bastard. 4. Slap a hysterical person to bring them to their senses. 5. Put out mouse poison in your house. 6. Shoot an enemy soldier during war. 7. Shoot an armed burglar in self-defense. 8. Knock down someone who is mugging you and run away. 9. Hand over your wallet to someone who is robbing you. 10. Take food from someone you know has plenty of money to replace it, and you are very poor. 11. Hit someone who bumps you as they are cutting in line ahead of you. | <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 12. When someone has greatly insulted you and is not sorry, shut them out of your life and refuse to acknowledge their existence. 13. Organize a hunger strike to protest unfair living conditions or rules. 14. Do nothing while a man on a nearby street corner repeatedly slaps and punches a woman. 15. Spray paint “this insults women” on an offensive billboard. 16. Shoot someone you find in bed with your spouse. 17. Stop buying products from a company whose policies you disapprove of. 18. Stop speaking to someone who really annoys you and is a total jerk. 19. Have an argument with someone who retaliates by killing your dearly beloved dog. |
|--|---|

Debriefing:

- When is violence okay?
- When is it hard to decide?
- How does it make you feel?
- Are there any situations where violence is the only alternative?
- What can we learn from this exercise?

Marge Schlitt has been an AVP facilitator for 20 years in New York state and in Lincoln, Nebraska.



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My Symbol of Power: A Circle

By Trusty Tony

In an Advanced Workshop on Power, we participants did the exercise “Symbols of Power.” (See D150 in the Advanced Manual.) This reflective exercise helps participants better understand themselves through the creation of symbols and concepts of power. Three symbols were posted on three separate walls so that participants could focus on one symbol without being distracted by other symbols. The symbols were a circle, a square and a triangle.

We were given newsprint and markers and asked to pick one of these symbols that appealed to us and gaze at it while reflecting on the subject of power. Then we were asked to draw or construct the image or idea pictured in our minds.

I chose the circle. A circle is continuous. No one knows where it begins or where it ends.

Sphere—a natural design said to be the strongest structure known in the universe. Power by natural design.

Time—the clock on the wall always moving forward. Perpetual power that no one can escape.

Transforming Power Mandala—a representative symbol of the power that we all have within ourselves in order to change.

Trusty Tony is an experienced AVP Facilitator at the Omaha Correctional Center, Omaha, NE.

Levels of Transforming Power

By John A. Shuford

Transforming Power (TP) is the power that works within us to transform violent or potentially violent or unhealthy attitudes, relationships or lifestyles into more positive, healthy, nonviolent ones. This power is available to each one of us. Transforming Power cannot be directly defined or described. Transforming Power simply works, whether or not we understand it or how it comes into being. It cannot be confined to words. It can only be experienced or observed. I will, in spite of this, try to shed some light on the possible processes of TP. This may be helpful in attempting to explain TP to others.

One could approach an explanation of TP from three levels: spiritual, interpersonal or social, and psychological. All three are not independent of each other; yet viewing each separately reveals many of TP’s qualities. For many, the understanding of TP as grace or the power of God/Spirit is sufficient, and no further exploration is needed or may be desired. For others, however, an understanding of how TP actually might work would be informative.

Spiritual level

Transforming Power can be seen as a spiritual phenomenon, i.e., tapping into that which connects us all. We can think of an individual as being a series of concentric circles, with the core being our innate health or goodness. As we let our barriers down or remove them, we move closer to the center of our being. When we tap into that center core, we experience a self-acceptance and sense of peace that allows us to connect with others without fear or apprehension. This connection transforms us and others. This river of spirit flows within us all. By tapping into it we connect with that spirit and the interconnectedness of all. We no longer feel separate or isolated, changing our experience of ourselves and others and, thus, transforming our attitude and view of the world. This shift gives us a sense of hope that the future can be better; then everything is different.

Interpersonal level

The perspective of seeing TP as interpersonal has at its core the experience of community. By creating psychological and physical safety, AVP develops a sense of community, with levels of safety and security that allow participants to lower their defenses and barriers. Participants then are able to honestly look into themselves. As they increase their awareness of who they really are, rather than whom others need or expect them to be, or who they think others want them to be, they more fully embrace and accept their true selves. This new self-awareness and higher self-esteem encourages more openness to new experiences, thought patterns and behaviors. Participants realize they are connected to each other in positive, healthy, interdependent ways, rather than negative, disconnected and manipulative ways. They no longer feel they are alone but are connected



to something bigger than themselves. Their experience of themselves and others is transformed.

Because of the importance of *community* to AVP, it is helpful to look at the use of this term by some other programs. Currently, there are drug programs and boot camps, both in and out of prison that base their success on building community. The use of *community* within AVP represents the creation of a supportive environment based on trust, respect and caring, within which participants voluntarily and willingly lower their barriers without being asked or coerced into doing so. The drug treatment programs create an *interdependence-compliance* environment, which is not based on trust, respect and caring. The participant is expected to act and speak in a prescribed way, often after being belittled into submission. The difference in the two approaches is monumental. The transformation that occurs with AVP is voluntary and internal to individuals and stays with them after they leave AVP and prison. The change that occurs with the drug treatment programs is externally driven and frequently continues as long as the person is in the structure of the program. It is *compliance* rather than *commitment*.

Participants in these interdependence-compliance programs often say they “fake it until they make it” or they “go along in order to get along.” Those who have participated in these programs have commented that a minority of program participants really wants to change—5 percent for some programs, up to 50 percent for others. One man, who is highly respected by the DOC (Department of Correction) for being a positive leader within the institution commented, “I consistently see men come out of the in-house drug program here and more or less ‘act out’ in all manner of ways once they are free of the program’s controls. The men leaving AVP workshops are quite different. The change they experience—in a very short time—is long lasting and less likely to fade. I meet men daily who participated in one, or several, AVP workshops (some years ago) and still feel the impact of the experience.”

The change from the experience of AVP is the development of new neuro pathways rather than a situational change in behavior due to capitulation to power. You cannot bring about positive, permanent attitude change in a hostile/punitive environment on a consistent basis. This is not to say these programs aren’t useful and beneficial to some. They just don’t have the consistent transformative impact on participants. As one inmate reported to me, “The drug treatment program taught me what to think, and AVP gave me the self-esteem and tools to do it.”

Psychological level

This experience of feeling connected is very powerful and leads us to exploring TP from a psychological perspective. We all have a core psychological need to feel connected and not isolated. This connection may be to others, a group or to something that is bigger than ourselves. This explains the immense impact that religion, gangs and the military have on shaping behavior and attitudes, especially today when we are more and more disconnected from our neighbors and our communities. The lack of feeling connected is also one of the prime psychological and social factors leading to criminal behavior according to Dr. Daniel Amen in the video *Firestorms in the Brain*.



Thoughts

By Terry Olney

Winning an argument by fighting
shows physical strength and
skill

Winning without fighting
shows mental and emotional
maturity
self control and intelligence

For happiness to win
look within,
the place to start
is in the heart.

Outside joy is pure decoy
it doesn’t last,
before long it’s past

But inside
joy resides
satisfaction galore
evermore
it’s all inside.

Terry Olney is an AVP participant at the Omaha Correctional Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

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Positive emotions and positive self-regard cannot be overemphasized. An article in the *Journal of Clinical Psychology*, "In Session" by Michael R. Bridges of Temple University, states that "numerous studies have shown that positive emotions broaden one's thought-action repertoire while also 'undoing' the physiological arousal associated with negative emotions and specific action tendencies." Also, "it is now clear that the experience and expression of positive emotions such as love, compassion, gratitude and forgiveness are essential for adaptive and healthy functioning across a multitude of human endeavors ranging from individual coping with bereavement and trauma, to marital relationships, and even to corporate team building."

Since many prisoners have experienced unresolved trauma and many have difficulty with relationships (both personal and professional), the experience of positive interactions and emotions has great potential for having a transformative effect on them. Some comments from AVP participants illustrate this transformation:

"It made me look at how I relate to other people, that I was doing it on a *threat-to-threat* basis, and the fact that that is not necessary. We can stand with each other and experience each other without wondering what the other is going to do, what the threat is, being on the defensive. What I like about AVP is that I look at others differently and I look at myself differently. I look in the mirror and for the first time in my life, I actually like what I see. I like what I've become and what I've become inside. I never before thought of how I related to other people; the defensiveness and intimidation. It just never occurred to me to think about it, that there was another alternative, not until AVP."

"Before AVP I only thought about violence; there was no second option. AVP saved my life; it gave me another option. The violence in my life got worse and worse. I spent most of my 11 years in prison in the hole. I am not a sensitive, caring, understanding individual, but this program has really had an impact on me. During my first basic as a trainer, there were a number of inmates there whom I had been very violent to before. I knew if I was to be a role model, to live AVP, I had to apologize to them for what I had done. It was odd to apologize to someone I had defeated and who had pleaded for his life to me."

"It is not fail safe, but it does work 90 to 95 percent of the time for me. Guys who knew me on the street come up to me and say I've changed, that I'm a new person. That really makes me feel good to hear that. It was inside me all along; I just didn't know how to bring it out without feeling less of a man."

Many men and women in prison, as children, had been abused physically, psychologically or sexually. The impact of this can be very damaging to their ability to develop connection with other people. According to Dr. Amen, when children do not experience bonding with their mother or other adult, they will not develop the capacity for empathy, which is a feeling of connection with others. Without empathy, they can hurt others and not be bothered by it. As one former female inmate told me, "I would hurt you; I would hurt anybody; and it meant nothing to me. I was mean." While in prison, this woman experienced AVP and the community that came with it. She is now one of the most caring, empathetic women I know. She has devoted her life to helping former inmates when they are released to the community.

The experience of community motivates you continually to seek it out. Within this AVP environment of trust, respect, caring and connection, newer healthier neuropathways are developed. As one experiences more of this new way of thinking, the old, unhealthy neuropathways atrophy, becoming less and less a part of one's life; and the new neuropathways become stronger and more integrated as they are reinforced.

I hope this has shed some light on the workings of Transforming Power. The interpersonal and psychological explorations in no way negate the spiritual aspect of TP. There is no way to know if the transformation occurs because of the interpersonal/psychological changes or if the transformation is spiritual in nature, which leads to the interpersonal/psychological changes; and it doesn't matter. Transforming Power works, and it is the most powerful outcome of true community. I believe the more we use this approach in prisons, the more success our women and men will have when they return to our communities.

John Shuford, AVP/Delaware, has been facilitating AVP workshops since the early 90s throughout the world, has offered workshops at national and international gatherings and has professionally trained prison staff in AVP.

Subscribe to the "L" Free

The national AVP-L email list is created for AVP facilitators to share questions and provide answers on facilitating AVP workshops. To subscribe, send an e-mail indicating where and when you obtained your AVP facilitator certification, where you currently train, and any other pertinent information to the list owner, Peter Hoover at prh4@cornell.edu.

What Is This Transforming Power, Anyway?

By *Delightful Dorothy*

One of the parts of AVP workshops that has always been most difficult for me has been clarifying the difference between Transforming Power and the more ordinary, or at least more overt, aspects of power in human relationships. As we all know, it's hard to capture in words just what a spiritual force is all about, and a lot of my early TP talks fell pretty flat. (However, I've always used the Ram Dass "Akido" story by Terry Dobson which has helped a lot. See www.wattstapes.com/dobson.htm.)

TP talks got a lot easier for me after my first Advanced Workshop on Power, held at Anamosa State Prison in Iowa, when the group came up with the basics of the *Power Grid*. While the words that describe Transforming Power on the grid may not be as concrete as those that describe some of the other kinds of power, getting a sense of what TP is not and where it does not originate seems to help people better understand just what it is.

This Power Grid has been further refined by participants in Basic Workshops at Anamosa. In fact, it was a first-time AVPer who had the insight to add the section about "Crowd Power," which is an important dimension of power dynamics that we all need to be aware of. Just another demonstration that AVP facilitators don't serve as experts, but simply seek to draw out the wisdom of the community!

I hope the Power Grid is as helpful in explaining TP to you as it has been to me and other AVPers I know. And, of course, we'd love to hear any ideas you might come up with to make it better.

Delightful Dorothy Whiston is a facilitator at the Anamosa State Penitentiary, Anamosa, Iowa, Mount Pleasant Correctional Facility, Mount Pleasant, Iowa and the Iowa, Correctional Institution for Women at Mitchellville, Iowa.

| POWER GRID | | | |
|---|--|---|---|
| Aspects of Power in Human Relationships | | | |
| KIND OF POWER | QUALITIES / EXAMPLES | STRONG / WEAK | POSITIVE / NEGATIVE |
| Personal Power | personality, personal history, mood, health, etc. | can be either, depending on circumstances or habit | can be used in either + or - ways |
| Role Power | teacher/student, inmate/CO, parent/child, boss/employee; also sometimes influenced by group social status (wealthy/ | comes along with role or social status | can be used in either + or - ways |
| Crowd Power | comes from the group—sports or concert audience, political gathering, religious gathering | usually greatly intensifies power dynamics; it may either exaggerate or level personal or role power; often very unstable | can go from + to - quite quickly (become a mob); usually more difficult to go from - to + |
| Transforming Power | comes from beyond us; is always available in us and others; can't manipulate it, but can only allow it to work through you | strong, though may appear weak or feel vulnerable; can increase other kinds of power when they are used for good | always for the good of all parties involved |

Acrostic Using Transforming Power

By Diligent Dale

T Try to transform the conflict with a win/win situation.

R Respect yourself.

A Affirm that there is always another way other than violence.

N Never blame others, it only escalates the problem.

S Sense what the person is going through; it may not be about you.

F Forget about your own needs and wants.

O Others have importance and feelings, try to recognize them.

R Remember there are always consequences when we use violence.

M Make sure you understand what is going on within yourself.

I Instead of allowing a situation to continue, walk away.

N Nonviolent solution is what we are looking for.

G Give respect to your opponent; it may calm the situation.

P Power comes from within us. We control it, it doesn't control us.

O Others are important, make sure we treat them that way.

W Work on yourself before you try to work on others.

E Every situation can be resolved nonviolently, it doesn't have to end with violence.

R Remember everything that was said above.

Diligent Dale Nollen is a facilitator at the Omaha Correctional Center, Omaha, Nebraska.

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AVP

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(Send your thoughts to P.O. Box 3294,
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Any group interested in writing and compiling a future issue can call Pat Hardy at (805) 886-9773 or email avppat@earthlink.net.