



The TRANSFORMER

Supporting and celebrating facilitators of AVP workshops

Empathy

In This Issue

Understanding Empathy 1

Illustration: What AVP Means to Me 2

What Does Empathy Look Like? 4

Empathy Module 5

Empathy Talk/Handout 6

Order Form for AVP Facilitators. . 7

Exercise: Empathy Response Circle 8

On Empathy Development 9

What Is Important? 9

Still Learning 10

Sisters 11

What's Happening? 11

Looking for Two Good People 12

Network Database Being Developed 12

Each issue is written by a different local group around the theme of their choosing. This issue was created by John A. Shuford, AVP/Delaware Coordinator, Clerk of the International Committee and AVP/USA Past President, and Deb Bromiley, Coordinator of Baylor Women's Correctional Institution in Delaware, with contributions from AVP/Delaware inside facilitators.

Understanding Empathy

By John Shuford

Transforming Power is about both *emotional intelligence* and *social intelligence*. *Emotional intelligence* is learning about ourselves, and *social intelligence* is learning how to understand others and to connect with them in a meaningful way. The skill or ability that most relates to social intelligence is empathy, which is one of the most important outcomes of AVP. We don't talk much about it, and we have very few exercises that directly address it. Yet, without empathy, Transforming Power would likely have little long-term impact.

Definition

The *Encyclopaedia Britannica's* (1999) traditional definition of empathy is "the ability to imagine oneself in another's place and understand the other's feelings, desires, ideas and actions;" in other words, to walk in their shoes. That definition has changed, however, because we realize one cannot walk in someone else's shoes. Another definition from *Psychology—An Introduction* is more explicit: "empathy—the arousal of an emotion in an observer that is a vicarious response to another person's situation." In other words, empathy comes from our ability to connect to our own core feelings that are similar to another's core feelings.

Why it matters

Empathy is important because it is what facilitates our interactions and connections with others. It is the foundation for building community. Without this sense of connection—this ability to consider other people's views or feelings—we would experience much conflict and might even develop narcissistic or antipersonality disorders. The reverse might also be true—the development of empathy might transform a narcissistic or antipersonality disorder.

How empathy develops

According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1999), "Empathy and other forms of social awareness are also important for the development of a moral sense. Morality embraces a person's beliefs about the appropriateness or goodness of what he does, thinks, or feels . . . Childhood is . . . the time at which moral standards

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begin to develop in a process that often extends well into adulthood." The development of these moral standards passes through several stages, from "avoidance of punishment; to avoidance of adult disapproval and rejection; to avoidance of internal guilt and self-recrimination. Others have argued that . . . the inhibition of aggressive behavior arises from this moral effect rather than from the mere anticipation of punishment." This may explain why the current punitive-retribution approach to corrections is not working and is, in fact, creating a worse situation. People who develop empathy are less likely to re-offend. One inmate told me that if you really want to hurt someone who has harmed others, make them feel the pain of what they have done, i.e., facilitate their development of empathy. From this awareness can come the motivation to take responsibility for one's actions and to change one's attitudes and lifestyle and, therefore, to transform one's life.

In order to experience empathy, several conditions need to exist. The person needs to be self-aware or self-conscious, aware of others and what they are experiencing, and be able to access his or her own feelings and

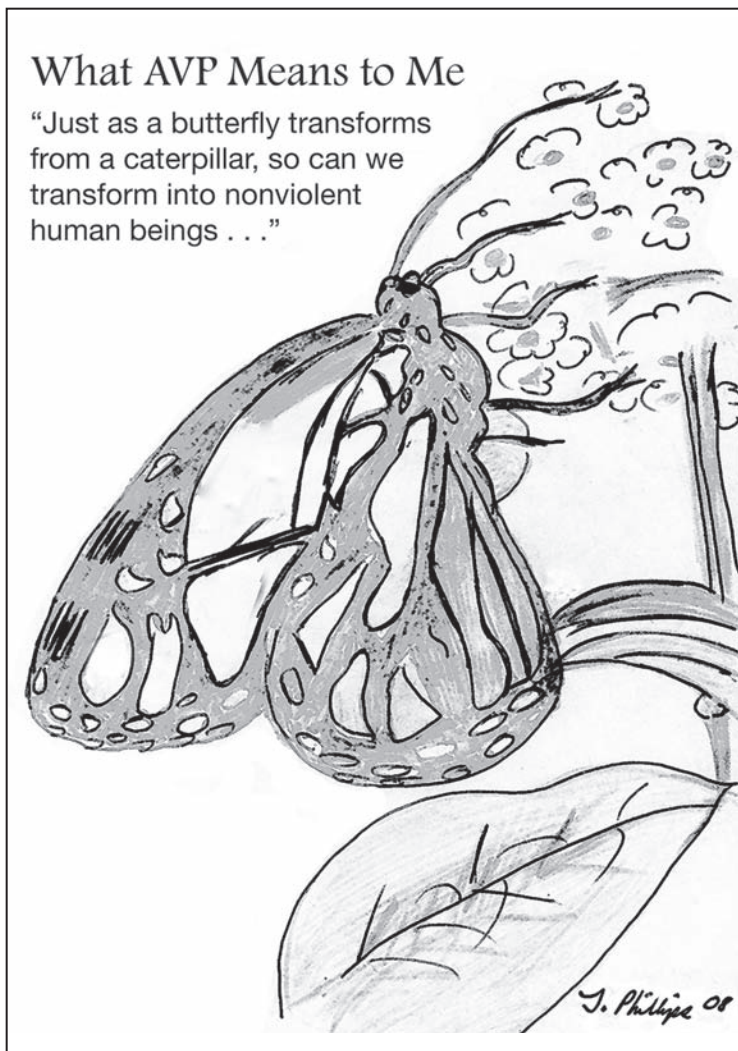


Illustration by Timothy Phillips, Hagerstown, MD

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ideas and be aware of their consequences in himself or herself and in others. The cognitive and perceptual abilities required for empathy begin to develop in childhood and continue as the child matures. This development of empathy, a natural ability we all have, is stunted or stopped when the child is sexually, emotionally or physically abused. The neuro-pathways in the brain are altered so as to protect the child emotionally, with the concomitant result being an inability to empathize. A similar experience also can occur in an adult who is traumatized. Trauma is usually stored in the back of the brain, far away from the emotional centers, which are in the frontal lobes.

Drug addiction has a similar impact on empathy. The use of drugs anesthetizes feelings, which decreases the ability to empathize in the moment. Addiction, on the other hand, has a similar effect on the brain, as does trauma; it creates new neuro-pathways. These neuro-pathways focus on the addiction at the expense of everything else, including family, friends, children, responsibilities, etc.

What prevents empathy development?

Peg Erlanger (President of AVP/USA) states that “some of us have so much pain as children that we shut down our pain receptors, and when we do that, we cannot feel the pain of others or our own.” We thus cut ourselves off from a significant part of ourselves. We create self-protection barriers and defenses that develop into “assumed” identities through which we relate to the outside world. These assumed identities are not who we really are but are identities we feel we need to take on to protect ourselves and function in the world as we see it. These identities keep others out and also keep us in, somewhat like a prison.

Robin Casarjian in *Houses of Healing* (1995) calls these assumed identities subpersonalities. “To the degree that we identify with any particular subpersonality, we see the world through the colored glasses (the beliefs and perspectives) of that particular identification.” Overidentifying with a subpersonality can debilitate us or stunt our growth. Some examples of assumed identities are the protector, the rescuer, the victim, the “know it all,” the good girl, the bully, the perfectionist, the mean mother, the failure or the “nothing is going to change” assumed identity. Over-identification can also occur when someone brings their job home with them. Correctional officers and police are particularly susceptible to doing this. They are trained to assess a situation factually without

getting emotionally involved. This lack of empathy does not serve them well at home, which may explain the high divorce, alcoholism and suicide rates they experience.

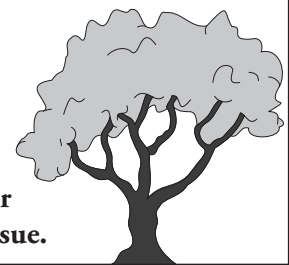
Breaking through to empathy

In order to break through the walls of our self-made prison—revealing who we really are and our natural ability to empathize—we need to feel a high level of safety. With this level of safety, we can now risk being vulnerable enough to lay down our assumed identity. *When you lay down your identity, you are left with your humanity; and from this place of common humanity, you can experience true connection with others.* This is when transformation occurs. AVP creates this level of safety through the development of community. Other programs, which don’t understand the significance of creating community, use the interdependent-compliance model, which creates a pseudocommunity. These programs are punitive based on a high level of judgment, which is actually counterproductive to developing empathy. Their level of safety is low. Those who experience these programs may alter their behavior somewhat, but they retain most (if not all) of their old identity, which makes it difficult for them to experience transformation. It may be that participants with high self-esteem are more likely to gain from these types of programs.

Even though AVP is one of the better programs at teaching empathy, we need to be more focused and conscious about our approach. Empathy is so critical to developing the necessary social skills for success in society that it can no longer be a by-product. It must be something we talk about and further develop in our workshop designs so as to enhance our effectiveness in facilitating transformation.

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What Does Empathy Look Like?

by John Shuford

Creating community is essential to the development of empathy, but it is not enough. We need to teach how to give an empathetic response. Understanding and experiencing empathy and giving an empathetic response are not the same. The skill of giving an empathetic response is a specific skill, just as is giving an “I” message. It is not easy for many of us, even those of us who are experienced facilitators. The exercise “Empathy Response Circle” (see page 8) was created by the men at Sussex Correctional Institution in Delaware to help people develop this skill.

A useful description of an empathetic response has been offered by Doug Couch (AVP/Antelope Valley):

“The plain empathetic response acknowledges the person’s valuing whatever they are valuing from an emotional base. This emotionally contextual acknowledgment does not speak to agreement, disagreement, apologizing or sympathy. While the details or content of what the person is expressing may also be reflected verbally, neither the contextual nor content-oriented reflection or acknowledgment is about joining in the person’s story or his or her position about the story. It is strictly letting the person know that regardless of what the story is, how desperate or mundane it might be, that he or she is heard at both the verbal-intellectual and emotional-value levels without judgment either way about how the story is expressed (e.g., I am hearing you AND I am noticing the feeling-value you are placing on what you’re saying about your experience).”

Clearly, an empathetic response is about validation and not about judgment. It is more about the emotional experience of what the other person is experiencing and not so much about the events that have occurred.

When individuals realize their ability to experience and express empathy, amazing things can occur. Here are some examples:

Delaware DOC Commissioner Stan Taylor commented, “As a warden of a state prison in Delaware, I saw AVP facilitate a dramatic reduction in the number of assaults between inmates in what had been a difficult maximum security unit. As the program continued to run and graduate more and more inmates, the overall climate improved to where the inmates were seeking ways to positively affect their living environment.”

After a workshop for only men whose participation was court-mandated for domestic abuse and after the “Empathy Visualization” exercise (see www.thetransformer.us/fall2008), one of the participants came up to me and said, “I had no idea she felt that way.” In the workshop, we did not discuss what the men did or the impact of their actions. This participant developed this awareness solely from within himself.

Nyiramajambere Francoise, an AVP facilitator in Rwanda who had personally experienced the trauma of genocide, commented, “During the genocide, they killed my mother, father and our relatives. It was our neighbors who killed them. The killers were our friends. I started to believe that no one is good. So I isolated myself from others. It was my pastor who told me to go to the AVP workshop. I didn’t want to go because when you go to a workshop, you have to make friends and to have a friend is to bring an enemy into your life. [In the workshop] I saw how people started to bring back their hearts to love people and how they talked to each other, and this started to change me. I started to have friends, speak freely and not to be alone. I made friends through AVP. I’m not sure how it happened, but it did.”

Robert Martin, AVP/New York stated, “If there is such a thing as a miraculous change in an individual, I can truthfully say that it was during my involvement with AVP that I began to grow from a person filled with hate, anger and despair into a person who believes he, too, is responsible for the protection, preservation and enrichment of humanity.”

E	Emotionally intelligent
M	Meaningful relationships
P	Peace building
A	Accessing your emotion
T	Trust building
H	Healthy attitude
Y	Your path to connection

Empathy Module

Contributors include Elinor Brody, Deb Bromiley, Paula Maiorano, John Shuford, Sussex Correctional Institution AVP/Delaware and Empathy Session at the 2008 National Gathering

This module is a suggested sequence of exercises ready to be put into an agenda format before it is used, i.e., adding L&Ls, gatherings, etc. As with all new agendas we welcome feedback to make it better.

1. Picture-Sharing Exercise (*Advanced Manual* D137)
 - a. Have participants pick out a picture from a large number of pictures.
 - b. Ask as a whip, "What do you feel when you look at your picture?"
 - c. Then ask, "What about your picture makes you feel that way?"
 - d. Discuss where emotions come from (e.g., from past experiences and associations).
2. Facts and Feelings Exercise (personal life events and emotions) (*Advanced Manual* D74)
 - a. Ask participants to put life events around the outside of the figure, beginning with birth.
 - b. List Primary Emotions across the top of newsprint—mad, sad, glad, scared and excited. Ask group for feelings/emotions and put each under one or more of the Primary Emotions.
 - c. Ask participants to write corresponding emotions inside the figure.
3. From Another Point of View Exercise (all behavior is purposeful) (*Advanced Manual* D84)

Participants generate possible reasons underlying examples of negative behavior.
4. Emotions Discussion
 - a. Why are emotions important?
 - 1) Emotions motivate us; they are how we experience and understand life and how we connect.
 - b. Where do emotions come from?
 - 1) Emotions are energy that travel to the brain, which interprets it according to past experience.
 - 2) They come from our values and beliefs and how we perceive our current life experience as it relates to those values and beliefs.
 - 3) Our values and beliefs are formed through our life experiences, family, community and peers.
 - 4) Our values and beliefs are developed in order for us to meet basic human needs for our psychological and physical well-being. Basic needs are
 - Survival: food, safety, shelter
 - Connection: fulfilled by loving, sharing, cooperating and a sense of belonging
 - Meaning in Life: fulfilled by achieving, accomplishing and being recognized and respected
5. Control and Power over one's life: fulfilled by having and making choices
6. Fun: fulfilled by laughing and playing
- c. Emotions are the currency or vehicle in life. They are how we connect and relate to each other; empathy is how we show and experience this connection. This is why empathy is an essential component of community.
5. Four-Part Listening Exercise (listening for facts, feelings and values) (*Advanced Manual* D83)
6. Empathy Talk (see page 6)
7. Empathy Bingo Exercise (connecting different types of responses) (see www.thetransformer.us/fall2008)
8. Human-to-Human Exercise (deeply connecting with a partner) (*Advanced Manual* D97)
9. Empathy Response Circle Exercise (see page 8)
10. Empathy Visualization Exercise (see www.thetransformer.us/fall2008)
11. Homework: write a letter to someone in your life whom you have victimized (or to their mother) containing empathy statements.
12. Continuing Empathy Awareness Exercise
 - a. For three to five days, "try on" a different person's experience of life. This might be a CO, a cook, an inmate or anyone you interact with frequently.
 - b. Observe that person for about 30 minutes.
 - c. Try to put yourself in that person's place. What is he thinking and feeling? How is that person reacting to what happens? What has that person's day been like? What problems might this person have? Why does that person experience the world in the way that she appears to do so? How do his experiences shape his overall temperament and the way in which he interacts with you?
 - d. Now, put your own shoes back on and think about the person you observed.
 - e. Did any of your observations surprise you? Can you understand why this person behaves in the manner that he or she does after watching him or her "in action"? Do you feel differently about this person after having "tried on her or his shoes"?
 - f. How will you alter your interactions with this person as a result of your observations? What did you discover about yourself and how you behave as a result of trying on this person's shoes?

Empathy Talk/Handout

By John A. Shuford

Empathy is the capacity to understand and feel the emotion that someone else is experiencing, i.e., to walk in his or her shoes. It is not sympathy, an apology or taking on another person's problem as your own. Sympathy is feeling pity or badly about someone else's situation; an apology involves your feeling badly about what you have done independent of what the other person is feeling. Empathy also is not taking responsibility for someone else's problem. Empathy is understanding what the emotional experience of another is, and an empathetic response validates what the other is experiencing and feeling.

You cannot fully understand what another is experiencing; however, you can experience within yourself the same emotion you believe the other is experiencing. That is, in a given situation you may not have the same fear and feeling of powerlessness, but you can understand what it is like to be afraid and feel powerless. So, you may not have experienced the same situation as someone else, but you can feel empathy for what they are going through.

An important factor when considering empathy is whether or not someone has healthy boundaries. Healthy boundaries are when someone is clear about where they end and the other person begins. People who have been abused or traumatized may not have healthy boundaries, resulting in others having too much influence or control over their lives. They end up making poor choices as a result of someone else's influence.

Empathy with someone who has healthy boundaries is part of a continuum of emotion, as in the following Empathy Scale:

Unaware	Don't know
Apathy	Know and don't care
Interest/Curious	Know some and want to know more
Concern	Know and care
Empathy	Understand/feel and can validate the other's emotional experience
Compassion	Empathy, with a desire to improve the other's situation

When someone has unhealthy boundaries, the emotional continuum may look like the following, according to Rev. Paula A. Maiorano, AVP coordinator, Delaware Women's Work Release & Treatment Center.

Unaware	Don't know
Apathy	Know and don't care
Interest/Curious	Know some and want to know more
Concern	Know and care
Identification*	Poor boundaries—take on another's problem as your own
Enmeshed*	No boundaries—one's thinking and behavior is not independent of the other person

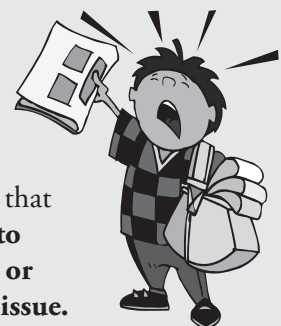
*According to Rev. Paula A. Maiorano, AVP coordinator, Delaware Women's Work Release & Treatment Center

If you can experience empathy and the validity of the other person's experience, you might also be able to see their truth. The significance in this is shown in the following quote:

"When faced with conflict, explore the possibility that opposing forces can both be true simultaneously. Taking this perspective immediately dissolves animosity and piques curiosity. You find yourself wondering, 'What is their truth? What is the value on their side?' When you finally abandon your belief that yours is the only truth, the game changes forever. Now you're free to see what truth you can create together." — Brian Alexander

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Exercise: Empathy Response Circle

Originally developed by Sussex Correctional AVP in Delaware

Purpose: To learn/understand what an empathic response is and how to give one and to experience empathy.

Time: 45 minutes

Sequence:

1. Have the participants sit in a circle with one chair in the middle.
2. Give a brief “Empathy Talk” (see page 6) by discussing what empathy is and is not; include the Empathy Scale:

Unaware, Apathy, Interest/Curious, Concern, Empathy and Compassion
3. Brainstorm different empathic statements for different situations, i.e., the death of a loved one, the birth of a child, the experience of coming to prison. Write responses on a chart. Then ask, “How can you identify with a person going through this?”
4. Ask for five volunteers to role-play a DUI scenario that includes the following characters:
 - a. The victim who is in a wheelchair as a result of the accident
 - b. The victim’s spouse/partner
 - c. The DUI driver’s spouse/partner
 - d. The DUI driver’s teenage child
 - e. The DUI driver’s cellmate who has positive things to say about him or her
5. Have a trainer (or a participant who understands and knows how to give an empathic response) sit in the middle of the circle and play the driver.
6. Ask the victim to tell the driver (who is sitting in the middle) what impact the accident has had on his/her life and to tell it with feeling (about 2–3 minutes long).
7. Ask for two or three volunteers to give an empathic response to the victim. Suggest they begin their comments with, “As a result of the accident, you feel . . . because . . .” (This is an opportunity to use a modified “I” message.) or “I’ll bet that made you feel . . .” The empathic response should not be an apology or a justification. After each response, the facilitator should ask the group if the response is a good empathy response and, if not, how it could be improved.
8. Next, the driver is to give an empathic response to the victim. The victim can draw from the responses already made or create a new one. Remember—no apology.
9. Repeat #7 and #8 for the remaining roles, ending with the positive comments by the cellmate. (If time is limited, the exercise can be effective with only three or four roles.)
10. Process: Ask the characters how their participation in the activity made them feel. Ask others in the circle how they felt about the activity. If desired, the exercise could be repeated with another scenario.
11. Break into quads and have each participant write a short empathic statement to one of the characters. Have each one share their statement with the others, giving feedback. (Have a facilitator sit in on each quad to offer assistance or to participate fully.)
12. Process in the large group with quads staying grouped together.

On Empathy Development

by Mike McCloskey, DCC, Delaware

“**T**ry to look at the situation from his point of view,” a friend suggested. This was many, many years ago, and I had yet to shift focus from myself to others. My initial response then was, “But his point of view is distorted. He is not in touch with reality!” I did not know it at the time but I had a long way to go in learning about empathy and the value of the humanity of others. A single comment by one insightful person started me on a journey and a life-long commitment to considering the feelings of others.

I did not know much about empathy back then. It would be years before I actually learned what empathy was all about. One friend’s suggestion planted a seed that grew over time. Gradually, I learned to view the world from the eyes of others and eventually feel their feelings.

An AVP Bias Awareness Workshop gave me a first-hand experience when I participated in the “Masks” exercise. In this exercise, I was a “masked” person and was subjected to certain rules that made me feel inferior. The experience allowed me to feel, first-hand, how it might feel to be belittled and treated like an outcast. In a very short time I felt what some men told me they feel daily. This was one of my first lessons in empathy. I got a taste of what some others experienced daily.

In the years following this experience, I continued to learn more about empathy. If we can experience the feelings and emotions of others, we also can gain a clearer picture of their world and, then, are in a better position to understand the reasons for their acting, feeling or behaving in a certain way. This greater understanding often decreases the possibility of conflict.

A challenge for me was understanding another person’s anger. So many emotions and feelings tend to be beneath anger that I found myself avoiding it. However, it was by getting in touch with these seldom-expressed emotions and feelings that I learned to understand the reasons some people acted in certain ways I found disturbing. The more I understood, the less disturbing the way someone acted was for me. This left the door open for me to see the inner goodness of other people and develop relationships I avoided in the past. I made attempts to learn more about how they came to be at a particular place in life and feel a particular way.

Learning to be empathic toward others not only improved my relationships with others, but it helped me become calmer and more peaceful within myself. The more I connected with others, the more I found fewer irritations in my life.

What Is Important?

by LaToya McDuffie, BWCI, Delaware

Be willing to suffer for what is important—that is my Transforming Power. For 2½ years I have been incarcerated. During this time my uncle and his wife have been raising my two baby boys, ages two and three. In the 2½ years that I have been here, I see my babies only three to four times a year. In 2006 I took parenting classes so I could be eligible for Reach Visits, which are 1½ hour visits where I can be alone with my children, followed by the regular 1 hour visit with my children and extended family.

After completing the parenting classes, I became extremely excited. When I told my uncle and aunt the good news, they immediately went against it. They have very busy lives and didn’t see how these extended visits would fit into their

schedules, and they didn’t want to upset the children.

I then became upset, but I held on. As time went on, from 2006 until now, I began to see my babies less and less. Not being able to see my kids often hurts. As I learned about empathy during AVP, I began to realize that my family is taking very good care of my kids. They go on trips, they do things as a family, they go to the best day care, they have the best health care and, most of all, they have unconditional love from my uncle and aunt.

Yes, right now I am suffering. And yet, I can understand how my uncle and aunt are feeling and what they are doing. It is the right thing for my children.

Still Learning

by Daring Deb, Wilmington, Delaware

I have been an AVP Trainer and Program Coordinator for a little over a year now. You would think that I practice AVP's principles every second of every day. Well, not so.

Having recently married and moved an hour from my former home in Pennsylvania, I was encountering difficulties with my two sisters, both younger than I. They seemed to be very resentful of my newfound happiness and my geographic distance. Prior to meeting my new husband and moving, I was very much a part of their everyday life, often functioning as a partner in activities with their kids, trips, listening and in general just being there and seeing a lot of them. I enjoyed this role. They were there for me when my previous marriage ran into trouble. Sisters can be very close, as many of you know.

As time passed and I was very focused on my new life, there were many difficult discussions, e-mails and phone calls about my absence from Pennsylvania. E-mails got nasty, phone calls lessened and I was feeling further apart from my sisters every day. I, of course, felt

Upcoming 2009 issues of the Transformer

Winter

Minnesota and AVP/USA Distribution Center - *Book Reviews and Sale* - Terry Kayser

Spring

Rocky Mountain Region - *Exercises That Changed Me* - Chelsea Kesselheim

Summer

New England Region - *Topic to be determined* - Nancy Shippen

If your local group would like to compile an issue, contact Pat Hardy, AVPpat@earthlink.net or P.O. Box 3294, Santa Barbara, CA 93130.

like the victim. I was hurt by them. I thought to myself, they are selfish and just don't get it. I was very defensive and just wanted them to be nice.

A few months ago, things escalated into a couple of very hurtful e-mails, and then my youngest sister really let me have it about how hurt the other sister was (but had never said anything to me). It started to dawn on me . . . how are they feeling? What was it like to be without your sister who was so close? I called the other sister and asked her to talk to me and tell me what it was like for her. I put my AVP listening and empathy skills to work and listened, for over an hour! To be brief here, she felt as though a family member had died or that she had lost a limb. It was awful. I opened up and allowed myself to feel her pain and saw how

my moving had affected my family. I was so wrapped in my new happiness and life that I assumed they would be happy enough for me to simply "get it." The first part of my conversation with her was to tell her that I had heard her; I re-stated what she had told me and asked her if I had gotten it right. She felt heard and validated. We then moved on to a discussion of how we could go forward. This type of conversation went on with the youngest sister also. It was painful for me; and although empathy does not include an apology, I did apologize for not truly understanding their feelings.

We are now moving forward with our relationships, somewhat modified, but close. If I had not been able to be empathic, I would not have realized how they truly felt. AVP is a wonderful thing!

2009 AVP/USA Annual Conference May 22-25, 2009 New York

Exciting AVP Events

We are planning a host of exciting events in addition to the conference. These will include a tour of Sing Sing Correctional Facility, speakers from the original Green Haven Think Tank where AVP has its roots, a possible performance of an off-Broadway play with four former inmates and lots more.



So, mark your calendar for 2009. This is an event you won't want to miss!

Sisters

by Roberta White, BWCI, Delaware

My sister, Terry, and I have been the closest out of my parents' six children; Terry was born fourth, I was born last. I was always known as "Terry's little sister."

On September 6, 2006, I was sentenced to 12 years of incarceration. I noticed it took my sister months before she visited me, and her letters were very few. I didn't understand why my "big sister" wasn't here for me as she had been throughout my life, prior to my incarceration. I thought she was ashamed of or embarrassed by me. I would write her, and it would be weeks before she would respond; and, even then, she never would

answer my questions. I would call, and she never would be available. I was confused. One day after I was incarcerated for over a year, my sister came to see me. The difference in this visit was that she didn't bring anyone with her. I thought the visit would be an opportunity for us to have a one-on-one discussion. I was excited. I thought it was going to be all about me. It wasn't. It was all about her and her feelings. What? Yes! My sister expressed to me how hard it was for her to take my calls, write and, more importantly, visit me at Baylor. She said she "lost not just her little sister but her best friend," and it hurt her to have the lack of access to me along with the distance between us.

I was floored. I thought, how

dare she? I'm the one in prison, not her.

Things should be about *me*, and what I'm going through.

I held on to my thoughts for about nine months, thinking about what my sister said. One weekend while attending an AVP workshop, I participated in an exercise called, "Transforming Power Rap." During this exercise, I had an overwhelming feeling of empathy for my sister. It was then that I put myself in my sister's shoes. She had lost her sister, too. I accepted the reality of it and moved forward in a positive direction. Today, my sister and I are best friends again.



What's Happening with Your Organization, AVP/USA?

by President Peg Erlanger (perlanger@rcn.com)

Friends, it is a pleasure to inaugurate an occasional column in this issue of *The Transformer*. I want to use this space to keep you posted on Committee of Committees projects and continue to invite your thoughts, suggestions and input.

- The Committee of Committees (CofC) has met twice since the National Gathering.
- The Conference Committee is hard at work on the 2009 conference in New York.
- The Youth Committee has worked through some complicated issues pertaining to the relationship between AVP and HIP and has emerged committed to strengthening the AVP Youth program.
- Our Name Recognition work

group is making some progress, and we hope this fall to initiate revisions to the Organizing Kit and other templates that we hope will serve local groups.

- Again, I invite your participation in the initiatives that the CofC has identified as goals for this year and in any initiative you might want to propose.
- We need someone to take over producing certificates of workshop completion.
- The Communications Committee is looking for generalists to help them come up with new ideas and review the website.
- The Finance Committee particularly needs help: grant writers, someone to generate thank you notes, a new clerk. You don't have to be a financial wizard to

help. Ann Ward has laid down the clerkship of Finance, leaving us with a gap not only in the leadership of that committee but in her wisdom and humor and in history. Ann has served on the leadership team of AVP/USA for 13 years as president, vice-president, clerk of CLARG and clerk of Finance. How do you thank someone for all of that service?

- Empathy, the ability to experience the world as another does—how central that is to the principles we espouse and try to live by! I hope this issue of *The Transformer* enriches your facilitation and your life. Thank you for subscribing to *The Transformer* and for the AVP work you do.

Looking For Two Good People . . .

AVP/USA is looking for a replacement treasurer and a replacement clerk for the Finance Committee. The present incumbents have served ably and well for a considerable time. They are asking to be relieved. The position of finance clerk is available immediately. The position of treasurer, depending on the individual's experience, could entail a period of training and shared responsibility until the 2010 Annual Conference.

This service represents a major opportunity to make an important contribution to the ongoing success of an organization that means so much to all of us, while supporting work at the local, regional and national level, and interacting with a wonderful group of committee clerks.

The main qualifications for the two openings include creativity, familiarity with financial statements and a willingness to work with others. Training and encouragement will be provided. For the treasurer position, experience with QuickBooks™ software and orientation to detail would be a plus.

To obtain more information, contact:

Donn Kesselheim
 ouzel@wyoming.com
 Clerk, Nominating Committee

Network Database Being Developed

The Committee of Committees and the CLARG (Committee of Local and Regional Groups) are developing a resource database of persons having special skills that could help with developing local AVP groups. Can you design a website, set up a 501(c)3, show someone how to maintain a 501(c)3, help train facilitators, set up and train on a database, answer legal questions, speak different languages, help set up community or prison workshops, share information on doing workshops with youth or any of a multitude of skills with which a local AVP group might need help?

If you have one or more of these needed skills, please e-mail Diana Couch at avpcouch@aol.com with your name, contact phone, e-mail address, state and the skill(s) you are willing to share. Also will you be willing to travel, work on the phone or work by e-mail?

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EMPATHY VISUALIZATION

Guided Visualization #1

1. **Relaxation:** Tell group, “Close your eyes, make yourself comfortable . . . Become aware of your breathing . . . Breathe deeply to a count of 4-2-4 [Inhale for 4 counts . . . hold for 2 counts and exhale for 4 counts] . . . Do this at your own pace . . . Be aware that you are breathing in relaxation and breathing out tension . . . Stay with this awareness of your in and out breath for awhile and experience yourself relaxing” . . . Say (slowly): “Now see yourself walking, there is no one else around, it is a warm, sunny day, you are feeling good. In the far distance, you see someone approaching with whom you have unfinished business or an unresolved conflict. Notice what your thoughts are, assumptions? . . . How do you feel? . . . As you come face to face, what do you say or do? . . . How does the other person respond? . . . You each continue on your way. Be aware of how you feel . . . When you are ready, return to the room and open your eyes.”
2. Put people in groups of three. For two minutes, each may share as she/he chooses: 1) what happened? and 2) how satisfied did you feel as you passed on? (Write these questions on newsprint for guidance of group in sharing.)

Stand in their Shoes

1. Pass out pencils/papers to participants.
2. Ask participants to think about the person from their visualization with whom they have unfinished business or an unresolved conflict. Tell those who didn't get a clear image in their visualization to think about someone with whom they have unfinished business or an unresolved conflict. [Give them a moment to come up with someone.]
3. [Have the following questions written on newsprint.] Tell the participants that when they are angry with someone, it is helpful to answer these three questions:
 - 1) What needs influence the other person to act this way?
 - 2) What beliefs or values influence the other person to act this way?
 - 3) What aspects of the other person's history [hurts, losses, successes, failures, rewards] influence this behavior?

Have participants copy these questions and then answer them as completely as possible. Instruct them that if they don't have all the information, to make up something that seems likely. Remind them that the purpose of this exercise is to explain the behavior they don't like from the other person's point of view. [Note: If some finish before others, ask them to sit in silence until the others are finished.]

4. After everyone finishes, have participants share in triads what this experience was like. [Give approximately 10 minutes for this.]

[CONTINUE ON PAGE 2]

Guided Visualization #2

1. **Relaxation:** Tell group, “Close your eyes, make yourself comfortable . . . Become aware of your breathing . . . Breathe deeply to a count of 4-2-4 [Inhale for 4 counts . . . hold for 2 counts and exhale for 4 counts] . . . Do this at your own pace . . . Be aware that you are breathing in relaxation and breathing out tension . . . Stay with this awareness of your in and out breath for awhile and experience yourself relaxing . . .”

2. [Read slowly with appropriate pauses.]

“You are walking alone on a warm, sunny day. You feel a slight breeze and a sense of calmness comes over you . . . As you continue your walk, you see a figure in the distance walking toward you . . . As the person gets closer, you realize that this is the person from your previous encounter . . .

“While they are still a distance away from you, practice looking at them with 'soft eyes' . . . Become aware of how this other person perceives, feels and wants differently from you . . . Become aware of a fear you have of this other person and how that affects your behavior . . . Realize there is something you want from this person . . .

“Now come face to face with this person and begin a dialogue with them . . . Start out by greeting them and telling them what they have done to cause you pain . . . State this as clearly and persuasively as you can . . .

“Now imagine yourself as the other person who has just received what you said about the pain they have caused you . . . Do your best to really become this person and try to see the situation from their point of view . . . Now as the other person, respond to the accusation and defend what they have done . . .

“After you have responded as the other person, return to yourself and the original feeling of anger or other feeling and tell them you have heard them and then expand on your original accusation and what you want from them . . . Say this firmly and respectfully with care . . .

“Once you have done this, return again and become that other person . . . Try to explain their position or viewpoint again . . . Respond as the other person defending what they have done . . . Try to truly feel what this person would feel in response to your accusations . . .

“Continue this dialogue between yourself and the other person until you both have truly expressed their feelings . . . Take some time to really hear what the other person says and try to understand the feelings behind their words . . .

“You are going to have to leave this person now . . . Your business with them is not finished, but say something to let them know they have been heard . . . Say your goodbyes and return to your walk along the path . . . Be aware of how you feel . . . observe any changes, any tension or lack of tension in different parts of your body . . . Feel the sun on your face and the gentle breeze . . . Walk a little further and when you are ready, return to the room and open your eyes.”

3. **Return to the same group of 3 you were in after the first visualization. Talk about**

1) what happened differently from the first visualization and

2) how you felt as you parted company this time.

Processing in Large Group

1. What was this experience like? How did you feel about this exercise? [What]

2. What did you learn from it? [So what]

3. How can you apply what you've learned? [Now what]

Empathy Bingo Exercise

This exercise was contributed by Sherri Sorro.

Copy the handout or put on newsprint 12 squares with the following words written in the boxes: advising, one-upping, educating, consoling, story-telling, shutting-down, sympathizing, interrogating, explaining, correcting, fixing it, and empathizing. Hand out the handouts [if you are using them] to all participants. Have a co-facilitator read each one of the “A’s” below and you respond with the “B.” Ask the group to name the type of response you gave.

Fix it

1. A I’m worried about having enough money to pay my bills this month.
B I’ll loan you the money.

One-upping

2. A Look at my scar from the cycling accident.
B That’s nothing, you should see the one I have on my knee

Story telling

3. A I got caught in traffic for 2 hours in 100 weather and no air conditioning.
B That reminds me of the time.....

Consoling

4. A I feel so sad that my son was court ordered to a rehab center.
B It’s not your fault, you are a good parent. You did the best you could.

Sympathizing

5. A I just got the lab report back and it was what I most feared.
B Oh you poor thing.

Empathy

6. A I have so much to do today.
B Are you feeling overwhelmed and wanting support?

Advising

7. A It’s scary for me to get up and speak in front of people.
B I think you should join Toast Masters.

Interrogating

8. A I’ve been trying to get this weight off and just feel frustrated.
B When did you first start having this problem?

Shutting down

9. A I lost my job.
B Cheer up, let’s go eat.

Explaining

10. A I’m really upset. You promised to be here at 11 and it is now after midnight.
B The reason I’m late is because

Correcting

11. A I’m hurt over what you said to mom last night
B That’s not what I said.....

Educating

12. A My boyfriend left for college 3,000 miles away.
B This is an opportunity for you to learn

Empathy Bingo Handout

ADVISING	ONE-UPPING	EDUCATING
CONSOLING	STORY-TELLING	SHUTTING-DOWN
SYMPATHIZING	INTERROGATING	EXPLAINING
CORRECTING	FIXING IT	EMPATHIZING