

Voices from Outside

Greetings AVP family,

Inside facilitators, please know that we on the outside are really missing our connections with you all. We miss being on team with you and, more than that, we miss knowing how you are. Being separated is difficult for us and we imagine it is difficult for you as well. We look forward to the day we can reunite.

We continue to be grateful for the work of our Volunteer Correspondent, Jo Clayson, who is in email communication with over two hundred inside facilitators across New York State prisons.

This newsletter highlights some of their voices. Please read every word.

We are excited to begin to again hold in-person community workshops! And we are grateful for the workshops that are held online!

As always, we are grateful for the continued support our extended AVP family of donors and those who walk with us in spirit.

In Transforming Power,

The AVP NY Leadership Team:

Funny Valentine Doyle, Charismatic Coralie, Contagious CC Carolyn Polikarpus, Anointed Anika, Jubilant Jo Clayson, Joyful John Sheridan, Jumpin' Jill McLellan



AVP New York's Annual Gathering

September 3-5, 2021 at Powell House, Old Chatham, NY

Front row (L to R): Shepherding Charlotte, Angelic Aran Wonders, Kooky K Karen Fraser, Blessed Bea Beguin, Secure Shirley Way.

Middle row (L to R): Just Josh, Joyful John Sheridan, Adventurous Alisha Kohn, Funny Valentine, Contagious CC Carolyn Polikarpus, Willing Will Scholl.

Back row (L to R): Present Patty Tyrol, Jumpin' Jill McLellan, Anointed Anika, Joyous Jackie Labatt-Simon, Really Rosey Oaks-Lee

Please support this work !

Our budget for 2021 calls for **\$27,000** in direct public support. Our income to date from those sources is **\$21,779**.

We need your support!

To donate on-line go to www.avpny.org or send a check to:
AVP NY, PO Box 6851, Ithaca, NY 14851-6851

Thank you very much!!!



Instrumental Ivié

*"IF YOU GO BACK & TRY TO SCREAM AT THE PAST,
YOU TRIP OVER THE FUTURE"*

—Lionel Richie

What If

What will always be glaring are the What Ifs
What if this had happened
What if that had happened
What IF I had sought help beforehand or onset
How might life be different
How might lives of families, friends & communities
Be different.

It seems so challenging, so courageous
To not get stuck with the what IFs fact
Instead willfully bring oneself to the present
And deal with What is now with resentment
Honor what it takes to do that
What IF it's not the condolences it's repentance
With your sentence.

What IF you acknowledge our wrongs
One day you will sing a new song
What IF you admit to being broken
Seek help & once again be strong
What IF your falling, Your purpose, your calling
Is dedicated to being kind
You & all would find some "Peace of Mind".
What IF!

—*Instrumental Ivié, Bedford Hills Prison June 26, 2021*

NOTE: my response after Derrek Chauvin's sentencing.

Generous Green

MISC.

My miscellaneous piece for this week is a simple question. I notice most people let the world shape who they are and what they do to a large degree. Of course there is a good in it at times. I'm guilty of that. But there's a point when we let it infect us so much we stop being ourselves. A compromising of character because of fear. A loss of individuality, the very thing that makes you special. I refuse to let that piece of me be buried. Nor will I let be abuse, but I will show it and I believe I would be great for it. So my question is, "Do you believe you're special?" If so, show that **** everyday and don't worry about it. If not, I sincerely hope you find that part of you that we all have.

Well I end with a peace and love to all.

—*Generous Green, Mohawk Prison*

Generous Green

Poem

SEE ME AS A BLACK MAN
PROUD AND FREE WHO STANDS TO BE
GREAT
WHO WILL NOT SUCCUMB TO HATE
FOR I AM THE MASTER OF MY FATE
AND I WILL DO WHAT IT TAKES
TO BREAK
THIS CYCLE OF SELF DESTRUCTION
SELF LOATHING AND SELF INFLICTED CONCUS-
SIONS
BANGING OUR HEADS ON THE WALL OVER AND
OVER
INSANITY REFUSING TO CHANGE BUT EXPECT A
CHANGE
THE SAME IS WHAT YOUR DESTINED TO FIND
SO WILL YOU REMAIN DEAF AND BLIND
TO YOUR GREATEST
OR WILL YOU STAND AND BECOME DEFINED?
I CHOOSE THE LATTER
DEFIANT AGAINST THE WRONGS.
SEE ME AS A BLACK MAN AS I WAS BORN.

*(This is not just the Black man, or any man for that matter.
The relevance is for anyone who looks past the word and
sees the meaning.)*

—*Generous Green, Mohawk Prison*

Poem

THE COURAGE TO BELIEVE
THE COURAGE TO SUCCEED
THE COURAGE TO BE
A FORCE INDOMITABLE INSIDE YOU
TO MOVE THROUGH ALL OBSTACLES
TO CONQUER THE UNCONQUERABLE
TRULY WE ALL HAVE THE POWER TO EMPOWER
WITH THE LIGHT INSIDE
ILLUMINATE SO THE BLIND CAN SEE
REJUVENATE AND DARE THE WEARY TO BE
BECAUSE WE ALL CAN BE
BUT ONLY BY SEEING THE TRUTH IN YOU
IN THE MIRROR SEE THROUGH THE EYES YOU
VIEW
AND BELIEVE, SUCCEED, AND BE
YOU!!!!

—*Generous Green, Mohawk Prison*

Scientific Starkim

"Inward"

Windows bathed by rain.
the moisture tends to
fall like tears.
Trails of pain
with nothing else left to gain
so we drown in shame--
yet together.

Our commonality
is a reality of historical spaces
so how can I find my place
within space
if I'm running the
human race?

I trace my fingertips
on hieroglyphs.

Utopia is fading
faster than ever before
forcing habitants to war,
as they become strangers to them-
selves.

They are the unblessed,
blind to intent and imprint
willing to no
unable to yes

I fall
only to rise inside
then settle
in the back of my mind.

Behold:
the space between
me and my shadow.

—Scientific Starkim, Eastern Prison



Calm Corey

The frustration and disappointment can have people on the edge of insanity. Personally, I believe that most of us is just a circumstance or situation away from going over the edge. Tolerance levels can be so different.

It seems like in many communities, this cycle of violence has been created that seems to never end. Weapons give people a sense of power, and at the same time, a false sense of security. Perhaps it's one of the reasons why every nation is seeking to obtain the best weapons of mass destruction.

I wonder how much longer it'll continue to be this way? I know that the Universal laws will have to balance things out. Nothing last forever, so one day all conflicts will be properly resolved.

—Calm Corey, Clinton Prison

Likeable L

HOW WILL I CHANGE MY ATTITUDE & BEHAVIOR

"The first thing I must do to change my behavior is to change my way of thinking, which will in turn help change my attitude."

I have taken notice to the fact that my behavior stems from my life experiences. The choices I make also reflects on my attitude towards life and how I view life in itself. Changing my attitude and behavior will be an everyday challenge. I must acknowledge the way in which I perceive things.

To continue this process of change, I will make it my business to work on not taking shortcuts, being stubborn, judgmental, temperamental nor dishonest. Because how I conduct myself now is how I will conduct myself outside. These are the very same behaviors that effect my ways of thinking and building positive relationships with friends and/or family. However, in accomplishing this working progress asking for help cannot hurt and will only help me to become a better person. Developing a habit of learning from these teachable moments can only humble me into accepting the change in behavior that will reflect in my attitude.

—Likeable L, Fishkill Prison

Kind King

The Gathering.

This Covid virus has brought and left a lot of hurt, pain and confusion in its wake. So much so that families have stopped talking to each other, broken up or violence now exists where love did. It's crazy how for years people lived in the same household and now forget the special things that brought them together in the first place. Society has been playing a very bad joke on us all, because we have forgotten how to see and talk to each other. Being stuck in the house for months allows everyone's good and bad habits to be experienced up close and personal, which can bring about the question "Who is this person I have been living with?".

My family was going through some very hard times with too many people in the house and others being alone and not having anyone to talk to and I became very concerned because when I called home there was so much anger and disrespect in the air amongst my loved ones that I did not know how to address it without taking sides.

One day I was in my cell going through some letters, and papers when my (Guide To Transforming Power) fell to the floor and I started reading "Help Along The Way". I calls my family and told them about this card I kept and had them put me on speaker phone so everyone could hear me and read the card front and back. I point out two very important issues 1) Seek to resolve conflict by reaching for common ground and 2) Respect and care for others. It took me three clicks on the phone but the matters were addressed.

I started to use my phone time with my family as a gathering where we sit down and talk about what topic or issues the family maybe going through. I am going to start giving my family members adjective names to reinforce the positive behavior between each other.

So now I have my AVP Sessions with my family until I can meet back up with my bigger AVP family. I miss them dearly.

—Kind King, Auburn Prison

AVP Westchester's Zoom Workshops



Zoom workshops are a pleasant surprise. Our teams usually prefer workshops in prison to those in the community because prison workshops tend to go much deeper and build a stronger sense of community. We discovered that Zoom workshops are more like prison workshops. Through the course of five workshops, with different participants in each, the groups ended up feeling like family and wishing the workshop had not ended. They listened, shared deeply and spoke openly. Time and again we witnessed evidence of Transforming Power. And, most tellingly, many want to facilitate in prison.

Facilitators from the Westchester Area Council ran several workshops by Zoom. The teams used a variety of schedules: one was on weeknight evenings, twice weekly for five weeks. This was the format for the groups who went all the way through three workshops. Another format was all day Saturday and Sunday afternoon for two consecutive weekends.

Zoom workshops bring together participants from all over the world. All the groups were geographically diverse. One included several from Montserrat, others included people from Europe, Canada, and many parts of the United States. Montserrat was special because the people on that island, or at least the ones in our workshop, just seem to go about life differently from many of us time-crushed New Yorkers. They dealt with power outages on two of the evenings, so one participant used up most of her cell phone battery to stay in the workshop. The other time their power was out, we had to reschedule that session. No one seemed upset by the inconvenience, or by the spotti-

ness of Internet access. They just took it in stride and embraced AVP. Similarly, one New Yorker participated from his car, miles from home in the freezing cold because it was the only way he could get connected to the Internet.

We did learn the importance of having a facilitator who is good with the technical aspects. We made extensive use of breakout rooms for participants to speak one-on-one or in small groups. This enabled us to do many of the regular exercises. We believe this contributed to building community and encouraging participants to speak openly. Another tool we use is numbering participants so we know who is going next in discussions, and to facilitate putting them in breakout rooms.

We used Light and Livelies to change the dynamics of the workshop. Some allowed people to get up and stretch; others encouraged laughter – respite from the seriousness of the workshops. It is also important to allow for one or more breaks during the workshop, a practice that comes naturally when doing workshops in person.

The pandemic has crippled our ability to do workshops in prisons, and these were the main focus of AVP Westchester. We've found that Zoom enables us to keep doing some workshops in community and train new facilitators, but we all look forward to the day when the prisons in New York again allow volunteers to come in and do AVP inside once more.

—*Musical Mary Eagleson and Joyous Jackie Labatt-Simon*

Meaningful Mustafa

Personally I'm glad for all the time I've invested in AVP. During this pandemic we've lost a lot... Last but not least, no AVP, but after having ingrained AVP into the very essence of my being I'm grateful. Knowledge without the practical application is just information. I'm able to apply transforming power and avoid violent situations easily now. I've learned so much from facilitating and am sincerely looking forward to when we'll be able to run workshops again.

—*Meaningful Mustafa, Sing Sing Prison*

Handsome Sampson

I was thinking about how many people have lost a lot during these trying times. Some have lost loved ones, homes, jobs, cars and so much more.

So what can one say to someone who is hurting???

I recall I was the one who was hurting and I came to basic AVP class to get my certificate so I could go on the Family Reunion Program (FRP). I was there going through the motions.

I was introduced to Transforming Power. WHAT IS THAT ???! TO CHANGE THE IMAGE OF! And it was right there the light went off for me. I was the angry, bitter, broken brother who could not make sense how I got put in prison and at that time I was imprisoned.

The light went off for me that I could be better and do better in spite of being in prison. I could CHANGE THE IMAGE OF — TRANSFORM POWER!

Since that time of awakening I realized I could rise above what I was going through.

So I would like to encourage you today who has lost things or people who were near and dear to you. You may never be able to get back those who were near and dear to you. But you can hold all the fond memories and laughs with you each and every day! And that is a part of Transforming Power!!!

Transforming Power is in us All. We just have to stop and tap into the channels and it will free us mentally, physically and spiritually. So I would like to encourage you today to tap into Transforming Power.

The one word that sticks out the most to me in Transforming Power is CHANGE. As people we tend to not like change. In many, many ways we love for things to stay the same because it is a comfortable place.

Well I am unclear why I shared all that but I do hope that it Blesses you and you are encouraged. So keep smiling and stay safe.

—*Handsome Sampson, Wende Prison*

Michael Rhynes

My name is Michael, I started my career as an AVP facilitator in the early 90's. Here's what I have been pondering, does the head of AVP realize there's a civil war going on in communities of color, where children are killing children?

We whom form and have formed the body politic of AVP would like the head of AVP, to take notice. That the slavery of violence is, devastating young lives in our communities. We are wondering where are the abolitionist against the slavery of violence?

The children in communities of color have learned how to deal with violence one way by following the law of (if one is hit, hit back). They have no idea that there are other ways to deal with violence. In fact, I have never heard one civic, community or religious leader mention stopping violence through the utilization of AVP in my community.

The Alternatives To Violence Project, has been in prisons for decades. Now that prisons are closed to volunteers, why has the thinking ability of those who control how and where AVP is implemented gone dormant?

The schools in communities of color are overrun with violence where are the vanguard of people who are trained to do AVP? Now that COVID-19 has brought the fault line of society into the open, shouldn't those dormant volunteers be deployed to communities of color?

Here's the rub, the vast majority of those trained to do AVP are well meaning white women and men. How do you deploy them with authenticity? Thousands of former incarcerated people have trained to do AVP in prison. Why aren't they being utilized to train people in their communities in the art of AVP?

AVP is a marketable skill, men and women who taken AVP and trained to become facilitators, should be paid a living wage. To teach the Alternatives To Violence Project in their communities and elsewhere.

—Michael Rhynes, Attica Prison



AVP Advanced Workshop on Zoom with Genesee Valley Area Council and Central New York Area Council facilitators, August, 2021.



TPW and AVP

Early in the pandemic, frustrated AVP facilitators who were suddenly not allowed in prison joined a coalition of prison program providers to advocate for positive programming and network with like-minded groups and individuals. This coalition, which became TPW-NY in the summer of 2020, has attracted a number of organizations that work in jails, prison, re-entry or prison prevention. Four AVP facilitators (Bold Bob, Contagious CC, Jumpin' Jill and Secure Shirley) have been serving on the leadership team. Humble Jose recently joined as well. Going into Auburn Prison, I have found it helpful to share experiences, information and strategies with the volunteers with other programs. We learned a lot from each other and shared strategies and information. Take that little bit of networking, multiply it many times over and you have something like the breadth of TPW-NY.

So what is TPW? The **Transforma-**

tive In-Prison Workgroup (TPW) is a statewide coalition of 110 Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) (30 in NYS) offering trauma-informed healing programs in California and New York prisons. Our mission is to ensure that all people living in prisons have access to meaningful, high-quality programs, and to accelerate the impact of recent sentencing reforms towards our North Star goal of decarceration.

TPW in California started around five years ago and has made great progress towards the implementation and funding for positive programming in the California prisons. TPW-NY has joined with other organizations to advocate for criminal justice legislation, signed on to Coalition for COVID Justice, held an in person meeting with DOCCS in August 2021 as well as holding monthly membership meetings via Zoom. The focus of the September meeting was reflection on the Attica Uprising. We hold onboarding interviews with prospective new members. One of our goals is to advocate that DOCCS allow more people who have done time back inside to offer programming because they are the credible messengers. We are in the process of forming a new leadership team with more system-impacted members and BIPOC members. More information can be found here: <https://www.thetpw.org/new-york-chapter>.

—Jumpin' Jill McLellan



ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT

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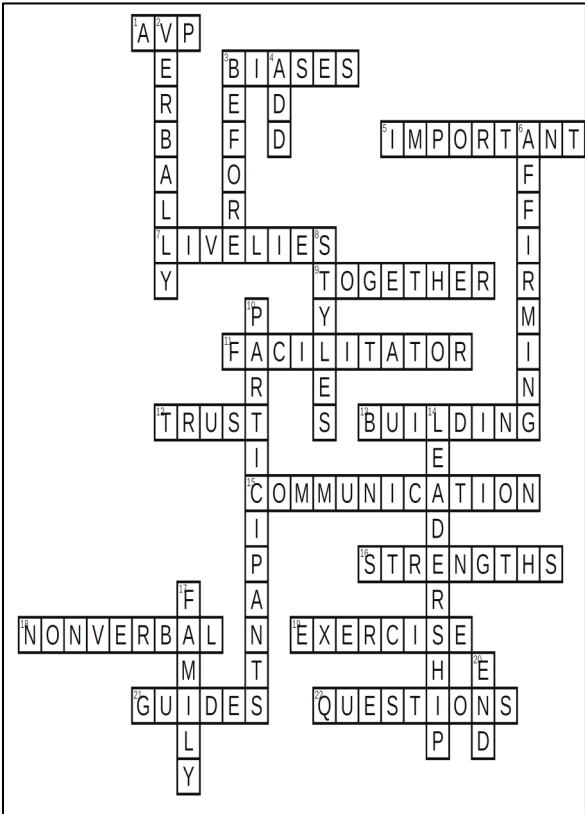


AVP New York Annual Gathering, 2021
Powell House, Old Chatham, NY
We all have a need for PLAY!!

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Training For Facilitators Puzzle Answer Key



- Across
1. _____ uses a team leadership model.
 3. Be aware of your own _____ particularly toward people who are different from you.
 5. It is _____ that all team members attend team building.
 7. Light and _____
 9. Good teamwork means that the facilitators are working _____.
 11. A person who makes an action or process easy or easier
 12. Teammates need to be able to _____ each other.
 13. Team _____ is a process by which the team learns to work together.
 15. Working together well requires good _____.
 16. We all have different _____ as facilitators.
 18. A type of communication
 19. Before leading an _____ make sure to have all the needed materials.
 21. _____ to Transforming Power
 22. After giving instructions always ask, "Are there any _____?"
- Down
2. A way to communicate
 3. A team building session is scheduled _____ every workshop.
 4. Remember to always ask your teammates if they have anything to _____ after you speak.
 6. One goal of the Basic Workshop is to practice _____ ourselves.
 8. We all have different _____ of facilitating.
 10. Don't forget to ask the _____ if they are clear before moving forward.
 14. The act of guiding a group or an organization.
 17. Together, facilitators for the AVP _____.
 20. Closings _____ each session or each day of a workshop.