

# The TRANSFORMER

Supporting and Celebrating the Facilitators of AVP Workshops

## Applied AVP: Foundation and Innovation

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## Advanced AVP Workshops on Addictions

By Christina Bellamy

AVP-Tampa Bay has offered weekend workshops in Coleman Prison, the largest federal prison in the US, since 2002. AVP-TB has offered annual addictions-focused Advanced Workshops for the women at Coleman for six years.

Estimates vary, but about 75%+ of all Coleman FCC incarcerations are directly or indirectly due to drug- and alcohol-related offenses. Our addictions workshops with women are open to 'recreational' users, overdose survivors, drug dealers, partners, family members and friends of chemically dependent people, including cellies. Despite the staggering addictions problems represented, many corrections facilities don't have adequate treatment programs, classes or even 12 Step recovery meetings. Reasons abound: lack of funding, staffing, meeting rooms, local 12 Step outside volunteers.

AVP can fill these gaps for the incarcerated.

Correctional non-religious programs focus on individual skills; AVP offers these women a community. AVP's experiential group learning is particularly well suited to addictions issues and recovery. Many women have said the experience was their lifeline to a fresh start after hearing other women share their experience, strength and hope. For example:

1) A woman acknowledged she sold drugs zealously for money and street status. In a role play, she saw the face of the user's child. For the first time, she saw and felt damage to the families. Her bravado crumbled, and she was rendered speechless.

2) A twenty-something 'party girl' was proud of her clubbing days, with lots of drinking, drugging and men. By the end of the workshop, she *knew* emphatically and emotionally that she was an addict after hearing many raw stories of other women in recovery.

3) A woman could see her father only as an angry, selfish jerk. The Addictions to Grudges exercise helped her see her father differently: filled with fear, loneliness and inadequacy as he died from alcoholism a few months before. Transforming Power in action...

Many AVP exercises in the manual directly address, or can easily be adapted to, an addictions focus: Addictions (violence) Brainstorm, Concentric Circles questions, Addictions to Grudges, Quick Decisions, "I" Messages & Magazine Pictures, Rumors, Buttons, Choices, Role Plays, Claremont Dialogue. Four-Part Listening wonderfully addresses frozen emotions,



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## An Advanced Workshop in Prison for "Professional Women"

By Susan Hefte

For quite some time, the women in prison with advanced degrees and professions had been in hiding. They did not want others to know of their skills, education or professional status, which might create demands on their time and energy with others coming for advice and help beyond that which they wanted to offer. Though they were generous with their time and support of others, they wanted to have some solid boundaries that they could control.

Yet, over time, it became clear these professional women needed each other for support and guidance. They wanted to have discussions in a sophisticated language they understood but could not freely use on the compound without being taunted with a kind of reverse discrimination: *You think you're so good, so smart, so much better...* etc. Nor did they want to hear that age-old: *If you're so smart, why are you here? Why didn't you know better?* They had heard enough of that from friends, family and within themselves without being battered by it again.

So they hid. Some discovered AVP and found relief to the boredom of their lives on the inside. Some became facilitators. Some found each other in workshops and started to talk about how they might use AVP as a place to begin a support system that would help meet their needs. Finally, they got the idea for a *Professional Women Advanced Workshop* that would help them figure out where they could go from being incarcerated to returning to a workplace that now shunned them, revoked their licenses and/or no longer trusted their accomplished skills. Whether they had been used or ill-advised or had chosen to break the law, they were now on the outs, many with no way back home.

We all worked together as a team. My colleague, Nancy Tait, MSW, and I searched for materials that might serve someone seeking to apply her skills upon a new career path. The inside facilitators searched through their resources as well. Some of the materials we used are noted in the sidebar. Our objective went far beyond presenting basic educational or interviewing skills—that was not what was missing. This group wanted to find hope again—hope in their own futures and hope for reintegration into society as respected, educated women with a great deal to offer and without the label of "felon" shadowing their every move.

The power of the workshop came in telling their stories, sharing their insights, finding common ground, discovering ways to support each other and digging their way out (the power of AVP). We had an initial workshop and then a follow-up. Every one of these women attended the Training for Facilitators Workshop and served as facilitators. One is the inside coordinator. We have been gratified to observe how some of their shame has been transformed into self-regard through renewed hope in their futures from programs like this one.

*Susan Hefte, Ph.D., has facilitated in the Women's Camp for eight years, largely on a monthly basis. She enjoys co-creating special-focus Advanced Workshops for incarcerated women.*



For a fully annotated list of books and the agenda used in the Professional Women Workshop, contact Susan Hefte at [AVP.TampaBay@gmail.com](mailto:AVP.TampaBay@gmail.com).

Here are three that were especially helpful:

- Covey, Stephen, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Simon & Schuster, 1989
- Sher, Barbara with Annie Gottlieb. *Wishcraft: How to Get What You Really Want* Ballantine Books, New York. 1979
- Stephan, Ph.D., Naomi. *Finding Your Life Mission: How to Unleash That Creative Power and Live With Intention*

## Exercise: “The River of Life” (demonstrated in many countries)

**Caution:** *this exercise can stimulate strong feelings. Use this exercise in an AVP Advanced only and in situations where there is ample time to share and process. Also, attend to group trust levels and ground rule agreements so participants can feel safe sharing their lives in this way.*

The River of Life is an exercise that adapts well to different cultures in an AVP workshop. This exercise has been developed in three widely different locations and cultures. In the shadow of violence all over the US and the world, AVP experiences such as these can offer hope.

*In Rwanda and Burundi, the River of Life was first developed with facilitators for a trauma-healing program developed by the African Great Lakes Initiative of Friends Peace Team. While this was not AVP, we used many AVP principles; and several participants had attended an AVP workshop. As we developed this program with colleagues and facilitators, several critical ideas emerged. How could we integrate overall learning from the trauma workshop? We developed an exercise to focus on a better understanding of trauma: common causes, consequences, ways to overcome trauma and how to build trust and reconnection in traumatized lives. Exploring traumas in an expanded life context could help participants begin to integrate their trauma into a whole life narrative. Adin Thayer and I developed this first version of the exercise that involved **drawing one’s own River of Life and sharing that with another person.***



The directions are:

1. Give participants: papers, markers, crayons, colored pencils. Ask them to think about their lives as a river. Draw life events along the river, including important people and significant places. As a variation, draw a road, or path—anything they think represents their lives. Add words to the drawing, write only words, or if they don’t want to draw or write, invite them to simply sit and reflect. Encourage working in silence in a quiet space.
2. After enough time, ask participants to pick a partner to share their River of Life.  
*In Colombia, (and Latin American - Columbians have taught Central Americans): Friends Peace Teams were also developing programs to help overcome trauma and consequences from many years of civil war. Val Liveoak, Alba Arrieta and I further developed the River of Life to deepen the experience and to **build on Colombians’ love of arts and drama.***

The exercise in Columbia became:

1. Basically the same initial instructions as in the African workshops were offered in Columbia. They then labeled parts of the river (road/path) as past, present and future.  
A facilitator demonstrated someone sharing his or her drawing with the large group.
2. Line up three chairs in front of the group, representing past, present and future.
3. Each participant explains only a few events from the past and present, moving from the past to the present chair as the events are briefly described.
4. A facilitator asks the participants as they sit in each chair, “What were/are some of the internal and external strengths and resources that helped you or will help you as you reflect on this time of your life?” (Another group member records these strengths and resources.)
5. For the future focus, the participant stands up. The facilitator helps the person create a simple sculpture of a future scene using other participants in the group as needed. From the representation of their future, they give a message back to themselves in the present.
6. Then they sit back in the chair representing the present. Make sure they understand the message from the future.
7. Next, from their place in the present, ask them to say the last thing they want to say to the past, then to the future and then to themselves now.

*At a Florida maximum-security facility, Christina Bellamy and I further developed the exercise **using groups of three.** Beginning instructions were similar to the other settings:*

1. We demonstrated the River of Life drawing with one of the facilitators as an example.
2. The men formed groups of three. They took turns being in roles of speaker, facilitator or scribe (of strengths and resources of the speaker). The speaker was asked to focus on only a few events from the past and present. There was a short period

*Continued on page 4*

## Nurturing an Inmate AVP Council in the Penitentiary of FCC Coleman FL

By Magical Michelle Young

### A Seed is Planted

At the closing of an Advanced Forgiveness Workshop, a lone voice cut the stillness with, "We can't wait four weeks for the next workshop--some of us might be dead by then." Between monthly workshops, the men wanted continuity, consistency and community. This is how we have worked it out together since April 2009.

**Grows And Pollinates**—supported by Coleman FCC administration and staff.

**Monday Council:** Key prison staff, tenacious and loyal AVP outside facilitators and invested inmates collaborated so the Council for Advanced Grads in USP2 is now thriving. Currently it serves as a training ground for four-man, inmate teams of T4F grads to hone facilitation skills and test agendas. The ~2.25 hours prepares them to apprentice/co-facilitate at 3-day workshops, and outside facilitators serve

as coaches, "ideal participants" and consultants.

**Saturday Meetups:** Not wanting to "waste our precious time on Mondays when they could take care of their own dirty laundry using AVP skills," the inmates created regular, bi-weekly Saturday meetings on the yard. Basic grads collaborate with experienced mentors to resolve daily issues, amend structures, devise back-up plans/agenda and support each other in community. Sometimes volatile issues were unfinished as we left Monday's Council sessions. Trepidation turned to

wonder when we returned, finding they had resolved the issues at the Saturday Meetup, using their own growing AVP skills.

They are being the change they want to see in their world. These two structures offer AVP-trained inmates opportunities beyond monthly workshops to influence the incarceration experience for themselves and others in a positive way. Several inside Council members have transferred to lighter security compounds or other Federal Prisons or have been released, determined to establish AVP in their new

*Continued from page 3*

### Exercise: "The River of Life"

of sharing before changing roles in their small group.

3. We reconvened in the full group, and the facilitation team began further debriefing.

#### Participant Comments

African participants were very positive about this exercise: "This helped me see that my life had many twists and turns and bad times, but I can see that I was able to move through the bad times and can move into the future."

The incarcerated men reported the exercise was very important to them. Some comments from participants: "This experience helped me open up to many things I don't normally talk about... My group was able to see things I couldn't see; I thought I already knew good things about myself... Made me look at myself differently, affecting my goals and directions... This tapped into an emotional place... If I don't share myself, I'm cheating myself and others... When others share themselves, they welcome me to do the same."

The River of Life can build community and begin to foster hope. Participants see strengths and resources in themselves and others as they share life stories .

*Creative Cece (Cecelia) Yocum has been involved with AVP since 1994.*

*This exercise has not been reviewed by the AVPUSA Education Committee for inclusion in the next edition of a Manual. Should you use it, please share your experience and observations with the Education Committee, Katherine Smith, katherine@transformingconflict.info*

*Continued from page 1*

### Advanced AVP Workshops

'war stories' of addicts and denial. Get creative with Light & Livelies, such as Going on a [Recovery] Safari.

**Suggestion:** You can attend open AA/NA/Alanon meetings to learn how addictions affect lives: families, relationships, children, boundaries, spirituality, finances, trust, health and well-being. This also will help you examine your own substance use and family history.

We'd welcome hearing how others have developed an addictions-focused Advanced Workshop.

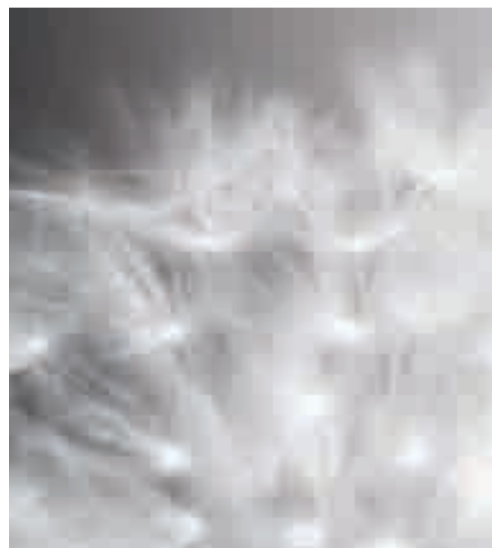
*Composting Christina Bellamy, AVP-Tampa Bay since 2000. She was half of the local editorial team for this issue.*  
[cbbellamy@earthlink.net](mailto:cbbellamy@earthlink.net)



environments. Staff observations about AVP grads include: increased personal responsibility, modeling accountability, intervention when members escalate, reduced lockdowns, incident reports and severity of events, better preparation for reentry, increased compassion and improved family relationships.

**Managing the Weeds-** some of the challenges we encountered.

- *Acts of Nature/prison issues:* Fog outs, locked down teammates, challenging space, escort availability, misfiled badges. What helped: flexibility, contingency plans, back-up teams, establishing alternate lines of communication—using AVP skills!
- *Stuff happens:* Without an agreed-upon structure, short and long-term measurable goals and regular check-ins, things crumbled. Each time “stuff” was addressed,



something positive was added to the agreements and structures.

- *Finding one’s voice:* Fostered a safe environment from the onset where those perceiving inequality, misunderstandings, lack of integrity or harm to AVP’s reputation were supported to speak up in the group, without repercussion.
- *Enabling vs. empowering:* The men directly handled non-preparedness, not showing up, not heeding feedback. Bad choices incurred consequences.
- *Fairness and justice:* Relied on the men to call each other out on honesty, “peacocking” and profiling in front of us. Outside facilitators can be played; age and gender can influence. They created leadership systems based on performance, not ego or personality strengths. It’s a delicate situation for them to stand out as a “leader,” so they are mindful about stepping up or standing out. Exercises that address *community* are offered almost every Council session.
- *Encouragement vs. constructive feedback:* There’s a fine line between building self-esteem and developing good facilitators. A variation on Fishbowl for mandatory debriefs at each Council session lets all facilitators and participants offer respectful candid feedback to the facilitation of the skill-building team. Affirmations abound!
- *Mentoring styles:* Outside facilitators as well as inside mentors consider: What is the most beneficial approach for each person to learn and grow?
- *Leadership structure:* We use more experienced inside facilitators for a Basic and have them mentor newer facilitators in an Advanced. Translation is often necessary for those who have minimal English; someone offers to serve as a translator. In some workshops, several Spanish speakers from several different countries are represented, and everyone honors

what is needed.

- *Boundaries:* Clarity with administration and staff is essential. Examples: discussing AVP principles (not personalities) as we are escorted to and fro, conflicts for roles of guards assigned to AVP, breach of trust issues if the staff escort remains in the room.
- *Inevitable changes:* Teammates transferring/going home: we honor each with a version of Strength Bombardment. New T4Fers join established teams, with the men deciding who goes where. They know their community better than we do.
- *Communication:* Outside and inside AVPers now keep attendance and meeting summaries. Outside teams share records with prison advocates to be sure the participants get credit for their involvement, support staff in making tedious callout sheets and in creating an AVP community that reflects the diversity of the compound.

**Trust, Trust, Trust the Process**

Show up, pay attention, tell the truth and let go of the outcome. Blooms are inevitable even in harsh environments.

*Magical Michèle Young serves as a passionate teaching/healing/performing artist. She has facilitated AVP in prison with Tampa Bay AVP and in the world since 2001.*

**Want to write an issue of the Transformer?**

We welcome your local group (prison or community) creating the theme and copy for a future newsletter. Well, let’s be honest...we need your local group to sign up for future issues. Your great opportunity!! You write the copy and we edit and lay it out. All needs to be received electronically.

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# People who are Homeless Hunger for a Safe Harbor

St. Petersburg, Florida, has a large population people without a place to live. Every week for over a year at the St. Petersburg Unitarian Universalist Church and Trinity Lutheran, people without homes have lined up for food, clothes and toiletries. I had been working with the churches and making sandwiches for people of the streets for several years and thought there might be an opportunity for AVP to make a more fundamental difference in the lives of these people on they street and their advocates.

*Celebration Outreach*, a coalition of eight churches backing these activities, agreed to stand behind an AVP mini-workshop that would address the violence and loss of hope that is a fact of life for this community of people. A mini-workshop was presented for three hours on a Saturday morning, followed by a potluck. Six “brethren without homes,” eighteen advocate-church members and four facilitators participated.

EH, is a manager at *Project Hope*, the tent city in Pinellas Park. When recruiting participants, he recommended we contact DS, a young man who just finished his GED. DS had told EH he was worried about re-offending because of the difficulty he often encountered “staying focused.” Later, when I spoke to him, DS said he was skeptical but would give AVP a try.

After an hour and a half of gathering and community building, the participants began sharing with increased depth. DS shared with clarifying honesty. He told the rest of the workshop participants that sometimes it’s necessary to be violent to ward off future violence.

Three men, roughly ten years older (and with more street experience), took issue with him. They proceeded to examine the 12 Transforming Power Guides, which had been handed out earlier. It sounded a lot like experienced AVPers talking, even though they were new to AVP and the concept of Transforming Power. They acknowledged that violence was a constant problem “out on the street.” They said they

understood his point of view and had lived that way in the past. Yet, the three of them were adamant that violence could be prevented if DS could think creatively and reach out for positive connections and support. To withstand the pressure, friendships are needed that can be trusted, as well as



a safe place to go where they can take off their masks, relax and build a protective community.

But they didn’t stop there. These more experienced men offered their support to the young man: how he could contact them when he was feeling stressed and needed help. The experienced people who are still homeless have been moved and excited, and so have the advocates. One of the wishes was to offer workshops at the different churches in the coalition so the broader community would become aware of AVP, too, and possibly participate. We are hopeful AVP can help turn the community into a peaceful and productive one that helps reduce the condition of homelessness.

Postscript: DS came back to the hall the next week when breakfast was served. He called out to “Jane” when she arrived to help cook. They had made a connection in the workshop. Later at the coalition meeting, she wanted to know if there were any AVP workshops in New Hampshire where she would be spending a month’s vacation.

Six months later, DS completed a certified nursing assistant course, found his own place, works three to four days a week and has a bank account. Tutoring at Tomlinson Learning Center played a central role in his transformation; and AVP was a needed support at a critical time.

By being involved with the food serving project it’s increasingly clear that AVP is beginning to fill a larger hunger. As a part of this “applied AVP” experiment, the people who come for food have been invited into the kitchen to help with food preparation and given supervisory or training jobs as they have shown their skills. They also have reversed roles with those serving so the servers can now go sit with the served on a more equal basis, sharing food and conversation. And that is another story...

*Darrell Hefte and his wife, Susan, brought AVP to Tampa Bay at the St. Petersburg Society of Friends in 2000. Two years later they took AVP into Coleman Federal Prison. They have worked with the homeless of St. Petersburg since 2010.*





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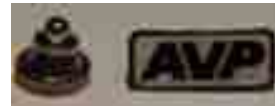
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# Role Plays a Challenge?



By  
Susan  
Hefte

As a facilitator, I was challenged and frustrated with role plays. Too often participants chose to play themselves, even with an emphasis to stretch oneself into a different role, sometimes triggering deep feelings beyond the scope of the workshop. Too often the role plays turned into a game or a farce, with learning lost or requiring much more effort to tease out than should be necessary. Too often the “audience” got bored with the debriefing, frustrating everyone except the person in the role who was getting the attention. I found myself avoiding our traditional role plays and not liking that option either.

As I see it, the purpose of conducting and debriefing role plays in AVP is to give participants some direct experience with using the tools of AVP that have been taught throughout the Basic and Advanced Workshops. This can be done very effectively through sociodrama. In *Sociodrama*, a scene and its

characters are created by the group and acted out as a way of experimenting with how things work – or don’t work – in life.

**The scene and characters** are compilations from the entire group. Greater buy-in occurs since everyone is an active part of both story and role creation with specific personality characteristics, speech patterns and body language.

The role play is about the human experience generally, rather than one person’s experience specifically. The role play creates common ground as parts of our own stories are being acted out.

**The audience members** are given roles as “official observers,” which keeps everyone focused and responsive throughout the role play. The observers may be asked to report what they see as “facts,” “feelings” or “values and beliefs” being expressed (three different groups of observers) during freezes in the action or at the end.

As a result, the **processing questions** are as important for the audience as for the persons playing the roles and the facilitators since this is often where much learning resides. What do these general stories have to do with us personally? It is much like sharing one’s experience of being affected by a movie. **What has each of us learned, observed or discovered through this experience?** This question should be answered by everyone in the room including facilitators. Feelings are acknowledged, but this can help move the conversation away from too much intensity to thoughts about one’s experience.

As in traditional AVP role plays, further exploration can be made with the following questions:

*Was there a turning point?* When? How did it happen?

At what point did you see

**Transforming Power** as an element in the role play?

Did you see any **missed opportunities** for the use of TP guides or “I” statements?

What were some of the **things that**

**could be done differently?** This can result in exploring alternative endings. If there is time available, the group can choose other persons to try the role play.

**Closing** the role play experience is important as well. Ask the group to evaluate the process as you would in any other AVP exercise. The beauty and safety of the *sociodramatic role play* is the shared creation from start to finish that is visible and open. Specific training in sociodrama can greatly enhance your facilitation skills and is recommended.

*Susan Hefte, Ph.D. has been an AVP facilitator since 1998. She is in her fifth year of professional training in Psychodrama with Antonina Garcia.*

*Recommended Reading:*

*Sociodrama: Who’s in Your Shoes?.* Sternberg, Patricia and Garcia, Antonina. Praeger Publishers, Westport, CT. 2000

*AVP Basic Manual.*

To receive a copy of an outline for this process, contact Susan Hefte through [AVP.TampaBay@gmail.com](mailto:AVP.TampaBay@gmail.com)

## Conference news

*This is a new column featuring all things around the AVP/USA Annual Conference.*

The next conference will be in Maryland (of course on Memorial Day Weekend) and organized by Dave (Humorous Hutch) and Nancy Hutchins (Knowing Nancy). They have found two wonderful places and are in negotiations with them as you read. Much support was gathering in the mid-Atlantic states to support 2012.

Congratulations to Toby Laverty and Alice Waco who chaired the exciting conference in California; much buzz and activity happening now now as a result of their incredible work.

Tell us what you are doing as a result of attending the last conference and we will publish it here in the Fall.

## “Applied AVP” with People who are Homeless

By Dr. Darrell Hefte, Ph.D

When organizing a community workshop geared towards “the homeless and homeless advocates,” time flexibility is essential, even more than in the busy community or time-structured prison settings. One of the objectives of this AVP initiative is to break down class barriers; those who serve become receivers and those in need become servers. The meals are prepared, served and, to some degree, eaten together by both church member volunteers and some of our guests who are homeless. The ultimate goal is to communicate effective ways to resolve conflicts and prevent violence by enhancing self-esteem and creating a greater sense of community.

Following is a brief look at how serving a buffet supper to the homeless at a local U/U church on Friday evenings has evolved into an AVP mini-workshop, connecting an already existing social service activity with the time-tested structures of AVP:

- 1) The facilitator gives instructions and handouts to experienced folks in advance. The agenda is distributed and discussed. The mini-workshop is structured so that more aware and experienced participants can be empowered to share with newcomers and bring them up to speed.
- 2) At 5:30 PM, 100 participants gather outside and servers begin trickling in. The sandwich makers are usually there by 6:15 PM. A brief gathering is held at 6:30 PM for sharing adjective names, using nametags and stating the church or group represented.
- 3) Then the team coordinator recruits those from the food line to pair up with experienced servers to share jobs. The “picnic” starts at 7:00 PM.
- 4) After the meal the twelve Transforming Power Guides are introduced and discussion follows. This is where successes and challenges of the evening are discussed, with alternative approaches explored. We review strategies that help break down barriers. For example, we learned by experience that:
  - By starting distribution of sandwiches from the back of the food line, anxiety that there won’t be enough food is reduced for those waiting at the end.
  - Finding common ground over the love of a dog is an experience that many people understand and can appreciate. A long time advocate brings her dog to the Friday night food service. Everyone knows them and enjoys their company.
- 5) Another Gathering is held just after clean-up where successes and challenges are shared. “Where we go from here” is addressed. Facilitators do recruiting after the Closing. The organizational possibilities are examined.

Participants who are homeless want the validation of a certificate acknowledging their successes. Keeping track of who has attended what experiences is a necessary task of supporting what might be called an “Applied AVP” certificate. The situation for those on the street is urgent; we need facilitators as soon as possible.

*Darrell Hefte has been serving through Tampa Bay AVP since 1998 and serving the homeless since 2006.*



## Exercise: "BEST, WORST, & OUTRAGEOUS" - PANEL OF EXPERTS

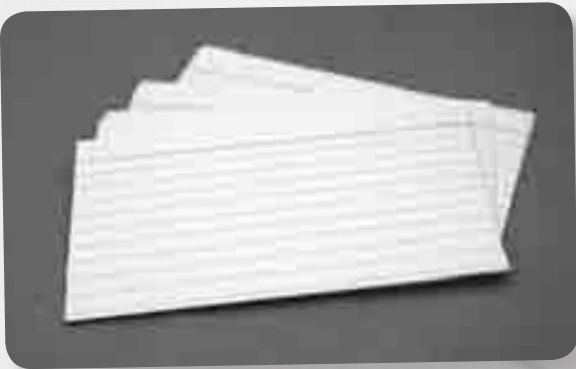
**Purpose:** This expands on the Empathy Exercise (Advanced D-63) and is an ideal exercise to use with challenging issues in an Advanced workshop. Each participant can hear a shift in perspective and, by giving voice to possibilities that are beyond acceptable norms, there can be the transforming power of laughter. Humor and learned wisdom from each participant can build a more sustainable, supportive community.

**Time:** ~1 hour (based on [# of participants] x ~ 4 minutes per panel response).

**Materials:** Pencils and small index cards or paper scraps, uniform in color and size.

### Sequence:

1. Seated in a circle, call a hurricane. Make sure facilitators are separated by at least two seats.
2. Count off sequentially around the circle starting with #1. Include all and facilitators. Distribute paper/cards and pencils to each.
3. Ask everyone to anonymously write an *unsolved* situation, problem or event in question form for clarity/resolution by a "top expert" in this field. Be sure to write legibly and succinctly. Allowing no more than 3-4 minutes, have each fold her/his paper and place on the floor in the middle of the circle.
4. Mix the papers before the first group chooses. The first "panel of experts: is comprised of participants #1, 2 and 3. Number 1 chooses a slip from the pile, sharing it with her group to verify that none of them wrote it.
5. Number 1 reads what is written to the group as each panel member quickly thinks of an answer based on their position: #1 is a top expert in her field, #2 is the worst expert ever and #3 is completely outrageous. Each panel member may have fun with their role by impersonating known experts, using accents and creating characters. Have fun since the topics may be heavy. Encourage everyone to participate in order to maintain the integrity of all three roles. It is important for the "best" expert to take a moment and answer sincerely from the heart as if they were advising a friend or loved one. Sometimes encouragement is needed for someone who responds, "I don't know!" They may doubt their ability to offer wise counsel or be intimidated by others in the group, or the issue may hit too close to home. A comment that can help is, "If you *did* know the best/worst outrageous advice, what would it be?"
6. After no more than a minute of pondering: # 1 responds with the best advice, #2 offers the worst advice and #3 shares the outrageous solution. This should take no more than 3-5 minutes per panel. This problem is now discarded.
7. The next panel of experts shifts to #2 as the best expert, #3 the worst and #4 is the outrageous. This proceeds in order to form subsequent panels. Follow steps 5 & 6 for each panel until all submitted problems are addressed.



### Processing:

- How did it feel to be offering advice?
  - Which "expert" point of view did you prefer to share? Why?
  - What was it like for you to hear others address your problem as if it were their own?
  - Did you hear insights that brought clarity to your situation or that of another?
  - Did you learn anything from hearing the struggles of others?
- Has your perspective shifted from when you first wrote down your issue? How?
- Does this change your views on how others might support you during difficult times?
  - How might you offer advice differently in the future?
  - Were there any TP moments?

*Magical Michele Young serves as a passionate teaching/healing/performing artist. She has co-facilitated in the Coleman FL Prison with Tampa Bay AVP since 2002.*

This exercise has not been reviewed by the AVPUSA Education Committee for inclusion in the next edition of a *Manual*. Should you use it, please share your experience and observations with the Education Committee, Katherine Smith, [katherine@transformingconflict.info](mailto:katherine@transformingconflict.info)

## Livin' a Life with "I" Messages is Like Bakin' a Cake

I use "I" statements with incarcerated women with the analogy "like baking a cake." When we first learn to cook, we may follow a recipe closely, adding the ingredients in just



the right order. As we become more adept at cooking, we may add more sugar, stir in a little cocoa, add fruit-- you get the picture. "I" statements are just like that. The basic recipe helps us get our thoughts in order so we can speak more openly and lovingly from our hearts. Becoming more experienced, we can mix it up a little differently, try variations and add information as we go.

We begin with a **Feeling**. How do I *feel* about this situation? (Feeling Faces listed on page E-24, Basic Manual). Many people substitute *thoughts* for feelings, such as "I feel that..." or "I feel like..." AVP offers a feeling language and exercises so participants can practice learning to identify and express emotions (I Messages E29-35/Basic; Facts Feelings Person D74,75/Adv; Four Part Listening D83/Adv; How Do You Feel When? D96/Adv; I messages D99-102/Adv.).

**When** is the next ingredient in the "I" Message recipe. When someone behaves in a certain way or something happens, it affects us. The "I" message is not disrespectful finger pointing--just identifying what happened.

**Because** is the next ingredient. It doesn't have to do with you so much as it has to do with me as I take responsibility for my reactions and feelings. I'm not justifying my reaction; I'm helping you understand how your behavior impacted me. Finally, **What do I want** from this situation? And **What do I really need** for the best outcome? Without these essential ingredients, the results can be less than satisfying. So, the "recipe" is: I feel\_\_when\_\_because\_\_. What I want is\_\_. What I need is\_\_.

This formula helps to surface feelings while helping us examine the present moment more carefully and requiring us to stop and think before responding. It requires vulnerability, authenticity and taking personal responsibility for feelings, thoughts and actions. "I" messages remove blame and offer

accountability.

Learning this concept of coming from the "I" place, knowing that I am the only one for whom I can speak, was a life-changing experience. I was a mature woman with three grown children. I had been a teacher and nurse for many years and was used to being a disciple of what I thought was the correct way of doing things, which was a rigid, authoritarian way.

*Example:* I might have said to a student: "You have to do this my way." Today, I might say to an AVP co-facilitator: "I *feel* anxious when you do this your way *because* I have always done this one way. *What I want* is to watch you do this your way, and *what I need* is not to be so rigid about my way so we can learn together."

There is "power over" of patriarchal power, "power from within," which we call empowerment, and "shared power," which one might call a feminist principle. When I opened myself to this concept, I witnessed the magic of Transforming Power. As I spoke my feelings, I felt more peaceful within myself and in all my relationships.

When I process AVP exercises in workshops, I usually include the question: "What was the most powerful part of this exercise for you?" When we are finished, I talk about this as Transformative Power. Evaluating the complete workshop with this in mind, participants often find transformational moments.

In the middle of a 3-day prison Basic Workshop with about 15 women last year, a highly charged conflict emerged among several of the participants. I insisted on using only "I" messages

when speaking to what happened. There was much dissension and the heat of opinions, rumors and grudges.

Participants wanted to blame, accuse, judge, assume and scapegoat and *not* take personal responsibility for what was going on. Ultimately, the women used "I" messages in arriving at a very peaceful and real-life conclusion! The "recipe" was used that day for a creative resolution, and the results were nutritious, affirming and transformative for *all* of us.

*Energetic Edie Daly, Gulfport Florida. AVP/TampaBay; Facilitator at Coleman FCC Women's Camp.*



# AVP

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