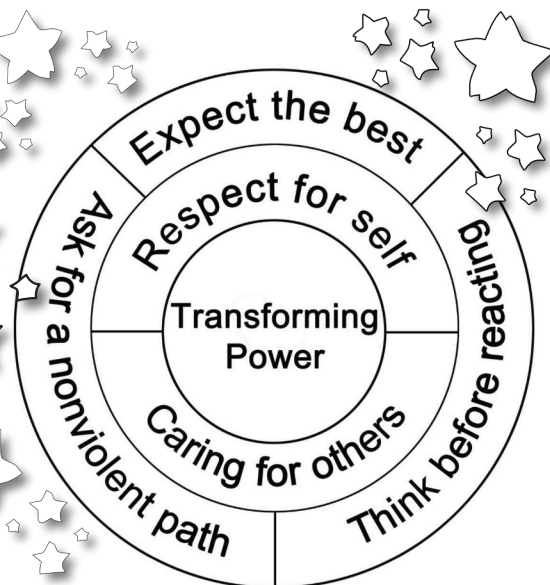


AVP Inside Out

Volume 2, Issue #5/June 2022



Place-Memories XXII by Kind Kiri, 2009 | Acrylic Paint Collage 11" x 10"

Note From the Editors

Welcome to our June issue of AVP Inside Out. In this issue we will explore fatherhood from different perspectives. We're delighted to include a sketch and thoughts from our Inside contributors. We look at the importance of a strong immune system. Our Transforming Power story involves a bumped tray and the inward power to act. One of our former inside facilitators offers concrete and useful advice to people exiting the prison system. We present haiku poetry about AVP created by participants in our last combo workshop and a meditation about heart, breath and light. We hope the blossoming of spring and the growth of summer fills your life with joy.

The Editors

Celebrations Deepening our understanding of diverse communities

In the memoir of his early days, *Dreams from My Father*, Barack Obama describes how he grew up without a father around. He only has a few memories of him before he left when Obama was two years old. Even though he was raised by a wonderful mother and caring grandparents, he always felt his father's absence. This is the reason fatherhood is so important to Obama and why he tries so hard to be there for his own children. He says he learns through experience and ongoing efforts to be a better father.

Here are some quotes from Obama about fatherhood.

“What makes you a man is not the ability to have a child — it’s the courage to raise one.”

“(Children) need our time, measured not only in the number of hours we spend with them each day, but what we do with those hours.”

“Every father bears a fundamental obligation to do right by their children.”

“Above all, children need our unconditional love — whether they succeed or make mistakes; when life is easy and when life is tough.”

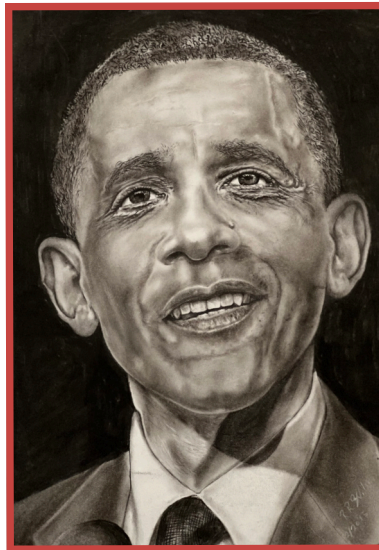
“We need to show our kids that you’re not strong by putting

other people down — you’re strong by lifting them up.”

“It’s up to us to set these high expectations. And that means meeting those expectations ourselves. That means setting examples of excellence in our own lives.”

These passionate thoughts on fatherhood were spoken from the pulpit by Barack Obama on Father’s Day 2008 at a South Side African American Church in Chicago. As we celebrate Father’s Day this year on June 19th, we especially encourage those fathers who didn’t have a caring father in their own lives to strive to nurture their children. Parents have a unique opportunity to instill the concepts of AVP in their children by listening to them, treating them with respect, and celebrating the development of empathy and compassion in their children.

Genuine Judy



Graphite Drawing of Barack Obama | by Artist Wilson

Meditation Providing opportunity for reflection and personal growth

Sun Meditation | Submitted by Centered Cindy

Find a position that is comfortable to you, whether seated or standing. Close your eyes, safe in the knowledge that nothing can hurt you. You are here now. Allow any duties or tasks that you still have for today to melt away. Allow any tension or anger to follow and dissipate from your heart.

Bring one hand to the belly and the other to the heart and feel both your chest and your stomach rise and fall with each

breath. Breathe in, and let it out. Breathe in, and let it out.

Begin to visualize a bright sun in your core and see it expand a little more with each breath. Feel it grow a little warmer with each breath you take, until the warmth of your sun fills your heart, your lungs and begins to flow into the rest of your body, down the belly and into your arms and legs. Lastly, feel the warmth of the sun fill your head.

With each particle of light, feel any trace of anger, sadness or disappointment leave your body and be replaced by the incredible warmth of the sun. Become aware that you are alive and you are happy right this moment, with no bad thoughts to cloud or sadden you.

Like the immense sun at your core, you are bright and you are warm. Feel your eyes open and shine from within with that inner sun.

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to support the printing and delivery of this newsletter to insiders.

Dear AVP

Advising each other through specific conflict by committee

Dear AVP,

Five Father's Days down, now. Heading for six and I still haven't seen my babies. I wonder if they remember who their father really is. This is far from my finest hour. The wife's picked up and gone. Gone to her parents. She says it's so she can get their help with the kids. So I've only seen them in person twice in all this time. With this Covid situation I don't know when I'll see them next. No Covid visits. All I hear about is other cons talking about their kids as well, so I'm not the only one. That doesn't help the situation. We're all sitting here waiting for that Dear John. But what can we expect being stuck in here for years on end. If only I knew back then what the consequences would be. I hope that when I get out I can prove to my kids that I'm not who I used to be. But that's easier said than done. Two years away from my parole hearing, I find myself falling deeper and deeper into my own mind, my anxiety and depression. I can't help but think that when I get out of here, my kids won't even know who I am.

Miserable Martin

Dear Martin,

I can see how important your children are to you and how much you miss them. It's hard to be separated from them when important celebrations happen. It might help to remember that connections aren't only related to special events like Father's Day and birthdays. While it's not the same as being with them, reaching out to your children on a regular basis will build a strong family relationship that can build bridges to the future when you will be with them.

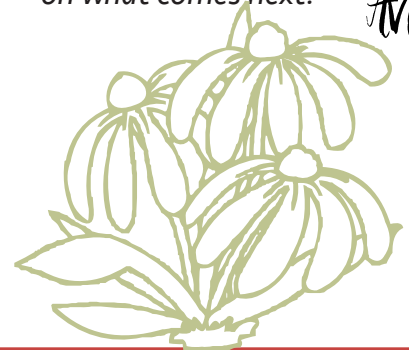
Consider ways that you can connect with your children throughout the year. Hand-written letters written specifically to each child can become reminders that you were thinking about them. If your children are young, send drawings. Ask them about and support their interests. Let them know you're keeping up with what's going on in their lives.

It may help if you strengthen the relationship you have with your wife. Maybe she can be an ally to support your connection with the kids and help build bridges between you all. While it is hurtful to children not to have

both parents present in their lives, there are ways to be part of their lives even at a distance. When you are released, you'll have the chance for a different healing process. You can begin thinking about what you might like that to look like. Maybe plan some things out with your wife.

Recognize that some things are out of your control, at least for now. Forgive yourself for past mistakes, and try to do better from now on. Think of ways that you can find your own support. Perhaps begin a practice of meditation, join or create a father's support group, Consider seeking out a friend, mentor or counselor you can speak with. Talk with them about strategies for building relationships with family members outside of prison. Remember to take care of and be kind to yourself. Focus on what comes next.

AVP



TP in Action

Stories of times Transforming Power (TP) was used to solve a conflict

An inside facilitator, Amazing Aaron, came to our AVP planning session so excited to share how he had recently used a transforming power guide. The day before our meeting the main dinner entree was advertised as fried chicken. This was a rare item on the menu and everyone was very excited.

Amazing Aaron was standing in the "chow" line holding his tray when he turned to talk to the man behind him. As he turned he bumped the man in front of him who dropped his tray. That man turned to him in fierce anger with his fists clenched. Our inside facilitator immediately said, "I'm so sorry.

Here, take my tray," and held it out to him. The bumped man's fists unclenched and his face changed into instant surprise, as he accepted the tray. Amazing Aaron beamed at us and said, "I just experienced "a great inward power to act."

Genuine Judy

Poetry

Here are haiku poems created during the most recent AVP Combo workshop. The haiku is an ancient Japanese poetic art form.

Non-Violence, yaay!
Shows up in my life every day
Shine a light on peace
Motivated Maria

Green better than red
To look under the iceberg
And cultivate peace
Collaborating Catherine

Be who I am
Thoughts of peace everywhere
By being me
Charismatic Cecilia

Be brave oh be brave
Peace in my country
Starts with sacrifice
Sharing Shanny

Storms rage, anger unfurled
Lost to myself in the world
Struggling to find peace
Bright Bruce

I walked to the store
A man yelled profanities
I waved and smiled
Devoted David

Sitting in Zoomland
Exploring all the ways of peace
Journey of the heart
Real Ray

Advice From the Recently Released

Things to Do After You Get Out I by Even Steven

1. Establish contact with your PO as soon as possible. While not your friend, neither is your PO your enemy. POs can be another useful resource while under supervision.
2. Follow rules! You will receive a list and your PO may add others.
3. You need a phone and the means to pay for the service.
4. Therefore, finding a job as soon as you can is a high priority.
5. You will need clothes and other self-care items. These can affordably be found at Salvation Army and Goodwill stores.
6. Since you likely will not have a car, any job will have to be within walking distance or on/near a public transportation route.
7. If you don't have a bank account, consider opening one. This can be done online or at the bank in person. Consider a Credit Union since they are more friendly and pay slightly higher interest, "free" money for saving with them.
8. While it may be tempting, it is best to avoid contact with any questionable past individuals. You have the opportunity to make a fresh start; your slate is clean.
9. A calendar is vital to monitor times and places. Always be aware of where you need to be and what you should be doing.
10. Keep in mind, unlike prison, not everyone is out to take advantage of you. You will need to adjust the way you think about people and situations.
11. When you get a job, be responsible with your money. Don't spend rent money on things you cannot afford. Learn to save and manage your money for necessary items. Make a monthly budget and abide by it. There are no shortcuts to this.
12. Unless working for a Temp Agency, plan to work on a job for a year or more before moving to a better job. Employers look for stability when hiring.
13. Maintain your appearance. Employers look for people who represent their business well.
14. Maintain a positive attitude in all situations. Remember it's not all about you!

Good luck! And keep in mind that sometimes we make our own luck.

Seeking Creative Works

Share imagery of your creative works with permission for publication - doodles welcome

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Poetry

Untitled I by Marmite Gary

i've been many men seldom good
sometimes a different one daily
and i still can't find that mask that fits
i've tried them all

the wrong side of 40
sitting in this f***ing room -
are we ever free?
just one set of walls to another
looking down at my hands -
them handcuffs left scars
they're never clean like a book only we can read
what a shame
if only they would listen to
what we have to say
i struggle with my conscience -
are you looking at your hands?

feel that rush of guilt and sorrow
for the things we have done,
the crimes of my life.
i was once a nice boy -
remember them days?
how things change - training days,
my troubled childhood i wished away -
running out of years now.

i'd like to think i could be different
to what's written on paper
or in the minds of those that label us
trouble makers, criminals, damaged, poor -
the ones no one wants
we've heard it all right?
we just don't fit!
it's never easy
we all have times when we get
the a**hole with running up that hill.

my feet are tired
i wont grace the ones who slide past
on that silver spoon.
i dont stand for them people,
i stand for us
the men women and children
that know what it's like to go hungry -
the ones that still give
even though we are running on empty

the fight of our lives -
warriors we are!

no, it don't take a sword and
a shield to be a warrior
its the heart that beats louder
than the rest scarred from that pain
the days when nothing is there
no food in the fridge
waiting on that door knock
that door to slam shut -
we've all felt that

i'd like to say it goes away
but its still here for me
its painful to read my own words
reaching for them pills that spill -
whatever gets you through that day - right ?
as you can see i'm just a mess
no different to anyone else
going through their troubles
i was the man that said
i don't need anyone, i don't care
who needs that pain right?

life was cheap to me once
now i'm waiting on my time - that shot in the dark
i'm going to be at the top
i'll tear any man down that
gets in my way by hook or by crook,
leave this life behind me -
the one that made it
truth is i'm still here
but taking steps to create that life
i really want when the lights are out and
its just you and the dark

throw that mask on the floor
no, its not easy to drop that guard
trust me it hurts
you question every word, every friendship
is it real or just another fake friend
they never really loved you
its all part of their trickery
we've all seen them - right?

my hands are covered in bite marks
many snakes crossed my path
i guess what i'm trying to say is
we all hurt, we all have a past
we get that time when we just wanna lay that head down
on the shoulder of a stranger,
so just remember -
even if your pockets are empty
and them tears streaming down your face
that pain that takes your breath away -
consider yourself a warrior
a f***ing hero to yourself.
when you think its over
and you can't take anymore
my hands in the dark reaching for you-
reach back because i need your hand
as you need mine.



Practice AVP

...in our everyday lives

Praise for Our Immune System | By Being Barbara

We are here today because we inherited an immune system. We learned survival eons ago when single-celled organisms began in ancient oceans. Over time our ancestors became more complex and capable.

Our immune system is full of bacteria and other microorganisms that recognize food and digest it into fuel to power all our functions. Our immune system also recognizes what doesn't help and moves it to our excretory systems. Sweat is one of these systems. Exercise improves our mood, cleans us out and helps our brains learn better.

Besides nourishment and exercise, sleep is very important. Sleep cements learning. "Sleep on it" is good advice. With a good night's rest we may even wake up with an answer to yesterday's challenge. Sleep hygiene recommends no screens before bedtime. A snack

is good, and so is covering the clock to block out light. Darkness signals our brain to switch to rest. Experts advise sleep hygiene, not pills.

Our immune system thrives on kindness which frees our brain to imagine, create, explore and receive. We all create the world we want to live in. Suggestion: "I will leave no kind thought unspoken." We are all enriched by affirmations like this. Make them up as you go along, or upon waking decide you will receive an affirmation. Use present tense as if your wish has already happened. "I am proud I followed through and completed this class." "I am a good neighbor and my neighbors are good to me!"

In order to do the work of AVP, our first responsibility is taking good care of ourselves so that we will be well-balanced and able to be present for others.

Thoughts From The Inside

Insider reflections of AVP actions

Thank you for your continued efforts & dedication, you and the program made a difference in my life! :)

Mike

Wow! I was so glad to hear from you guys. It's always good to hear from you guys. I can't wait to get out of here. It's really bad now with the covid. We are locked down a lot. So with that said, the newsletter is great. I read them over and over. It means a lot when people see you as something different than a number.

Gerald

Dear Community

Providing updates on AVP actions underway in our community

This spring FNVW submitted an application to the Minnesota Department of Corrections (MN-DOC) to restart in-person prison workshops. We are hopeful that the information included in the application will also result in a reclassification of AVP as a research-based program which would elevate our status. This would make it more likely that we would be allowed to return to prison workshops sooner and, with the higher standing, have fewer workshops canceled.

During the pandemic we have attempted to get permission to offer virtual workshops. We have also requested the opportunity to meet with inside facilitators only in order to refresh skills and rebuild our teams. We will continue to seek ways to reach out to incarcerated AVPers and people interested in AVP until we can return to offering in-person workshops.

Bright Brucie

About this Newsletter

AVP Inside Out is a newsletter created by MN AVPers to support our communities and to keep AVP principles in action. Our communities include incarcerated and non-incarcerated citizens, referred to as "insiders" and "outsiders". As of April 28, 2022, 423 insiders in 9 facilities receive print copies. Electronic copies are sent to 2 facilities, a veteran's healing community, and 1469 outsiders. Please note that editors cannot respond to correspondence, but we are delighted to hear from our readers and grateful for all feedback. We occasionally publish excerpts from correspondence (using adjective names); please indicate whether you give us permission to do so.

Editors: Bright Brucie, Centered Cindy, and Genuine Judy.

Layout Artist: Perspicacious Fish.

[AVP](#) (Alternatives to Violence Project, avpusa.org) is a program of [FNVW](#) (Friends for a NonViolent World, fnvw.org).

Line drawings not credited are artistic fonts.



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