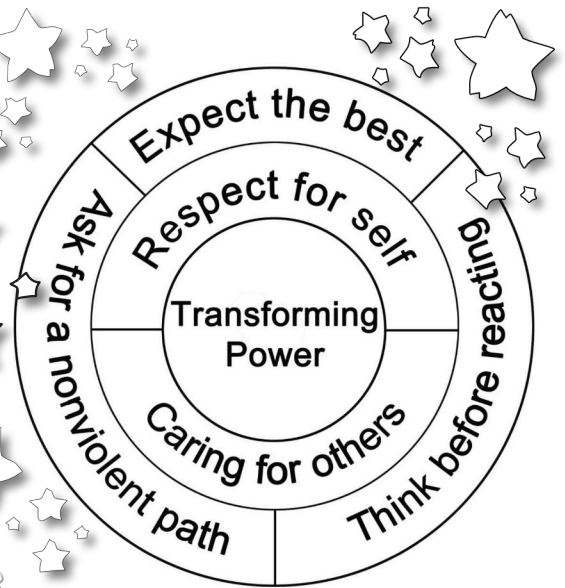


AVP Inside Out

Volume 2, Issue #1/February 2022



Note From the Editors

Welcome to the first issue of 2022! We hope that you are able to enjoy the fourth season in Minnesota – winter, Brrr! We're pleased to report on the success of AVP work with veterans, and celebrate Black History month learning about Shirley Chisholm. We share self-reflections of an insider who is using acquired skills to improve his life and see how even a small kindness demonstrates the effectiveness of Transforming Power. We've also included a meditative poem about the power of believing in and helping each other. We explore peace literacy and how attention affects outcomes. Finally, feeling stressed? Try this month's quick meditation.

The Editors



Poetry, 2021
By Genuine Judy
Collage, 10" x 16"

Dear Community

Providing updates on AVP actions underway in our community

Launching AVP Workshops with Veterans by Bright Brucie

Last November, AVP held its first workshop with 14 veterans at the Eagles Healing Nest. This is a sober living community composed primarily of veterans, all of whom are seeking to heal from traumatic experiences in their past. This was an exciting venture as we sought to adapt the Basic workshop to fit the needs of our veterans.

To prepare, we researched trauma & healing and attempted to incorporate elements of military experiences. One member of the facilitation team is a veteran who brought to the table the unique sense of community which is part of military life. One adaptation we made was to include questions related to the effects of their service on participants' current lives (e.g., "What was one thing that you learned in the military that has served you well in civilian life?"). Another is the role play the participants selected that was of a recently discharged veteran dealing with the effects of PTSD.

In the military, it is common to use Battle Buddies as mentors and guides when a person is assigned to a new unit. For our workshop, we randomly assigned each participant to be the Battle Buddy of another. While facilitators monitored the group and were prepared to intervene if necessary, having a designated Battle Buddy ensured that people had someone to call on if needed, even after the workshop sessions ended. We also started monthly mini workshops (or Standowns) open to anyone who has participated in AVP.

Another valuable difference is the role of the Eagles Healing Nest community. Participants in this workshop return to a community that offers counseling and multiple healing services to its members. They have unrestricted access to other community members and can continue to develop friendships that started in the workshop. That caring extends to the facilitation team, as they provided us with meals and lodging.

Participants lauded the experiential nature of the workshop and several commented that they felt closer in three days to other workshop participants than they did with people they'd been around for months. Most have reported that they used skills they learned within days or weeks of the workshop; many attested to improved family relationships as a result. We plan to continue offering workshops and standowns on a monthly basis.



TP in Action



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

How can we honor ourselves while extending the hand of friendship to someone who is treating us badly?

I had a college roommate who was a great trial to me. She didn't do laundry regularly but hung her dirty socks around the rim of the trash can to air out. She bathed once a week, on Saturday night. She had an out of town boyfriend and when he came to visit, I was expected to

Seeking Creative Works

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

find someplace else to spend the night so they could have the dorm room. After a few weeks of this, we barely spoke to each other.

The semester dragged on, and near the end of the year her boyfriend was back in town. He was taking her out for a fancy dinner and she was getting ready for his arrival. I noticed she was working on something small and getting increasingly frustrated. Finally I asked her what she was doing, and she showed me the hopelessly knotted, delicate silver necklace chain she was trying to untangle so she could wear it to dinner. I told her, *I'm really good at that kind of thing—let me work on it.* I took the points of two safety

pins and teased out the knots and handed the necklace back to her. She was so grateful. She knew I was unhappy about being kicked out of my room when the boyfriend came to town and yet I took the trouble to help her out.

Our relationship changed after that. We never became friends, but the animosity was gone and we both kind of accepted who the other person was. A year later I chanced to see her at a concert and we greeted each other cordially. Sometimes "building a community based on honesty, respect, and caring" begins with one small gesture of kindness.

Centered Cindy



Thoughts From the Inside

Insider reflections of AVP actions

One of the most emotional moments of my life came as a result of participating in the workshop exercises encouraged in AVP. I connected with parts of me that I stuffed away as I felt supported and connected to others around me, which gave me a sense of humanity and integrity to care about myself and others. We did meditation which I continued afterward and it has guided me to self-discipline, structure, focus, intention and sound decision making. These behaviors combined with the lessons learned in AVP Workshops have taught me to be more peaceful, motivated to resolve conflict,

and desirous to have a chance to live a crime free lifestyle.

I still struggle because some of life's hardest knocks with me has come in the form of injustice, loss, grief, illness, addiction, disappointment, and failure. However, I now feel like I have a family of support and people I can talk to to come up with helpful solutions instead of making excuses and poor choices. Silence can become misery, so transform your powerlessness by taking [time] to develop a new sense of power and freedom. Prison is a painful way for any of us to live life when we have so much

potential to add meaning to this world in good ways!

I know prison makes me unhappy, ashamed and baffled as I resent allowing my talents to waste away. And I think for what? Is committing or being involved in crime worth all this? I only have myself to blame when I think of how I'm not there with my children, family, or friends during the holidays. It's time to get real to be content on adjusting more than our point of views, but also our lifestyles.

Swagnificent Zell

If you are in a position to donate in any amount, please consider [Friends for a NonViolent World](http://fnvw.org) (fnvw.org)

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

Dear AVP

Advising each other through specific conflict by committee

Dear AVP,

I'm Elderly and in failing health. For some reason I didn't get conditional medical release even though I have a terminal illness, and I also cannot get work release because I'm not healthy enough for it. So I'll be getting released from prison with no chance to get used to things. After nearly three decades locked up I don't have any support system except for your group and other volunteer outreach groups I've met in prison. The problem is, I can't be around you guys because it will stop you from being able to volunteer. Basically I've been stripped of the chance to ease back into society, and I've also been stripped of my only support system. Do you have any ideas?

Worried About Returning to the Streets



Dear Returning to the Streets,

Even if it is positive, it is frightening to think about a major life changing event such as regaining your freedom after so long - especially when expected or familiar resources are being denied to you. You are very smart to begin investigating your options now, while you have time to reach out and develop those connections before your release. To be clear, you are welcome to participate in official FNVW and AVP activities upon your release, including co-facilitating community-based workshops. You may want to contact FNVW to get started with that after you have settled yourself post-release.

You mention other groups. You could begin reaching out to those groups and seeing what they offer outside of prison work. One example is Minnesota Prison Writer's workshops, which offers benefits to people who have participated in their programs both before and after release. If you haven't already done this, begin reaching out to outside organizations now. Religious communities often offer assistance to members who need support, including after release from prison.

As your release date approaches, you may become eligible for programs at your facility specifically designed for citizens returning to society. For instance, Faribault has a transitioning center. There are also outside organizations whose mission it is to help those transitioning into society. These may vary from county to county, so reach out to the county social services and work with the parole officer assigned to you to identify what is available to you locally.

It is not easy to make the transition to society as a newly released citizen. But there are people and organizations that want to help. Unfortunately, it will mostly fall on you to make that initial contact. This is especially true of services not directly connected to the prison system. But know that we are cheering you on as you return to society.

AVP

Poetry

Tribute I by Cool Guy

Although Americans value stuff
it was a menagerie
of helpless small insects on the edge of my bathtub
who made me realize
that with three dimensions and an infinity of time
we are in Buhlaland.

When we believe in each other,
when we help each other,
the power to do good arrives.

Birds sing their own songs.
Yet they transform ordinary routine
and make our lives richer
beside a quivering present.

In the same way, our small contributions
towards happiness and praise
will lessen burdens.
I have learned the courage to self actualize
lives in the spiritual world.

The birch forest swallows me with fragrant breath
while my youth slips away.
Our bodies have life
which gives a taste of what is yet to come.
May it be so.



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 January 25, 2022, 403 insiders in 10 facilities receive print copies. Electronic copies are sent to an additional facility, 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.

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Cindy.

Layout Publisher: Perspicacious
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Line drawings not credited are artistic
fonts.

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



If you are in a position to donate in any amount, please consider Friends for a NonViolent World (fnvw.org)

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

Celebrations Spotlighting outstanding individuals of diverse Backgrounds through the lens of current events

Black History Month: Shirley Chisholm By Centered Cindy

Black History Month is an annual celebration of achievements by African Americans. Since 1976 every U.S. president has designated the month of February as Black History Month, a time to recognize the central role African Americans play in U.S. history.

This month we highlight Shirley Chisholm, who was the first Black woman to serve in Congress. Born in 1924 in Brooklyn to two immigrant parents, she was an early childhood educator. In 1964 she was elected to the New York State legislature. When a new congressional district was created out of her Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood, she took advantage of the opportunity and was elected to the U.S. Congress in 1968. Her opponent campaigned by saying the district "needed a man's voice in Washington," and she met the challenge head on, saying there had been Negro men in office earlier but they

didn't deliver. She also used her fluent Spanish to appeal to the growing Hispanic population in the district.

Chisholm broke the standing convention that new Representatives keep their heads down. She boldly spoke out against the Vietnam War in her first speech on the House floor, vowing to vote against any defense spending bill until "our values and priorities have been turned right side up again." She was a founding member of both the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC) in 1971 and the Congressional Women's Caucus in 1977.


In 1972 she declared her candidacy for President, observing that none of the other candidates represented the interests of her low income constituents. She campaigned nationwide and succeeded in getting on the ballot in twelve states. Chisholm received 10% of delegate votes at the Democratic National Convention, a respectable

showing given her outsider status and modest funding.

Chisholm's campaign slogan was "Unbought and Unbossed." She remained true to that slogan throughout her years in Washington. Some of her supporters were shocked when she visited political rival George Wallace while he was hospitalized after an assassination attempt. Alabama governor Wallace was known for his segregationist views. In the end their cordiality benefitted Chisholm's work to pass legislation for a minimum wage for domestic workers, when Wallace convinced a number of Southern congressmen to support it.

Shirley Chisholm said she would like to be remembered as a Black woman who dared to be herself, and who was a catalyst for change. We celebrate her service to our society and the principles of AVP, such as a commitment to truth and building a community based on honesty, respect, and caring.

Meditation Providing opportunity for personal growth and reflection

 Connecting with the Earth | by Bright Brucie

We often think of meditation as something that requires time and distance from others to work. There are other forms of meditation that can effect a change when it is needed, in the moment of need. Here's an example of a meditation to handle stress in three deep breaths.

When you become aware of feeling stressed or anxious, try creating a brief time-out to bring those feelings into a calmer state.

Take a deep breath. Hold it as you count to five. Breathe out to a count of five. Pause for a count of five. Take a second deep

breath and hold it to a count of five. Breathe out to a count of five. Pause for a count of five. Take a third deep breath and hold it to a count of five. Breathe out to a count of five. Pause for a count of five. Say to yourself, "Relax" or "Be calm", whatever phrase is appropriate. And move on.