



## Alternatives to Violence Project

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### *The Alternatives to Violence Project*

In these times, skills for peaceful relationships are needed more than ever. Founded upon the understanding that caring for others arises naturally from respecting and caring for oneself, AVP uses experiential exercises to help participants discover the wonder that is part of each of us. AVP provides a safe environment where we can enjoy the process, and learn and laugh together. Some themes of the workshop are:

- ◆ **Affirmation, Trust and Self Esteem**
- ◆ **Communication**
- ◆ **Cooperation**
- ◆ **Community Building**
- ◆ **Creative Conflict Resolution**

AVP is a worldwide association of volunteer groups offering experiential workshops to youth and adults in conflict resolution, responses to violence, and personal growth. AVP teaches nonviolent skills and techniques such as used by Mohandas Gandhi and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. to create successful personal interactions and to allow people to share and contribute more effectively.

Explore ways of becoming a more positive influence by changing how you **respond to or initiate violence**. **Come and be** part of a movement that is already making a difference in lives around the world.

#### **WHAT IS THE ALTERNATIVES TO VIOLENCE PROJECT?**

We live in a violent society....and violence comes in many forms. Many are shocked by the increasing conflict on the streets, in our school and in the home. Violence knows no class, racial, economic or geographical boundaries. People in the US have twice the chance of being murdered than in many other Western countries. Our schools have resorted to metal detectors. Violence in the home, physical and mental, directed against both spouse and child is rampant. We lead the world in prison population, and our prisons, rather than protecting society from violence, spawn more violence. Over ninety percent of prisoners eventually return to society-- from a prison experience that encourages violence.

#### **AVP IN PRISONS**

AVP focuses much of its efforts toward one of the most violent prone groups in our society, prison inmates. AVP began 30 years ago when a group of prisoners at Greenhaven Prison in New York were

asked to help develop a program to address the attitudes and violence of at-risk youth. Asking a local Quaker group to assist, AVP was developed. The program was tested on other inmates in the prison and was so successful it quickly spread to other New York prisons. Then it spread to other states and later to other countries. AVP is now in most states and in many countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Mexico, Costa Rica, Canada, South Africa, Nigeria, Rwanda, Bosnia, Croatia, Ireland, Russia, India, United Kingdom, Macedonia and many others.

### **Key Benefits**

- Recidivism Reduction (i.e.-71% back to prison rate lowered to 47%)
- Coping with Prison Violence
- Re-introduction to Society

### **AVP IN THE COMMUNITY**

Outside prison, in our daily lives, we face interpersonal conflict and non-physical violence everyday. AVP also conducts workshops for teenagers, battered women's shelter residents, youth home residents, homeless shelter staff members, businesses, and other community groups. An entire small town in Colorado has chosen to go through our program. In 1994, the UN sent our facilitators to work with youth in the refuge camps. In Nicaragua the national police force receive our training as part of their efforts to defuse violence.

### **Where do participants come from?**

- Teachers
- Psychologists
- Boys and Girls Club staff: their clients often struggle with issues of violence, and organizations always have their own conflicts.
- Homeless: Their input and sharing really empowers workshops
- Ex-gang members: where the action is
- Social Workers
- Retired: AVP groups have bloomed due to their commitment.
- The Courts: An AVP workshop must not be the sole alternative to incarceration, i.e.: there must be an element of volunteerism.

Churches: There is a large nonreligious spiritual aspect in workshops.