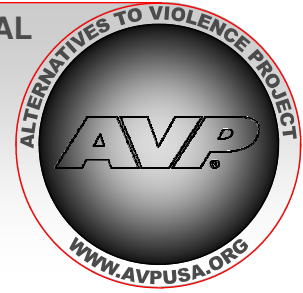


- communication
- affirmation
- community building
- trust
- conflict resolution



## COLLECTED COMMENTS ABOUT AVP

The primary purpose of this collection of statements about or supporting AVP is to provide some indication of the impact and effectiveness of the experiential workshops its volunteers facilitate. This collection is mostly of earlier existing documents. Included are such items as brief comments and letters from inmate prison workshop facilitators and community workshop facilitators, from professionals in the corrections and other fields, and excerpts from one or more studies on recidivism, violence and infractions. As this is the earliest version and a “work in progress,” all of the above examples may not appear until later versions of this collection. Where possible, references will be provided. Typically, facilitator names of inmates and others have been omitted from brief statements.



Simple guides to finding the peaceful potential of each one, experiencing the sharing that teaches attitudinal skills and discovery of self and others from a broader perspective, and appreciation reflected by practicing the skills of that discovery in day to day living, culminates in a growing collective power for peace in the world.

As people in the face of conflict pause to find a peaceful path, the world experiences a ripple from that tiny effort. And as people and their ripples converge, a safe environment emerges, coaxing even the most violent of people to relax, to bond as a community, and to participate with one another in reaching their common goal of happiness.

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This compiled document is a work in progress, using many older items, and to be expanded to include newer information as it comes in from sources across the USA and around the world.

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## CORRECTIONS AND OTHER PROFESSIONALS

- ***Evaluation of an Inmate-Run Alternatives to Violence Project:  
The Impact of Inmate-to-Inmate Intervention (Maryland)***  
*Christine Walrath (2001)*  
*Johns Hopkins University*  
[http://www.avpusa.org/ftp/Walrath\\_AVP.pdf](http://www.avpusa.org/ftp/Walrath_AVP.pdf)
  
- ***Lessons from the Cellblock:  
A Study of Prison Inmate Participants in an Alternatives to Violence  
Program (unpublished)***  
*Stanton Sloane, an AVP Facilitator (2001)*
  - *Masters' Degree in Conflict Transformation at Eastern Mennonite  
University*<http://weatherhead.case.edu/edm/archive/files/year1/Sloane.pdf>
  
- ***A Study of the Effectiveness of Alternatives to Violence  
Workshops in a Prison System***  
*Stanton Sloane, an AVP Facilitator (2002)*
  - *Masters' Degree in Conflict Transformation at Eastern Mennonite  
University*<http://www.sfu.ca/cfrj/fulltext/sloane.pdf>
  
- ***How Restorative Is AVP?  
Evaluating the Alternatives to Violence Project According to a  
Restorative Justice Yardstick***  
*Michael Bischoff, an AVP Facilitator (2003)*
  - *Masters' Degree in Conflict Transformation at Eastern Mennonite  
University*<http://mediate.quaker.org/papers/rj.htm>

- ***The Alternatives to Violence Project in Delaware:***

***A Three-Year Cumulative Recidivism Study***

*Marsha L. Miller, Ph.D., (2005)*

*John A. Shuford, M.B.A., Ed.S., FACHCA, an AVP Facilitator*

<http://www.avpusa.org/ftp/recidivismreport.pdf>

**NOTE:** The following is excerpted from the full report (*web URL above*) by permission of both Marsha Miller, and John Shuford. The charts in it have been modified to reflect only two statistics, while the full report covers many statistics along with interpretive statements.

**The Alternatives to  
Violence  
Project in Delaware:  
A Three-Year Cumulative  
Recidivism Study**



**September 2005**

**Evaluation funded  
by the Drane Family Fund of the  
New Hampshire Charitable  
Foundation**

**Excerpts and paraphrasing by Doug  
Couch, Editor, *The Transformer* (AVP-  
USA newsletter), from report citing  
the following studies...**

**Current (Miller) Study:**

**Marsha L. Miller, Ph.D.**

Research, Evaluation, & Planning

1400 Stoneleigh Road

Wilmington, DE 19803

(302) 478-8912

[m.miller2001@comcast.net](mailto:m.miller2001@comcast.net)

**John A. Shuford, M.B.A., Ed.S.,  
FACHCA\***

AVP/Delaware Coordinator

209 N. New Street

Dover, DE 19904-3127

(302) 678-8326

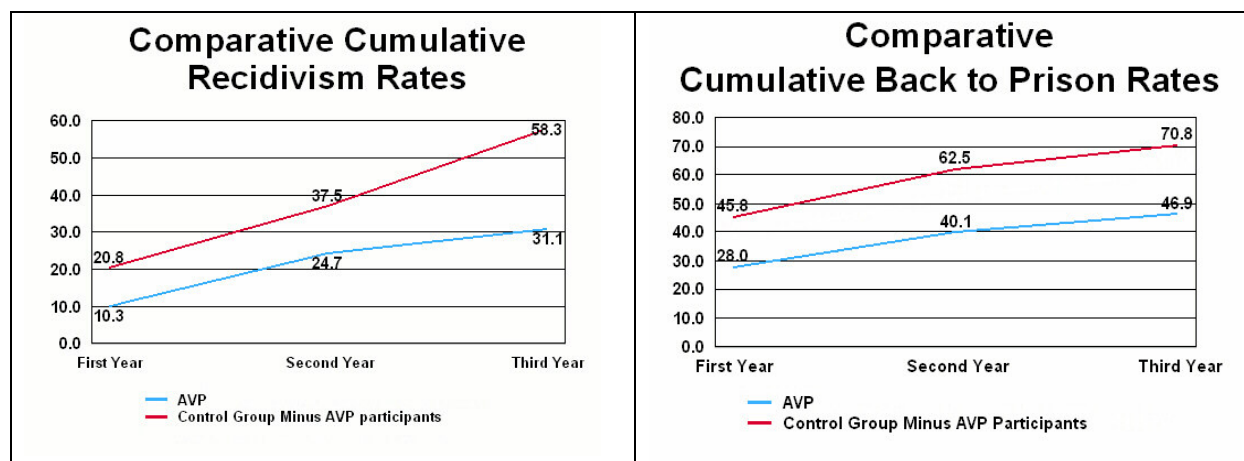
[j.shuford@verizon.net](mailto:j.shuford@verizon.net)

**Referenced (Sloane) Study:**

**Sloane, Stanton (2002).** *A Study of the  
Effectiveness of the Alternatives to  
Violence Project Workshops in a Prison  
System*, Ph.D. Dissertation Case Western  
University.

Recidivism statistics were developed for a random sample of Alternatives to Violence Program (AVP) participants from 1993 to 2001 at the Delaware Correctional Center, the state's largest correctional institution, which houses male inmates with the most serious offenses. The AVP sample consistently performed better each year for three years both in recidivism and in the rate of return to prison for any reason. These striking results

suggest that AVP is effective in reducing the likelihood of recidivism... The goal is to be able to examine the resumption of criminal careers apart from the consequence of rules violations that involve discretion and may be treated differently over time.



**Inmate Comment (excerpt):** "During my first basic as a trainer, there were a number of inmates there whom I had been very violent to before. I knew if I was to be a role model, to live AVP, I had to apologize to them for what I had done. It was odd to apologize to someone I had defeated and who had pleaded for his life to me."

**Inmate Comment:** "I always thought there were two kinds of people, strong and weak. When I learned the difference between passive, assertive and aggressive, it totally changed my perception. That was the turning point for me. Strength is now something that comes from within."

**Prison Official Comment:** "I saw AVP facilitate a dramatic reduction in the number of assaults between inmates . . . and the overall climate improved to a point where the inmates were actually seeking out ways to positively effect their living environment." [Stan Taylor, Commissioner, Department of Correction, Delaware]

**Prison Official Comment:** "Your program has been a mainstay contributing to the lowering of violence in the Facility. Time and time again, we have witnessed the effectiveness of the Alternatives to Violence Project through changed behavior of inmates, who might otherwise have committed violent acts which would have lengthened their period of incarceration. It is my sincere hope you are able to continue providing the Alternatives to Violence Project here at Eastern. We have no substitute program; we must rely on you and your staff for this vital support." [Philip Coombe, Jr., Superintendent, Eastern Correctional Facility, New York.]

"AVP starts by establishing a sense of dignity or self-worth in participants. This serves to instill a willingness and ability to communicate. Participants first have to see themselves as worthy of being communicated with, in order for them to initiate the process. As they begin communicating, they develop affective

trust [cognitive trust is believing that others are competent to carry out a particular task, whereas affective trust is believing others will support and help you as part of your friendship]. As trust builds, they begin to share feelings and learn that others are more like them than they are different. This leads to the recognition that others are 'OK.'" [page 19, Sloane 2002]

As affective trust increases, participants begin to see others as having value, which is the foundation for empathy. The result is that pro-social behaviors begin to develop rather quickly. As their self-confidence and self-esteem develop, they are less affected by the negative influences in their housing units and in the institution in general. This is reinforced by the high level of visibility of this positive "community" in the institution and the fact that other graduates tend to reinforce what they have learned from AVP. It also creates curiosity in new inmates who are apprehensive about prison life and are drawn to the AVP community.

Of long term significance is the relationship of these changes on maturation. Two very important skills or abilities of adult maturity are being able to develop meaningful relationships and make healthy decisions. Prison, by its design, arrests the development of these two skills. AVP effectively re-engages this maturation process by:

- Fostering the development of empathy. AVP increases participants' self-awareness and self-knowledge. When they look into themselves, they discover their "innate health," which we all have. This increases their self-acceptance, which allows them to be more accepting and risk taking with others. This is the basis of empathy, which is necessary for meaningful relationships with significant others.
- Empowering participants through interpersonal and intrapersonal skills development and attitude change. Inmates typically feel themselves to be victims, powerless and alienated. AVP helps them realize they are co-creators of their lives, which with positive attitude change, leads to responsible and healthy decision-making.

The low recidivism rate of AVP participants should make this program attractive to Departments of Correction. In addition, an earlier study (Sloan 2002) showed that AVP has a positive effect on prison discipline.

It seems likely that the impact could be even greater if AVP were combined with a full service re-entry program after inmates are released, one that would help them avoid problems that lead to rule violations that result in returns to prison. AVP Delaware is currently exploring the possibility of developing a re-entry program that would provide a positive support community and assist with participants' many logistical and survival needs. Another possibility might be to combine AVP with other existing inside inmate programs as well as programs that provide transition services.

## CONNECTICUT

### HUMAN RELATIONS TRAINER & CONSULTANT

**Letter of support from Nancy E. Nothhelfer, April 18, 1987** *(photocopy of letter available):*

“I have been associated with the Alternatives to Violence Project since 1981. At that time in my role as human relations consultant I was contracted to do a series of workshops of continuing education for two the community trainers. When I was informed of the short training that these folks were given before they were conducting workshops in prisons, I was totally amazed and believed the workshops could not be of value. I knew how many years of training and interning it took for me to become a trainer. Yet I like the concept.

“So at the same time I was leading the continuing education workshops, I was a participant in the Basic and Training for Trainers weekend workshops, a strange situation. Shortly thereafter I co-facilitated a prison workshop. And I saw first-hand how it all works – even or particularly with folks who have but the most elementary training in experiential learning but care. For six years I have seen this same phenomenon occur in a prison setting over and over with many different persons of varied occupations. This program works and with a minimum of hours of training.

“There is a remarkable result – both with the inmates and with those who go into the prisons. If you consider the cost-effectiveness of AVP, there is no equal.

“Having been a human relations trainer and consultant for sixteen years, I am richly rewarded monetarily in my work with Corporate America. Although I have received no remuneration in my six years of work with AVP, I am richly rewarded innerly. I plan to continue for many years.”

Nancy E. Nothhelfer  
Human Relations Trainer & Consultant



## DELAWARE

I'd like to take this opportunity to express my support for and admiration of the Alternatives to Violence Program. As a Warden of a State Prison in Delaware I saw the AVP facilitate a dramatic reduction in the number of assaults between inmates in what had been a difficult maximum security unit.

As the program continued to run and "graduate" more and more inmates, the overall climate improved to a point where the inmates were actually seeking out ways to positively effect their living environment.

As the Chief of Prisons for Delaware, I've seen similar results in each of the prisons that have implemented Alternatives to Violence Programs.

There have never been any security breaches and the staff and inmate population alike respect the AVP volunteers.

I'd highly recommend the Alternatives to Violence Program to any correctional manager and especially to those experiencing a high level of inmate on inmate conflict.

*Stan Taylor, Commissioner  
Delaware Department of Correction*

Note: For Delaware Full Reports by Miller & Shuford, and Sloane...see pages 2 & 3 above for web site references.



## NEW JERSEY

### 1. **Testimonial:**

“Words cannot express the value of the training you have conducted at the Academy. The impact you have had on the staff, personally as well as professionally, is remarkable. After the first training workshop, there was a definite change in attitude and I saw a cohesive bond develop between many of the staff. Although there were still disruptive influences at work, the majority of the team was able to rise above the negativity.

The Effective Supervisory Skills training certainly addressed our need to have our supervisors better enabled to motivate and lead line staff. I am constantly amazed at the transformation our staff experiences during your training sessions. There is actually a paradigm shift from the rigidity and inflexibility ingrained in Corrections, to the understanding and acceptance of the value of community and teamwork. I have no doubt that our staff will take what they have learned from you and carry it with them wherever they work. My greatest hope is that the teamwork and supervisory tenets you shared with us will eventually become the tenets by which the Department of Corrections manages.”

*Craig Conway, Director  
New Jersey DOC, Office of Training*

## NEW YORK

### 2. Letter to Marge Zybas (AVP), July 25, 1980 (photocopy of letter available):

"I can't begin to tell you the impact the workshop you facilitated has had on our youth and the staff as well.

The change in one of our young men (Jose) is particularly astounding. He is now a joy to work with.

In behalf of all our residents and staff, my heartfelt thanks to you and your staff. It is individuals such as yourselves which makes our sometimes difficult task easier.

*R. W. Washington, Facility Director  
New York State Executive Department  
Division for Youth*



### 3. Letter to Margaret Zybas (AVP), July 31, 1984 (photocopy of letter available):

"Thank you very much for the continuing support you and other members of your staff have given to Eastern Correctional Facility through the Alternatives to Violence Project. I cannot emphasize enough the value of your work here. The inmates themselves are the biggest testimony to the Alternatives to Violence Project, as reflected in their demand for the courses and the backlog of inmates waiting their turn to participate.

"Time and time again, we have witnessed the effectiveness of the Alternatives to Violence Project through changed behavior of inmates, who might otherwise have committed violent acts which would have lengthened their period of incarceration.

"It is my sincere hope you are able to continue providing the Alternatives to Violence Project here at Eastern. We have no substitute program; we must rely on you and your staff for this vital support.

I look forward to seeing you in the near future."

*Philip Coombe, Jr., Superintendent  
Eastern Correctional Facility, New York*



### 4. Letter to Margaret Zybas (AVP), September 26, 1985 (photocopy of letter available):

"...Your program [AVP] has been a mainstay contributing to the lowering of violence in the Facility. It also increases the ability of the inmates to withstand stress and not resort to aggressive modes of behavior..."

*R. Hoke, Superintendent  
Eastern New York Correctional Facility*



5. **Letter to Stephen Angell (AVP), January 29, 1987** (*photocopy of letter available*):

“...‘The Alternatives to Violence Program is one of the most popular and worthwhile Volunteer Programs in the New York State Department of Correctional Services. The volunteers are well trained, dedicated and many have had long years of experience working in a correctional setting. They arrive ready to challenge the inmates. And with the challenge, they also provide the format for positive change and help the inmates involved to cope with the pressures of the system. The instructors help the inmates to develop a positive self-image and equip them with new skills and attitudes during the period of incarceration. Building on those skills and attitudes after release will enable the inmates to lead a productive, crime-free life in the community.’”

*Jerry Ducie, Director  
Correctional Volunteer Services, New York*

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## OHIO

### 6. **Testimonial:**

“Employees consistently rate the Conflict Transformation/Teambuilding training extremely high on the evaluations. [Note: These trainings were facilitated by institution staff rather than outside trainers.] It is generally thought to be the best training program that staff has participated in. Attendees particularly identify being able to develop personal relationships with others as very impactful. The labor unions are strong supporters of this training. Employee grievances have dropped to an all time low . . . Thank you for helping us change the culture at MCI. It is the best investment of resources that we have ever made.”

*Christine Money, Warden*

*Marion Correction Institution, Ohio*

## A MAJOR CITY PRISON SYSTEM

### 7. **Testimonial:**

“Prior to the training, our receiving room on my shift [7-3] had 5 or 6 uses of force per month. Since the training [75% of his staff had training], there have been a maximum of 5 uses of force in the last 2 years.”

*Captain Edmonds*

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### 8. **Testimonial:**

“I have personally seen such a major difference in the way they perceive themselves, the way they interact with each other, and the way they interact with support staff, whether they be social service, medical or maintenance. The rate of sick abuse or not coming to work has dropped and the overall attitude of the workplace has improved.”

*Captain Whitaker*

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## AVP INMATE FACILITATORS

1. "When I viewed AVP through the windows, I thought it was a joke. I didn't understand it and I didn't care to either. After I went through AVP the first two days, I respected it to a point. The people around me in the workshop made me feel it was something a person could really believe in. You could let your guard down, express yourself and not be criticized or threatened in any way. This was the first time I had experienced this. Every time I would talk to someone there was some kind of threat coming back, except with AVP. The people in the workshop made me feel so comfortable I could let my guard down. This was one program that made me look at myself and at another person without disrespecting them. That is how it has effected me."
2. "I'm 37 and have been in prison for a third of my life. I got involved because I know at some time the institution would respect the program because of the people involved. That is the only reason I went into it. I was going to get it into my file. Once I got there, it was a whole nother ball game. I had no other reason to judge it than what I saw and heard."
3. "It made me look at how I relate to other people, that I was doing it on a threat to threat basis, and the fact that that is not necessary. We can stand with each other and experience each other without wondering what the other is going to do, what the threat is, being on the defensive. What I like about AVP is that I look at others differently and I look at myself differently. I look in the mirror and I actually like what I see. I like what I've become and what I've become inside. I never before thought of how I related to other people, the defensiveness and intimidation. It just never occurred to me to think about it, that there was another alternative, not until AVP."
4. "I grew up all my life resolving conflict violently, school, domestic, wife. In AVP I found an alternative that work, and works for me every day. I look at other people differently, I look beyond the exterior. It changed the people around me, they saw the change in me from four years ago. Before when I was challenged, I would come back and try and intimidate them to see their reaction, and now I don't do that. I've been a comedian all my life, but now I use it in a positive sense. And what really works is when you affirm someone else, they are not ready for it or used to it in this setting. And it works, it changes people."
5. "I went into the workshop as a pessimist and I came out as a changed person. I was alive, I was actually alive. I liked what I saw in myself. It was a real high and I've been doing it for two years and I love that feeling. And to see other people awakened in the workshops, to see their lives changed."
6. "It's hard to trust other people. I've spent my whole life not trusting other people. AVP has allowed me the opportunity develop trust in myself and in other people and it has made an incredible difference in how I look at the world and life."

7. "I am now always looking for the best in other people. It's beautiful to see 250 lb men and 180 lb men hugging each other and saying, 'I respect you for what you are.'"
8. "There is good in every one. We have not known how to see that good without being perceived as weak and vulnerable. AVP showed me how to reach down and see it, to tap that guy that has always wanted to come out but was afraid to come out. When growing up, if you couldn't fight, you were a cast-a-way. Being tough was the thing. When I became an adult, I should have out grown it, but it became a learned behavior and I carried it into my marriage and I lost it all. When I see someone now, I see them with a different perspective. I'm looking for something good, whereas before I was looking at all the negative things in someone. It's a great program."
9. "In my life, there was a very dictatorial ruler in my house. He was the absolute king. When I got married, I was going to be the absolute king, because I was going to have the power he had. It was a lose/lose thing for me. I went through three wives, alienated six of my kids, by being that way. Now, I look at things differently. I see a conflict and can head it off before it becomes physical. I don't let things get so desperate that I have to take desperate measures. I try and be more aware of what's going on around and resolve the situation before it develops to that critical melting point. It doesn't make me perfect. I still get angry, but I know how to direct it. I'm no longer the guy standing on the corner looking for a house number afraid to ask. I will ask for help now and that is a big step for me because I have never had to ask for anything in my life. I always provided for myself."
10. "I always felt I had to have control and now I can give up control and not feel bad about it, and yet still retain a feeling of responsibility for the outcome."
11. "AVP has been the biggest help for me in my 12 years in prison."
12. "AVP will probably save my life down the road."
13. "I grew up where anger was either physical or withheld. So growing up I didn't enjoy conflicts because I saw the results of it at home. When I got married, I wanted to be the boss, I wanted to be in control. And in the workplace, when things didn't go well, I had trouble resolving conflicts. I let everything build up for 10 years and I exploded. That scared me because it showed a violent side of me I didn't want to admit I had. I learned through AVP that I didn't have to let my anger get out of control. It showed me how I could do it."
14. "I got into AVP because there weren't any others. I didn't see myself as an angry person. I'm no longer afraid of being out of control. When I had that fear, I would put up a barrier so they couldn't get to know me and I couldn't get to know them. A side benefit of AVP is that I don't take things so seriously and I let people inside that wall. I have learned to deal with anger as it happens and not let it build up. I now don't fear coming back into the institution because I don't fear being out of control."



15. "I grew up in a family where my mother and father would not express feelings or anger. They would hold it in until they would explode. That is the lesson I learned from them; not to express my feelings whether they be anger or love. Then it was too late and violence became a way of life for me."
16. "There is not only physical but mental violence, which can be even worse. I always had to have my guard up and I contribute that to low self esteem. I knew what I needed to change. I had been in every group in the institution and they were all generic. They gave the same information. There were very few solutions offered. When you are given the information without the solution, you are still lost. AVP gave me some concrete solutions."
17. "At my first AVP I saw people I knew before but for the first time saw them as people. That really stuck in my mind and after the workshop, I realized AVP was going to be a part of my life. I felt better about myself and the more I'm involved, the better I feel about myself. I am able to talk with people, to really communicate with them. There was no turning back, AVP was me. It was a part of my life. I threw out the negative thoughts and filled them with positive ones. I will have space for more positive thoughts and probably always will, so I keep searching. I give to others, but I am always teaming something. Each workshop I feel better about myself, and my self esteem improves."
18. "Those who have been through AVP really communicate with each other, so when we meet and talk, we walk away feeling good because we have someone to talk to. You can't shake it off, it is in you."
19. "All my life, negativity has been around me. I am negativity. It has created me. My thoughts were negative. When I dealt with other people, it was in the negative realm, even when I tried to do what I thought was right. AVP took out the negative and put in positive. It gave me new avenues to view, new alternatives, other ways to see things. Where as before, I saw everyone as a potential enemy. Like most of us here, we came from a war zone, America is a war zone. You have to look at life as a soldier, every day. Now I sit back and look at the world in a different way with a different perspective. I wasn't into male bonding, but now I look at that in a totally different light."
20. "If people can see that there is a different way to see things, in a positive way, it will change them even if they are not open to them."
21. "It is not fail safe, but it does work 90% to 95% of the time for me. Guys who knew me on the street, come up to me and say I've changed, that I'm a new person. That really makes me feel good to hear that. It was inside me all along, I just didn't know how to bring it out without feeling less of a man."
22. "Men seldom talk to men, they talk at each other. They have a facade, the macho, the bravado. You never get past that because they always are fronting. In an AVP workshop, even with the diversity of men, you see the facade melt away. For the first

time, you are actually talking to the person. When you walk away, you take that community with you. The next time you see him, you know what you are looking at because you know what's inside. And you let other people see you for what you really are. At that time, it makes no sense to go back to your facade because you have blown your cover. People know who you are as a real person.”

23. “AVP was the first workshop I participated in because I didn't have to talk about my case, which was still in court. I'm not a violent person and my crime was not violent, yet I got a lot out of the workshop. AVP gives you the tools to deal with people whether they are violent or not.”
24. “I've seen the effect it has on other people, and if nothing else, I wanted to be a part of that.”
25. “Before AVP I only thought about violence, there was no second option. AVP saved my life, it gave me another option. The violence in my life got worse and worse. I spent most of my 11 years in prison in the hole. I am not a sensitive, caring, understanding individual, but this program has really had an impact on me. During my first basic as a trainer, there were a number of inmates there whom I had been very violent to before. I knew if I was to be a role model, to live AVP, I had to apologize to them for what I had done. It was odd to apologize to someone I had defeated and who had pleaded for his life to me. Some friends got out of maximum for having beat up some correctional officers and came to me anxious to get some action. I explained to them that type of activity was not me anymore. You could see the hurt in their eyes and it hurts me because I know I cannot do it and I cannot allow them to do it. It is a whole different world, it's different for me. When I was a woman or I fought with all the tools I could fight with, I learned to be the best that I could be. Now to be a warrior for nonviolence, I had to learn the tools of AVP.”
26. “I'm scared to tread in the old waters. I don't want to know who I was. I never knew how to love, I didn't care about love, I didn't care about anybody else's feelings. I only knew win, survive, be strong, and that was it. There was conquer, and there was destroy, there was no middle ground. My definition of a man was who the toughest man on the block was. We know right from wrong, but we don't know what we are doing wrong. I stand there angry, furious, and now I ask myself, "Why?", Why am I angry. That is the biggest thing AVP is to me. I ask myself why. "He is not going to do anything." As long as he doesn't put his hands on me, there is no reason to be violent, physically or mentally. Why? Because someone thinks they are superior to someone else. No one is. We are all equal. We have to understand that we all have to live together, especially in here, it is a must. When we come into a group, we see each other's differences. When we leave, we have seen how similar we are, our values, experiences, relationships. It's like we are looking at a whole other person, we have so much in common.”
27. “Something happened on the very first day that changed me. Two to three hours into the session. We played games and laughed at each other and then at ourselves. And when you laugh at yourself it doesn't bother you. You are learning very important things while you

are having fun. When you leave a workshop, there is no longer any denial. We have made some true friends in the workshop.

28. "They say to have fun in the workshop, but we are able to carry it out of the workshop and have fun in regular life."
29. "To spend three days without negative energy has a profound effect on people."
30. "We become a family and can draw on each others' strengths and weaknesses. The larger the family gets, the more important we become."
31. "I was in a situation recently which became violent. I tried to be nonviolent. Violence was not in my mind but was in his, and he became violent. I felt guilty because it turned violent even though I tried every thing I knew."
32. "The affirmation exercise was very difficult for me and it was the turning point for me."
33. "I still get angry and at times get furious, but it never results in violence."
34. "I was a warrior in my mental state, I would think about killing you, about hurting you. And to me that was more detrimental than going out and fighting somebody. I was fighting constantly, I was living it, I was fighting myself constantly. Thinking about doing harm to people. That worked on me worse than actually going out and being physically violent. Getting into AVP gave me a life style I could live with, that I fell in love with, that I could use. I saw something that worked and I grounded my life in it. Once I was able to let down the barriers and trust people, and I didn't worry about that violence, I didn't have to worry about you hurting me, and I didn't think about hurting you. I used to be passive on the outside but very violent on the inside. Now I'm nonviolent on the inside and outside, an integration I thank AVP for."
35. "It is not a matter of modeling it. It is a matter of believing it and, therefore, it is your lifestyle and you live it."
36. "I've seen guys come into a workshop and I say they will never make a good trainer. Then, six or eight months after the workshop, I see the change and tell myself that I was wrong, they will make a good trainer. Sometime people change during the workshop and sometimes it occurs over time."
37. "We bond with each other, and therefore, we can play more and have more fun with each other. We are more open and free with each other."
38. "It's not about being passive. It's about dealing with a problem and handling it. Being assertive."

39. "I always thought there were two kinds of people, strong and weak. When I learned the difference between passive, assertive and aggressive, it totally changed my perception. That was the turning point for me. Strength is now something that comes from within."
40. "Violence is not power, it is loss of power, loss of control. If you have power, you can relinquish it."
41. "We have to reevaluate what it is to be a man. My grandfather used to tell me that you know your a man when you don't have to prove anything to anybody else. Now I understand. I could not before AVP."
42. "Empowering people to find themselves and then giving them the tools to express what they've found."
43. "We empower each other."
44. "In one workshop, half of the participants said they did not want to be there, they were told to be there. The trainers were able to empower the whole group and by the third session, they had forgotten their attitude. The next day was a powerful experience for all."
45. "It doesn't matter the reason you come, so long as you are not disruptive, it will effect you."
46. "I liked everything about AVP. The AVP program has left me with good spirits and feeling good about myself and people around me. I think even more positive about my life and things that I can apply to my daily life so that I can become a better person." "I have had nothing but good feelings about myself from the time I walked in the door to AVP. I thought that the program was going to 'stink'. I was wrong. It is nothing like I expected. As a lost soul needing help like this, AVP was there for me as well as others. I express the appreciation for everyone that made this happen."
47. "Of all the programs coming in here, none had so much respect shown for it"
48. "I found it to be very surprising, because I never would have believed it would or could ever be possible to get to know or work with any of them. As well as the fact that everyone worked together and helped each other in all of the exercises and groups."
49. "I think that this whole weekend has been a wonderful event that will remain with me throughout my life in useful ways, more that you could imagine."
50. "From my time spent here in the AVP program, I was able to find a person within myself who I never knew existed. I am now able to meet difficult situations and use the tools of AVP to handle them."

51. "Everyone was able to play a part in their own learning process. Each was able to find that there is more than what is on the outside of each other. There is an inner self that rules our lives."
52. "(AVP) helped me to open up to others and see different things about my life that I didn't even see or notice. (AVP) made me feel real good about myself."
53. "I think the group overall, throughout the three days was a great experience and I think everyone included has learned to be open and honest and have become a little more trusting in their fellow man."
54. "I really felt that most of the people had a lot of ugly things within them until we got into it. I soon found out that I was wrong because I got to understand a lot of them through the exercises and found out that they are some really good people."
55. ". . . there are so many people in this world like myself who just need a little help along the way, someone who will understand and just listen . . . I came to the workshop looking and didn't really know what I was looking for. I now thank the Lord that I did. I feel that I've learned how to listen and if I truly and honestly work real hard at it, I will be the man I want to be."
56. ". . . (AVP) helped me learn to listen before I make judgments. Something I would never do before is hear a person all the way through."
57. "It helped open my mind to new ideals towards life . . . I found out that this program can be fun as well as educating. It made me feel like I was someone and what I said was important."
58. "Made me realize it's not as hard as I thought to be honest with others and to respect and care for others opinions."
59. "All of us learned something this weekend which explains AVP's success rate."
60. "I feel that 99% of everyone who came got something good out of it, and that is very good."
61. "I have lots of nightmares with this monster about to grab me and I wake up in a cold sweat. I'm afraid to go back to sleep because the monster will get me. But, this morning, I woke up feeling really good. I had a wonderful dream that I was helping needy children in Africa. I wanted to go back to sleep to see if the good dream would come back because it felt so good."
62. "All my life the only alternative that I ever knew was a violent response. When confronted with a stress situation or its equal, I knew nothing but violence. But thanks to the AVP program, I have other methods in dealing with these same situations that once forced violence from me. So for me, the program is priceless."

63. If there is such a thing as a miraculous change in an individual, I can truthfully say that it was during my involvement with AVP that I began to grow from a person filled with hate, anger, and despair, into a person who believes he too is responsible for the protection, preservation and enrichment of humanity.”
64. Thank you for showing us how to divert our violent attitudes into a positive and peaceful outcome. . . . Peace of mind is so hard to find these days . . . by some miracle, I found it here in the AVP program . . . I looked inside of me and found a loving and caring me.”
65. “My feelings about the AVP program is a feeling of great joy. I went in with an open mind and came out with a clean mind. I understand myself better now transforming my power to Peace.”
66. I had a great time and I didn’t want it to end. It is almost like a big family losing their home and splitting up. I feel we all opened up and shared especially in the discussions and in concentric circles. I learned a lot about myself.”
67. “What words are there to express a feeling never shared before! . . . GREAT. I enjoyed myself while learning about me. As for the certificate, I’m sure it’ll come in handy but if the Parole Board doesn’t recognize it, no problem. It’s their loss.”
68. “I feel it was a wonderful thing, to be able to discuss our inner thoughts and feelings without hurting anyone and at the same time bringing out the best in each other. It felt like a real family. For the first time in my life I have meet people who came into my life and changed it. . . . I now find myself feeling like I never have before.”
69. “This was a new experience for me. Having had military and police experience, I thought I had a well-rounded past, but this workshop enables one to express himself. If a person was shy or reluctant, this could help one overcome that. I noticed as the workshop progressed, people would open up more and more. It gave you an opportunity to interact with other people. Since our class was varied, ethnic background, male, female, this enhanced the group interaction.”
70. I entered this program for one reason only, to get an AVP workshop certificate. But after the first session I knew that this was different than anything I ever experienced in Jail. Super Steve and Merciful Marge were sincere. So were the other inmate facilitators. And seeing the rest of the group get into it, it got me into it and I learned things about me I never knew before. I think it’s a great program and more importantly it’s one program I can honestly say I’ve learned from and for that I am truly grateful.”
71. “I think the workshop was very interesting and helpful in understanding other people’s problems and problems that may arise with ourselves in the future. The preventive measures on violent confrontations were thoughts that I had never thought of going or even saying to prevent a harmful situation. It taught me how to react with other people and other situations that will prove helpful to myself and others around me. It taught us to

have respect for ourselves and one another and to believe in our goals but also to understand opposing sides of two people.”

72. “When someone’s ego is assaulted, that triggers off one’s defenses. Dealing with an assaulted ego is a very tricky situation and has to be handled properly. I realize now that my ego was assaulted when I committed the crime I’m here for now. If I would have rationalized things then I would not be here now. I won’t forget what I have learned by you helping me to see this. Thank you for what you showed me.”
73. *(From an inmate transferred from an AVP facility to one without AVP):* “I Just wish that I could have continued with the program. I reached a stage where I was beginning to understand my aggressive nature. Somehow I’ve got to learn more . . . [the AVP program] meant an awfully lot to me. I try to remember some of the things we learned, and to apply them all the time . . . I went back to lifting weights again. That burns off a large portion of my aggressiveness . . . [This] leaves me in a different frame of mind to deal with people. It lets me be receptive instead of cocky.”
74. What I did learn is deeply imbedded in my heart, mind and soul, and today, tomorrow, and in days to come I know that I will be a little closer to being more as I wish to be, because of your sincere help and participation in formulating and making this workshop into a reality.”
75. “I want to thank you ever so much for the wonderful seminar . . . for I found the same to be very enlightening. Thus a unique educational experience. Also influencing and gratifying my personal convictions of determination to succeed in the goals which I have established for myself. It has become to me the most important program that I have ever participated in, while incarcerated.”
76. “All my life, I have dealt with all aspects of my life with violence. My fists and my gun were my means of dealing with all problems. That is, until recently. On April 1, 1984, I took a course called Alternatives to Violence Project, Part I. I took the course because I wanted to impress the parole board. Boy, was I surprised by what I learned and saw. . . . I dropped all of my guards and I honestly gave AVP a try. To make a long story short, I learned to use tools they taught me, in my everyday life. I am a new man and I love it. Transforming Power really works. I have begun my life anew.”
77. Primarily, I am writing this letter to thank your organization for bringing this program to our facility. I honestly believe it has opened new paths for me in dealing day to day with people. It has stressed to me all the good that is there in all people, if we take the time and effort to really look. I am sure that future sessions will also help many more inmates attain an inner peace. I am now on the road to looking at people with new eyes and listening with new ears. I would also like to bring your attention to the professionalism, sincerity and dedication your staff has brought to this program. They were not judgmental and had a great deal of human understanding. . . . The quantity of useful exercises were only surpassed by their quality. By the end of the program . . . I truly got the feeling that



each and every participant benefited by this ‘close encounter of the best kind.’ I am anxiously looking forward to participating in your advanced program. . . . “

78. “It was so much that I did not know about people in general. But since I have been affiliated with the Quakers I have a better outlook and more feelings for the next person. I have come to the point that my inner feelings for the next person has come to be a part of me and I cannot stand around and see them destroy themselves as I could do before. I would like to thank you on behalf of the men who had an opportunity to participate in the seminar. . . . Some of us have had an opportunity to ‘apply’ what we have learned and to incorporate it into our daily living here. . . . All that I have learned is useless unless I put it to work. What I have learned I want to give to others.”
79. “I never spent a weekend or was involved in anything in my life that affected me the way the Seminar did. I am 40 years old and I never really trusted anyone or took much time to consider the other guy’s feelings. I was shown some basic principles at the Seminar which made me think about the alternatives which have been available to me although I was unaware of them. I will not forget the things I’ve learned. . . . I made a discovery of what compassion, concern, interest and love can do to make a bad situation good.”
80. “As I would like to become a trainer and work with inmates such as myself after I am released. Because I know from my experience that there is a lot to learn from transforming power – nonviolence.”
81. *(This letter is from an inside trainer who was beaten the night before he was to facilitate a workshop. It is addressed to the volunteer outside trainer who led the workshop):* “I won’t say that I’m sorry that I was unable to work with you last week, because I know I will work with you in the future. I’m not going to talk about what happened or why it happened. What I am going to say is this: AVP works. I worked for me in that I didn’t fight back – something in me would not allow me to fight back. I took the blows to the face and head because I didn’t want to hurt the guy I had the problem with. Also, I believe God was at work. One thing I learned from all this is that God works in mysterious ways.  
 “Transforming Power was at work. Now, many people don’t understand me or what I’m saying when I tell them that I could not fight back. It has given me the opportunity to say to them that I had a choice in the matter, and I don’t hate the fellow I had the problem with. Many people find that hard to believe, but it’s true.  
 “Also, I know that I can live on the outside and make a difference in the community. You see, I know what happened that night. I know I can take it just as others have done. What I’m trying to say to you is that you didn’t lose. With me, we won the race (smile).  
 “I’m not the same person I was when I came into jail almost 13 years ago. That is good. And it is because of your help and love in teaching me AVP.”

82. **“Ladies in Tennis Shoes Are Sole Volunteers**, a testimonial written by an inmate in a Maryland prison, and published in *the Transformer*, the quarterly newsletter of the Alternatives to Violence Project – USA (condensed by Doug Couch, Editor of the Transformer)



Two great ladies, “Kind Kit” and “Eager Ev” Pilgrim have spent a decade as the sole community volunteers for the Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) at Eastern Correctional Institution.

Over 10,000 prisoners have been housed at ECI this decade, and during that time, 2,000 prisoners have completed AVP only due to these amazing ladies, who have introduced and promoted AVP here despite innumerable obstacles.

Filling a niche at Eastern, “Kind Kit” and “Eager Ev” bring AVP to prisoners, showing them techniques that provide “win-win” solutions which generate loving respect and a sense of community. By debriefing role-plays, deconstructing the decision-making process, and analyzing communication feedback, AVP shows prisoners how to use “Transforming Power” to change the outcome of possible conflict.

“Kind Kit” and “Eager Ev” have helped reduce inmate-on-officer, inmate-on-inmate, and parolee violence and recitivism, working with murderers, rapists, and others, by promoting ethics and values in a valueless environment. ☸

## AVP COMMUNITY PARTICIPANTS

1. "I feel more relaxed, more positive, more patient. I feel like a new creature . . . in three days my life has changed a lot. Thanks."
2. "The session three was beautiful because we were able to express ourselves. We respected on another's opinions and were able to let out anger without being violent. Everybody got a chance to talk about our own problems and ideas."
3. "I'm going to stop and think before I stereotype. The role play gives you time to see how you really act, time to see you put in others shoes and how it really is."
4. "In AVP you get to know others, seeing the serious side of a lot of people, things I never knew before."
5. "I liked the program and I got a great deal out of it. I know I will use it for the rest of my life. Thank you very much for what you have done to change my outlook on life."
6. "I feel that this program is very helpful to people who truly want help. I feel I've gotten a lot from it. This program has undoubtedly saved my life or helped in doing so. I fought and bled for this country and I truly know the waste in War and Violence in general. Keep up the good work and let us all work on the beautiful dream we have of World Peace and Brotherly Love."
7. "The program is a powerful and positive one, for all individuals. I believe it is healthy and inspiring to others. I've learned a lot and maybe someday I could pass this knowledge on to others."
8. "In three days of AVP I've learned and gained so much about loving and sharing. Lots of positive answers concerning my mind and others. I am more than appreciative to have been a part of the AVP Program."
9. "AVP makes you think how many ways for violence to happen that need self control. . . . We were able to talk about what we thought, no argument, no confusion . . . and the realization that loss of control can happen to anybody."
10. "I enjoyed the discussions. It gave me a chance to discuss my feelings with people I didn't know. But now I'm glad to know them and will keep the relationship we built in here, out there."
11. "The group was very responsive, worked together as a whole. I felt good being a part of them. The discussion and exercises made me pick my brain and find my real goals, good parts and bad parts about myself and find ways to deal with them."

12. "I found this workshop to be somewhat soul moving. It was as if I went on a three-day retreat with a bunch of strangers and returned as a family. This course benefited me greatly. I feel the facilitators were on track in every shape, form and fashion of the word. They expressed themselves clearly and made everyone understand where they were coming from."
13. "The Alternatives to Violence Project has enriched my life with a wonderful outlook on communication with my fellow man. It really taught me something about myself and others. It proved that peace can be reached if we only lay down our prides. It was a blessing to be part of this program. With the various discussions I participated in, came a greater ability to become open and caring for the other participants. The group, although at first gave me anxiety, became the very antidote to my fears of communicating. But they were supportive and caring."
14. "I am giving my life to this work because I believe that the world will destroy itself unless it learns the arts of Peace and I believe that Peace begins with the individual."  
*Larry Apsey*  
*Author of "Transforming Power" and a founder of AVP*
15. "I am 74 years old and had to learn I had violence, as most of us do. I have never stopped learning and know that it's never too late to learn to love well."
16. "The philosophies of AVP are implanted in my soul. AVP has reshaped my daily routine and my whole future. These philosophies get me in and out of predicaments that I would never have dared attempt without AVP in my blood. I continue to pass AVP along on an individual basis."
17. "AVP has been the basis of great growth and change in my life. It has helped me in my career and in my family life."
18. "It was a beautiful experience . . . I call upon it frequently in my present work. Thank you."

# INTERNATIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

## ***1. An Evaluation of AVP Workshops in Aotearoa / New Zealand***

*Brian Phillips (2002)*

- *Diploma of Applied Science (Nursing) from MIHE (NSW, Australia)*
- *Masters of Science in Mental Health from University of Wollongong (NSW, Australia)*
- *PhD candidate in Nursing at Victoria University of Wellington (when Evaluation published)*

<http://www.avpusa.org/ftp/AVPNZReport.pdf>

## **AVP IN ARMENIA**

<http://www.astro.ucla.edu/~chris/raffi/raffi.html>



Armenia



# AVP IN RUSSIA

<http://www.astro.ucla.edu/~chris/raffi/raffi.html>



Russia – 1997

## COMMENTS FROM RUSSIAN PARTICIPANTS

*A number of workshops have been done with a variety of participants in Russia, e.g., doctors, nurses, business executives, engineers, teachers, peace activists, students, Ministry of Internal Affairs personnel and a TV journalist. Some of their comments follow:*

1. "AVP is the most developed and well organized of all nonviolent workshops we've experienced. It is the first time we have had the same number of participants at the end as in the beginning, and that includes world class trainers [who have presented here]."
2. "Transforming Power is something that I've been feeling intuitively."
3. "The importance of thinking about your partner in communication. The techniques of expressing one's feelings in transforming conflict. Role plays, concentric circles, I

messages and 6 pt problem solving were very popular because, 'these things contribute to better openness and understanding and trust,' and they 'can be used in everyday communication with people and in teaching.'

4. "Role plays 'make it possible to look at and analyze real life situations,' and they 'allow me to discover things inside of myself that I hadn't known about.'"
5. "I have seen another shade of the Russian Soul."
6. "When I look into the mirror, I see my eyes. When I look into my partners eyes, I see God."
7. "Thank you for the experience of talking truth to each other."
8. "I got up at 2:00 this morning to get to this workshop."
9. "This is more than a group, a flower bud - a very special wonderful thing."
10. "I love this group because of the communication I may never experience again."
11. "I feel calm and safe in this group - I want to work with others in it."
12. "I felt like I was in a circle of close friends."
13. "Thanks for those rare moments of spiritual development I've experienced."
14. "We are internally ready to solve conflicts."
15. "A bit too relaxed; everything is too good for me here now."
16. "When I accept my opponent, solutions are easy."
17. "Now I have some experience of effective work in a collective on the basis of trust and cooperation."
18. "I had a lot of fun and I'm now convinced that any situation can be resolved."
19. "The program is organized in such a way that everyone has a chance to speak and be heard which makes people feel they are personalities whose opinions [are] important for others."
20. "The free, relaxed atmosphere."
21. "Thank you very much for the happiness of communication, for the joy you brought us."
22. "In our difficult times you give people a sense of self assurance and faith in each other."



23. "Personally for me the most valuable was the presence of wise and sensitive people (the participants) who are very rich and strong spiritually. Without them it would not have been possible."
24. "I haven't thought enough about nonviolent conflict resolution before. It may sound banal, but resolving conflicts and reaching compromise is more real for me now."
25. " Although you can't change everything overnight, there's hope now and some skills for it to become true."
26. "It's incredible, it's great. The wall came down. AVP makes real change from effects of communism, 70 years is hard to change. It breaks down barriers between employees. It's our first experience of freedom and what it means."
27. "The mere fact that such workshops and groups still exist proves that not everything is lost yet. There's still hope that these 'lonely voices' will sometime become the spiritual basis of the society."

## AVP IN AUSTRALIA

<http://www.avp.org.au/>

## AVP IN CROATIA

[http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/kurtzs/kurtzs\\_0312.htm](http://www.pcusa.org/missionconnections/letters/kurtzs/kurtzs_0312.htm)



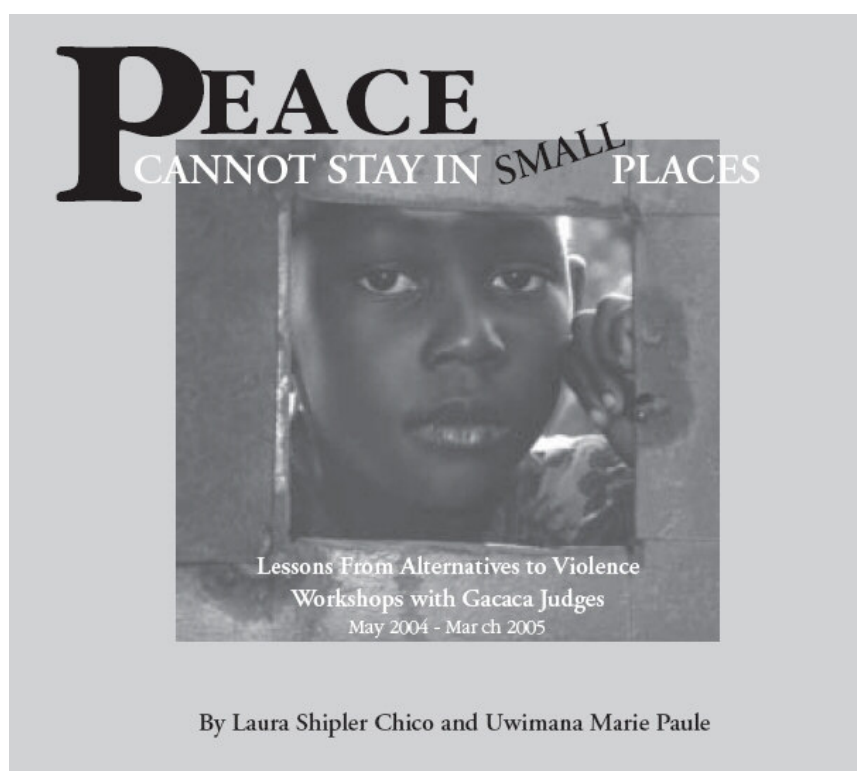
# AVP IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

<http://www.avpbritain.org.uk/>



# AVP IN RWANDA

<http://aglionline.org/PDF/AVP%20Rwanda.pdf>



Armenia Australia Azerbaijan Brazil Belarus Burundi Canada Caucasus Region Columbia  
Costa Rica Croatia Cuba Dominican Republic Ecuador Georgia Germany Haiti Hong Kong  
Hungary India Ireland Kenya Lithuania Macedonia Mexico New Zealand Nicaragua  
Nigeria Russia Rwanda Slovenia South Africa Spain Sudan Sweden Tanzania  
Tonga Uganda United Kingdom United States-(in at least 41 states, some with multiple groups)