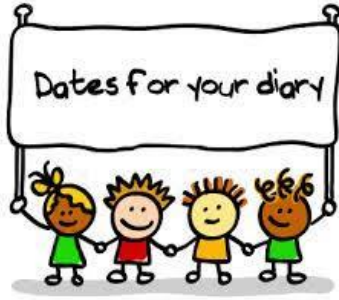


AVPWA NEWSLETTER JUNE 2023



July Workshops

July 1 – 3 *Acacia Protection Adv*
July 1, 8 *Community Adv*
July 11 – 13 *Karnet Basic*
July 22 – 24 *Acacia Mainstream Adv*

Australian National Gathering

Oct 2 – 6 *Quaker Meeting House, Mount Lawley*

For more information on these workshops, please contact Collette, our administrator (Details end of newsletter).

New Administrator

Collette Chesters is an experienced facilitator, who has taken on the position of Administrator after the resignation of Mark Newhouse. Sincere thanks to Mark for his dedication to the role, and welcome to Collette.

Collette can be contacted via the AVP WA email address avp.wa1@gmail.com.



Condolences to Sally and her family

Sincerest condolences to long-time facilitator Sally Herzfeld on the death of her husband Tom. Our thoughts and love are with Sally and her family at this sad and challenging time.

Australian National Gathering

AVP WA is excited to be hosting the Australian National Gathering from 2 – 6 October this year.

It has long been the tradition for one Australian state to host an ANG every couple of years. With the advent of Covid, we managed to maintain online connection between states via the Virtual Australian National Gathering (VANG). We now feel it is appropriate to once again share in person, and have volunteered to hold the Gathering at the Quaker Meeting House in Mount Lawley.

This is a wonderful opportunity to share with interstate as well as local facilitators so we hope you will set aside the dates and come along. There will be many opportunities to be involved, including transport to and from the airport, billeting interstate participants, co-facilitating sessions, providing sustenance etc.

We will be offering a virtual component for some of the sessions.

More information will follow via newsletters and emails in the months leading up to the Gathering.

The Basic Workshop

Jim Thom

We have had feedback from participants from time to time that they think we don't get to the core business of "Alternatives to Violence" soon enough in a basic workshop. They come along expecting us to address deep issues and find themselves playing games and using positive names then wonder if they are in the right place to deal with their often serious issues.

As a result we have discussed this issue at training sessions both in the community and in prison. Most of us thought that the AVP program has developed over almost 50 years and should not be adjusted too quickly. The first session is about giving participants information and starting to form community, in order to allow us to look

deeper at alternatives to violence in a safe space. However we did agree that some people might feel a little silly initially during some of the light and livelies and positive names.

Therefore we suggest that before morning tea, perhaps in the guidelines enlarging on “Respect the Process,” that the facilitator gives a little spiel, in their own words that covers the following points:

- 1) We respect the life experience of the participants and that the games are to lighten the mood and to build community and trust within the group
- 2) That we will look deeper into alternatives to violence and conflict resolution later in the workshop

Some comments from the inmate facilitators about the basic workshop were:

- The violence brainstorm is a good activity early on which often broadens people’s perception of the range of violent behaviours
- It would be good if the outmate facilitators were occasionally more assertive in order to keep the group under control
- The value of supportive team members cannot be over stated! If the team works together well the workshop will be a success
- The workshop can provide intense self learning
- Role plays can be difficult – people feel awkward
- Is the first day agenda too short?
- The team has the power to change the agenda if they feel it is indicated – there is a lot of flexibility
- We could have a colour coded agenda based on level of difficulty
- It caters for different learning styles and abilities
- Good progression in the structure of the workshop
- Would be good if participants had some prior idea of what sort of workshop it is before signing up – eg intro sessions
- Finally – we don’t do enough of them!!

Facilitating in prisons

Jim Thom

Working in prisons can be very rewarding even if initially it seems a little scary. It’s AVPWA’s core business and we work in three metropolitan prisons as well as Bunbury and occasionally Port Hedland. However we are getting a little short of facilitators who are active in prison and would really like to encourage others to give it a go.

It’s true that it often involves weekdays and is difficult for those working and looking after children. The workshops are usually three consecutive days and the teams usually consist of two people from outside along with two inmate facilitators.

A stumbling block is obtaining clearance from the DOJ as this can be a lengthy process. One way to experience the prison environment is to attend a training day. We also hope to be able to visit on October 4th during the national gathering. If you are at all interested or have any further questions please let us know

An inmate facilitator’s story

I am always being asked, what does AVP mean to you, and how have you used the programme to better your life. To answer this question, honestly I would have to tell you a short piece of my history.

I come from a family prone to violence, alcohol, drug abuse and gangs. My father left my mother after beating her one night and never returned. My earliest memory is my mother beaten, crawling on broken glass on the kitchen floor. When I asked what age this could have been, my mother replied with “I am unsure, it happened a few times”. I heard my mother being raped in the adjacent room by men around for parties and I was too young to help- my mother or stop them. I told my mother I wasn’t hungry many times as I knew we had no food in the cupboards. I watched as my older brothers would fight in gang fights, and I wanted to be like them when I grew up as that’s what “being a man” was.

At 14 while selling drugs for my brother, I found him after his suicide by hanging and cut him down and tried to cover him up so my mother wouldn't see him. Violence, for me wasn't just a way of life it was the only way to survive in my habitat. In my neighbourhood you were either a fish or a shark, and the people that were fish I viewed as weak and prey to be fed upon. The socio economic scale was so down turned people would rather sit at home and sell drugs and attack people with no sense of worth than work for the extra \$150 over the dole. I viewed people from outside my area as peasants, little more than cattle to be milked. When these are the decisions of future presented to a young man? Of course I went with option A and joined a gang.

Sounds like the Australia that you know? This is the only one I knew of and the only one I was shown.

So how does a 3 day course change a person like that? Honestly? 3 days? It doesn't. The tools you gain from those days when applied over time and honesty, can create change. Here is the secret I found and in this brothers and sisters I hope you also find some comfort from the everyday struggles and the nightmares of the evenings.

As soon as you sit down there needs to be a personal commitment and willingness to change straight off the bat. If you aren't there to change you are wasting not only your time but the facilitators and other members' time also.

The second is to leave your ego at the door. Holding onto ego will only stunt your growth and openness.

The third is to trust in the process. The process is used all around the world and people have been doing AVP since its incorporation in New York for inmates like me.

The forth is trust in your facilitators. They have sat where you are sitting for countless reasons and regardless of who is the biggest and baddest sitting there. Know and trust that each person is able to bring a different perspective to the group and many heads are better than one.

Has AVP helped me? Yes. What I have taken from AVP is the mandala wheel and transforming power, options of thought processes, and tools for legitimate change given to me from people who have lived my life and worse from around the world. I have learnt a way where the pain and anger, rather than continue to cause damage to my life, can be transformed into something constructive to the relationships I am now trying to build or rebuild with those close to me.



They say that only when the war-like man has had his fill of violence will he truly search for peace and those of you now reading this small testimony and wondering if AVP can help you the true answer is, it is up to you.

But I would rather try and fix with new tools the damage created than continue with old ones that do further damage.

Change will not come easy and there are steps to the processes of change in all of us, but stay diligent, stay focused on personal change and the ones that are around you will not only notice the difference but applaud your changes as they manifest.

I hope this has helped you in some way to make the decision to attend an AVP class or to talk to an AVP advocate of facilitator.

Thoughts and hope,

From and AVP inmate facilitator

Editor's note

A newsletter is published monthly.

If you have any news, photos, inmate contributions or new things you've tried in workshops, please send them to our newsletter editor Selene Moonbeams. selenemoonbeams@gmail.com

Need more information?

For details of upcoming workshops or training, to volunteer to help facilitate a workshop, or just to find out more about AVP, please contact our administrator Collette Chesters avp.wa1@gmail.com