

AVP Facilitators Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

This handbook outlines the work of facilitators before, during and after a workshop and complements the volunteers' handbook which outlines the support available to all our volunteers, including mentoring. There is also a separate handbook for those working in prison. You should also be aware of the policies regarding expenses, safeguarding and the joining and leaving procedure for facilitators etc. which are available on the AVP web site (www.avpbritain.org.uk).

The facilitator's role is to enable the learning of the participants from their experience and we should avoid teaching or preaching. We always work in teams and your co-facilitators are there to support you. One member of an AVP team has the responsibility of lead facilitator. The lead facilitator is generally selected in advance, although sometimes this role can be decided by the team and may be shared. This leader has certain duties above those of other members of the team, such as administration, and facilitating team building, feed-back and mutual support. Occasionally, the leader may have to take a unilateral decision in an emergency but, in most cases, team decisions are made by consensus.

Personal conduct

All AVP facilitators should model the values and methods of AVP through demonstrating the basic values of integrity, responsibility and respect. When facilitating you should always consider the following:

- Honour your commitment to facilitate workshops. Please give at least two weeks' notice if you are unable to facilitate (unless there are exceptional circumstances) so that other arrangements can be made.
- Participants place their trust in facilitators and may perceive you as an authority. Be sensitive to your role and its boundaries.
- Be aware of any signs of emotional or physical distress and recognise your own limitations in responding to difficult situations. You may recommend appropriate services or other agencies to individual participants (as long as you do not have a conflict of interest). Your regional coordinator will provide an approved list of organisations that participants can go to for further support.
- Wear appropriate clothing.

BEFORE THE WORKSHOP

Contact your mentor

Prior to every workshop, you should contact your mentor to let them know how you are feeling about the workshop and to make arrangements to have a follow up discussion after the workshop. If you do not have a mentor, please contact your regional coordinator to make arrangements.

Kit box

Your regional coordinator is responsible for preparing your workshop kit box. In your team preparations make sure that the kit box includes all the resources that you require for the activities you have planned, including information about further resources

available to participants beyond the workshop. At the end of the workshop, ensure that you mark what has been used up so that the kit can be easily replenished.

Health and Safety and the Venue

In your preparations find out about the venue. Make sure that you know where the fire exits are, the fire procedures, where all the facilities are and if there are any instructions about the security of the building. During the 'Opening Talk' participants should be informed of where all the facilities are and what to do in the event of a fire. At the start of every session the participants should sign a register. In the event of a fire the lead facilitator must take the register with them. Once assembled in the assembly points the lead facilitator must take a quick register to ensure that all the group are together in the safe point.

Take care when moving furniture and workshop equipment. Do not put yourself at risk by attempting to lift heavy loads and seek the assistance of other people if necessary.

Your regional coordinator will ensure a risk assessment is completed before the workshop. During your team preparations review the risk assessment and ensure any safeguards raised have been put in place. There will be common features for most AVP workshops, but your workshop team should consider whether there are any specific issues which need extra attention before every workshop. For further guidance on completing risk assessments, see the [Health and Safety Policy](#) on the web site or contact your regional coordinator.

Participants

Before the workshop, the lead facilitator should find out from the regional coordinator if there are any participants with special needs such as visual, hearing or mobility impairment and should arrange, for example, large print versions of handouts, or a hearing loop or provide for wheelchair access. This may also affect the choice of exercises and light and livelies.

Team Building

It is important that enough time is set aside before the workshop for team building and planning; a minimum of two to three hours is recommended. The team needs to take some time to get to know each other on a personal level and learn about each other's feelings and styles in order to work effectively together in what can be stressful situations.

Getting to know one another

It is helpful to share views and experiences on these topics:

1. A little bit of my personal life... Is there anything going on in my personal life which could affect the workshop?
2. Do I have any past experiences that could affect this workshop?
3. How much experience I have had facilitating AVP workshops...
4. A good/bad experience that taught me something was...
5. What I am confident or not confident doing is...
(e.g. writing, reading, giving directions, light & livelies, etc.)

6. Specific concepts I have difficulty with...
(e.g. I Messages, Transforming Power, etc.)

Developing a working relationship

- Participation: You should let other members of the team know which exercises you are comfortable with and which you are uncomfortable with. A less experienced facilitator may be encouraged to take on an exercise by pairing with a more experienced facilitator.
- Communication: What signals can we give to the rest of the team if we are having difficulty in presenting an exercise? How far do we welcome support? If you have your own way of presenting an exercise you should make sure that the rest of the team are aware, so they do not interrupt unnecessarily.
- Decision making: Will all decisions be made by consensus? How do we view leadership? In what circumstances should the lead facilitator take a decision themselves (e.g. when time is running out to decide an agenda or an unexpected situation arises in a workshop)? The team should agree that no team disagreements will be expressed in the presence of participants.
- Dealing with unexpected situations: In preparing for workshops it is helpful to discuss what should happen if an unexpected situation arises e.g. a participant is distressed or becomes very disruptive. If a participant needs to leave the workshop, it is recommended that a facilitator of the same gender goes with them. In general, avoid being with a participant in a one-on-one, out of sight situation and never touch a participant in such a situation.
- Feedback: Team members should be willing to both give and receive feedback including suggestions for change.

Feedback

Giving feedback and learning from it are components of much of what we do in AVP. It is part of our task of helping each other do as good a job as possible. Every debriefing session between sessions should include an opportunity for each team member to give feedback to the others and receive it from them. However, neither giving nor receiving feedback is simple; there is an art to both.

Giving Feedback

Start with strengths. Specify exactly what was positive. Strengthen each other by letting people know that the good things they do are recognized.

Then move to things needing improvement. Again, be specific. Remember:

- Be aware of the value of the person addressed and of how hard it is to respond constructively to criticism.
- Describe behaviour rather than labelling it. Be objective rather than judgmental.
- Offer a possible way of improvement; a concrete suggestion.
- Speak in a tentative rather than a dogmatic manner. Do not impose a suggestion. Ask for reactions to the suggestion. Give room to accept, refuse or modify it.

- Stick to the basic problem, and do not get involved with complex descriptions of the history of the problem or anticipated negative reactions of the other person.

Receiving Feedback

Remember that we all have much to learn and can always improve. It is possible that we may be wrong. So can our critics be; but even misguided criticism can nonetheless be helpful. At the very least, it can tell us that we were ineffective with that person at that time, and perhaps lead to a more effective approach.

If you receive feedback from another facilitator which you feel to be hostile or misguided, remember that the feedback may say at least as much about their opinion of them self as it does about their opinion of you. Try not to take it personally.

Criticism directed at something the person is unable to improve is not helpful. Each person is the final judge of what cannot be changed and what should not be changed: some things may be just too hard to change. We should all be willing to live with a certain level of imperfection in ourselves and others.

Planning a Level 1 Workshop

The structure of Level 1 workshops tends to be fairly standard, while the agendas for Level 2 workshops are developed to suit each group. This section outlines the basic principles in devising an agenda for a Level 1 workshop.

Every session generally consists of:

- A Gathering: usually a brief 'go-round' to draw the group together
- Exercises: taking various forms
- Energisers or Light & Livelies: games designed to raise energy levels after sitting still and/or being serious for a long time. Because they are often quite silly and fun, they help to bring the group closer together.
- Feedback: Explain to the participants that this is their workshop and we try to build into it as we go along the things that the group expresses a need for. Therefore, at the end of every session we ask for feedback so that we can plan future sessions. It is important that you tell us how you really feel about the sessions.
- Closing: something to round off the session, often another brief go-round.

Experiential Learning

We all learn best from experience - from our intuition- and also learn from our emotions. Sometimes this means learning from our mistakes. It is important for the learning process to provide an environment where people can make mistakes and correct them without fear of judgment. A workshop is that kind of environment.

We learn from both **concepts** and **experience**, and an effective workshop includes both kinds of learning. Concepts alone, without experience, often seem like dull theory or dry lectures. Experience alone, without concepts, may appear as confusing or meaningless events. When the experiences and concepts come together, it helps participants make sense of their experience.

Sometimes, the process works best if the experience is presented first, and then is followed by a presentation of the concept, which may seem illogical. People are often more receptive to learning when they have first had a chance to struggle with the problem.

Building Blocks and Mortar

Starting from the ground up, the basic AVP agenda is built of basic building blocks which may vary slightly but generally include:



This structure should be introduced at the start of the workshop and you should then indicate how the workshop is progressing at different stages through the building blocks. Missing any part of the course will be detrimental. They fit together like the parts of a jigsaw, although it may not be possible to see the whole picture until we are nearing the end.

It is helpful to be aware of a certain logical sequence in presenting alternatives to violence:

- In order to respect others, people must first learn to respect for themselves. They need to build **self-esteem and self-respect**. To do this, they need affirmation, positive feedback and a safe environment. Crafting an AVP agenda involves ensuring that these needs are adequately met, from the very beginning and throughout the workshop. (Thus, for instance, the ground rule against putdowns of self or others, and the positive adjective in the adjective name game.)
- In order to relate to others, people must learn to **listen** and **communicate**. Communication can be very primitive; Sigmund Freud once said that "the first person to hurl an insult instead of a stone was the founder of civilization."

Nonviolent communication is more demanding. It requires that people learn to communicate honestly, clearly, and non-threateningly, enabling others to drop their defences and really hear what is being said. Just as important, communication requires active listening - the giving of full attention to another so that they may feel really heard. To be truly heard is one of the rarest, and one of the most affirming and healing of human experiences. People who have learned both to talk and to listen to one another begin to feel safe enough to risk sharing.

- No group of people is perfect, and no collection of individuals sees eye to eye on everything; but once communication and sharing are possible, they can begin to build and experience **community**. If a workshop goes well, a sense of community will begin to build on the first day, and that sense will sustain the group in undertaking the later exercises that call for greater psychological risks.

- But in the real world, conflicts will still arise. To deal with them, we need to teach practical **conflict management skills**. There are a number of exercises and techniques for this, ranging from *"I" messages* to *role plays*, and these will take up most of the rest of the workshop.
- When participants return to the real world, the warmth and the learning of a workshop may dissipate. The last session of an agenda should try to ensure that the workshop experience is reinforced for the participants by **affirmations** from each other and from the facilitators.

Using the analogy of building a wall we start with the foundations before the top course and the mortar that bonds to all of these and holds them together is **Transforming Power**.

Flexibility

The lead facilitator will normally send a draft agenda to the team at least for the first session, or even for the whole workshop. The team should discuss it in the planning but should be prepared to adjust it after every session, according to the feedback from evaluations and group energy levels; major issues may also arise, which call for changes of direction in the workshop.

Making small changes to an agenda is relatively easy and non-disruptive and can be decided upon using the usual process of a team discussion: people's needs can probably be met by a modification of the agenda to cover a burning issue followed by a return to the original plan. However, if things have reached such a pass that the group is unable to focus on anything but a burning issue, it may be necessary to scrap the agenda for that session. This should not be undertaken lightly as it risks abandoning whatever learning processes have been initiated and may undermine the stability of the workshop and upset some or all of the participants. The decision should be made by the facilitators, although the group should be consulted and their wishes taken into account when making the decision. So be flexible and follow the group's needs, while being mindful of the basic building blocks and mortar

Big Oaks from Little Acorns.

To get across a major concept, start by offering a small experience of it in an early session, sometimes even without identifying it. Self-esteem and affirmation, for instance, starts in the adjective name game where, without mentioning either one, we require that people use a positive adjective for themselves. Throughout the rest of the workshop their self-given name will subconsciously raise their self-esteem. In the next session, use an exercise that reinforces this beginning more explicitly and strongly. This might be Concentric Circles with the list of topics designed to raise self-esteem, or it might be another exercise. In still a later session we will build on this by getting people in touch with their own experiences with and capacities for constructive living. The sharing of experiences of Transforming Power can be this kind of exercise; and there are others. The underlying principle is to lay a foundation of personal experience and then to build on it by offering or evoking more personal experience of AVP's major building blocks. This sometimes called 'chaining' and is part of how adults learn.

Multipurpose Exercises.

Many exercises serve, or can be made to serve, subtle underlying purposes in addition to the obvious one. For example, Concentric Circles is on its surface an exercise in active listening - but by varying the topics on which participants are asked to talk, it can also

be used to show them from their own experiences where they are and where they are going. The topics might, for instance, be on power or anger, and might ask for a time when they have used it constructively, a time they have misused it and hurt someone and so on.

Group Techniques.

Exercises can be carried out either in the whole group or by dividing the group into pairs or small groups for personal discussions and decision making, then having them report back through a spokesman to the reassembled larger group. This provides a degree of privacy and will help to involve people who from shyness or whatever would be reluctant to speak up publicly. Care should be taken in selecting the groups to maintain a balance of different types of participants and to break up 'cliques'.

The *Fishbowl* technique allows a burning issue to be discussed publicly and openly but in orderly fashion; only a few people are inside the fishbowl and allowed to speak, but they can be "cut in on," as at a dance, by people outside the fishbowl who want to make a point or a contribution.

Balancing the sessions.

Any AVP session should include an emotionally balanced mixture of experiences and should both begin and end on an upbeat note.

- The *Gathering* should be quick, positive, and designed to show people from their own experience the good things they are capable of. If necessary, it can be used to offset negative attitudes that have been expressed previously.
- After the gathering, a session may begin immediately to explore issues raised but not dealt with in the previous session, or it may open with light introductory exercises laying ground for deeper consideration in the following session. Take the group where they are, and do what is most important for them to go on from that point.
- Exercises that are emotionally heavy should be scheduled in the middle of a session, allowing time enough to deal immediately with any negative or troubling emotions that may be aroused and to give them some kind of closure. Exploration of underlying issues can be left to a later session, but no one should have to leave a session in a state of emotional turmoil.
- No exercise should compel people to sit too long. Small-group exercises followed by debriefing in a larger group are helpful because they make people move around a little. If for any reason people are forced to sit too long for comfort, break it up by interposing a brief physical activity, such as a Light and Lively.
- Be aware of time, and do not start an exercise toward the end of a session that you will be unable to complete. Substitute another, shorter exercise that will be appropriate for the group in the emotional space where they are at the moment.
- When choosing an exercise try to make sure it suits the needs and experiences of the participants and not just yours.
- As the workshop progresses and the participants become more confident more of the power in running the workshop can be given to them even if imperceptibly.

Light and Livelies

Light and Livelies are the energy raisers; heavy and emotional exercises with little movement need to be balanced by the laughs and physical exercise they provide. Be sure to include enough of them and where appropriate, don't hesitate to throw in an extra one if needed.

Physical contact

When planning the workshop agenda, carefully consider the level of body contact appropriate for the specific group and the stage in the workshop. What will be uncomfortable at the beginning of the workshop could be acceptable by the end. When selecting light and livelies and trust exercises, the lead facilitator is responsible for safety precautions and for judging whether an exercise is appropriate for the group. For all the exercises, remember that participants have the right to pass. The communal group context is an ideal place for individuals to experience appropriate physical contact. However, the following precautions should always be taken to ensure the safety and well-being of all workshop participants:

- Always seek a participant's permission to touch when setting up interactive activities.
- Avoid touching a participant anywhere other than the hand, arm, shoulder or upper back.
- Respect and respond to signs that a participant is uncomfortable with touch.
- Use verbal directions rather than touching, e.g. ask a participant to turn this way, rather than physically place the participant in the required position. Use this approach for demonstrations where touch is essential for safety reasons.

Remember you will be seen as a role model and often participants learn as much from the cooperative, caring behaviour of the facilitators as they do from the exercises.

DURING THE WORKSHOP

Welcoming participants

When participants arrive, it is important that someone is there to greet them, show them where the facilities are and put them at their ease. Sometimes a volunteer may be available to welcome participants, but in any case it is preferable that the team finish team-building and planning before the participants arrive and are ready to interact with the group and introduce yourselves. For some participants attending an AVP workshop can be a big challenge - they may not have done any group work before or know what to expect, they may be attending as a way to resolve a big issue in their lives or they may not be comfortable meeting new people. It is unsettling for participants to see facilitators preparing before the session or sitting in a closed group; we need to start building our AVP community from the start.

AVP is now starting to use a pre-workshop evaluation form as well as a post-workshop evaluation form; if so these should be distributed before the workshop starts.

Housekeeping Details

Once the workshop is underway, give information as to times and places of sessions, coffee breaks, and any other non-AVP practicalities such as special needs, fire drills, location of toilets, a mobile phone number to call if a participant is delayed, etc.

Agendas

Go through the agenda at the start of each session indicating where the breaks are and perhaps give a brief description of each exercise.

Attendance

Point out that everyone is expected to attend all the sessions; anyone who cannot should discuss this with the facilitators. New people will not generally be admitted after the first session as their presence could interfere with the community building. In general, if a participant leaves the course they cannot return, but that does not necessarily exclude them from future courses.

Facilitators Discussion

Occasionally the team may need to take 'time out' in order to talk things over (especially if something unexpected happens). This is a normal part of working as a team and participants need not feel alarmed or that they are being criticised. Mostly this can be done in the group, but sometimes the team may need to separate themselves from the group.

Unanswered Questions

It sometimes happens that people at the beginning have questions that will be answered later on in the workshop and discussion may get diverted onto issues which are not on the agenda. The team should post a blank sheet entitled 'Unanswered Questions'. If anyone has a question which cannot be dealt with it at that time, invite them to write the question on the posted sheet. At the end of the workshop, review the list and make sure all the written questions have been answered to the questioner's satisfaction; if not the team may address them further.

Guidelines (also known as Ground Rules)

The group is a community and in order to try to build enough trust in one another to feel safe and secure together, certain guidelines need to be observed. Examples are:

- We look for and affirm one another's good points.
- We refrain from put-downs, of self and others.
- We give others space to speak
- Volunteer yourself only.
- We keep everything strictly confidential (except where a person has disclosed that they intend to harm themselves or another person).
- Everyone has the right to pass.
- Look after yourself and others.
- We start and end on time.
- We acknowledge and respect our differences.

The guidelines apply to both participants and facilitators. Everybody has the right to challenge somebody else if the guidelines are contravened. Some of the guidelines may be pre-written and displayed on the flip chart, but it is generally best for most of them to come from the group. Afterwards, the guidelines are posted on the wall in full view, for the duration of the workshop. Sometimes these guidelines can be initialled by facilitators and participants to show they have been agreed and are therefore owned by everybody; this works particularly well in prisons.

Certificates

Do not volunteer that certificates will be issued unless asked, as it is not our purpose to motivate people to earn a certificate for this course, but to help them find new ways of dealing with their problems. Where a participant completes only part of the workshop a special certificate may be issued. We may sometimes provide a letter confirming attendance at a workshop but we do not give references or report on the behaviour of a participant during a workshop.

Opening Talk

The opening talk which begins a workshop should generally take no more than 15 minutes. The section falls roughly into three parts: *History of AVP*, *Philosophy of AVP* and *Building Blocks of the Workshop*, so one facilitator can deal with each topic or the whole talk can be done by one facilitator.

History

The Alternatives to Violence Project [AVP] started in 1975 in Greenhaven Prison, New York, when a group of inmates asked local Quakers to help them devise ways of communicating non-violently, in an attempt to stop the rising spiral of violence they were noticing amongst the younger inmates. AVP first came to Britain in 1989 through Quaker groups and has grown ever since. In 1997 AVP Britain was launched as an independent charity which has no formal connections with the Quakers or any religious group. It now works in over 50 countries worldwide.

Philosophy

This is summarised by the following points which are normally on cards

- We are all volunteers
- We are teachers and learners
- The more you put in the basket the more you get out
- AVP is not religious but it may be spiritual
- We look for the good in everyone
- AVP is fun

Building Blocks

These are mentioned above and again are normally on cards

Presenting Exercises

Purpose of Exercise

When presenting an exercise, it is usually helpful to tell the participants the purpose of the exercise and how it fits into the building blocks and the overall goals for the workshop. However, there are some exercises in which an explanation of the purpose may undermine the learning experience. These include:

- Broken Squares
- Hand Pushing
- Secret Spot
- Coloured Dots
- Masks
- Cooperative Construction
- Power 1,2,3,4

For most exercises, draw the learning from participants through the experience of the exercise. Do not tell them what they should be experiencing. Avoid programming the behaviour of the participants.

Giving Instructions

It is important to present the instructions as clearly and concisely as possible. Some general guidelines are:

1. Show respect for yourself and others by waiting for silence before beginning the explanation of an exercise or other instructions.
2. It is important for one facilitator to take charge when giving instructions. The instructions should be clear and firm. Take your time. It is often desirable to give instructions more than once. Have you checked out the instructions with the participants to see that they understand? Remember to ask "Do you have any questions?" or "Do you understand the instructions?" Have you checked with your fellow facilitators? Remember to ask "Do the facilitators have anything to add?"
3. Divide participants into groups before you give instructions for the exercise; participants tend to forget instructions if they are given before groups are formed. You may allow people to find their own groups, but it is often quicker to assign people by counting up to the number of groups (e.g. 1, 2, 3, 4 for 4 groups etc.) This also tends to break up cliques. It is often helpful for a facilitator to be with each group, to answer questions and keep the conversation moving.
4. Generally, it is desirable to include facilitators in exercises to avoid the development of barriers between facilitators and participants. However, there are some exercises (such as those listed above whose purpose is not disclosed) where facilitators should not be included since they may affect the results of the exercise. Those who are not leading should make a point of watching the body language of the group. If someone is getting bored or struggling to understand it, you need to convey this to the facilitator running the exercise, by discreet signalling or relay the facilitator's instructions directly to the participant.

Processing Exercises

At the end of each exercise it is essential to draw all the learning from the exercise and to integrate experience with concepts and with the participants' lives. This 'processing' also broadens learnings by having others hear what individuals in the group have learned. Processing exercises is really the fine art of asking questions rather than making comments or making observation about the exercise. The less confident participants may well learn more from the answers to the processing questions than from the exercise itself. Do not be afraid to leave a period of silence after asking

questions as some participants need time to reflect and suggest answers and may be inhibited by the more vociferous participants.

When processing an exercise, it is usually only necessary to have one or two questions prepared beforehand. Other questions will naturally flow from the discussion.

The four key areas to cover when processing an exercise are:

- Feelings
- Experiences
- Perceptions
- Relating to life

Some examples of questions which may be appropriate are:

Feelings

- General question: "What was that like for you?" to open processing.
- What primary feelings occurred during the task? How did you express it?
- Did you feel that you were listened to/heard/understood? Did you do the same to others?
- Did you feel free to express your ideas/feelings? What behaviour/structure facilitated open expression?
- Did you feel what you had to say was valued? How were you affirmed?
- How did you let others know you valued what they said/did?
- Did you feel there was a cohesiveness in the group? What helped or hindered?

Experiences

- What behaviour/process/structure enabled the group to fulfil its task effectively?
- How were decisions made?
- When was the turning point? Who or what caused it?
- What helped in finding common ground/agreement/consensus?
- Were you able to hear and respect differences and respond in a caring way?
- How did you handle your frustration?
- Did anyone dominate the group? Did you say so?
- How were you involved in the task? Are you satisfied/dissatisfied with your behaviour?
- Did you take any risks? Were they successful/unsuccessful?

Perceptions

- How well did the group work together?
- How well did the group support individual members?
- Were you aware of any obstacles to communication?
- Was there a balance between accomplishing the task and maintaining relationships?
- Did you feel that you had any influence in the group in getting the task done?
- How do you deal with and use differences in the group, opinions, age, skills, knowledge, etc.?

Relating to Life

- What did you learn about yourself? About others?
- How can you apply what you learned about yourself to another experience?
- Was there any Transformation?
- How does this apply to your life?

Transforming Power

The concept of Transforming Power lies at the heart of all that we do in AVP. Most of us agree that we have the potential for change. For some, the idea of Transforming Power may connect with a religious or spiritual experience; others see TP in purely secular terms. We should not disguise where we are coming from but should be open to various interpretations and use language accordingly. Just as we accept differing attitudes to it from members of the team, we should be ready to accept the participants' own differing understandings and interpretations. Part of our responsibility as facilitators is to examine our own lives and actions in relation to this idea of transformation. When we introduce TP on a workshop, our interpretation and experience of it moves the idea from an intellectual concept to one we own.

It is good practice to introduce TP early in the workshop, in Session 2 or 3, but no later. This allows time to come back to it in later sessions, reinforcing and expanding as increasing understanding grows amongst the participants. It follows that the first session on T.P. should not be too heavy or too long, for later sessions will amplify the concept. Throughout the workshop, we can find moments to come back to T.P., drawing attention to it in stories that are shared by the group, perhaps posting a copy of the mandala on the wall for reference.

Role Play

The purpose of role play is to provide a safe place to learn and put the various techniques into action. It enables people to see things from another person's point of view and discover there can be a multiplicity of outcomes to a given situation. Role-play can be risky; it can be a huge waste of time, but it can be the most rewarding and illuminating part of a workshop.

It is sometimes helpful to avoid the phrase "role play" which alarms many people, who don't like being put on the spot, or who will not be happy with "drama". "Practising skills" may be a more comfortable way of putting it.

Types of Role Play

Role play typically involves two (or possibly three) characters involved in a conflict. In the 'Boxing Ring' approach several others may be involved as supporters. In the 'Fish Bowl' approach all participants are encouraged to get into role; two volunteers take the lead in a 2-party confrontation and the others pick it up and see where it leads them.

Setting Up

It should be explained that it is not acting but the characters are put into roles and should stay in character until de-roled. There should be no physical contact and at times the action may be halted by calling "Freeze" so that the feelings and motives of the characters can be investigated.

Generating Scenarios

The scenario chosen should be open ended and not designed to produce a pre-determined outcome. It should provide an opportunity for the use of Transforming Power with a win/win potential. Complex scenarios should be avoided. Scenarios may be developed from previous exercises e.g. Hassle Lines or by brainstorming followed by voting where everyone can vote as often as they wish and the scenario with the top score wins.

Developing characters for a role-play

It is important to stress that no person should play their own role in a conflict which they have experienced in real life. (It can be useful to play a different role in the conflict – particularly one's adversary, or to act as scene-setter). It is not important for participants playing a character to be of the same gender as the character; indeed it is sometimes helpful if they are of another gender.

The character is gradually brought into their role by asking them various questions such as:

- Their name, age, gender, married/not, children/not, where they live,
- Do they work/what do they do in the day, etc.

Each character is given a name label. Further questions identify the background to conflict and their relationship in past and the current situation. Each character may be allowed a one secret piece of information.

Role-Play Action

It is often useful to start with a confrontation as the tension helps to allow TP to work. At any point the facilitator can freeze and ask the characters what is happening and/or how they are feeling. In particular, look for what people say and do, their body language and tone of voice.

The role-play should be stopped:

- when a resolution has been reached,
- when it is escalating towards a harmful or violent outcome,
- when the role-play is going nowhere and the action is dying,
- after everyone has worked through their feelings and the group has all the information that they want from fictional characters.

De-Roling Procedure

This is an important step as failure to do this properly can leave a participant with strong emotions. Each character is normally asked if they are ready to come out of role and then to stand up, take off their label and stick it to a chair. They are then told

"You are no longer (fictional name); you are (adjective name). Welcome back (adjective name). Is there anything that (adjective name) would like to say to (fictional name)"

A silly question e.g. "what did you have for breakfast?" may be asked to bring them further back into themselves.

Processing

Useful questions might include:

- What escalated/defused the situation?
- What were the turning points?
- What helped transform the situation (TP at work)?
- Can this be applied to real life?

Don't get into a discussion. Simply look for the learning points and move on.

In processing a role play be aware of the language used. The participant playing a character should refer to the character as 'he/she' and not 'I'.

How to Get Participants to Volunteer to do Role-Plays

Sometimes participants are reluctant to volunteer for role plays. When you ask, be prepared to wait – don't be afraid of silence. Explain clearly why we are doing role-playing (it is not acting or psychodrama) and that it will involve everyone. You may try use warm-ups so people not starting from scratch. You may do a demonstration with facilitator. You also need to guard against an overenthusiastic response from participants.

During a Role Play, What If...?

A participant shows off

Some participants may use the opportunity of role play to show off. If this happens it is best to freeze, intervene and ask group what's happening. You should try to guide the participant back into what you want and you may need to rerun and swap in new people. It is important not to prejudge or over-react - expect the best.

A participant is stuck in character

A participant may start acting out a stereotypical character and not serving the role-play. You should freeze, ask role-player what's happening, make suggestion and re-iterate purpose of role-play.

A participant is caught up in role and is not ready to de-role

To prevent this, ensure you have a clear structure and explain in advance what will be happening. Make sure you use labels. Give the person time and space to get rid of stuff; ask them how they are feeling and what they are thinking. Ask the person lots of questions in character before starting de-roling and possibly ask the group for help.

A participant gets into distress/cries during or after a role-play

Role-plays can bring up distressing stuff – it is real. You should remind participants of ground rules and the need to look after themselves during workshop and take responsibility. If a person is in distress, freeze and ask if they want to go on. One of the team or another participant should offer support and ask what they need. You need to acknowledge the effect this may have on rest of group: get them to talk in pairs about how they feel and get group to talk about what happened.

Always remember

- keep eye contact with other facilitators – trust them and ask for their assistance if needed
- trust the process
- trust the group
- be intuitive
- we are not setting ourselves up as Drama Therapists and the team must take great care not to get into this role

It is useful to bear the above principles in mind also when facilitating other exercises, such as *Hassle Lines*, where participants are encouraged to put themselves into strange situations.

You should remember that role-play is in a way a means to an end, and that that end may be better served in some workshops by the use of exercises such as *6 Point Problem Solving*, *Empathy* etc. You should also remember other formats for role-plays,

such as *Three to One*, *Hassle Lines* and *mini-role-plays* to practice Non-blaming language etc.

Working with Groups with Varied Backgrounds

Most groups that we work with include people from many backgrounds and levels of understanding. There are particular challenges when some participants have very low literacy ability or a limited attention span, or may be in a fragile emotional state due to previous abuse.

Useful hints

- It is generally useful to say at the start that anyone who needs any help regarding reading or writing should talk to a facilitator during the break. Any assistance should be provided discreetly and without fuss.
- Bear in mind that many people have not been used to sitting for long periods in groups, or expressing their thoughts or feelings in front of other people. If necessary split an exercise into parts, with a break every now and then.
- Each time you move to a new area of activity, recall what you have done so far, and what you are moving to next. For every exercise that deals with a new skill (or "tool") make a flipchart to go on the wall, that lists each skill in turn. Try to put them up in order. Suggest that participants photograph completed flipcharts in the breaks, so that they can reflect on them later. Be as visual as possible and use handouts whenever you can; many people learn visually much more easily.
- Reflect back to a participant what they have just said. Ask the rest of the group if they have understood, and go back if necessary to repeat some things.
- At times one participant may take up a lot of time with their answers or their preoccupations. Try not to let this happen, as it frustrates the others, who quickly get bored. However, do this in a respectful way. Say you will talk privately with this person later on. Ask for contributions from other members, so as to keep them involved.
- If doing an exercise such as "Choices", or "Consequences", try not to have more than two or three choices. Any exercise which calls for lots of options may risk losing the attention of some participants.
- Some people do not like speaking in front of the whole group, for fear of embarrassment, loss of face, or just not knowing how to put words together. Know your participants. Those who are less confident may benefit by being put in a group with more confident ones.
- Beware of groups of "mates" who can dominate the mood of the group. Vary the seating as often as necessary, by sitting in their seats, so they don't always sit together.
- There may occasionally be emotional moments when participants step out of their normal comfort zone and disclose revealing things about themselves. We should give them time, show we appreciate their honesty and respect their dignity.

AFTER THE WORKSHOP

Monitoring and Evaluation

At every workshop, the team are responsible for ensuring that a register of attendance is recorded and that each participant completes an evaluation form and a diversity form.

At the end of the workshop, set aside enough time for your team to discuss how the workshop has gone and to give feedback to each other on the workshop delivery. A minimum of one hour is recommended for debriefing. During this session, your team should also discuss the facilitator report and also consider participants who are thinking of becoming facilitators. All forms should be returned to the regional coordinator within two weeks of completing the workshop.

Relationships with Participants

All AVP workshops aim to build a sense of community and trust. During the event of a workshop, this can often lead to a close bond developing between participants and facilitators. However, facilitators should not directly ask any participant for contact details or offer their own details. Where an exchange of details is required, always do so through the regional coordinator and regional office. If you are concerned about a relationship you have or another facilitator has with a participant, you must report this to the lead facilitator and your regional coordinator.

Reporting Participant Achievement

Because of AVP's strict confidentiality policy and the difficulty in giving objective feedback on participants' progress AVP does not normally report on individual participants. Where we have been asked by a participant or their sponsoring body to provide feedback it would be limited to a report on the workshop content and a participant's level of participation.

LEVEL 2 WORKSHOPS

Level 2 workshops are characterised by the input from the participants in choosing a focus for the workshop, although in some cases, the focus may have been decided in advance. If so, the team will still need to help people explore their goals within the focus.

Building Community and Setting Goals

As with any AVP workshop, success depends greatly on building community within the group. People need to get to know each other and feel comfortable working together. They also need to recapture a sense of some of the experiences they had in their Level 1 Workshop. Community building, therefore, far from being omitted, must be given all due attention. The concept of Transforming Power also needs to be reintroduced. It is the foundation of this workshop, as it was of the Level 1. People will expand their perception of it during the workshop. Like breathing, it doesn't have to be part of consciousness all the time, but it must not be absent.

People should be looking in some depth at their individual goals and thinking about exploring some that seem important to them for this workshop. They will then work to put them together with the goals of others.

Decision on the Focus of the Workshop

One of the major outcomes of a Level 2 workshop is to increase people's skills in making group decisions that do not ignore the needs and thoughts of any members of the group. This is basic to nonviolence. To give an opportunity for the group to work on group decision making skills, we ask them to decide what should be the major focus of the workshop. We try to avoid the twin pitfalls of arriving at a too-easy, top-of-the-head decision or of spending more time and energy on a decision than it is worth.

A generally accepted method for achieving this is consensus, or some variant of it. However, it is not a simple method. It requires a strong foundation of shared values and community and time to work things out. It is pointless if people don't genuinely care about the issue, and take arbitrary stands. But the experience of working through a difficult issue in a group that seems impossibly divided but does find a way acceptable to all is often incredibly moving and valuable. Such an experience cannot be contrived, but does sometimes happen. Even without it, the effort of learning what consensus is about and realizing the importance of not leaving people out of decisions is valuable.

Many teams like to explain the principles of consensus and then give the group a physical experience of it by doing an exercise like *Have a Heart* or *Picture Sharing*. Either of these can give people an idea of what it feels like to stand aside or stand in the way of a decision. Then the group discusses what the focus should be. The team has the delicate task of pulling agreement from the group on a subject that will be manageable for the team. The topic is usually one that gets in the way of nonviolence; something that has meaning and creates difficulties for the group, such as anger, fear, power, communications, man-woman relationships, and others. Often, the group will come up with some combination of subjects that seem to be linked such as anger and pain.

The Main Part of the Workshop

The major effort (usually three sessions) will be spent on the chosen focus and the team then has the task of designing a workshop around this topic. The exercises in the manual are classified according to various topics and levels to make the construction of appropriate agendas easier. It is helpful to follow the planning guidelines for Level 1 workshops.

Unfinished Business and Closure

At various stages in the workshop the team should check with the group about how their needs are being met, remembering the gradual shift in power to the participants as the workshop progresses. The remainder of the workshop should be spent on fulfilling those needs, and on bringing the workshop to a good close.

YOUTH WORKSHOPS

Although AVP generally only works with over 18s, we are sometimes asked to work with younger people. When preparing to facilitate a youth workshop you should always familiarise yourself with the AVP safeguarding policy (see the web site) and check with your regional coordinator who is responsible for child protection practice at the partner organisation.

When facilitating youth workshops, AVP requires young people to be supervised by at least one other responsible adult from the partner organisation (e.g. teacher, youth

worker). Before and during the workshop check with your regional coordinator that there will be adequate support: there should be no requirement for unsupervised contact with young people.

When facilitating a youth workshop, you will be required to undergo a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check (or Protection of Vulnerable Groups (PVG) check in Scotland) for work with young people. Your regional coordinator will provide you with the necessary details of how to apply for these checks.

CONFLICT IN TEAMS

Sooner or later everyone is likely to find themselves co-facilitating with someone they find difficult to get on with, or with whom they disagree. Sometimes the difference is between facilitators who have a different attitude to time-keeping; sometimes it is between facilitators who want to deliver a standard package with a minimum of experimentation and those who want to explore new possibilities in new contexts. Sometimes the difference is about something else. Please remember the following basic principles:

- When facilitators differ, those most likely to suffer are the other participants.
- Any overt mutual hostility is de-motivating for the facilitators too and AVP cannot afford to have facilitators de-motivated.
- Think it possible you may be mistaken.
- During the workshop, it is important to accept the decision of the lead facilitator regarding any conflict.
- It is important to address any problem as soon as possible and there may be an opportunity to address the conflict at the debriefing after the session or at the end of the workshop. Alternatively, it may be resolved by a one-to-one conversation after the workshop. Don't forget to use your mentor.
- Try to identify the issues which underlie the disagreement, in a way which is factual and specific and does not put anyone down. Try to look after your own sense of self in other ways and let aside bad feelings totally.

GUIDANCE FOR LEAD FACILITATORS

As you become more experienced in delivering AVP workshops, you may want to become a lead facilitator. This is an opportunity for you to develop your skills. As a lead facilitator, you play a vital role in bringing together a workshop team and are ultimately responsible for the overall functioning of a workshop.

Requirements of a Lead Facilitator

A lead facilitator should;

- Be familiar with AVP level 1 and level 2 materials.
- Have a clear understanding of how to create a workshop agenda, ensuring that the essential topics are covered and that it meets the needs of the group.
- Be confident in leading new exercises.
- Be able to take ultimate responsibility for the overall functioning of a workshop.

- Be confident in handling conflict and difficult situations.
- Be able to take into account other facilitators skills and abilities.
- Be willing to support the development of other facilitators.

When am I ready?

This is not an exact science and the time will vary from one person to the next. It is important to have experienced a number of AVP workshops, have become familiar with the material and to understand the process of AVP. Some people may be ready to lead a level 1 workshop after experiencing 3 or 4 workshops as a facilitator, particularly if they have had previous experience of facilitating groups. Most facilitators will need to do 10 or more workshops (level 1 and 2) to develop their skills and confidence.

Training Process

1. The first step is to complete the Self-Assessment Questionnaire for lead facilitators (available from the AVP website) and discuss your responses with your mentor or an experienced Lead Facilitator.
2. You should then complete an online training course for lead facilitators developed by AVP which is also available on the AVP website.
3. You should also complete the *Educare online course in Safeguarding Adults* available at <https://www.educare.co.uk/courses/safeguarding-adults/>. The cost of this course (about £30) will be reimbursed by AVP.
4. During this process, you should work with an experienced lead facilitator for two workshops taking the role as lead under their guidance and support. After the workshops, you should fully debrief the experience together and decide whether you feel ready to lead a workshop on your own or if you need more support or practice.
5. If you have completed these steps and feel you are ready, contact the AVP Operations Committee (opcomm@avpbritain.org.uk) and you will be put on the register.

EXAMPLE AGENDAS

LEVEL A WORKSHOP (LESS INTENSE WORKSHOP)

Session 1 Getting to know you.

Welcome. Introductions. Housekeeping
My hopes and fears for this course
L&L Sun shines on
About AVP – history, building blocks, philosophy
Working agreement
Name game
L&L Pattern ball 1
BREAK
Some things I have in common
What is anger, violence, conflict?
Tree of violence
A nonviolent world
L&L
Evaluation
Closing Hand shakes plus new names

Session 2 Listening and communication

Gathering. Something I did to help a friend
Good/bad listening – mime
Talking circles
L&L Slow boat to China
BREAK
Situation I resolved without violence
Turning points
Blaming language
First practice – When..... I feel (go round)
Evaluation
Closing How do I feel now compared to when we started?

Session 3 Dealing with feelings

Gathering – a thing I learnt yesterday
Feelings statements revisited part 1, part 2
In pairs in the centre, I messages practised
L&L Zip zap boing
BREAK
Transforming power
Iceberg
Uses of anger
L&L Crocs and frogs
Evaluation
Closing Turn around (from facing in to facing out)

Session 4 Cooperation and empathy

Gathering – If I were an animal
4 behaviours
L&L Mime the lie
In his shoes
BREAK
Empathy
Evaluation
Closing Rainstorm

Session 5 Practising skills

Gathering A relationship I would like to improve
Construction
Prep for role play
L&L Pattern ball 2
RP 1
RP2 (boxing ring model)
Prep for affirmation cards

Session 6 Bringing it all together

Gathering People tree
Stepping stones
BREAK (to do evaluations)
What next, + unanswered questions
Certificates
Meditation Defuse me
Closing hug. Packs + aff. cards

LEVEL B (LEVEL 1) WORKSHOP

Preliminaries

Find someone who...
Diversity sheets
Baseline survey

Session 1 Building community

Welcome/Housekeeping
The bag
Gathering – what I normally do on a Friday night.
L&L – Big wind blows
Positive names
Working agreement
Affirmation exercise in pairs
History, philosophy and building blocks
BREAK
Violence handout
Nicole Kollerman
L&L
Evaluation
Closing handshake

Session 2 Violence and communication

Gathering
Violence in my life
Tree of destruction
Tree of wellbeing
Tree trunk
L&L Mime the lie
BREAK
Good and bad listening, with Role Play
Talking circles
BREAK
Blaming and non blaming language
Feelings statements
L&L Mrs Mumbly
Evaluation
Closing

Session 3. Roots of anger, behaviours and cooperation

Gathering - a favourite object
Tree trunk revised
Iceberg
L&L Pattern ball 1
BREAK

Situation I resolved/turning points
Transforming power/handout
Frustration station
L&L Ping and pong
BREAK
Crossing the river
Construction
Evaluation
Closing

Session 4 Practising skills

Gathering – picture sharing
4 behaviours with mini role plays
Empathy
L&L Pass the duck
Prepare RP
Role play
Evaluation
Closing – prepare affirmation cards during lunch

Session 5 Bringing it all together

Gathering – people tree
Who am I ?
L&L pattern ball 3
UAQs
Toolbox
BREAK Complete affirmation cards and post workshop survey
Stepping stones
What next?
Certificates
Meditation – I am me. Close with packs and aff. Cards and handshakes

LEVEL C (LEVEL 2) WORKSHOP

Session 1 Community building and consensus 630-930

Welcome and housekeeping
Name game
L&L Pattern ball 1
Opening talk
The bag
Working agreement (by the group)
3 Q interview
BREAK
Recalling Level 1
Picture consensus
You have to have a heart consensus.
Reflection
L&L Slow boat to China
Feedback
Closing

Session 2 930 -1230 Revision and consensus

Gathering Something I remember from L1
TP revision
Concentric circles – forgiveness
L&L
BREAK
Choices
What is consensus?
Choosing a topic
L&L Zip zap boing
Feedback
Closing

Session 3 Assertiveness and forgiveness.

Gathering Someone I'd like to meet
Iceberg
Scenarios involving feelings (Using feelings plates)
Assertiveness D11
BREAK
Forgiveness D80
In his shoes
BREAK
Meditation on forgiveness
Closing Grab the bottle

Session 4 Practising skills

Gathering How do I feel, in one word
Anatomy of an apology D9
Power triangle
Choosing scenarios
L&L Clay modelling
BREAK
RP 1 and 2 Boxing ring style
Evaluation
Closing Rainstorm
Prepare affirmations and evaluations

Session 5 Winding up and clearing out

Gathering If I were an animal
Injunctions of childhood
Magic carpet
Grudges/ the bag
BREAK Complete affirmations And other forms
What next
Who am I?
Certificates
Closing meditation – Defuse me.