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Acknowledgements

After the 2011 AVP International Gathering, the AVP International and AVP USA Education Committees formed a Joint Best Practices Team to continue to explore how AVP is practiced and adapted to cultures and settings around the world, and to sponsor a worldwide discussion on the principles, values and best practices of AVP, AVP workshops and facilitation.

Built upon the wisdom and collective experience of the AVP community, the editorial team working on this booklet are Betty McEady (AVP California, USA), Bronwen Hillman (AVP Mexico), Dawn Addy (AVP Miami, USA), Jordan Hoffman (AVP Australia), Katherine Smith (AVP Sydney, Australia), Maji Peterx (AVP Nigeria), Malcolm Smith (AVP Sydney, Australia), Martin Ford (AVP Canada), Nancy Vimla (AVP California, USA), Saskia Schuitemaker (AVP Aotearoa & AVP Guatemala), and Val Liveoak (AVP Texas, USA & Peacebuilding en Las Americas AVP groups).

We also acknowledge the many unnamed AVP facilitators inside and outside prison who continue to deepen and strengthen AVP through their dedicated work. We appreciate the contributions of everyone with deepest gratitude.

Is What You're Doing An AVP Workshop? The Core Elements of AVP Workshops is published for the use of AVP facilitators around the world and for others who use elements of AVP or the AVP style in other workshops, formats, or settings.

Other readers are advised that the material in this booklet is based on a particular philosophy and a set of carefully structured group dynamics, without which the material discussed here has no context.

Preface & Introduction

About this booklet

This booklet has several intended purposes:

- to explore the base principles and criteria required for all AVP workshops;
- to encourage discussion and exploration of best practices in AVP;
- to inform policies on what is an AVP workshop and what is not;
- to explore what it is that distinguishes an AVP workshop from other conflict resolution, anger management, or personal development programs;
- to guide discussions to determine programmatic relationships to AVP and the appropriate use of AVP components, and
- to examine and review where AVP workshops are today.

This booklet was initially created drawing from extensive discussions by the AVP International and AVP USA Joint Education Best Practices Team, discussions across the AVP USA listserv (AVP-L), notes collected at the 2011 AVP International world gathering, “Nonviolence and Community: Reflections on the Alternatives to Violence Project” (Pendle Hill Pamphlet #322, 1995), and of course the AVP Manuals.

AVP is based on a set of values including decisions by consensus, community rather than hierarchy, personal growth and development, and working together by agreement and without coercion. AVP is measured and tested by its adherence to these values. If it loses sight of them, it will have failed in its mission no matter how brilliantly it succeeds by any other standard.

AVP Basic Manual 2002, p. A-5

What is the essence of AVP?

The essence of AVP includes: 1) living our core values; 2) understanding what violence is, how it manifests and applying alternatives to violence; 3) caring for others with honesty and commitment to bringing about peaceful solutions to conflict, while supporting personal growth.

What is the purpose of an AVP workshop?

AVP workshops are experiential and enable participants to deal with potentially violent situations in new and creative ways, while also discovering and exploring their own personal transformation.

All AVP workshops have common elements. These are the basis for the effectiveness and consistency that have enabled AVP to remain relevant over its more than 40-year history and into the future.

How is this booklet structured?

This booklet is divided into three sections to explore the various elements of an AVP workshop:

1. The Building Blocks & Other Workshop Content
2. Workshop Fundamentals
3. Workshop Processes

These sections are divided into topics or elements. Each topic has: a) a word cloud image representing an initial brainstorm by the Best Practices team; b) a description and/or reason why the topic is part of an AVP workshop; c) how it is included in the workshop, and d) notes about what may happen if the element is not included in an AVP workshop.

Section 1: Building Blocks & Other Workshop Content

These steps if followed, set in motion a positive dynamic which will then work by itself to produce a learning and healing experience drawn from and belonging to the participants themselves.

AVP Basic Manual, 2002 p. D4

The Building Blocks are the framework on which the AVP workshop is built. They are the foundation from which transformation can develop.

Without the Building Blocks:

- workshops would be reduced to a series of activities without meaning, a roof with no walls;
- participants will find it difficult to apply the workshop to their own lives, and
- habits will remain unchanged.

The Workshop Content is what people will take away and use in real life. This includes the tools and techniques to help manage the conflicts in our lives, increasing awareness of ourselves and others.

Note: A few relevant exercises or activities are given in italics for most of the topics discussed in this section. These are offered as suggestions only and are not meant to be a complete list.

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Affirmation



Why is Affirmation part of an AVP workshop?

Finding good in oneself and in others builds self-esteem. This leads to trust in self and others. Affirmation is key to building trust in the workshop space.

How is Affirmation included in an AVP workshop?

Being respected as a member of the group

- Group Agreements
- *Adjective Name / Positive Name*
- *Affirmation Exercise*
- *Affirmation Pairs*
- *Concentric Circles*
- *I Messages*

What happens if Affirmation is not included in an AVP workshop?

- self-doubt and mistrust
- participants will speak poorly of themselves and others
- there will be a hesitance to share and any sharing is likely to be negative
- it's hard to feel good about other people
- the group will feel divided
- if I am angry with myself, I will project my anger onto others
- it will be difficult to experience the positive

Assertive Speaking



Why is Assertive Speaking part of an AVP workshop?

When we talk about our feelings and what we care about, we speak with clarity and openness. Otherwise, our feelings and needs cannot be considered, which could lead to conflict.

How is Assertive Speaking included in an AVP workshop?

- Gatherings
- Speaking from the “I”
- *Assertiveness (2nd level)*
- *Concentric Circles*
- *I Messages*

What happens if Assertive Speaking is not included in an AVP workshop?

- participants will feel disempowered
- there will be misunderstandings and wrong assumptions
- unmet needs lead to conflict

Communication



Why is Communication part of an AVP workshop?

Communication is focused listening and speaking concisely so each message is heard by others. When we express our own needs and concerns we are better able to hear the needs and concerns of others. Breakdown in communication is the most common cause of conflict and dispute.

How is Communication included in an AVP workshop?

- Gatherings
- Light & Livelies
- Non-verbal exercises
- Sharing in small groups
- *Broken Squares*
- *Concentric Circles*
- *Cooperative Construction*
- *I Messages*

What happens if Communication is not included in an AVP workshop?

- participants will stop listening
- conversations will be monopolized
- misunderstandings / assumptions
- manipulation can occur to meet needs

Community & Community Building



Why are Community & Community Building part of an AVP workshop?

Community exists when people feel they belong, and are cared for and respected. Individuals will see themselves as part of the group rather than alone. Creating a safe and trusting space is essential to the AVP workshop and process. AVP is a personal experience that happens in a community of mutual respect. In the process, we learn how to build a community for ourselves.

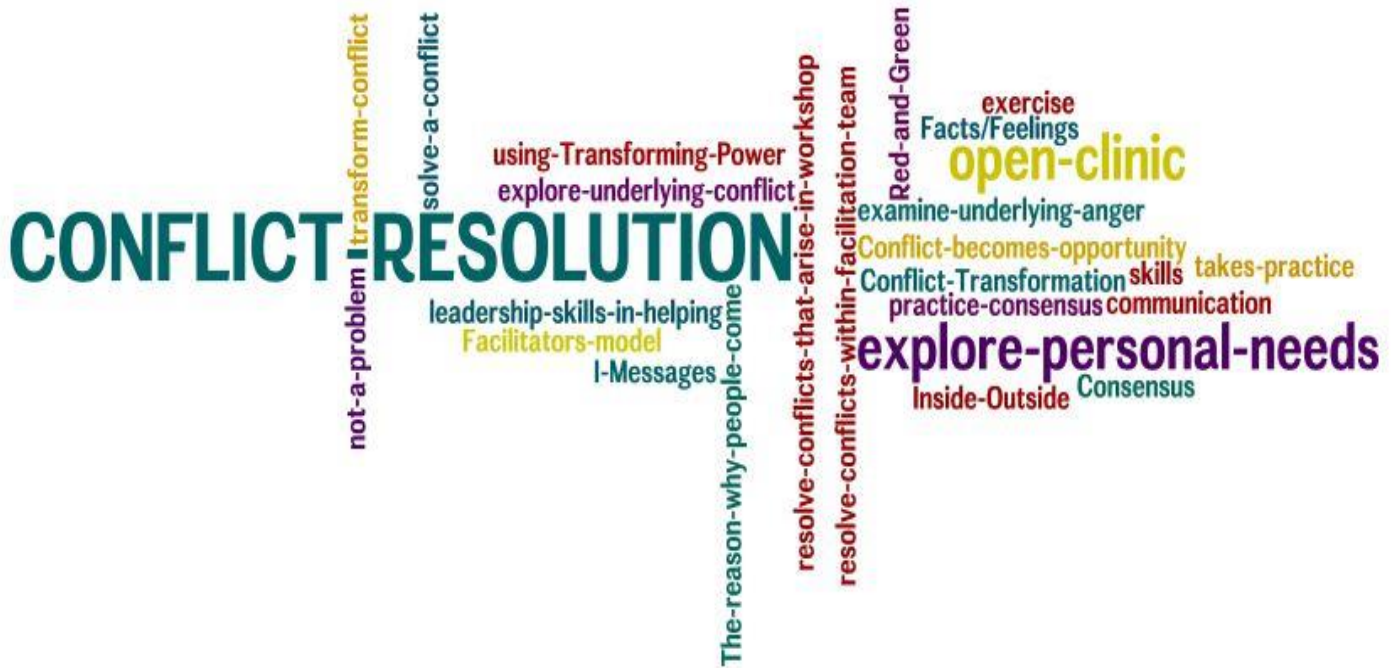
How are Community & Community Building included in an AVP workshop?

- Focus of, at least, the first session of the workshop
- Sitting in a circle
- Gatherings
- Group activities
- Group Agreements
- Light & Livelies
- *Broken Squares*
- *Cooperative Construction*

What happens if Community & Community Building are not included in an AVP workshop?

- the workshop space will not be safe; there will be mistrust within the group
- participants will be wary and defensive
- interacting with communities will continue to be difficult
- participants may leave
- participants will be unable to build and maintain community outside the workshop

Conflict Resolution



Why is Conflict Resolution part of an AVP workshop?

This is one of the areas where we put Transforming Power into practice. It helps us to see conflict as an opportunity, not a problem. Essentially, this is why many people come to an AVP workshop.

How is Conflict Resolution included in an AVP workshop?

- Communication exercises
- Consensus exercises
- Role Play exercises
- Facilitators model this for the group
- *I Messages*
- *Six-Step Problem Solving*

What happens if Conflict Resolution is not included in an AVP workshop?

- participants find it difficult to recognise there are alternatives to violence
- helplessness and hopelessness
- people stay stuck in avoidance

Conflict Transformation



Why is Conflict Transformation part of an AVP workshop?

Conflict creates opportunities to transform situations into something that is less harmful and more manageable, even if the conflict cannot be resolved immediately. It can be used to strengthen relationships and to find new solutions. Conflict Transformation allows creativity in order to deescalate conflict, by envisioning a different outcome. This is how we bring Transforming Power into our daily lives.

How is Conflict Transformation included in an AVP workshop?

- *Crocodiles & Frogs (L&L)*
- *Hassle Lines*
- *Power 1, 2, 3, 4*
- *Quick Decisions*
- *Role Play exercise*

What happens if Conflict Transformation is not included in an AVP workshop?

- conflicts escalate
- disempowerment
- participants will have difficulty connecting the concept with actions or strategies
- if you think you can't do it, then you won't try

Consensus



Why is Consensus part of an AVP workshop?

People will believe in themselves when they see their contributions having value and when they are part of a decision making process. The consensus process means respecting everyone. It is the practice of “power with” not “power over”. It is an exercise in trust. Consensus necessarily involves the needs and concerns of all members of the group being heard and understood.

How is Consensus included in an AVP workshop?

- Clinics
- Group Agreements
- Modelled by the facilitator team
- *Bean Jar (2nd level)*
- *In Common (2nd level)*
- *Specific consensus exercises (2nd level)*

What happens if Consensus is not included in an AVP workshop?

- there will be an imbalance of power; equality will be lost
- the workshop will be top down instead of bottom up
- strong opinions will dominate and persuade
- a win-lose situation will be created
- participants will feel “talked at” instead of “shared with”

Cooperation



Why is Cooperation part of an AVP workshop?

Cooperation is the skill of working productively with other people and is essential to building community. We need others to help us meet our needs. Working together recognises the value of everyone's contribution and builds respect for all. We can help ourselves by helping others.

How is Cooperation included in an AVP workshop?

- Gatherings
- Light & Livelies
- Non-verbal exercises
- Role Play processes
- *Broken Squares*
- *Cooperative Construction*
- *Lost at Sea*
- *Role Play exercise*

What happens if Cooperation is not included in an AVP workshop?

- disempowerment
- competition
- marginalisation
- nothing happens
- participants will disengage

Empathy



Why is Empathy part of an AVP workshop?

Empathy is a fundamental part of personal relationships and interactions. It is the ability to have compassion for and to understand others.

How is Empathy included in an AVP workshop?

- Affirmations
- Gatherings
- Listening activities
- Listening without judgment
- Self-disclosure
- *Empathy*

What happens if Empathy is not included in an AVP workshop?

- communication and problem solving become manipulation instead of cooperation
- there would be less trust and participants will be less willing to share

Listening



Why is Listening part of an AVP workshop?

Listening is a critical part of communication. Unless someone tells you what they're feeling, you make assumptions. When we listen to others we are also listening to ourselves. It is a way of showing respect and feeling respected. People feel validated when they are heard.

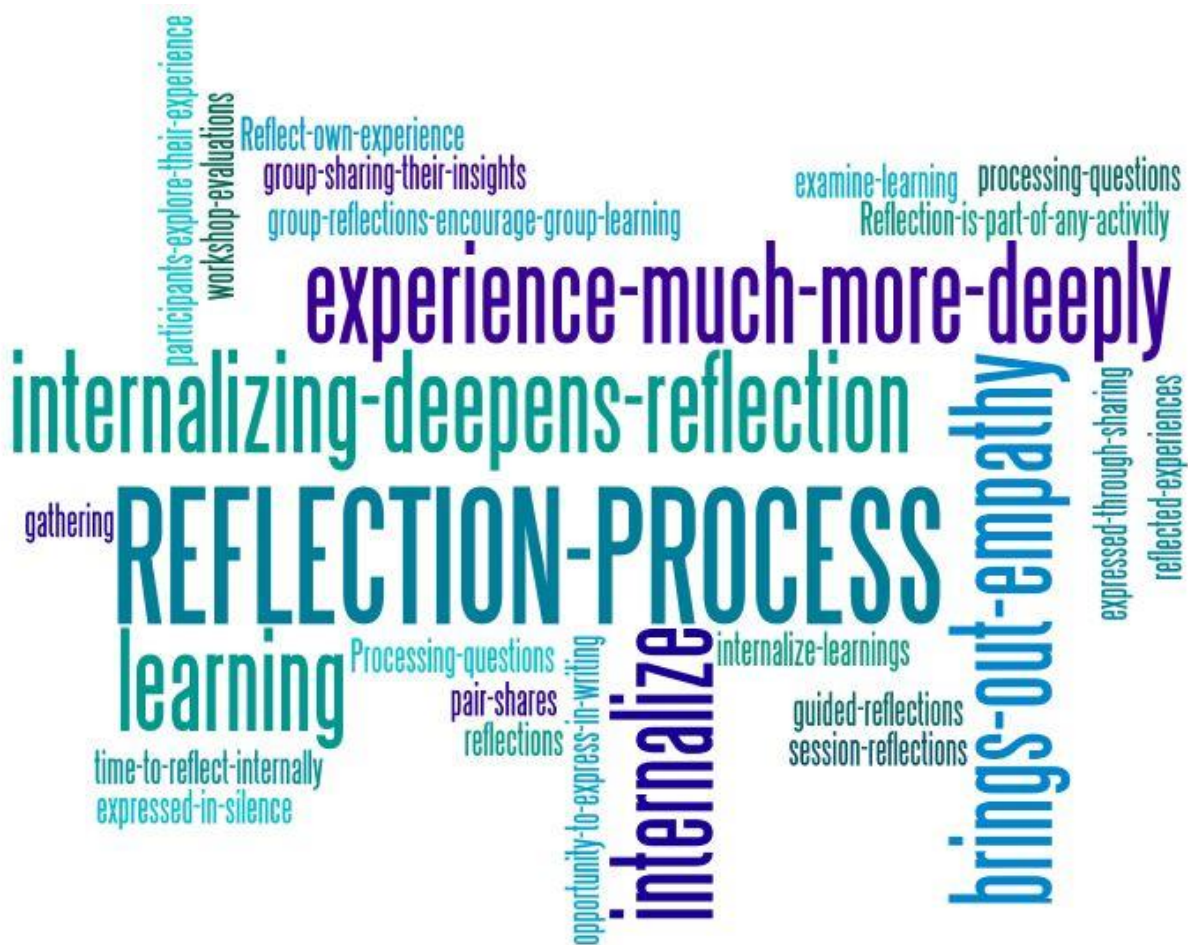
How is Listening included in an AVP workshop?

- Gatherings
- Group Agreements
- Processing
- Small group exercises and activities
- *Concentric Circles*
- *Listening*

What happens if Listening is not included in an AVP workshop?

- there will be misunderstandings and wrong assumptions
- participants will not feel heard
- the group will be dominated by the loudest or until someone feels heard
- power will emerge and be exerted

Reflection



Why is Reflection part of an AVP workshop?

This is an important part of identifying how we perceive ourselves. Reflection enables people to see the wider picture and to visualise their place in that wider picture. It opens us up to changing our thinking about alternatives, reinforcing the practice of Think Before Reacting.

How is Reflection included in an AVP workshop?

- Gatherings
- Journaling
- Personal reflection exercises
- Processing/Debriefing questions after exercises

What happens if Reflection is not included in an AVP workshop?

- habits are unlikely to change
- participants will remain reactive
- the workshop may stay “on the surface” without real consideration of its application in the lives of the participants

Transforming Power



Why is Transforming Power part of an AVP workshop?

This is the core of AVP. It is the realisation that there is always a choice or an alternative. It is often seen as spiritual. It is the basis of every exercise and activity in the AVP workshop. Transforming Power connects the AVP tools and techniques to daily life.

How is Transforming Power included in an AVP workshop?

- Related to all exercises and activities
- Stories / talks
- Transforming Power Mandala / Transforming Power Circle
- *A Conflict I Resolved Nonviolently*
- *Role Play exercise*

What happens if Transforming Power is not included in an AVP workshop?

- quite simply, it is not AVP

Trust



Why is Trust part of an AVP workshop?

This is important for building community and safety so that participants will feel confident in opening up and sharing with the group. The level of trust within the group is checked before doing certain exercises. Trust is not rushed, rather it is built gradually.

How is Trust included in an AVP workshop?

- Facilitators model trustworthiness and trusting throughout the workshop
- Group Agreements
- Self-disclosure
- Trust exercises

What happens if Trust is not included in an AVP workshop?

- participants will not want to share
- defensiveness; everyone watching their back
- participants will lose faith and confidence in the workshop, the team will be lost
- participants will not be open to change
- the group will become divisive

Section 2: Workshop Fundamentals

The Workshop Fundamentals are consistent worldwide, covering the identifying or key elements of how AVP workshops are put together. When the fundamentals are respected, the AVP workshop can be flexible to respond to the perceived needs of the participants.

Without the Workshop Fundamentals:

- The workshop will not be recognisable as AVP;
- Apprentice facilitators are unlikely to feel comfortable on the team, and
- It will be difficult to adapt the workshop to the group.

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Experiential with a Progressive Focus



Why is Experiential with a Progressive Focus part of an AVP workshop?

The workshop is built as a progressive experience, starting with safer, smaller steps, becoming increasingly intensive and difficult. Structuring the AVP workshop in this manner builds confidence and trust with participants. Participants will trust the team. We learn by experience and through the mutual sharing of our experiences.

How is Experiential with a Progressive Focus included in an AVP workshop?

- Agenda planning, each session builds on the previous
- Activities start with having an experience and then reflecting on that experience to relate this to real life
- Awareness by facilitators as to how building blocks are being developed and how they fit together

What happens if Experiential with a Progressive Focus is not included in an AVP workshop?

- participants detach from the process, they become overwhelmed
- the workshop becomes rigid and confusing
- the workshop loses meaning and its differentiation from other similar experiences
- participants will not trust the team

Facilitation Teams



Why are Facilitation Teams part of an AVP workshop?

The team models how we interact with each other, always working together. By sharing responsibility, the team models cooperation and joint leadership. This is also an opportunity to model trust, as each facilitator knows they can rely on the support of their team. It shows the group that working together is stronger than working alone.

How are Facilitation Teams included in an AVP workshop?

- shared leadership
- taking turns to facilitate and hold the space
- teams with at least 2 facilitators

What happens if Facilitation Teams are not included in an AVP workshop?

- a single facilitator would hold power over the group rather than modelling sharing this power or leadership
- it would be easy to create 'superstars' or 'know-it-alls', which undermines the concept that we are stronger together than alone
- creates a hierarchical structure
- a single facilitator would be physically and/or emotionally vulnerable, not being able to debrief the experience with anyone
- the workshop would quickly become a classroom style of teacher and students

For further discussion on Facilitation Teams, see other booklets in this series.

Length & Size of an AVP Workshop



The AVP workshop was originally designed as a 21-hour experience with a group of 20 participants. This changed over the years to 18-22 hours with recommended group sizes ranging from 12 to 20 participants. This amount of time allows trust and community to be built and for the processes to occur.

If workshops are less hours in length, there is not enough time for participants to experience the full workshop processes and activities. Also, participants taking a subsequent workshop will not be sufficiently prepared.

When there are more people in the workshop circle (participants and facilitators), there will not be enough opportunity for each person to participate fully.

When there are fewer people in the workshop circle, the community experience will be limited and also there is a potential that the workshop will move into personal therapy.

For further discussion on how much time a participant (or facilitator) can be permitted to miss during a workshop, see other booklets in this series.

Participation



Why is Participation part of an AVP workshop?

AVP workshops are for participants (ie. not to meet the needs of facilitators, authorities or observers). Participation helps to build community and create a safe space where participants can feel safe sharing of themselves.

How is Participation included in an AVP workshop?

- All people in the room (facilitators and participants) are participants in the workshop; any observers are asked to leave
- Facilitators participate in the activities they are not actively facilitating
- Gatherings
- Group Agreements

What happens if Participation is not included in an AVP workshop?

- the workshop and the space become unsafe
- if there are observers (outside people) present, participants will feel they are being watched and evaluated and they will shut down
- if facilitators don't participate, they become the authority figures and may be seen as holding power over the participants
- people will feel vulnerable
- there will be no sense of confidentiality
- it will be difficult to build community

Purposeful Flexibility



Why is Purposeful Flexibility part of an AVP workshop?

It allows the team to draw from feedback to prepare upcoming sessions / agendas, showing participants that the workshop is for them. The workshop is responsive to the group. We are all at different places in our growth and openness. With no predetermined outcomes, the AVP workshop remains open and inclusive. We recognise individual journeys by being flexible.

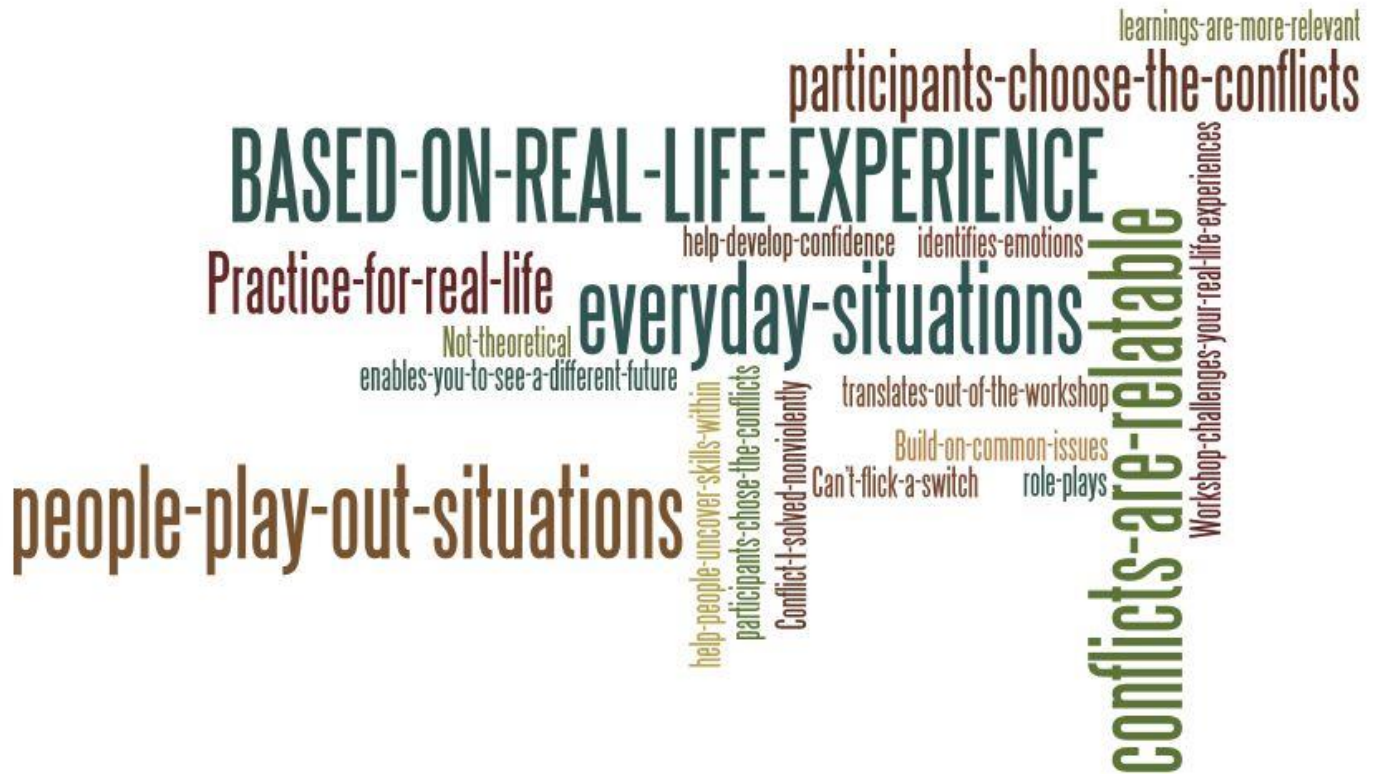
How is Purposeful Flexibility included in an AVP workshop?

- facilitators observe and are aware of the mood in the room
- participant feedback during session evaluations
- each session agenda is prepared according to what facilitators have observed and participants have commented
- facilitators share their observations during clinics

What happens if Purposeful Flexibility is not included in an AVP workshop?

- the workshop will become rigid and lose its safety
- participants will feel like they are being talked at and will disconnect from the experience
- participants may not feel the workshops relates to them
- the power element in the workshop will stay with the facilitators instead of being passed to the participants

Real Life Experience



Why are AVP workshops based on Real Life Experience?

The AVP workshop is practice for real life. The workshop is not theoretical and therefore translates easily into the day-to-day. We all have the skills to manage conflict, the workshop is merely a space to uncover these skills and to have the confidence to use them. There's nothing complex or mysterious about what we do. The workshop challenges your real life experiences and the emotions associated with these. It helps you find alternatives that work for you. Community is created by sharing and building on real life issues and experiences.

How is Real Life Experience included in an AVP workshop?

- Processing
- Role plays with everyday situations
- Facilitators model self-disclosure, encouraging participants to do the same
- *A Conflict I Resolved Nonviolently*

What happens if Real Life Experience is not included in an AVP workshop?

- the workshop experience will not be transferable to real life
- learnings will be lost over time
- there will be little encouragement to apply the AVP tools to one's own life

Safety



Why is Safety part of an AVP workshop?

Safety is a sense of security and support. It recognises people's comfort level and encourages them to extend it. It allows everyone to expose their vulnerabilities. When people feel safe, they will be more willing to take risks, make mistakes, and explore alternative responses to the difficult situations in their lives. A concern for safety (both emotional and physical) and a conscious concern for maintaining safety are defining characteristics of an AVP workshop.

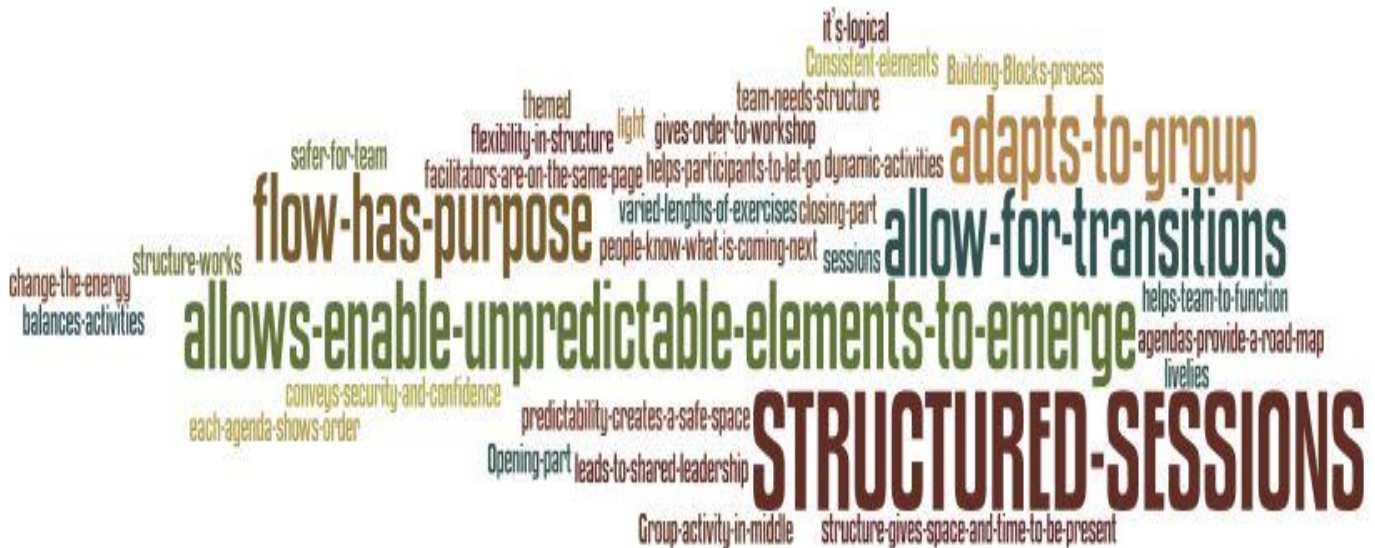
How is Safety included in an AVP workshop?

- Facilitators are always aware of the mood of the group and the surrounding environment
- Group agreements
- Modelled by the facilitating team
- Participant feedback after each activity and at the end of every session
- Facilitator check-ins between sessions

What happens if Safety is not included in an AVP workshop?

- no one will take risks
- someone may get accidentally injured
- there is a potential for retraumatisation
- participants will shut down and close themselves off
- the entire AVP program would be in jeopardy

Structured Sessions



The workshop is essentially a sequence of activities that are structured to give a carefully crafted series of experiences on which participants can reflect and learn.

What happens if Structured Sessions are not included in an AVP workshop?

- lack of structure takes away from being able to trust
- participants may feel disconnected from the workshop
- there may be a sense of anxiousness at not knowing what's coming next
- the facilitator team looks disorganised
- there is no consistency
- the progressive nature couldn't happen
- there would be no sense of purpose
- no closure; needs could be left unmet

Section 3: Workshop Processes

This section covers many of the tools and resources on which AVP workshops are built. They are the supporting elements for the building blocks and workshops which help to give clarity and create safety and community within a workshop. These processes keep the workshop experiential and encourage personal exploration.

Without the Workshop Processes:

- There will be no framework to feel connection with others;
- The workshop will feel like a series of exercises or activities with no glue to bind them.
- The workshop will become theoretical.

Note: A few relevant exercises or activities are given in italics for some of the topics discussed in this section. These are offered as suggestions only and are not meant to be a complete list.

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Agendas



Why are Agendas part of an AVP workshop?

The Agendas give both participants and facilitators a roadmap of where the workshop is going. They give structure to each session and participants will have confidence that there is a purpose. They help the facilitator team to organize the activities in the session and show clear purpose and continuity. Agendas provide reassurance that the workshop activities have been thought out and that they are purposeful.

How are Agendas included in an AVP workshop?

- The team prepares the Agendas before each session
- Agenda Review at the beginning of each session
- Written out on a poster
- Read aloud

What happens if Agendas are not included in an AVP workshop?

- the workshop will be disorganised and unfocused
- the power will remain with the facilitator team
- participants will repeatedly mention their needs
- participants are more likely to disengage
- participants will take 'breaks' when they want rather than waiting
- lack of context for the exercises and activities

Brainstorms



Why are Brainstorms part of an AVP workshop?

Brainstorms are used to explore topics and raise awareness. This process allows for a wide variety of ideas to come out without judgment and gives everyone a say. It helps participants to understand their contributions are valuable. Brainstorms help to avoid repetition of thoughts and ideas. This process encourages participation.

How are Brainstorms included in an AVP workshop?

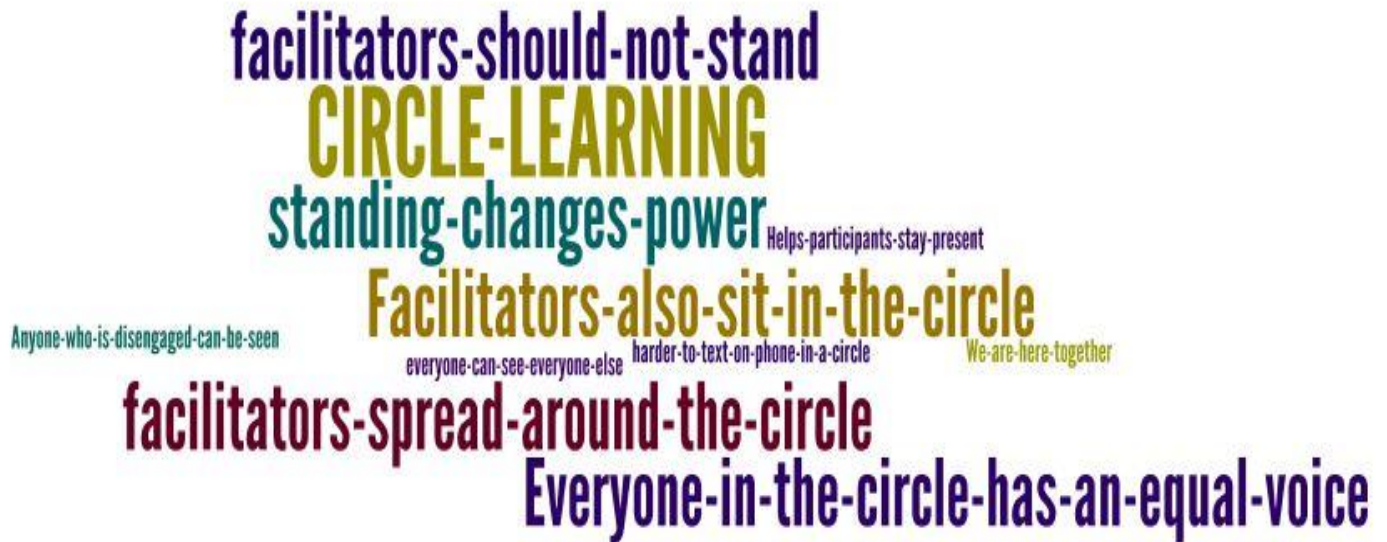
- All workshops have at least one brainstorm activity
- Brainstorms may involve the whole group or be done in small groups
- *What is Violence / Nonviolence?*

What happens if Brainstorms are not included in an AVP workshop?

- there will be less sharing of ideas and experiences
- conversations may be monopolised or dominated
- participants will not feel heard and acknowledged
- participants will not realise they have the knowledge within them
- facilitators will need to speak more often to ensure the concepts are covered

For discussion on how to do brainstorms, scribes, etc., see other booklets in this series and the AVP Basic Manual.

Circle



Why is the Circle part of an AVP workshop?

Everyone is equal and feels included when we sit in a circle. Everyone can see everyone else. Anyone who is disengaged can be seen.

How is the Circle included in an AVP workshop?

- facilitators and participants sit in the circle as equals
- facilitators are spread around the circle, to avoid a power block
- facilitators sit to present exercises and activities, emphasising our equality with the group

What happens if the Circle is not included in an AVP workshop?

- there will be a power differential creating hierarchy
- the workshop will become a classroom style space
- participants will find it easier to lose interest

Clinics & Fishbowls



Why are Clinics and Fishbowls part of an AVP workshop?

These are tools for the facilitator team to use to make adjustments to the workshop in the moment or to address a problem or crisis as this occurs. Participants will feel safer when they know the facilitators will respond quickly and appropriately. They involve the group in general decisions, often in reference to time. They model ongoing and respectful communication within the facilitator team and that decisions are made by consensus. Being involved and seeing the process empowers participants and shows them the facilitator team is aware of their needs.

How are Clinics and Fishbowls included in an AVP workshop?

- talking through an issue with the group (open clinic)
- facilitators talk with each other across the circle (open clinic)
- facilitators discuss an issue away from the group (closed clinic) during the facilitator debriefing
- immediate problems or issues can be addressed using the fishbowl technique

What happens if Clinics and Fishbowls are not included in an AVP workshop?

- an atmosphere of us (facilitator team) vs. them (participants) is created
- participants will not feel respected enough to have things shared with them
- participants will feel isolated
- decisions are more likely to be made by one person
- problems would continue without resolution
- participants will assume the worst

Feedback, Evaluations & Facilitator Debriefing

Debriefing-and-Feedback



Why are Feedback, Evaluations and Facilitator Debriefing part of an AVP workshop?

It is important in an AVP workshop to give the participants the opportunity to influence the planning of their workshop. Participant feedback helps the facilitator team identify areas for improvement and also which activities have been the most (or least) meaningful for the group. The facilitator debriefing is an opportunity for the facilitators to offer feedback to each other and to discuss the feedback received from the participants.

How are Feedback, Evaluations and Facilitator Debriefing included in an AVP workshop?

- evaluation and reflection at the end of each session
- facilitator debriefings during and after the workshop
- feedback or written evaluation at the end of the workshop

What happens if Feedback, Evaluations and Facilitator Debriefing are not included in an AVP workshop?

- participants may feel silenced
- “team think”
- no outlet for concerns
- participants and facilitators may feel disempowered
- unmet needs will remain unmet

Gatherings + Openings & Closings



Why are Gatherings part of an AVP workshop?

Gatherings bring the group back to the circle. They allow everyone's voice to be heard, without judgement, if they choose to share. The right to pass is sometimes exercised here and is respected by all. Gatherings can help to set the tone for the upcoming session or they can be used to reinforce something from the previous session. The facilitators and the participants are seen as equals.

Why are Openings and Closings part of an AVP workshop?

This process serves as a transition between what's going on outside and the workshop space. Openings bring everyone back to the same place and help to build community. Closings ensure a togetherness among the group before departing. The structure of having an opening, a middle and a closing is used in the exercises, sessions and the workshop overall.

How are Gatherings plus Openings and Closings included in an AVP workshop?

- At the start of each session or workshop (opening, gathering)
 - At the end of each session or workshop (closing)
- For specific Gatherings, Opening and Closing activities, see the AVP Basic Manual*

What happens if Gatherings plus Openings and Closings are not included in an AVP workshop?

- the session will feel 'ungathered'
- quieter participants will pull back and not speak
- participants will become less responsive, less involved and more isolated
- participants and facilitators will find it difficult to focus on the workshop itself
- people may leave the workshop space feeling that something has been left unfinished
- the group will feel scattered

Group Agreements



Why are Group Agreements part of an AVP workshop?

The Group Agreements are an essential step in establishing safety and an awareness of how safety can be maintained in the workshop. They are recognisable to all and help participants to become aware of the impact of their behaviour and the behaviour of others. The group experiences consensus by accepting the Group Agreements. The Group Agreements set the atmosphere for the workshop and empower participants. They honour the effort made by the group to create their own space.

How are Group Agreements included in an AVP workshop?

- established at the start of the workshop
- referred to during the workshop
- displayed on a poster

What happens if Group Agreements are not included in an AVP workshop?

- there may be unintentional violence
- participants will be unsure as to whether their behaviour is considered acceptable
- participants won't have a place to turn if they feel disrespected
- participants will fall into old habits (eg. side conversations)
- there will be no framework for safety or the behaviour expected

Groups



Why are Groups part of an AVP workshop?

Participating in an experience as a group builds awareness of our relationship to and with others. Different sized groups during an AVP workshop offers opportunities for different levels of sharing and helps build community. Participants will often feel safer sharing in a small group. The group will often answer a question itself rather than rely on the facilitator team.

How are Groups included in an AVP workshop?

- Different exercises call for different sized groups, eg. pairs, in threes, fours, whole group, etc.

What happens if Groups are not included in an AVP workshop?

- there would be lecturing rather than drawing the wisdom from the participants
- there would be no practice and experience of relating to each other
- participants may feel left out and isolated
- participants won't learn from each other
- participants will turn off

Light & Livelies



Why are Light & Livelies part of an AVP workshop?

Humour can be healing and helps us to connect with each other. Laughing and playing together creates community and improves communication, while building safety and testing proximity and touching (where this is culturally permitted). Light & Livelies help to discharge emotions and diffuse tensions, as well as lift energy. They serve as a break from one exercise or activity to prepare the group for the next. They are another opportunity for the facilitator team to interact directly with participants, with everyone on the same level.

How are Light & Livelies included in an AVP workshop?

- After each major exercise or activity and role play
- When the group needs a change in energy

What happens if Light & Livelies are not included in an AVP workshop?

- the workshop will become stagnant
- it will be difficult to transition from one exercise or activity to the next
- a major tool would be missing
- the workshop would become emotionally exhausting
- participants will get bored
- there will be limited learning

For discussion on how to facilitate Light & Livelies, see other booklets in this series.

Processing & Debriefing Exercises



Why is Processing and Debriefing Exercises part of an AVP workshop?

It puts the experience into perspective and opens participants to new understandings. The workshop becomes a group process as participants share their insights and experiences. Processing exercises takes the experience to a deeper level. Thinking through the experience practices thinking before reacting.

How is Processing and Debriefing Exercises included in an AVP workshop?

- Processing questions after exercises and activities
- Restorative questions to help work through emotions
- Reflections on the experience

What happens if Processing and Debriefing Exercises is not included in an AVP workshop?

- participants won't recognise how the exercises are relevant to them
- previous habits may continue
- negative feelings may linger
- participants may not see the purpose and how the exercises, tools and concepts relate to real life

Role Play



Why is Role Play part of an AVP workshop?

Role Play in general offers real situations to explore conflict and to experience how the AVP exercises, concepts and elements can be used in day-to-day life. Seeing a role or position from another point of view is the essence of empathy. The traditional AVP role play exercise gives participants an opportunity to practice Transforming Power.

How is Role Play included in an AVP workshop?

- Experiential component of many different exercises and activities
- *Hassle Lines*
- *Quick Decisions*
- *Role Play exercise*

What happens if Role Play is not included in an AVP workshop?

- the learning from the workshop won't be applied or translated into real life
- the workshop will be theoretical instead of experiential
- there will be fewer opportunities to see conflict transformation at work
- Transforming Power remains conceptual instead of being seen as real

Self Disclosure



Why is Self-Disclosure part of an AVP workshop?

Sharing of ourselves creates trust, equality, builds community and enables empathy. Taking a risk and sharing experiences encourages sharing from others. The facilitators set the tone of the sharing based on both their own comfort level and that of the group. Self-disclosure shows it's okay to not have all the answers.

How is Self-Disclosure included in an AVP workshop?

- Facilitators model by offering personal stories as examples
- Encouraging participants to share their experiences
- Gatherings
- Small group activities
- Light & Livelies
- Transforming Power stories

What happens if Self-Disclosure is not included in an AVP workshop?

- facilitators will appear distant and unapproachable
- participants will not feel connected with others
- trust may be difficult to build
- sharing will be impersonal
- participants may feel isolated
- there will be less opportunity to discover common experiences

Unanswered Questions



Why are Unanswered Questions part of an AVP workshop?

By offering a place where participants can ask questions and express concerns, they will feel respected. Writing unanswered questions on a poster will help participants to let go of a particular issue and focus on the current experience. These questions can be answered or addressed all together instead of interrupting the flow of the workshop and taking time away from the group. The facilitator team will better identify the needs, concerns and questions within the group.

How are Unanswered Questions included in an AVP workshop?

- introduced in the first session
- questions to be answered later are written on a poster during the workshop
- questions are addressed in the last session of the workshop; the participants are first invited to offer an answer and if the question is still unanswered, the facilitators respond

see the AVP Basic Manual

What happens if Unanswered Questions are not included in an AVP workshop?

- the group will get sidetracked or distracted
- participants will want their questions answered in the moment
- there will be a lack of respect
- questions will keep coming up until they are resolved

About Best Practices

A best practice is a process or technique that has consistently produced more effective results than those achieved by other means. In the context of AVP, it is AVP's values that determine its processes and, in turn, the AVP processes make visible its values.

The AVP Best Practices booklets offer a way for our community to collectively improve and maintain quality and integrity in our work. These booklets invite reflection on what works and what does not work in AVP and AVP workshops.

Facilitators are invited to read, discuss and contribute ideas, experiences and feedback to the Best Practices Team for inclusion in future versions of these booklets and to expand on the AVP manuals.

The AVP Best Practices booklets are available for free in electronic format (pdf and online) on both the AVP International and AVP USA websites.

For more information on the AVP Joint Best Practices Team, or comment on this or other Best Practices materials, write to: bestpractices@avp.international.

www.avp.international

www.avpusa.org

AVP Core Values

The Underlying Core Values of Our AVP Organisation and Workshops

Core values are the fundamental principles that guide our actions and behaviours. The following core values, appearing in no particular order, are present throughout AVP, from our workshops to our organisations, to our daily lives. They influence our behaviour and our way of thinking. They set AVP apart.

AVP-Trained Teams

A community of AVP-trained facilitators. We practise and model the attitudes, skills, processes and knowledge of AVP. This is present in workshops and throughout the organisation.

Shared Power and Leadership

Acceptance that in AVP we are all learners and all teachers. We share responsibility and draw on the strengths and wisdom of each group member. We work as a team.

Alternatives

The belief that we always have options and choices in any given situation. We have the power to decide how we respond.

Inclusiveness

The conscious effort to acknowledge and consider, without prejudice, all natural and social differences in the AVP Community. We unconditionally accept the person while not accepting behaviours perceived to harm relationships.

Good Within Everyone

The belief that there is something of value in all of us. We seek to affirm and connect with that capacity for good.

Journey of Personal Exploration

The understanding that each person's path is different. We each empower our own path and are open to change.

Experiential Learning

Doing, listening, interacting with others, and reflecting on present and past experiences leading to reframing perspectives. Re-experiencing the self with peers.

Community

Building, rebuilding and maintaining a sense of belonging, connectedness and safety with others. Respecting and caring for oneself while respecting and being present for others.

Personal Nonviolence

Taking personal responsibility for not harming oneself or others. When we recognise there are alternatives, violence is no longer an answer to conflict.

Consensus

Trusting that a level playing field exists where all are part of the process to find a way forward that everyone can accept, work with, and apply.

Safety

Creating an environment that is conducive to collaboration, personal growth and taking risks to change ourselves.

Accessibility and Consistency

Staying true to our best practices and ensuring our processes, learnings and operations are open and easily understood.

Transforming Power

We are guided by our optimism that when we are open to Transforming Power, every situation has the potential to have a hopeful, positive outcome.

Mutual Respect

Building strength and confidence in oneself and honouring dignity and connection with others.