

Type	AVP Basic workshop
Venue	ST Paulus Primary School
Date	22 – 23 January 2018
Facilitators	Constance Tau, Corlette Nxumalo, Jabu Mashinini, Judy Connors, Mosiwa Malula and Tumelo Tau
Grade	7

Overall Feeling

An AVP (Alternatives to Violence Project) is an experiential workshop that accommodates various groups who are 12 years and older. We had a dynamic group of pre-teens who were eager to learn about different ways of handling conflict. This group participated with a high sense of energy. The boundary agreements proved to have given a sense of responsibility to the participants. Some of their agreements were, respect each other's opinion, confidentiality, have fun, learn to speak, share airtime, respect each other's culture and religion etc. These agreements assisted the team to work well with the participants.

It was during the affirmation exercise that the participants listened enthusiastically as they learnt more about the greatness and history of their names. One of the participants said that it was difficult at first for other people to pronounce her name, and she confronted them so that they could pronounce it correctly. Her name was given to her by her parents as a remembrance to her grandmother. During the feedback some of the participants said it was great to hear about how other traditions name their children. It was an exciting moment to see all the learners listening to all stories that were shared. It was a little difficult for other learners because they did not know what their names meant, yet they appreciated and loved their names.

It was also clear to us facilitators that, even though these learners are young, they valued opportunities to reflect on their interactions in the world. One of the topics we chose for them to share on was, "A time I did the right thing, even though it was difficult..." Although a number of learners at first made use of the permitted boundary agreement that they can pass if they are not ready to speak, by the end of the sharing, almost every learner had shared. Some very touching stories emerged from this, for example the sharing of a young learner who had been on his way to buy an expensive game with his father, when he saw a woman at the roadside looking after her baby. He chose to give all his money to her instead of spending it on himself.

It was the light and livelies, also known as energisers, that kept the participants engaged in the workshop. They enjoyed playing games as it helped with concentration.

Some of the issues that children struggled with were bullying, healthy relationships (relationships at schools, with parents and friends), racism (there was quite a strong racial segregation of groups in one of the classes), love and violence, favouritism between teachers and learners, trust and lack of concentration in class. Role plays were done around these issues whereby the learners had an opportunity to create a conflict that they know and then implement skills like “I-messages” and Transforming Power to resolve the conflict. They were very interested in learning about trust and relationships. The blind-walk assisted with the practical application of trust and the debrief gave abundant responses. They realised that they need to trust other people more. They also need to work on being trustworthy, which will help in building healthier relationships. We observed that some of the learners had challenges with relationships at home. They would like their parents to apologise for being absent in their lives. Even though they see them daily, they do not partake in their children’s lives.

What went well?

- The team was ready and the class rooms were well organised.
- The resources required to conduct the workshop were readily available.
- The learners were interested in the workshop and engaged with the facilitators.
- The role plays were good for the learners to do practical’s.

Challenges

- Some of the learners were distracted and rowdy.
- Ambient noise in the garden.

Learnings

- We noticed that the *I-messages* were still a little challenging for this age group, so believe that the follow-up sessions in a few months’ time will be a good opportunity to see whether the learners have been using this in their lives and to what effect. We will be able to consolidate this learning in future sessions.