



Taking Responsibility – Breaking Away from Hate and Violence

“Think about it like this. By the time they end up in prison, they already see themselves as victims. This attitude radicalizes them even more. They say to themselves, ‘See, the system has targeted me because I’m a real threat! I’m something now!’ While serving their sentence, their anger and frustration at society only grow stronger. They reject speaking to social workers out of spite. They are convinced that the officials are only out to brainwash them – and, most importantly, stop them. ‘They just want to attack me and my ideas. That’s the only real point of those stupid talks and group therapy sessions with the social workers and psychologist!’ So, there’s a lot of resistance on their part from the very start.”

– A former right-wing extremist

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A training program for ideologically motivated perpetrators during and after custody

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Why Have a Prison Program for Juvenile Offenders?

Hate crimes perpetrated by juveniles on the basis of ideological, racial or religious intolerance are not just the odd occurrence. Around 2,500 young offenders are convicted for serious crimes in Germany annually. One of the most common grounds for sentencing is assault and battery motivated by right-wing radicalism, xenophobia or other forms of extremism. Recidivism rates are very high.

Convicted juveniles deserve the opportunity to turn their lives around and learn how to lead a nonviolent and crime free life. Short-term behavior correctional measures are sim-

ply not sufficient for this task. Extremist groups are well-organized and extremely difficult to turn one's back on. There are only two real factors preventing recidivism: stable relationships and successfully putting learned strategies into practice after release.

Any program designed for juvenile delinquents, typically with low levels of education, must incorporate three main elements to be of any real assistance. It must:

1. be based on nonexclusive values and devoid of specific and overt religious, ethnic and cultural references

What does the future hold for these convicted juvenile hate crime offenders?



2. offer supplementary general education
3. teach and strengthen self-reliance while not ignoring the important role of one's community.

Our unique program "Taking Responsibility – Breaking Away from Hate and Violence" is a unique and nonconfrontational alternative in the field of violence prevention and correctional programs. At its heart is the principle of Verantwortungspädagogik® [Education of Responsibility]. Pilot projects were first conducted between 2001 and 2002 in the German state of Brandenburg. By January 2010, our program was being administered in 10 federal states across Germany. The program was also updated in 2007 to provide

better assistance to immigrant youth who identify with Islamic extremism. Our program is held in high regard by legal authorities, federal ministries, international partners and, most importantly, the offenders themselves. Significant reductions in recidivism rates among participants attest to its effectiveness.

Judy Korn, Thomas Mücke and
Helmut Heitmann

*Why Have a Prison Program for Juvenile Offenders?
His renunciation of violence will be put to the test after release.*



Since 2001 more than 500 juvenile offenders have participated in our program. Their reconvictions would have meant more violence, more victims and a cost of roughly 15 million Euros to the taxpayer.

	Violence Prevention Network	Conventional Offers
During custody	6 month program – antiviolence training – civic education – focus on personal past – analysis of the crime Voluntary participation, 8 participants max.	– inadequate scrutiny of extremist ideologies – limited personal reflection on committed
Post-release	Stabilization coaching (1 year max.) – utilization of social network – implementation of learned strategies	– insufficient post-release support services – exclusive focus on emotional control
Recidivism Rates	< 30 %	78 %



The Target Groups

Right-wing affiliated juvenile offenders
Radicalized juvenile offenders of foreign descent

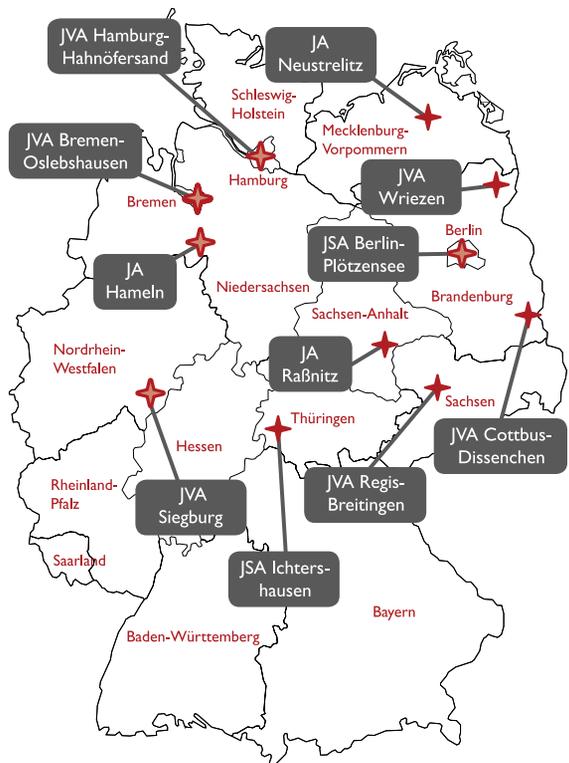
Even before their first sentencing, many juvenile delinquents have a long history of violent behavior. Anyone taking part in a Violence Prevention Network training program has either committed a hate crime already or is openly hostile to foreigners, homosexuals, the homeless, the disabled, and/or other “undesirable groups.” A perceived group, ethnic or cultural superiority is commonly offered as justification for attacks against these groups. Thus, the juveniles’ behavior fits with research findings that highlight the interconnectedness of a rejection of democracy, the embrace of authoritarian values, general intolerance and a willingness to resort to force.

Right-wing hate crimes are typically committed out of “simplistic hatred” (e.g., “because Ni**ers stink!”) or on the basis of more complex and ideological reasoning (e.g., “Society must be saved from such undesirable elements!”) Both right-wing and Islamic extremists share a profound intolerance of, in their view, weaker societal groups. This loathing of weakness is closely associated with seemingly archaic concepts of manhood and honor, expressed in many common insults, such as “Du Opfer!” [“You victim!”] Anti-Semitism is prevalent in both groups, albeit for different reasons. Occasionally, the perpetrators even believe their actions to be in accordance with religious doctrine.

Our training is designed primarily for the followers and not the ideological

leaders of these movements. Only rarely are ideologues allowed to participate. Most attendees have very low levels of education and find overly simplified explanations of complex issues convincing. Moreover, almost all the youth come from troubled families, characterized by broken relationships, physical and mental abuse, emotional rejection and drug

Partner Penal Institutions in 2011



Training program for right-wing juvenile offenders



Training program for young offenders with immigrant backgrounds

abuse. Instead of emotional encouragement and support, abuse commonly mars their early personal development. Consequently, many turn to peers, gangs and cliques in search of security and a sense of belonging. Proving and maintaining group loyalty is nearly always a main motivating factor behind their violent acts. This dynamic is therefore a central issue dealt with in our program.



The assailants wait on the other side of the street for an African-European family to finish loading their car with groceries. The group leader gives the signal by hurling a racial slur at the family. The “recruit” runs up and starts beating the man while the other two grab and hold back the mother and their 10-year old child. The man lies motionless and bleeding in the street as the recruit climbs a park bench. He is ready to jump down and crush the man’s head with his combat boots, but the leader intervenes and calls off the assault. After escaping, the group jovially celebrates the young recruit and his right of passage. He has successfully completed the obedience test and is now a full-fledged member of the brotherhood.

“It was absolutely thrilling! I could decide between life and death.”

“No, you couldn’t! Others made that decision for you. You just had to obey.”

“I would have killed him though. I didn’t give a sh*t about the guy and I would have beaten the woman too, the f**king ni**ers!”

“What about the child?”

“That’s unfair. There are just too many of them!”

“Didn’t you hear the child crying?”

“I ignored it.”

“How do you think the little boy felt as he saw his father lying on the street?”

“Probably powerless...helpless...rage...incredible fear... But I don’t feel sorry for him or the others. What are you trying to get at!!”

“So, when he grows up, how do you think he’s going to deal with those emotions?”

“I don’t know. He’ll probably smash someone’s head open...”

Silence.

– Abbreviated transcript from a crime reconstruction session

Training Program:

Goals and Guiding Principles

Voluntariness

Extremist views and violent behavior are often deeply ingrained in one's thinking and personality. Thus, the long-term rejection of hate, violence and extremist ideologies is the result of a very lengthy and tedious learning process. Time, support and trusting relationships are also essential for change. The need for better educational strategies and qualified personnel for these individuals is great. Conventional approaches (e.g., human relations training and history lessons) often have the opposite effect by hardening the offenders' resistance. Therefore, taking part in a

Violence Prevention Network training program is completely voluntary.

The Group Principle

The group training format is particularly conducive to initiating behavioral change. Participants have abundant opportunities to take on the role of the other. This greatly helps develop tolerance and empathy. Moreover, new and unfamiliar material and situations seem less threatening when one is part of a group, something the coaches make good use of. Participants also gain experience, via the group, in understanding and articulating their

More than just a criminal, he is an individual with personal strengths and weaknesses



own personal boundaries. Bullying and harassment, involving physical contact or verbal humiliation of any kind, are not tolerated at any time during the training.

Respect and Esteem

Beneficial and effective resocialization requires mutual respect and trust on both sides. In our program juvenile offenders are not just reduced to the sum of their crimes. They are rather treated as individuals with their own strengths, weaknesses and unique personal stories. Humiliation and abasement are counterproductive when confronting their biased and racist attitudes and when addressing their crimes. The coaches therefore strive to be adult figures of authority who show respect,

interest, and concern. They also do not shy away from tackling tough topics that are of immediate importance to the youth. The non-threatening stance of the coaches in combination with group work greatly facilitates a willingness to see a new point of view when discussing controversial political and social topics.

Post-Release Application

The initial reentry period into society is particularly difficult: former gang peer pressure, immense challenges, frustration and setbacks are commonplace. The juveniles need to know how to deal effectively with emotionally charged and potentially violent situations. They must therefore be properly prepared

Education of Responsibility

Tolerance and human dignity are at the heart of Violence Prevention Network's educational approach. Our aims are to strengthen understanding, not resistance, and improve the ability to explain behavior, not justify it. The effectiveness and success of the program is based on combining the following elements:

- pre-release group training and individualized post-release stabilization coaching
- a focus on personal past circumstances and the inclusion of family members
- a self-reflective approach to violence prevention, in addition to political and historically relevant supplementary general education



for what awaits them outside the prison walls and be in the position to apply what they have learned in real life situations.

Stabilization Coaching

Even after release, juvenile offenders are in need of considerable assistance. Hence, our post-release stabilization coaching is an indispensable continuation of the training. It is designed to assist the youth in putting their newly learned conflict management strategies into practice. Their former coaches act as trusted and dependable contact individuals. The coaches pay regular visits and are available around the clock should an acute problem or crisis situation arise.

Unlike conventional post-release support services, our stabilization coaching is a direct follow-up on pre-release conflict management training. The immediate goal is to avoid a return to their former (violent) behavior and to help cement what they have learned in theory. The active and supportive role of family and caregivers is of critical importance in helping them turn their lives around, preventing recidivism and avoiding rejoining former circles. That is why family and caregivers are included as part of the stabilization coaching.

Stabilization coaching is vital for the overall success of the training program



The Coaches

A coach's individual personality plays a much greater role in working with juvenile offenders than in other branches of social work. Close, personal contact and engagement are paramount in providing effective correctional support. Winning their trust is key. Genuineness, self-determination and a strong character are thus indispensable personal characteristics for the job. All Violence Prevention Network coaches have many years of relevant work experience with violent youth before joining the team. In addition to their other existing qualifications, every coach is required to take our 6 month long, advanced methodological training course to become an AKT-Trainer® [Antiviolence and Responsibility Trainer]. This

course provides the coaches with the necessary methodical skills and includes extensive instruction in history, politics, intercultural competency, gang/extremist symbolism and the workings of the juvenile penal system.



Program Components

The Training

The program's core is the actual training itself, which is led by 2 coaches with a maximum of 8 participants for about 5 months. The training program is best suited for male juvenile inmates who champion extremist ideologies. The course normally comprises 23 onsite sessions held weekly in the penal institution.

Prerequisites for participation are voluntariness, a willingness to speak frankly in a group about their previous crimes and lives and a consent to abide by the group's own rules. Everything shared and discussed in the group is strictly confidential.

Experience has shown that post-training support services are most effective when inmates are released shortly after completing the program. The coaches decide which inmates will be placed together, based on information gained through screening interviews and input from staff members of the correctional facility.

Common goals of the participants are:

- to better understand and correct their violent behavior
- to accept each individual's fundamental right to liberty and freedom from bodily harm

Young, full of hate, violent and incarcerated – a good recipe for a dead-end future



- to learn how to resolve conflict nonviolently
- to take responsibility for their actions
- to distance themselves from extremist ideology
- to play an active role in planning their future

The Biographical Interview

A private consultation is conducted with each prospective participant before beginning with group training. This offers the coaches a chance to discuss expectations, outline the program's objectives and build a sense of trust. As a part of the interview, the inmate is encouraged to reflect upon and talk about his past, family circumstances, circle of friends,

political and religious affiliations and the crimes he has committed.

Group Sessions

Coaches begin the first meeting by outlining the structure of the program. The juveniles then have a chance to introduce themselves and get to know one another. The next task is to have the juveniles themselves set the rules and guidelines determining how they will work together. Aided considerably by various strategies employed by the coaches, a sense of trust gradually develops among the members. In subsequent sessions they begin the process of discovering the connections between their formative past experiences, propensity for violence and extremist beliefs.



The Biographical Interview

T. is ready. He is now willing to speak about his former life, crimes and views with others in a group. He will have that opportunity later; but first he has a private consultation with one of the coaches today. T. is visibly uncomfortable speaking about himself and clearly on the defensive. Based on past experiences, he is expecting a confrontation and the need to justify his crimes. That is why he is rather surprised to learn that “what happened that day” is not important – for now, at least. The coach is much more interested in how he is doing in general and wants to learn more about him and his childhood. With considerable suspicion, he starts to tell about the small town he is from, his mostly absent father and beloved mother. The coach listens and occasionally asks clarifying questions but does not render opinions or judgment. T. continues by telling about his neo-Nazi buddies and the gang he belongs to. He openly talks about how he hates foreigners,

believes in National Socialism and his right to use force. His hate is as deep-seated as his distrust, and it is immediately apparent to what extent these emotions determined his life outside prison. T. approaches everything and everyone with mistrust. Even the most innocent of comments can be understood as an attack. He responds with hostility and aggression, the only way he knows how to. Unfazed, the coach shows understanding for his suspiciousness, resistance and fears, but not for the crimes he has committed. At the end of the talk, T. is surprised at how much he has voluntarily shared. Is it because someone is showing interest in him as a person and not just in the crimes he has committed? The coach wants to clarify the point of the program; he directly asks T. what he needs to make it in the outside world, free of violence and without reconviction. So, that is what this training is all about – T. and his future. He now knows who and what he is dealing with. The foundation for the hard work in the coming weeks and months has been laid.



Every session starts and ends with a so-called “lightning round” in which each person shares whatever is troubling him. This offers a unique opportunity to both discover their own personal issues and practice communicating their thoughts and feelings. They assist each other as a group in finding ways to overcome these issues. In this way, they experience being taken seriously. Each session ends with a sporting activity determined by the facility’s equipment. This allows the coaches and participants to interact on a more equal footing with each other. It also gives the coaches valuable insights into the participants’ progression (e.g., in regard to self-control). If needed, private

talks with a coach can be organized after the group session as well.

There are countless occasions throughout the training period to analyze and challenge extremist thinking (see page 20). Debating right-wing positions, xenophobic attitudes and controversial social issues with the coaches gives the participants the chance to debate political opponents without resorting to violence.

As during the match and training, never lose sight of the goal



The First Group Meeting

Eight juvenile inmates sit in a circle alongside two coaches. It is the first group meeting and the atmosphere is a little tense. Communicative warm-ups help people relax and get to know each other. No one is pushed too far and nothing embarrassing happens. Now that the ice has been broken, it is time to talk about their expectations and share what they want to work on to improve themselves. The answers are unique to each individual: to learn self-control and not turn violent in particular situations, to remain cool despite feeling provoked, to understand why people flip out and avoid doing so, to not end up in prison again, how not to fall into the same traps again and be bullied around by the old gang, to stop saying the wrong thing at the wrong time, to prepare for life after

incarceration, etc. Each has his own past; each has his own needs and goals for the future.

The next task is to agree on a code of conduct for the group that will shape and govern how they interact and work with each other. They have to come up with this set of rules themselves. Likewise, the young men need to decide what they expect from the coaches. These issues are first discussed in small groups and then later presented and agreed upon all together. One thing everyone can agree on is that no one wants to be "brainwashed" or "patronized." They want to be accepted and shown respect. A coach asks what that exactly means for them. "Not to be told that I'm wrong when I share my opinion, for example." Who would have thought that this group would establish its own rules based on democratic values and principals



with little or no input from the coaches! The first lessons have been learned. To deserve respect, you have to show it. To be taken seriously, you have to take others seriously. And last but not least, everyone has the right and responsibility to constructively participating in the decision-making process.

Intentionally confronted with unsolvable tasks



Confronting Right-Wing Ideology

Today's group discussion is about Germany's current social problems, such as high unemployment, welfare benefit cuts, white-collar crime and corruption. "What are the reasons for these problems?" "Who do you think is responsible?" As if according to script, someone answers, "The Jews and their control over global finance and capital! They have the money and are driving Germany to ruin!" The coach proceeds calmly. "All right, then. Where is Germany's financial capital held? Yes, the banks control it. Is Josef Ackermann, head of Deutsche Bank, Jewish? No?" The coach is well prepared and goes through a list of the heads of Germany's main banks. There is not a single Jewish person among them. The youth are impressed by the coach's knowledge but extremely irritated nonetheless. The coach then turns the tables by asking whether

Frank Schwerdt, the leader of the Berlin branch of the NPD [a right-wing political party], is Jewish or not. The group is immediately in uproar: "Why are you provoking us?" "I'm not. I'm just applying your logic. Mr. Schwerdt has lots of money, is a powerful force in the real estate market and trades on the stock exchange. He wields power through his capital and uses it to further his political interests. Shouldn't he actually be a Jew according to your definition?" The line of argument has its intended effect. The young men have been made to think things through. It is a start. The coaches will naturally need to come back to this topic and keep readdressing it in future discussions.



Religion and Violence

The participants are discussing religion and what it means to them personally. "Islam is the only perfect religion because it is free of contradictions. There is no need to question it. All you have to do is practice it. I haven't read the Koran, but I do what it tells me." "The main thing is that I believe in my Allah. Better than being an infidel, even if he's not a criminal. Infidels are the worst!" "If the victim of my crime is an infidel, then the sin isn't so bad." "Our religion gives us men more rights and power than women. That's just the way it is. We men have to make sure that women do what we tell them. For example, I'm going to tell my girlfriend that she has to convert to Islam." "We're not allowed to have Jewish or Christian friends. Otherwise, we'll be impure." "Islam allows one to fight back when attacked or insulted."

An imam has been invited to talk to the young men about religion. His attendance is unexpected and unsettles several members of the group.

"Humans have to accept and respect one another, regardless of whether they are religious or not. In essence, every religion teaches the principles of nonviolence, peaceful coexistence and respect for all life." "Islam does not allow for gender inequality. All are equal before Allah." "If Muslims aren't allowed to have Christian and Jewish friends, why are they allowed to marry them?" "A person's faith and religious identity are completely personal matters. No one should be forced into anything." "Freedom of and from religion is an unalienable right in Germany. That's why there's absolutely no religious justification for the use of violence." "Your faith in Allah doesn't free you from your responsibilities to all mankind. If you have mistreated or injured another, you must personally rectify those wrongs. You also have the moral obligation to avoid perpetrating any future injustices."

Demystifying Violence

One training module is devoted exclusively to the nature and causes of violent behavior. The task is to demystify violence and grasp how it arises. The (often negative) role of friends, peer pressure and other important external factors contributing to violent behavior are highlighted. Regardless of the type of crime committed, group members are taught how common defense mechanisms, such as self-justification and trivialization, work. Participants frequently take on the role of victims in exercises, which helps strengthen their

ability to empathize. The aim is to show how violence is indeed avoidable and how each individual is personally responsible for his choices and actions. In later sessions participants are taught how to remain confident and cool when conflict situations arise. They learn through role-play where their emotional thresholds are, how to better read body language and exit an escalating situation with composure before it is too late.

Confronting the Culture of Violence

The group is divided in half by the coaches. Team A has the task of coming up with examples of how violence is “cool”. Team B, on the other hand, has to brainstorm about its disadvantages. The members of team A are animated and answers spring forth in rapid succession. “I’m in control when I attack”. “It’s like being high”. “It’s how I get what I deserve”.

The young men in team B, however, find coming up with arguments against the use of violence considerably more difficult. A few already realize that violence is the reason why they are in prison to start with. After a little reflection, it becomes clear that their violent pasts will always remain a part of their lives. They now have a criminal record, will face societal prejudices and encounter difficulties in

securing jobs and vocational training. In the subsequent discussion, their longing for acceptance and recognition, expressed through the perceived advantages of violence, is exposed. And those are things they have not experienced much in their lives. Their emotional needs deserve to be acknowledged but not their satisfaction through violent means. This newly won recognition does not, however, immediately change a deeply ingrained, learned propensity to use violence. Nonetheless, a seed has been planted, and the myth and glory surrounding violence slightly tarnished.



Critical Analysis of the Crime

Legitimizing the use of force is an integral component of both right-wing and Islamic extremist ideology. Hence, facing up to one's own violent acts and personally accepting guilt is of the utmost importance. Every participant is therefore required, at some point during the training, to have their crime critically analyzed by their group.

A crime reconstruction session lasts about 3 hours. The participant must recount the events of the crime in minute detail. The group then proceeds to assess the violent act and its consequences for the victim(s). By taking on the supportive role of "violence experts", the members of the group help the offender accept accountability for his crime.

Accepting responsibility is the basis for change and coming up with one's own violence prevention plan. The reconstruction session is normally an extremely intense emotional experience. The nature and brutality of the crimes are often extremely gruesome and not easy to deal with.



Reconstructing the Crime

The “lightning round” is over and the focus is now on T. The coaches prepare the others for their role in today’s session. They have to listen to T, but also question him, offer comments and criticize him if necessary. Most importantly, they have to assist him in accurately recounting and working through his crime. T. was convicted of joint murder, committed when he was only 18. The interview begins. He is asked to describe the circumstances leading up to the murder and what exactly happened that day. One coach’s attention is on T, while the other monitors the group. He proceeds by telling how the victim had owed him money. He went to the young man’s house with three friends. The victim “got what he deserved.” T. only beat him a little bit at the beginning. It was the others who lost control and are actually responsible for the man’s death. He did

not really grasp what was going on at the time. It takes him less than a minute to recount the entire story. After finishing, the coach directly asks T. whether he is guilty of murder or not. Without blinking an eye, T. denies his guilt.

The group is not yet given the chance to comment on T.’s rendition. First, the events of the actual murder have to be reconstructed blow-by-blow. Like a detective, the coach asks about details that have no apparent connection with the murder itself. T. does not yet understand why she is pursuing this line of questioning. On that day he was out with his girlfriend and three friends (then aged 15, 15 and 14.) T. broke through the door of the victim’s place and knocked him down with a single punch. He started ransacking the apartment and destroying the furniture. As a group, they then started kicking and beating the young man with heavy objects. While



the others continued, T. stepped back and went with his girlfriend into the kitchen. "What did you talk with your girlfriend about?" "Was there anything on the kitchen table?" T. vividly remembers chatting about some local bars with her. There was a bottle of beer and an ashtray on the table. After a while he returned to the living room and stopped his friends. They left the victim lying in a pool of blood. It was a matter of minutes before he died of his injuries.

It is now the group's turn. The second coach asks them who they think the perpetrator was. They recount how T. was at the center of events preceding the murder: It was he who led his friends to the house. He was the oldest and in charge. It was T. who knocked the door down and started beating the victim first. And it was T. who called the attack

off in the end. There is no doubt for anyone present: T. was the perpetrator.

The questions intensify: "How can it really be possible that you remember what you spoke to your girlfriend about but not notice that a person was being brutally beaten just a few meters away?" T. is cornered and can no longer convincingly deny his guilt. His lips begin to tremble. The time has come for him to finally accept responsibility for his crime.



Family Day

"What was your reaction when you first realized that your son had joined the right-wing scene?" T.'s parents hesitate for a second before offering the coach an answer: "We were horrified, to say the least, and fought against it!" The coach then wants to know how they think T. dealt with the ensuing family conflict. According to T., they punished him with contempt, verbal abuse and threats. Despite his wishes, his parents showed no interest in learning anything about the topic of right-wing extremism. That is why T. felt personally rejected. At some point the parents just gave up, and his neo-Nazi activities became a taboo subject in the family. "So, how did it get to this point? Why is T. sitting in jail today?" asks the coach. The parents offer their own

explanations: he fell into the wrong crowd, everything is worse after the collapse of the GDR, the judge was "out to get him," etc. Unsurprisingly, serious issues stemming from dysfunctional family relations are ignored. "What are your son's strengths? What is he especially good at?" His mother, with a blank expression, shrugs her shoulders and looks at her husband. He has no idea either. They start to feel under pressure and become irritated. Maybe these questions will make them stop and reconsider their role in T.'s development. Hopefully. At any rate, the coach clearly warns the parents not to expect too much. "It's clear through the training sessions that your son has started to change. He will not return to you as a completely reprogrammed individual, though."

Speaking with the coaches often helps caregivers fully understand the important role they can play



Family Day

As part of this special visitation, coaches have the opportunity to speak privately with the inmates' parents, relatives and caregivers. Unresolved family issues, which have become apparent during the training, are commonly an important topic of conversation. Likewise, if requested to do so, the coaches can act as a mediator, informing family members that the youth desires new interaction patterns. These visitations are often the starting point of a long process of family reconciliation. Meeting and involving relatives also allows the coaches to better gauge the level of support the juveniles can count on after release.

Preparation for Release

As the date of release approaches, the group turns its attention to preparing for the next step. Considerable time is devoted to discussing their future prospects, goals and fears. What kind of life do they want to lead and can they realistically expect? It is essential for the participants to realize their own personal strengths and weaknesses while honestly assessing their chances and limitations. The main task now is to offer them useful tools and strategies for starting a new life. This involves, for example, making plans for how they will structure their daily lives. Other topics include conflict and stress management

What to do when the old friends show up at the door?



strategies, job hunting tips and exploring vocational training options. A successful reentry into the job market or educational system considerably reduces the danger of backsliding into old behavioral patterns. Common pitfalls are also addressed, as are the likely consequences of rejoining former circles. Participants reflect on how they will react if and when the “old gang” appears at the door or even threatens them.

The program ends with a personal assessment. Each participant shares his views on his own development as a result of the training and receives feedback from his peers. Everyone receives a certificate of completion. The “graduation ceremony” celebrates the importance of individual and group accom-

plishment and the hopes for a successful transition, built on the lessons learned in the program.

After Release

The lessons learned are put to the test after the participants are released. The initial period directly following incarceration is especially difficult and fraught with risk: pressure from former extremist circles, failed attempts, frustration and high demands can quickly become overwhelming. Therefore, most participants accept our post-release support services, lasting anywhere between 6 and 12 months. During this period, their former coaches are in regular contact, pay visits and are available 24/7 if a crisis situation arises. The youth are given targeted support in readjusting, and



Post-Release Stabilization Coaching

The coach's telephone rings. It is P. on the other end. He sounds really nervous. "I've really done it this time. I need your help." P. was released 10 months ago. At that time, the coaches helped him search for and find an apartment. He wanted to return to his old neighborhood but not live with his parents. He also had a construction job he took very seriously. He did not earn much money but enough to make ends meet. He even went with his coach to an advice center to figure out what he could do to resolve his lingering debts. P. distanced himself from his former neo-Nazi friends, who he occasionally bumped into on the street. Directly after this release, they used to wait in front of his door to take him out "on a tour." However, P. always refused; he knew how easily „something bad" could happen if they have "a few beers together." That is why he became the laughing stock of his old friends, which P. extremely resented.

Things are much better now with his parents, especially since they no longer live under one roof. His mother has become a very important person in his life. P. has learned how to speak about his feelings, also with his parents. They have recently been working through a lot of difficult issues from the past. P.

is now much more aware of cause and effect. He has also made great strides in learning how to deal with criticism. But, he recently lost his new job and was forced to go on benefits. He is not sure how he is going to make it now. He has started drinking a lot more recently and even associating with "those friends" again. He thought he was in control until last weekend when it unexpectedly happened again. He was in a disco with some friends and very drunk. Some guy got in his way. P. lost control and beat him up. That is why he wants to meet his former coach as soon as possible. His anxiety and self-doubting are palpable over the phone. The two meet the next day. Just as he used to do before, P. starts blaming others. Working through the incident in detail though, the coach is able to show him how he alone is accountable for his actions. She balances her reprehensions of P.'s relapse with encouragement: it's a really positive sign that he has approached her to reflect on the incident. We are once again reminded of how great the challenges are for those who have made the choice to leave hate and violence behind.

considerable assistance is provided in helping them secure a job or vocational training. The temptation to rejoin the "old and trusted network" is often high. The coaches thus help them to maintain their distance and keep their composure in conflict situations. Further assistance includes helping them structure their daily routines and securing benefits to support themselves if necessary. Every attempt is made to build a constructive sup-

port network made up of friends and relatives. If this is not possible, local groups and youth protection agencies are contacted.

Becoming a Coach

In order to effectively run our course, the coach has to be a highly skilled instructor who is: a specialist in the theory and methods of education, well versed in historical facts, knowledgeable of hate and subculture symbols, a skilled debater; well acquainted with the workings of the juvenile penitentiary system and fit in mind and body. One of our main functions at Violence Prevention Network is providing quality advanced vocational education and training to those interested in becoming coaches. These are typically persons from directly related fields, such as juvenile court experts and street or prison social workers. Our advanced training program to become an “Antiviolence and Responsibility Trainer” consists of 11 modules, taught over the course of 22 days. There are also 40 hours of intervision and supervision work and 10 monitored, on-the-job training days. The course is run by qualified instructors, who closely monitor and document the candidates' performance.

Informational Material and Courses for Penitentiary Staff

Our specially designed training seminars for penitentiary staff offer insights into educational philosophies and approaches as well as detailed information about extremist subcultures. Other services include: debating tips for countering biased and ideological thinking; a hotline for questions surrounding extremism; and a quarterly journal addressing new trends and developments in right-wing extremism, immigration and radical Islam.

Detailed information concerning our courses for penitentiary staff can be obtained by emailing us at:

post@violence-prevention-network.de

Violence Prevention Network e.V.
Straße des 17. Juni 114

10623 Berlin

Please send me the following Violence Prevention Network material

- Brochure Taking Responsibility – Breaking Away from Hate and Violence:
_____ copies.
- Training curriculum for right-wing extremist juvenile offenders:
_____ copies.

I would like to receive your free email journal (published 3 to 4 times annually in german) with articles about right-wing extremism and radical Islam.

My email address: _____

I would like to make an appointment with the Violence Prevention Network.

Please call me at the following number to set up a time:

I have a request or concern of the following nature:

Name and Institution _____

Address _____

Telephone and/or Fax _____

Telephone Hotline

Do you have specific questions regarding ideologically motivated crimes, right-wing extremism and/or hate symbols? Our team of experts will gladly assist you. Please call +49 30 – 917 05 464.



Correcting behavior.
Protecting citizens.
Avoiding reconviction costs.

