



Understanding and Effectively Treating Violence

James Gilligan, M.D.

Welcome to the Webinar, Understanding & Effectively Treating Violence

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Violence as an Instinct?



- **Violence is NOT caused by a universal, inborn instinct that spontaneously grows in intensity until it is discharged in violent acts (toward oneself or others).**



What Causes Violence?



- Recent investigations of hereditary and environmental influences on violent behavior have found results suggesting that neither child abuse alone nor heredity alone causes violent behavior, so that violence only results when an individual is both abused and genetically predisposed to respond to abuse and stress with violent behavior.



How Childhood Experiences Impact Violence



“The violent criminals I have known have been objects of violence from early childhood. They have seen their closest relatives – their fathers and mothers and sisters and brothers – murdered in front of their eyes, often by other family members. As children, these men were shot, axed, scalded, beaten, strangled, tortured, drugged, starved, suffocated, set on fire, thrown out of windows, raped, or prostituted by mothers who were their “pimps” ; their bones have been broken, they have been locked in closets or attics for extended periods, and one man I know was deliberately locked by his parents in an empty icebox until he suffered brain damage from oxygen deprivation before he was let out.”

Violence. James Gilligan, M.D., Random House. 1996.



The Importance of Love



- “But the self cannot survive without love. The self starved of love dies. That is how violence can cause the death of the self even when it does not kill the body.”
- “The two possible sources of love for the self are love from others, and one’s own love for oneself. Children who fail to receive sufficient love from others fail to build those reserves of self-love, and the capacity for self-love, which enable them to survive the inevitable rejections and humiliations which even the most fortunate of people cannot avoid.”
- “Without feelings of love, the self feels numb, empty, and dead.”
- “When self-love is sufficiently diminished, one feels shame.”



Violence. James Gilligan, M.D., Random House. 1996.

The Role of Shame in Violence



- Overwhelming shame can lead to the phenomenon called “death of the self” (mortification).
- Shame motivates defenses against wishes to be loved and taken care of by others (which a person may interpret as being passive, dependent, infantile and/or effeminate); and those defenses often take the form of reaction-formations, i.e., active- independent, “macho, pseudo-hyper-masculine aggressive behaviors that can culminate in violence.
- Among the most powerful psychological motives, or causes, of violent behavior is the feeling of being shamed and humiliated, which occurs when people feel insulted, slighted, disrespected, dishonored, ridiculed, rejected, or subjected to any other “narcissistic injury.”



Guilt and Shame



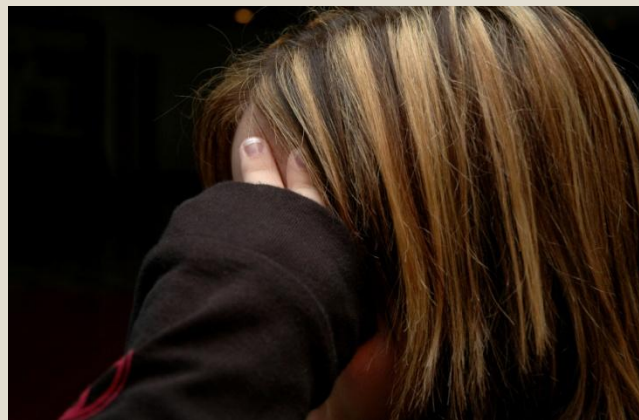
- Shame and guilt are antagonistic emotions, rather like the sympathetic and parasympathetic branches of the autonomic nervous system (to which they are psychophysiologicaly related), in that the conditions and stimuli that increase the intensity of the one tend to diminish the intensity of the other (e.g., the factors that increase feelings of shame tend to diminish feelings of guilt, and vice versa).



Guilt and Shame



- Violence is most likely when people experience a maximum of shame and a minimum of guilt.
- Feelings of guilt and remorse stimulate anger toward the self and the feeling that one deserves punishment (from oneself or from others), whereas feelings of shame and humiliation stimulate anger and punitiveness toward others.



Guilt and Shame



- Guilt and shame are the emotions of moral experience, and they motivate diametrically opposite moral value systems, one of which (“Guilt-Ethics”) says “Thou shalt not kill” (because that would make you guilty of the sin of harming another person), and the other of which, “Shame-Ethics,” says “Thou Shalt Kill” (because failure to do so would identify you as a weakling, wimp or coward who could not take care of himself, you would be deserving of contempt, and you could not maintain or regain your honor, reputation and respect).



What is Most Shameful for Men and Women



- **Men are shamed primarily for failing to be aggressive or “manly.”**
- **Women are shamed primarily for having sex.**

Committing Violence



- All violence, both criminal and legal, is committed in the pursuit of upholding what the violent person considers to be justice (at least at the time of committing it).



Punishment



- Punishment increases feelings of shame and decreases feelings of guilt.
- Punishment, rather than inhibiting or deterring violence, is the most powerful method we have yet discovered for stimulating and increasing the amount of violence in the world.



What are the Effects of Punishment?



- **The more severely we punish children and adults for violent behavior, the greater the likelihood that they will continue to behave violently.**



Punishment

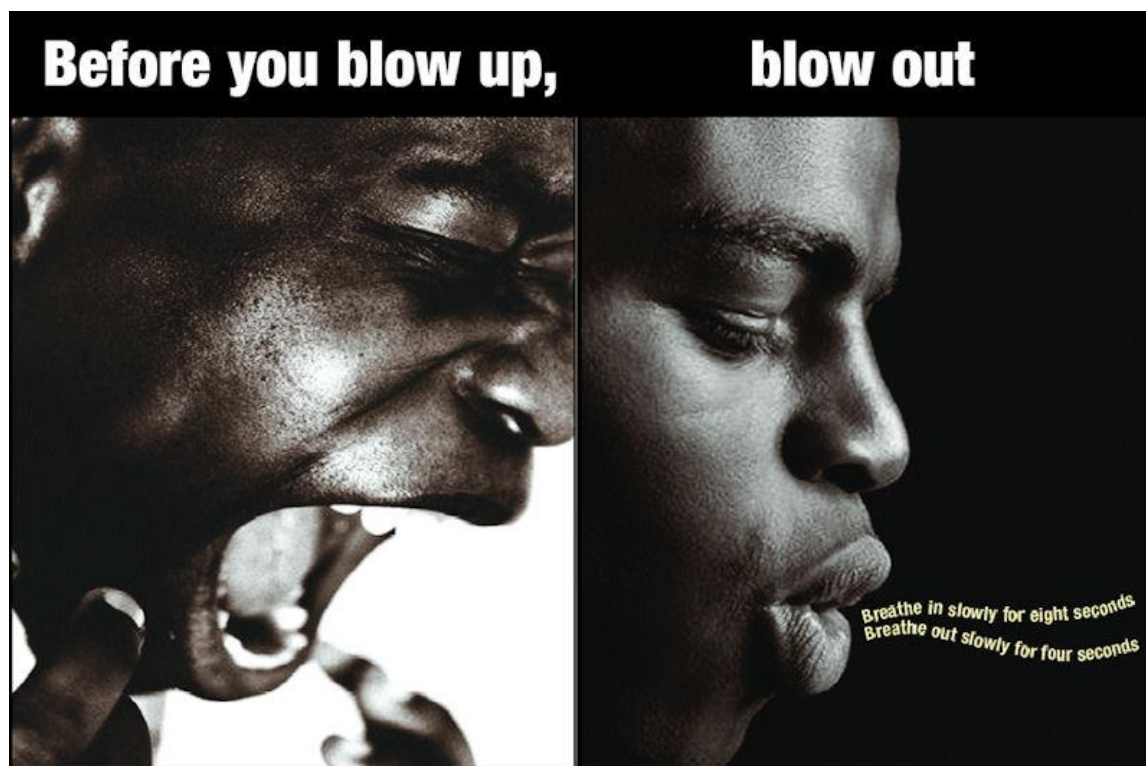


What can we do with prisoners that would make them less violent?





Manalive is a non-profit men's program committed to helping men age 16 and older stop violence to themselves, their intimate partners, their families and their communities.



Whenever your partner does something or says something that triggers your anger, put one hand on your heart and the other on your stomach. Breathe *out* for eight seconds like you're blowing out candles on a birthday cake. Then breathe *in* for four seconds like you're smelling a rose. Repeat this four times. It will relax your body and clear your mind. This is just one of the exercises we teach at the Manalive/MAV Center to keep you and your partner safe. For more information about stopping your violence to your partner, contact us at the **Manalive/MAV Center**. Call (530) 392-0714 or email david@mavcenter.org

<http://mavcenter.org/>

War on Drugs & Violence



- The “war on drugs” and the “war on crime” (including the explosive increase in our imprisonment rate). Did these “wars” reduce violence?
- The criminalization of a wide range of stimulant and sedative drugs has increased the rates of criminal violence, not decreased them.



Violence and Drug Use



- Are people who are intoxicated by marijuana or heroin more likely to engage in violent behavior than they would be if they had not ingested those chemicals?



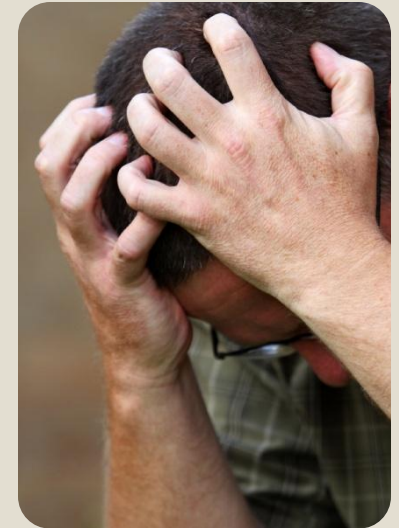
Mental Illness



- **Among prison inmates, those who suffer from major mental illnesses are no more likely to commit violent crimes after release than those who are not mentally ill.**



What is the Relationship Between Suicide and Violence?



Is Most Violence Defined as Criminal?



- **Most violent acts are not defined by the law as crimes.**



Structural Violence

From Violence: Reflections on a National Epidemic

"the increased rates of death and disability suffered by those who occupy the bottom rungs of society, as contrasted with the relatively lower death rates experienced by those who are above them"



Violent Death Rates

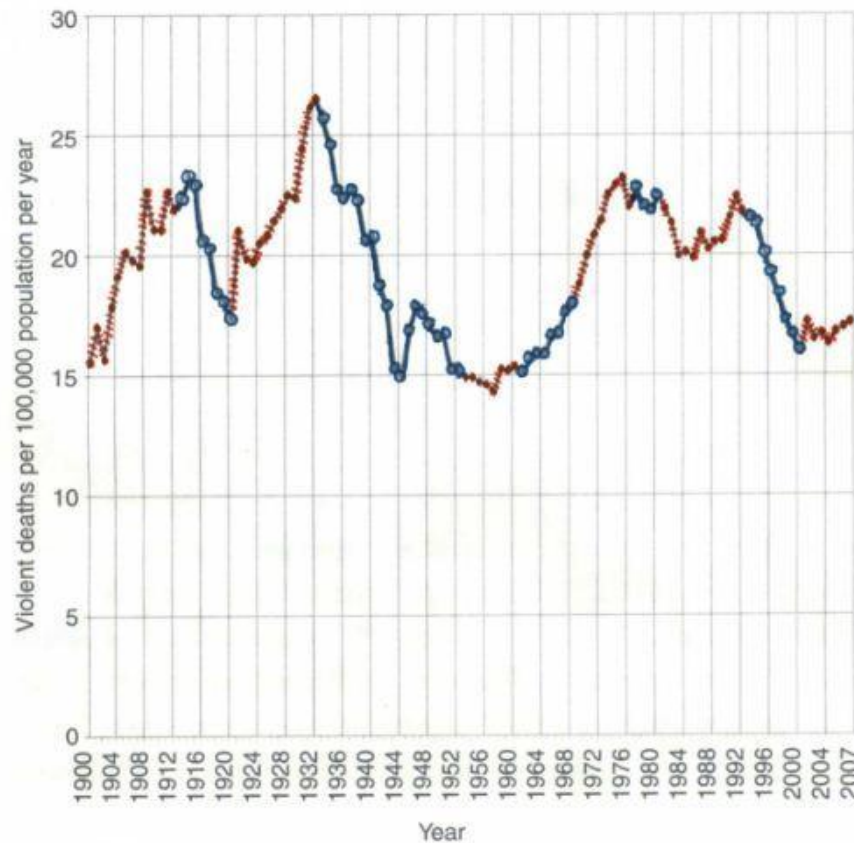
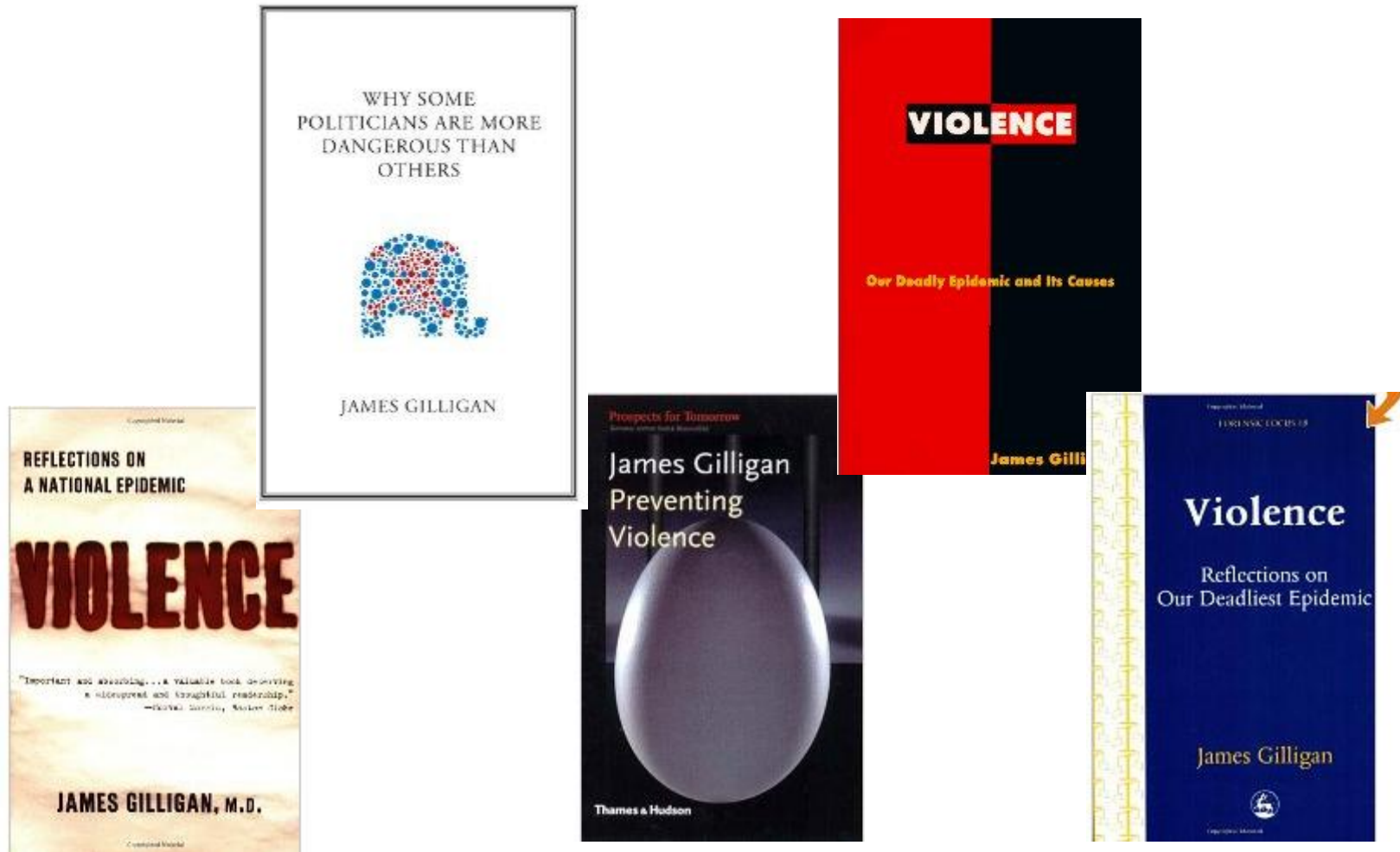


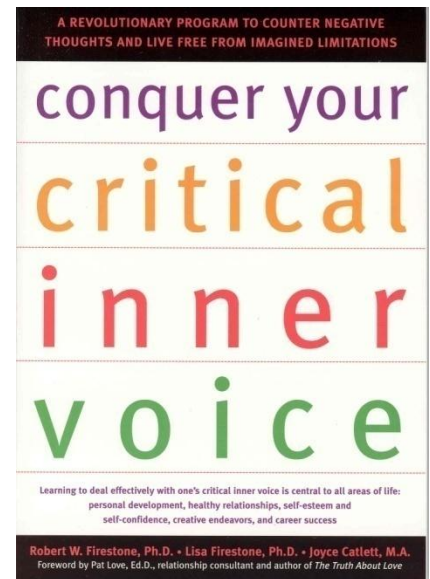
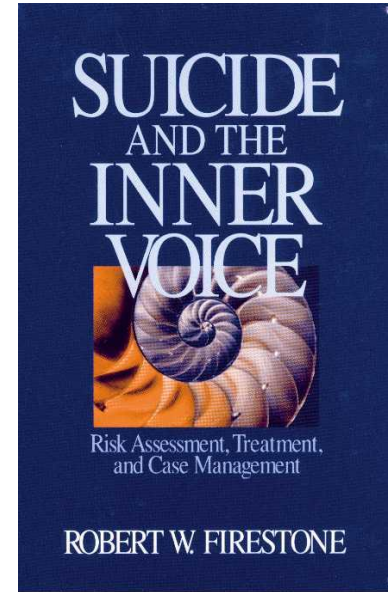
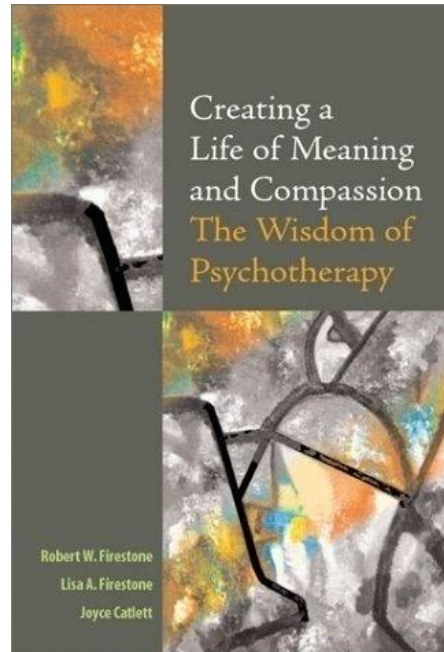
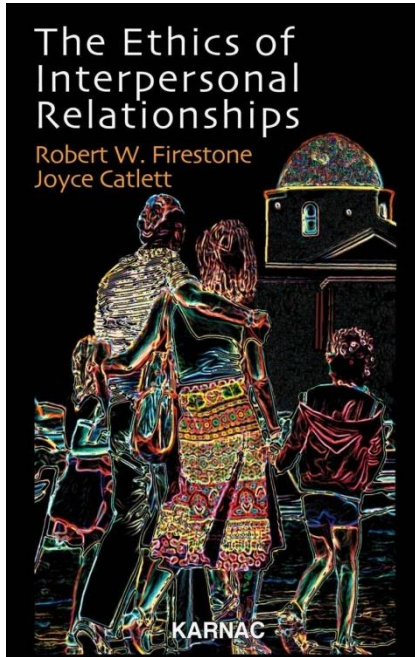
Figure 1.1 Violent Death Rates (Suicide plus Homicide) per 100,000 per Year, United States 1900–2007 Age-Adjusted to Standard Year 1940 (Not Based on all 48 States until 1933)

Resources: Books



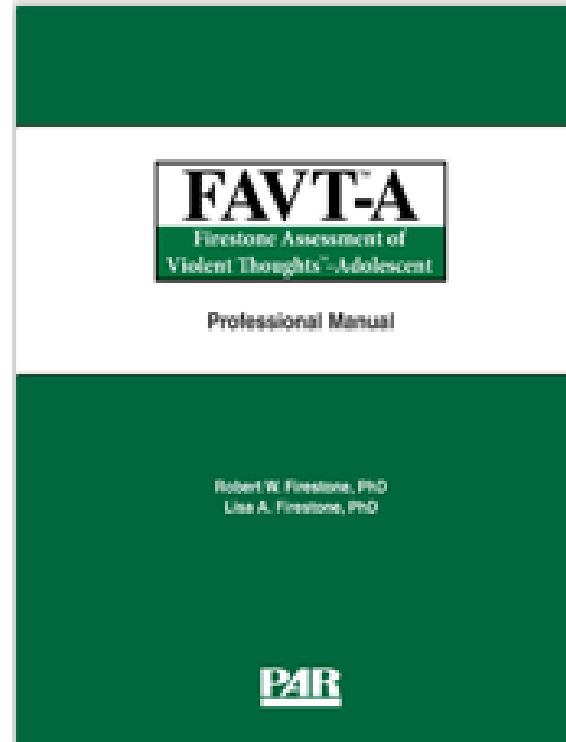
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Resources: Books



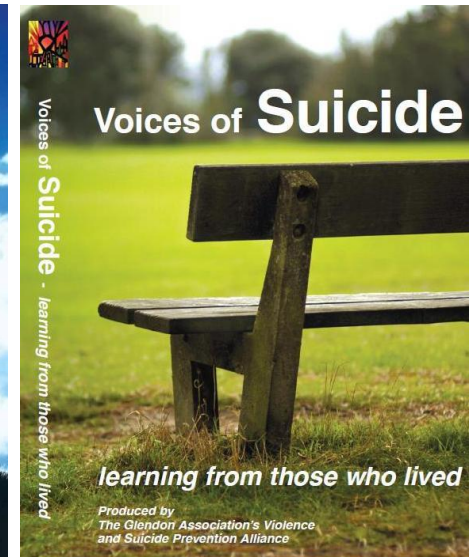
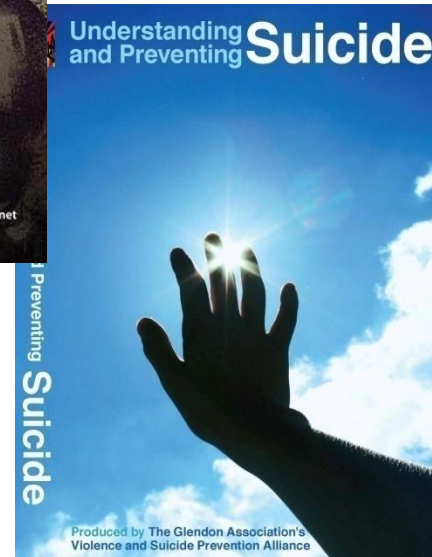
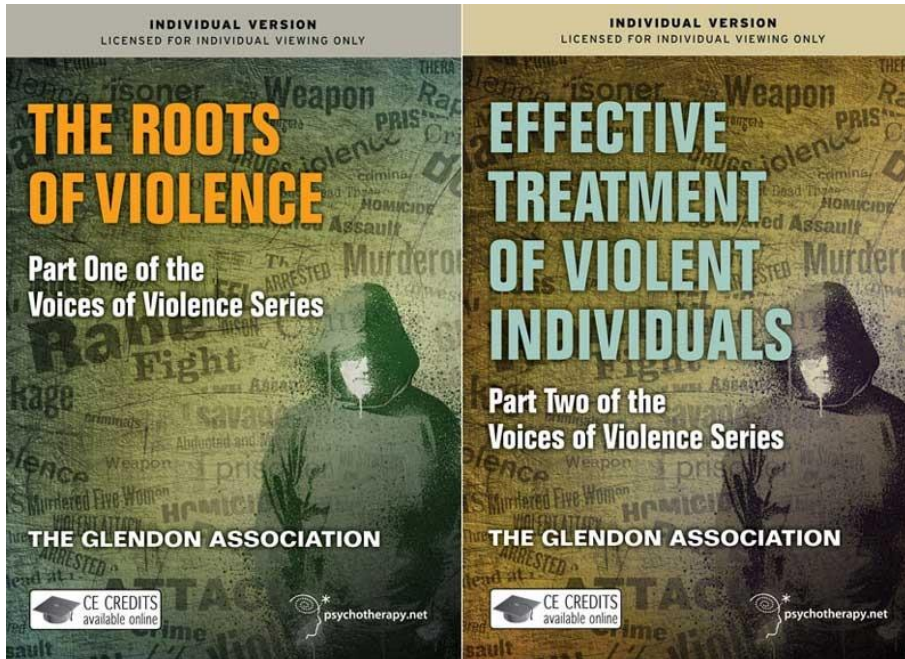
Visit www.psychalive.org for resource links

Assessment Instruments: FAVT and FAVT-A



Visit www.psychalive.org for resource links

Resources: Films



Visit www.psychalive.org for resource links

Upcoming Webinars from PsychAlive

Featuring Dr. James Gilligan and Dr. Lisa Firestone



Why Does Violence Occur & How Can We Prevent It?

Presenter: James Gilligan
Nov. 13 - 11am- 12pm PST



How to Raise an Emotionally Healthy Child

Presenter: Lisa Firestone
Dec. 4 - 12pm – 1pm PST

Learn more or register at
<http://www.psychalive.org/2012/01/upcoming-webinars-2/>



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