



British Focusing Association NEWSLETTER

Issue 25: Summer 2024



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From the Editor

Gordon Adam



Firstly, I apologise for the lateness of this newsletter, which I had hoped to publish at the beginning of August, before I went on holiday, but this didn't happen and it's taken a couple of weeks since being back to find the clear space I need to work on it. I hope that the wait is worth it and that you enjoy reading this issue of the newsletter.

Synchronistically, the southern coast Turkey has emerged as the backdrop of two of the articles: the first an account by Paula Charnley of attending a women's Focusing retreat in Turkey in the Cirali/Olympos area this year; and the second an inspiring account by Birte Robins of Denmark of Focusing with a dolphin in The Bay of Marmaris (some 300km West of Cirali) in 2012. Both of these are illustrated by lovely photos!

Set nearer to home, is a lovely piece, made up largely of feedback from participants, of this year's annual BFA gathering at Unstone Grange in Derbyshire. All together, the different voices offer a wonderful appreciation and celebration of Focusing Community! This year's gathering was particularly well-attended (and enjoyable!).

Poetry is strong in this issue – I received submissions of three poems – all written by BFA members (what a creative bunch we are!) – so, I decided to add one of my own poems, actually written as part of an excellent 'creative writing' workshop led by Bethany Rivers at our annual gathering in April.

I won't attempt here to name all of the pieces in the newsletter, but there is a great originality and diversity in ALL of the articles.

Finally, I'd like to acknowledge Sarah Paul and Vicki Thomas for their much appreciated help in editing this issue.

If anyone has even a slight inkling to write something for the newsletter, or to be involved in any way, please do get in touch and share it! The next issue will be the 'Winter' issue, with a deadline of the end of November.

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BFA Gathering—Derbyshire—April 2024



From the Sofa (Celia Dawson and Fiona Parr)

This year's BFA Annual Gathering was held at Unstone Grange, near Sheffield in Derbyshire – a lovely old house with extensive attractive grounds, including a large vegetable garden. The gathering ran from supper on the Thursday until Sunday lunchtime. We had a bigger than usual group, with 23 people, including six hardy souls camping, despite the cold weather. There were lots of offers of spare blankets, sleeping bags and hot water bottles, which were gratefully accepted by the campers.

The atmosphere was friendly and cordial right from the start – from the first evening gathering, in which we introduced ourselves to each other. It is always so wonderful to be among fellow Focusers in a spirit of acceptance and without judgement. It was good to meet and get to know some people attending a BFA gathering for the first time. As one participant wrote later:

“I loved the way we listened and made space and tuned into each other.”

We had Focusing partnerships in the mornings and evenings, which many found to be deep and enriching, and there were workshops in the mornings and afternoons. We also had peer consultative support groups (in threes) on the last morning.

We particularly enjoyed the evening of music and dancing organised by Gordon – augmented by the fancy dress, brought by Sarah Paul, which, together, brought much fun and laughter.

Other workshops/offerings included:

- A walk in the local woodland led by Peter Gill, where we learned to look more carefully at our surroundings and to use our senses to appreciate the beautiful things around us
- An inspiring creative writing workshop by Bethany Rivers, where we all wrote a poem, amongst other things
- Gordon led an evening of sharing poems and being with them in a Focusing way as a group
- A discussion about Sociocracy and whether it might be useful for BFA, facilitated by Helen and Adriana
- A powerful workshop of 'Fool Expression' led by Vicki and Gordon

- Lindsay Gibson talking about being an adopted child and the impact it has on later life
- A Speaking Circle workshop was led by Barbara McGavin
- Bethany on indigenous tribes

From participants

"I've been to a lot of BFA annual gatherings but I think this one may actually have been my favourite. I was a bit concerned that the size of the group might make for a less congenial or more jangling event but my fears were unfounded! It was a gathering full of warmth, laughter, kindness and deep listening. We were united in a shared enthusiasm for exploring and expanding the scope of Focusing, and a rich mix of skillfully led workshops somehow gave me the courage to turn towards tender, shrouded corners of myself in new ways. It was lovely to meet some of our newer members and to be glowingly reassured that they will carry the torch of focusing forward as us oldies begin to step back." *Kay*

"I realised that this was only my second BFA gathering, I had a deep sense of being a member of a community. We got in touch with both our playful side and our potential for growth" *Paula C*

"This was my second BFA Gathering and I was a little nervous that I would be over-awed by all the very experienced Practitioners but it turned out to be a lovely, nourishing, fun, interesting and connecting event. I felt we were all there to be open and accepting – as the process of Focusing helps us with. I loved the dancing on the last night and thanks to Sarah P bringing some fancy dress stuff – we had a really good laugh. Unstone felt welcoming and comfortable even though it could do with a bit of updating! It was also marvellous to have Barbara McGavin with us – what a treat!" *Vicki*

"I didn't know what to expect from the gathering but I'm so glad I went anyway. I left with a tangible sense of having something more than I did when I arrived. I felt enriched and enlivened. It seems that something particularly special can happen when a group of Focusers gets together. Like something in me wakes up, sits up and smiles." *Sarah P*

"The highlight of the gathering for me, was experiencing a space where I could give myself permission to be myself – including being OK with feeling anxious in a group of new people, and taking as much time on my own as I needed. I had one particularly wonderful Focusing session outside, which felt very significant in supporting me to feel I'm part of a greater ecosystem (in fact, the Focusing ecosystem and the world). When I'm in a group of Focusing people, it feels like we're moving with a shared meaning that also includes all our individual meanings – like being the tentacles of an octopus where each has their own devolved brain while being part of a larger organism!" *Lucy H*

"The gathering gave me the opportunity to experience being in genuine community with everyone – Focusing deeply, eating together, dancing, talking, sharing, and exploring in a wonderfully accepting and kind space.

Meaningful, challenging at times, and fun. I loved the open fires in the living rooms, the beautiful grounds, and every single beautiful person." *Colette*

"I loved the spontaneity and diversity of the workshops that were offered. There was plenty of time for rest and Focusing in pairs. I was able to deeply explore how I experience community and connection within the safety of being surrounded by other Focusers." *Sarah H*



"It was so lovely to be with you all this weekend. I wish there had been opportunity to connect with more of you, but maybe next time! I noticed for the first couple of days back feeling the energy of the Gathering was with me, enriching life... and I also notice now a mourning that this feeling tends to dissipate for me and I get stuck back into the 'grind' of day to day life. There's a wishing it was easier (for me) to hold on to the lovely feeling from these Gatherings and keep living in that way. And I also acknowledge it is hard to do when life is busy and when not surrounded by fellow Focusers who want to go slow, be kind and sense inwards." *Suzi*

The 2025 BFA Annual Gathering will be held at the beautiful new venue of Sheldon Retreat Centre, near Exeter, from 23rd—27th April. Camping available. www.sheldonretreat.com



Focusing School 2025: 4-day residential. Old Swinford Hospital School, West Midlands. 20th to 24th August.

An opportunity to learn from well-known, experienced teachers, as well as meet people in the wider Focusing community and enjoy Focusing together.

There will be a diverse programme of workshops on a range of themes. Participants will be invited to choose in advance one of the main teachers' topics for the morning sessions, and stay with this group for each morning of the event. In the afternoons there will be time for Focusing swaps, and a variety of afternoon workshops and activities that can be chosen at the time of the event, and offered by participants themselves.

The evenings will have space for music, dancing, games, poetry and other creative contributions from attendees. As a boarding school the Old Swinford Hospital School is an ideal venue set in beautiful grounds, and with accommodation and catering facilities for up to 140 people. The event is fully catered and three vegetarian meals will be provided each day.

Early bird booking until the end of August 2024. See the link or QR code on the adjacent flyer.

Social Oriented Focusing Workshop with Yehudit First London. 7th- 8th September, 2025

"Yehudit First is developing one of the most exciting new applications of Focusing, a practical experiential approach consistent with Gendlin's existential philosophy".

For the first time in Europe, Yehudit is offering her *Social Oriented Focusing* model in a full in-person two-day workshop in central London, hosted by *London Focusing*, Yehudit will introduce us to experiential exercises that can be used with ourselves, our clients, couples work and group conflict. Yehudit is a gifted and experienced group facilitator and Focusing teacher.

For full information and booking:

<https://www.londonfocusing.com/event/between-you-and-me-with-yehudit-first/>

An Underground Ocean: Dreaming Together at the BFA Spring Gathering

By Lindsay Gibson



'Moon Boat' by Colette Cameron

"Time after time at Unstone, I witnessed felt senses shining out from an underground ocean of creative collective congruence."

In Derbyshire's Unstone Grange, over four days of April this year, I participated in my first annual BFA residential. The cherry trees were in full blossom, and the one I could see from my bedroom window was quite the largest cherry tree I had ever seen. When I got up close and personal with this stupendous specimen, I discovered that the cloud of pink was emanating from not one, but two adjacent trees. If I am to transition from my muddled perception which brought a monster cherry tree to life, to a clear understanding of mundane and separate specimens, I ask if there can be a space in which the blossom can remain poetically attached to the one source?

Some may attempt to answer this question with a Jungian concept of a collective unconscious, a singular wellspring which feeds all of our imaginings. However, my Art Therapy background leads me initially to consider D.W. Winnicott's theory of transitional objects and transitional spaces; a paradoxical world where objects are both real and make-believe simultaneously: a furry teddy bear with a human-like face soothes a pre-verbal child; an entire audience of theatre goers suspends their disbelief to gasp, laugh, cry and wonder together with actors, in a play, upon a stage. Contemporary to John Bowlby, Winnicott's theory has long since articulated an essential aspect of what it is to be human, both in terms of infant development and in our human cultures. His work is rare in psychology; it is more usually artists who think long and hard about the nature of our shared cultural manifestations.

The words of German filmmaker Werner Herzog come to mind, he said *"It is not only my dreams, my belief is that all these dreams are yours as well – and that is what poetry or painting or literature or filmmaking is all about – this might be the inner chronicle of what we are. We have to articulate ourselves."* For us to think about dreams, let us be sure to include all liminal spaces, transitional times and shared imaginings. Let us not rule out our night-time dreams, the felt senses which manifest as imagery, the art we make when our focus is more on process than product, and all well-timed tellings of good stories. Professional artists like Herzog might be particularly good at articulating what they do, but they by no means have a monopoly on finding meaning through creativity.

Time after time at Unstone, I witnessed felt senses shining out from an underground ocean of creative collective congruence. My experiences as a process artist, equip me to resonate with the inevitability and normalcy of such shared visioning. Even so, I was overawed by the depth and clarity of the shared dreaming that reverberated around the fleeting community gathered together this springtime on the edges of England's Peak District National Park. My boldness in this attempt to give voice to shared subjectivity, is itself prompted by multiple dreams; some of my own, some of others from before, and some of several others present at Unstone: all afloat and all alone in individual rowing boats, gently bobbing on moon & star lit seas.

The space to talk about our shared poetics is dense and resistant. The voice is thick and claggy with

un-use. Socially acceptable norms and taboos understandably oppress our ability to talk freely, and we easily become siloed into our separate silences. Outsiders, minorities and visionaries are easily shut up and shut down in simple exchanges of 'business as usual'. I recall an earlier instance of similar dynamics. As a schoolgirl I read, and with the help of my diary, confirmed, that my menstrual cycle had the same rhythm as the phases of the moon. It was a book that had shown me the wonder in how my experience joined with the world outside myself. Some years passed before my peer group gained enough voice to speak more freely about menstruation. By active consciousness raising processes, we found the words, built the confidence and exercised our power to openly share that, not only were our bodies attuning with the moon, so too were our cycles attuning with one another.

This is like a secret knowledge, and finding the words for secret knowledge is a delicate endeavour. When the way we are used to seeing the world is disrupted, and we wake to throw out the dirty, old bathwater, we have to practice the skill of holding onto the baby. Transitional times benefit from extreme gentleness. My longing is to move private noticings into shared spaces where communication can happen: a potential shared carrying forward.

There are skills to be practiced in explicating a collective felt sense. Knowledge of our internalised social prejudices is required in order to navigate the rocky waters of inter-personal power dynamics. A shared vision of a hammer is not the same thing if one person feels like they are holding it, and another person feels like they are being struck by it. The intersectional nature of structural violence can call up a vision of multiple people with multiple hammers giving and receiving myriad blows with no end in sight – not desirable! Our Focusing practice does not exempt us from having to face our part in the maintenance of societal inequities, if anything it adds to the weight of our responsibility to actively not carry forward the collectively undesirable parts of the status quo.

Eugene Gendlin addresses the nuanced dynamic of the relationship between the individual and the collective. He writes *"It is not true that merely developing as individuals will somehow change the patterns in which we must live. We need to build new social patterns and new patterns of thought and science. This will be a mutual product no single person can create. On the other hand, if we work jointly too soon, we lose what can only come through the individual in a focusing type of process. Nobody else lives the world from your angle. No other organism can sense exactly "the more" that you sense."*

So whilst Gendlin acknowledges our essential need to create new patterns together, he underlines the hope that we are alert to appropriate timeliness. I would say that when our desire to collaborate and work collectively is already evident in our dreams, the time is definitely ripe. We are already moving somewhat collectively as one – and not an amorphous one, but a differentiated whole. At the Spring gathering, not only was the time right, but the place was too. It was interesting to discover that the guiding principal of the Unstone Grange Trust is 'Unity in Diversity.'

Dreaming of Monsters

"What would an ocean be without a monster lurking in the dark? It would be like sleep without dreams." Herzog.

As we develop awareness of social justice issues by attending to social patterns, we come up against collective trauma. Shirley Turcott explains that collective trauma is "not one person's story – sensations coming through individual bodies – **it needs the world to change** (doesn't necessarily need something personally)". Turcott is the originator of Aboriginal/Indigenous Focusing Oriented Therapy (A/IFOT). Her practice of IFOT has had to lean away from the common psychological hyper-individualistic view, and instead, deal now with the presentation of **collective** trauma in epidemic proportions.

Here is recognition that within families and communities who live through atrocity, there will be individuals who can touch into traumatic collective felt senses which are unbearable. And here there is need for tools outside the usual – Turcott outlines three such tools:

- Survivors of collective trauma need something more big than the trauma that occurred
- Sometimes connecting with the inanimate may be the only thing holding you in impossible times
- Let objects hold a felt sense with you

In IFOT it is expected that an indigenous person can find support in 'all my relations: the land: the plants, animals and rocks, etc., and all of my ancestors'. But for thoroughly Westernised souls, unless one has a spiritual/religious faith, these tools are surely to be found in the domain of the Arts. It is interesting to note that it was Natalie Rogers, Carl Rogers daughter, who founded Person-Centered Expressive Arts. Currently one application of Focusing which uses the arts is called Children Focusing. Children Focusing opens a window on how we can have, hold and manipulate materials in order to connect to the beauty in this big world, bolster our safe grounding and invite our agency. Crossing Focusing with process art multiplies the layers of sustenance available to sojourners. We can recognise and call into being transitional objects to hold our felt sense with us in impossible times.

It has been the German conceptual artist Joseph Beuys who has been most influential in informing my artistic practice. It is he who points to the similarity of community role between the shaman and the artist. He says: *"Every human being is an artist, a freedom being, called to participate in transforming and re-shaping the conditions, thinking and structure that shape and inform our lives"* and Beuys draws the parallel that *"This is precisely what the shaman does in order to bring about change and development: his nature is therapeutic"*.

Collective dreaming and collective trauma are two sides of the same coin. This applies across society generally, and specifically in the microcosm of a Focusing gathering. Instances of collective dreaming point to our ripeness to turn towards the portions that we as individuals carry of collective trauma. If now we don't expose the structural injustices that we replicate in our blind spots, then when and who will?

I would love for each of us to go out of our way to hone the skills that will allow us to metabolize society's blind spots. EDI work is a storehouse of knowledge. I have been privileged to witness it disseminated in a process-oriented way. My own practice tries to open spaces in a process art way. At Unstone my contribution was a dialogue stimulant in the form of three site specific installations.

Social and cultural dynamics are always freshly forming. I hope we can work together to sensitise liminal spaces (in other words, make socially responsible art). The call is to moment to moment attending to layers of unfreedom. These unbearable edges await the softening balm of our creativity. Let us not only resonate with what we have in common, but also deeply listen to include our radical differences.

References:

Gendlin, E.T. (2004). Introduction to 'Thinking at the Edge'. The Folio, 19 (1), 1-8.

From https://www.focusing.org/gendlin/docs/gol_2160.html

Quotes from Shirley Turcott are transcribed from the IFOT YouTube channel.

From <https://www.youtube.com/@indigenousfocusingoriented4099>

Lindsay has had the Herzog and Beuys quotes for so long, they were gleaned from the dog eared outsider, marginalised and visionary section of her diary.

A different angle on this sort of subject is demonstrated in a short film (11mins) which Lindsay made earlier this year. It draws upon poetics and Protected Characteristics through the eyes of a centre based community. It is available: www.youtube.com/@lindsaygibson1518

Artwork at beginning of article: 'Moon Boat' by Colette Cameron [step into a creative space](#)



Lindsay Gibson originally trained ten years ago with Kay Hoffman in England. She subsequently travelled to the Netherlands to work with Rene Veugelers and Harriet Teuw, in preparation of joining the ranks of BFA recognised Focusing Practitioners. Of particular relevance to this article is her participation in TIFI's 2021 conference on Embodied Liberation. Lindsay lives in the bonnie capital city of Scotland, Edinburgh, and works face to face in actual and virtual space.

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<https://creativityforwellbeingworkshops.wordpress.com/>

Focusing in Turkey (May 2024)

By Paula Charnley

A friend recently described the area of Olympos/Çirali on the South Coast of Turkey as a Mystery School. It has drawn me back again and again over 30 years. I go there to re-charge, rest, see my friends, and to commune with the mountains, the pine trees, and the sparkling turquoise sea. The mysterious ancient city of Olympos sits in a valley on the route of the Lycian Way. Sarcophogi there have been dated at 400BC. Olympos nestles at one end of the 3km turtle beach and the eternal flame burns on the mountain at the other end.



The Kosk

In September 2022, I did a web search to see if there were any Focusers active in Turkey. My mouth fell open as the link revealed a recent Focusing retreat in the Olympos Valley hosted by Marta Fabregat. Not only is Marta a BFA member teacher, she had been my second mentor for my Practitioner training in 2021. I immediately and excitedly emailed her, and said "Marta, next time you offer the retreat I would love to join you." Fast Forward to 'The Path of the Sensing Being,' May 16-19th, 2024.

Excitedly I arrived at the 'Pension Köy Evi' (The Village House) in Olympos. I was open to the things unfolding and didn't really know what to expect. Marta and her group of four Irish and one Turkish woman arrived back from Focusing in the ancient city of Olympos to greet me. They had been here for 4 four days as part of their Professional/Practitioner training.

Our classroom on day one, 'the kösk', is my idea of paradise, combining my love of Turkish culture and Focusing. I was intrigued how this had all come about. Ceren Can (pronounced Jeren Jan) has studied the Skills course with Marta and was here on the Practitioner training. She had courageously invited four friends from Ankara and Istanbul who were new to Focusing. Ceren told me "I was so into personal development for years, like therapy, etc. When I came across Focusing I found it a very comprehensive method, basic yet powerful. Except for my yoga practice which continues, I realised that I didn't need the other methods that I had learnt."

We began day one with an attunement which revealed our expectations for the three days to come. Nazli expressed her concerns "is it something spiritual, or hippy?" Marta brings/introduces? Focusing in a flowing, experiential way which lends itself to the relaxed atmosphere we were in. Her teaching reveals the Focusing process by just being there in the circle and sharing. She takes space to pause as someone shares and will reflect and accompany them on their journey until they reach a natural stopping place. At moments she'd invite more experienced Focusers to share their understanding of the Focusing process for example: 'Felt Sense' or Companioning. I experienced this as a glue which formed the community during our days together. Setenay said "There is so much information here about being human; to be heard, to be in the moment and in the body, and at the same time not being structured."



Olympos Valley

In this land of Rumi, The Turkish women not only spoke excellent English but were able to express their feelings in beautiful and poetic metaphor "It's like a small flower has been planted in my body and I hope it will grow" (Setenay). In a country that values philosophy – Sevede, a Philosophy PhD student says that "when working with concept and argumentation there is usually not much room for sensation. Here I have the ability to communicate in a non-conceptual way and to be understood."

As we strolled in the May sunshine through the ancient valley of Olympos, we were literally walking the path of the sensing being. I am not alone in feeling how the people from ancient civilizations walked the brown earth and marble paths, stroking ancient limestone blocks and inhaling the intoxicating scent of the bay and pine trees. As the valley unfolds we see the jewel of the Mediterranean inviting us in, those who Focused in the water experienced a womb like holding.

Our group settled on Olympos beach, overlooked by the magnificent 2650m Tahtali Mountain. I feel that her vast maternal presence is guardian to this magical valley. Like the turtles that lay here, we nestled into the sand and inevitably a conversation around Focusing ensued. It seemed like our Turkish friends were experiencing the alchemy of Focusing. Questions arose like "What if my stuff is too much for the companion to handle?" These were gateways to teaching moments and deep discussion.

Our Turkish friends threw themselves into the experience, as our time together drew to a close, this is what they shared:

Nazli: "It has given me a tool to handle my feelings, to be myself in a non-scary way."

Sevde: "I felt a sense of mutual recognition, a way of welcoming and being welcomed"

Setenay: "It's an unforgettable and precious feeling."

Didem: "Being gentle with yourself is a trendy topic but I don't get it. I feel that everyone is improving but I'm not. Because I'm neurodivergent, I usually have to catch up. This is my way (Focusing) it is so powerful it showed me how to understand"



Olympos Beach

So what might the future of Focusing in Turkey be?

I spoke to Ceren who works for a Humanitarian Aid Organisation: "Working for the last few years in the Syrian refugee camps, I'm always figuring out the best way to work with disadvantaged people and I got fatigued. After I learned Focusing I realised that I didn't need to be a therapist, or offer intervention or advice". As Gendlin said "If we had to be smart, or good, or mature, or wise, then we would probably be in trouble. Mirroring Gendlin's words she said "just being present as a living being is enough." Ceren continued "This retreat of 11 people was intimate so that we all had the space to share individual experiences of our Focusing processes. It was a safe space where we felt really heard." As she evolves as a Focusing Professional, I asked her how she dreams the future of Focusing in Turkey.

"As we returned home, this way of being has rippled out into our friendship group, it feels like we have found another way now of being present". She feels that Focusing is something that would be very useful in the aid organisations. She is inspired to teach Focusing to the employees and also the people in their care.

For myself I feel filled up and happy and super excited that, from a simple web search, my Focusing network of friends in Turkey will grow.



Reference:

Gendlin: 'The Primacy of Human Presence' https://focusing.org/gendlin/docs/gol_2110.html

All participants gave consent for their quotes and pictures to be used

Paula Charnley is a Person-Centred Psychotherapist/Counsellor and Focusing Professional. She integrates Focusing into all of her work with clients. Paula was introduced to Focusing when she was receiving Psychotherapy and completed her Focusing Skills with Ria Van Hage in Amsterdam where she lived for many years. Focusing has been such a gift in her life that she is committed to passing the skill on to others, she teaches BFA skills to groups and is often found at Festivals and gatherings introducing people to Focusing. She returned to the Staffordshire Moorlands in 2015, where she has her practice and completed her professional Focusing Training with Peter Gill. info@paulacharnley.com

Learning to Be With Myself: Mindfulness vs Focusing

By Naomi Silverly

There is huge value in learning how to sit with your inner experience, with how to allow emotions, body sensations and triggers to be there, but for many it is a long journey learning the skills of how to hold internal experiences in a way that is manageable. Both mindfulness practices and Focusing have supported me in a very long journey of recovery from years of emotional and physical dysregulation.



Watercolour by Irene Ruby (see credits for more info)

Initially, I thought mindfulness practice alone would 'fix' me, and I went to great lengths to achieve what it seemed to promise: courses, teacher training, a Master's. What I thought was *the* thing that was going to help me get better, feel better and live a fulfilled life, only touched the tip of the iceberg, and was simply a doorway into other much deeper ways of understanding and connection.

Looking back, my journey with mindfulness felt a very lonely one. I became aware of so much that I had been carrying for so long, but with very little idea of how to be with or hold it. The intensity of what emerged was too much to bear on my own. It did not provide sufficient resources for me to be able to build relationship with, release or integrate it all.

Secular mindfulness practice, although often taught in group contexts with a mindfulness teacher, often ironically ends up in the long term feeling like a largely solitary unsupported experience. You might be led through the process by a teacher. Guiding questions might be *Can you be aware? Can you notice it? It doesn't really matter what is there, can you just be with it and see if it's possible to bring compassion to it?* The emphasis is on attention, intention and attitude. Compassion is invited, but what is not acknowledged is that this might feel totally inaccessible for some, particularly if this quality hasn't been experienced for a very long time, if ever. The mind might understand the concept but does the body feel the associated visceral sensations of what is being guided? For me, it felt like being guided by someone who has little awareness of what is going in my inner experience, sitting with what's there in a largely solitary way, and trying hard to make my experience fit the narrative.

In contrast, Focusing is like a shared body-led practice; you are being supported by another person who is welcoming and reflecting back, making the odd suggestion, so that whatever is coming up in your mind/body experience can be heard, expressed, and perhaps unfold or evolve. Your body is leading the practice and showing you what wants attention; it gets to explore what words and images fit. Although it can be done solo, most practices take place with the support of a companion.

The learning is about becoming aware of what's alive inside, bringing presence to it, and not only being with, but listening: *What's alive in me now? What needs attention? Is it ready to express what wants to be heard? What does it want me to know? How does it want me to be with it?* I hold space for all that is going on in my experience, and my partner holds space for all that – the gentle qualities are modelled as we explore together; peer-to-peer, body-to-body. We come into relationship with what's there. We bring a more expansive presence that carries a sense of okay-ness, and through that, an allowing softness might emerge that feels a bit like compassion.

In terms of power dynamics, mindfulness is taught by a teacher who orchestrates the sessions and models mindful qualities, and is usually based on whole group teacher-participant interactions, which leads

to a top-down approach. The teacher tells the participant where and what to pay attention to, and how to pay attention, and the inevitable domino effect is that the participant's mind tells their body where and what to pay attention to, and how to pay attention. Underlying this is an assumption that if the teachers are saying it, that's what's alive for everyone. They might even tell us what we're feeling, and while that might resonate for some, many might not be feeling this on a visceral level. What the guidance is suggesting might not be alive or not resonant for others, which can feel particularly painful, especially if others share or show that they are aligned with what is being suggested in the guidance. This can lead to a sense of exclusion and isolation for those who don't feel aligned with the narrative being set by the teacher.

The top-down power dynamic that builds between teacher and participant can lead to the participant's mind trying to control their experience², with minimal space for what's actually going on inside to be expressed. Unless there is regular support from a meditation teacher or partner, you are merely sitting with your experience in solitude and there is little opportunity for all that arises to be heard or acknowledged in any meaningful way. Opportunities for connection are orchestrated largely through the teacher. With such controlled teaching dynamics and solitary experience, the pain of carrying something difficult without it being seen, heard or understood can feel very intense indeed. This structure can limit opportunities for personal expression, genuine connection, or for energies to be released or integrated.

Although they can have a role in physical and emotional recovery, mindfulness practices and many of the contexts and dynamics with which they are delivered only meet a fraction of what is needed to recover from nervous system dysregulation. Difficulties that may arise in these contexts can reinforce power dynamics and narratives that we're conditioned into and that live on in our bodies and society, keeping people stuck and, for some, sick.

In contrast, Focusing feels more bottom-up, where we start with the body and the felt sense. A lead-in helps us come into contact with the body and space is given for the body to reveal what it has to communicate, however it wants to communicate. My companion is holding space for me and my experience and I am holding space for all that is going on inside me, and voicing that through words, facial expressions, gestures, bodily releases. Focusing usually being a shared practice, we come together and explore our internal experience in each other's presence, with a sense of allowing; it is all being heard and acknowledged, and it is held and supported.

This is where Focusing meets those deep nooks and crannies of the felt experience that mindfulness barely touches, because it is taught with minimal power dynamics – you are always in choice around your process, and if something is coming up for you, then opportunities are available to be heard and supported. Focusing is taught either through workshops, one-to-ones, or if you want to become an active member of the community – a skills course. The teacher invites agency and choice, and you are always welcome to honour and respect your own experience. There is a sense of humility - no *more/less than* – we are all equal. Focusing guidelines around non-judgement, choice, confidentiality and privacy support a sense of safety.

Mindfulness often feels like a solitary experience when we practice with others because sometimes, we are just being with our internal experience with little palpable connection to those around us. Although it offered a solid foundation for coming into presence with myself, mindfulness practices offered few actual opportunities for genuine connection; there were moments throughout my recovery where this felt painfully absent. While the teacher guided people into what they think lead to a feeling of deep connectedness, that meant little to a nervous system which has been conditioned into feeling abandoned and alone, and can often reinforce triggered reactions. Ironically, around the time I accredited as a mindfulness teacher, circumstances around the pandemic and vaccination led to even more isolation, and it became clear that something else was needed.

One of the keys to recovery from emotional and physical dysregulation is to share, to be seen and to be heard, to reflect and feedback, and to feel resonance with another. This is supported by neuroscience and our biological need to be surrounded and supported by other nourishing beings.^{1 3} As soon as I found spaces where it was safe to share vulnerably and autonomously, there was a turning point in my recovery.

Focusing was one of those spaces: we are explicitly building connection with ourselves and with others. We learn to build relationship with what is going on in our experience, and that is being facilitated by someone holding a bigger space around that, and for whatever might be going on inside. Imagine a child having a tantrum – how do they feel if we just stand by and watch them? And how would they feel if we said “Yes, this is how you’re feeling, there’s lots of intense emotion, and of course you can express it, AND I want to hear what it is you have to say.” There is emotional availability, and the emotional connection we feel when someone understands our experience deeply.

And it doesn’t need to be a mindfulness teacher, but simply a Focusing peer, who, on completion of a skills course, is trained to hold another’s experience with attention, care, acknowledgement and reflection. As they hold space for you in that way, you learn how to hold space for yourself. You learn to self-regulate through co-regulating with others who have built these skills: acknowledging, welcoming, making space for and building relationship with all those energies and emotions that need attention. Co-regulation leads to self-regulation. In group contexts, the qualities can be mirrored and consolidated, not just from one person in the room (the trained mindfulness teacher), but from everyone around you.

Focusing addresses these issues because the process allows the Focuser to be in total choice in a way that meditation doesn’t. There is freedom of expression because the body gets to say what’s going on. There is agency because we are in charge of our own process and someone is with us supporting us, whichever way we choose to go. There is connection because I’m expressing myself and being heard and supported by the presence of an acknowledging, listening person who is also connected to themselves. There is responsibility because I am the best person to make the wisest decision about what needs attention in my experience and how it might want to be accompanied. Kindness is there because a larger presence is making space, holding and welcoming all the parts and the energies that they bring. And with all that comes acceptance and compassion.

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- 1] Maté, G. (2022) *The Myth of Normal*. London: Vermilion.
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- 3] van der Kolk, B. (2014) *The Body Keeps the Score: Brain, Mind and Body in the Healing of Trauma*. New York: Viking.

Artwork by Irene Ruby, *Makings and Musings*. www.makingsandmusings.com



Naomi Silverly started her Focusing journey in 2019. She has recently qualified as a Focusing Practitioner and is currently working towards Focusing teacher training, aiming to merge that with Pain Reprocessing Therapy to support people in recovery from long-term health issues (yes it is possible!). Focusing has formed been a key practice in her own journey with symptoms. Once upon a time she also worked as an English teacher in Seville, cycled from Alaska to Mexico, studied as a linguist and communicator in London, and qualified as a Breathworks Mindfulness Teacher. Naomi is currently based in Cambridge, UK.

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A dark light

Last night I lay with my darkness
promising to meet it
promising to know all it had to give me.

It said to me, No, not now,
leave dark for now. Tears
will come when they are needed.

No point in taking a bucket
to a well that's covered over.

Then the dark showed me it was light,
a dark light, shining
not in the dark but through it,

telling me:
joy, don't forget joy.

There was no ache; I forgot loss
and longing. There was only love
moving through my body.

It curled round me as I slept, holding me
closer than arms could hold,
softly, so its touch didn't bruise me.

Susan Jordan

What to do

Something is bothering me
There is a heaviness here
Not easily moved aside
Not easily understood.

A heaviness that feels old
Of being overshadowed
Pushed out and ignored
Feeling not good enough.

What to do, what to do
At times like this?
I could wait for it to pass
After all we are told are we not
That everything is transient?

Yet it may have arrived
Bearing gifts
As if that which is noticed
Is there to serve not harm.

It sounds so easy
To hold a loving space within
Of acceptance
Until an old friend comes knocking!

Rumi pointed out
Our inner world is a guesthouse.
When we are awake
We can stand at the door smiling!

More work to do here me thinks!

Maybe I can start by being kind
Pull back the curtains
Welcome the day
Notice how nature lives.

Russell Kendall

Clean Language and Focusing

By Alison Thorpe

"Clean [language] is a way of enquiring into someone's experience, while radically honouring that experience" (James Lawley)

I came across 'Clean Language' in 2020 and was immediately fascinated by its rich exploration of experiencing, language, symbolising and metaphor. It promised powerful ways of transforming stuck issues that were hard to change, even with long-term Focusing, and this felt very hopeful for me at the time. Now I am training in this method, I have a growing sense that Focusing and 'Clean' can be combined to provide something very powerful and special.

One of the things that has been very meaningful for me is the feeling of being given a deep permission to trust my experience in whatever form it emerges. I have been able to honour all the metaphoric, symbolic and creative ways my dissociated childhood trauma has presented itself. Focusing is usually taught – at least initially – as a bodily process: we turn inwards to see what is there. Focusing for me tends to involve more free association, memory retrieval and symbolic imagery than felt senses experienced *in* the body. Of course I know that my body is involved, I do get some felt senses in my body, and there's a deep feeling level to it all, but something changed for me when I experienced the way that metaphor was so prized in the 'Clean' approach.

So what is Clean Language?

It is a set of questions that, when skilfully used, enable people to go through an experience that is transformative. It was developed by David Grove (1950-2008), a psychotherapist with Maori heritage, who found that metaphor was a natural way that his clients communicated and processed trauma. One definition of metaphor is *'understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in terms of another'* so it is easy to see why it makes processing overwhelming or unapproachable experiences less intense. A wealth of research since the 1980s now views metaphor as embodied and arising out of our experience in the world. As Focusers this is probably easy to appreciate because a bodily felt sense easily develops into something symbolic.

Grove developed Clean Language questions in order to stay out his clients' way and maximise the healing potential of his metaphor therapy. He could see that even non-directive therapists added their own words and sometimes their assumptions to what clients said. Thus he developed 'Clean' questions, which had no assumptions in them. They can be answered in any way the client needs, and *only* the client's exact words and phrases are reflected back.

So what are the questions?

Here is a diagram of twelve basic Clean questions. (The '...' gaps are filled with the client's exact words).

There are quite a few specialised Clean questions, but a high proportion - perhaps 80% or more per session - will be one of these basic twelve.

What do you think of the questions? There *are* some assumptions made like location ("And where is that X?") and time ("And then what happens?") which seem universal in human experience. Clean questions do of course direct a client but they can be answered in any way, including "No" or "I don't know". Asking about the location of something (e.g. **"And whereabouts is that?"**) can be extremely helpful and I now have a much wider appreciation of the very spatial nature of our



experiencing. There is a Clean process called 'Clean Space' which is about locating physical spaces in the room, where new information can emerge about our issue or desired outcome.

You may notice the questions all begin with "And...." This has a very important effect on how the questions feel as a client. The way that Clean questions are asked is as important as the questions themselves. I find it amusing that I now love an approach that is question-based, since I've always reacted to questions with a rabbit-in-the-headlights feeling! Clean questions feel completely different to me.

So what happens in a Clean language session?

A standard opening is the question: **"And what would you like to have happen?"**

You might like to try out that question for yourself. Does it feel different to: "And what would you like to happen?" or "And what do you want to have happen?" (I think this question is carefully worded).

An answer to this opening question sets the stage for the entire session, as our body-mind will bring what is relevant to that question, that desired outcome. What will likely happen is that a 'metaphor landscape' will develop from the questions asked, and the structure, the pattern of what is stuck or unresolved will be revealed, and a developing solution or transformation of that problem will form. This may take many sessions, but it is also amazing how quickly new discoveries and realisations happen. To me it is the same feeling of a felt shift in Focusing, or that feeling of *"Yes, this is it, this is exactly how it is (in me, in my life)"*. Encouraging and supporting metaphor seems to be a way of making our inner experience play out on an outer or inner stage so we can more easily 'see' what's happening.

The full Clean Language syntax is:

And [client's words]

And when [client's words]

[clean question].

For example (Clean questions in bold):

(Client): *I feel a lot of despondency because I want to move forward with this and I feel like I'm failing at it'.*

(Facilitator): **And** you feel a lot of despondency because you want to move forward with this..... **And when** you want to move forward, **what kind of** move forward **is that** move forward?

(Client): *Hmm.... I see this as a path, a stony path.... There seems to be some kind of a block ahead, I'm not sure what that is....*

(Facilitator): **And** you see a path, a stony path. There seems to be some kind of a block ahead.... **And when** a stony path **is there anything else about that** stony path when there seems to be some kind of a block ahead?

(And so on).

As the session continues it will be important to develop the *stony path* and the *block ahead*...and how these symbols and metaphors might be connected to the desired outcome of *moving forward*. A lot more is likely to happen. It may be at this point that nothing can shift this block: this is what the current reality is. However, there is an opportunity here for a wider metaphor landscape to develop, which may be what is needed for the problem to resolve; this *path* and *block* may be just one part of a larger whole. For example, it could be that the '*stony path*' is not the way forward. Or perhaps another way appears once the block cannot or won't be moved. Or the block itself may change, or something resourceful may appear in the landscape which can potentially resolve the situation.

There are a couple of further thoughts I'd like to share on the value of Clean Language in the context of Focusing. In a video clip of Akira Ikemi (a Focusing teacher and therapist) he speaks of a 'temporary nothingness' before what is 'not-yet formed' comes into awareness, and how Focusers trust that 'not-yet formed', we even have faith in it! My experience of bringing Focusing into counselling sessions is that it can be uncomfortable for people to dwell in that 'nothingness' and clients seem to find it hard to wait for something to emerge *from* the felt sense. It is easier to jump back into 'talking about' the issue. However,

dropping in a Clean question with clients at that point is quite different – they can easily answer a question like “And what kind of unsureness is that?” and this often brings a symbol, metaphor, image, felt sense, which is then developed with more Clean questions. Clean Language seems to be an easier way into the experiential. I want to explore what happens if we use questions while also keeping the ‘dwelling with something (not-yet-formed)’ that Focusing has. The Focuser or client could even indicate when a question would be useful and when they just want space to be with a felt sense and let it develop in its own way.

A second important experience for me is that a Clean Language process entirely accepts that change is a tricky business, and it supports the change process until it fully happens. It can feel, with Focusing, that the felt shift is supposed to do the work; that this will lead to outer change (obviously I am putting this in its strongest version). I can have amazing, shifting, big sessions, but then be very disappointed that it isn't a lasting shift. There have been suggestions that Focusing could have a seventh ‘action step’, without which what comes next is missing.

Take the ‘*stony path*’ example above. It might now look like something can change or transform. Perhaps a new path has appeared that is linked with what the client really wants in their life and feels very right. In a Clean process we check this out. We might ask: “**And when the new very right path is there, and there is no block on this path, the way is clear** [client's words], **what happens to move forward?**” The answer may be “*Yes this can happen now*”, in which case we might ask questions to develop what happens next. It might also be that the ‘*move forward*’ still cannot happen. This could – given that the client started with “a lot of despondency” – feel very discouraging or even hopeless, “*I've found a new path and even this doesn't work!*” However, as James Lawley puts it:

“Our aim... is for the client to find out whether the change starts a contagion which creates a new or reorganised metaphor landscape, or whether it invokes doubts, concerns, or fears. A problem reaction is not a sign of failure — quite the opposite. It indicates the client's system is revealing more of its complexity... This increases the chance that the client's system will reorganise in a way that is more than relief of a symptom, more than a remedy. Rather it will be a generative change — **a robust, resilient change that keeps on giving.**”

I hope this has inspired you!

If you want to know more there are many articles on this website: www.cleanlanguage.com . And if you'd like to explore Focusing with clean or have a discussion with me, I can be contacted by email (see bio below).

References:

- 1] James Lawley quote from this video: <https://www.youtube.com/live/4jeKINOFAMU?si=XoBudq2ji2OjTsT>
- 2] Akira Ikemi quote from this video: <https://youtu.be/crlo41N2TMI?si=PdWbnW2hxsfKDAow>
- 3] Symbolic Modelling (the full Clean Language approach): <https://cleanlanguage.com/symbolic-modelling-lite/>
- 4] Metaphor quote: Lakoff, G and Johnson, M (1980) *Metaphors We Live By*, quoted in Lawley, J & Tompkins, P (2000) *Metaphors In Mind* p.6



Alison Thorpe

I'm a Counsellor and a Focusing Practitioner, and I work online and in-person in Brighton, on the south coast of the UK. I'm working on integrating Focusing, Clean Language and parts-work. My Focusing training has been very much influenced by Inner Relationship Focusing, developed by Ann Weiser Cornell and Barbara McGavin. Please get in touch if you would like to explore these areas with me.
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Focusing with a Dolphin

By Birte Robins



This article is about the healing I received from a large male dolphin name Phillip in Turkey in xxxx. I had suffered from high blood pressure since my menopause started many years ago. Several generations of my family had also suffered from hypertension. I had also been living under stress for years as director of an international European business.

I was unable to completely address the stress in my system even with my years of experience as a yoga and meditation teacher, nor from many Focusing healing sessions, done from the late 1980s when I

learned Focusing, and became certified in the early 1990s.

I often did a specific six-step blood pressure Focusing healing session accompanied by my Focusing partner, attempting to find the root cause and appropriate action steps/ways to heal this genetic, stress-related problem. I have always had great Focusing partners, and every so often, I would listen to my felt sense regarding my blood pressure problem. My sessions with a Focusing partner helped me to get clear actions steps of what to do to lower the pressure and heal the root cause of it, even going way back into cell memories, and my genetic heritage. But unfortunately it never went away completely. At best it cleared and went away after some of the Focusing sessions, but somehow it always slowly sneaked back.

My blood pressure kept returning to how my body had got used to functioning over many years.

Dolphin Vibrational Healing

For years, even before my blood pressure went up, I had the desire to be in the company of a dolphin, and it didn't matter to me whether it was a 'tame' or 'wild' dolphin. Back then, my husband and sons, had all had the chance to be with semi-wild dolphins in Florida Keys in the US. I didn't have such an opportunity, until one day, I received an invitation to go with some good friends to a great holiday resort in the bay of Marmaris in southern Turkey.

I already knew that in this area there was a very well functioning dolphin therapy and swim centre – so I immediately booked a session with a big male dolphin named Phillip, that they loaned to people like me, who just wanted to be in the deep water with him, 'sensing and swimming'.

In the Marmaris deep sea or bay water, a centre had been established where they let their captured dolphins live. The centre was created, over a period of time, by some dolphin trainers who had come and developed part of the area as a healing and psychotherapy centre where some of the dolphins were trained as 'therapists' for families or their kids.

When dolphins are working as therapists, they do it here in this centre, alongside a couple of Personal Trained Therapists. During these sessions, the healing and releasing that happens often comes through the dolphins' ways, and manners of using sonic or vibrational communication. These vibrations, are clearly working as a form of sound healing, and the dolphins themselves use these sonar sensing tools all the time for communication. Dolphins have a large brain and an evolved intelligent life force which makes it possible for beneficial contact and communication with a human being. In fact the particular sonic vibrations that emanate from dolphins means that they interact with humans in a more deeply healing way than other animals (cf. dog, horse, etc). Dolphin healing has been shown to have a balancing effect on both hemispheres of the brain – i.e. it balances the *whole brain*, like Focusing does.

Despite the trained dolphins being in an enclosed area, it was still part of this big deep bay and the sea surrounding Turkey and the Greek Islands. So the area of the centre where the dolphins lived, played, worked and swam, was at least 10 meters deep! The sounds and vibrations from the dolphins permeate the whole area, so that simply swimming around in the 10 meter deep bay/sea water, was also a healing experience in itself, as the water was full of vibrational energies.

This particular Turkish centre, was very well functioning, despite having captured the dolphins, and keeping them captivated, it was obvious that they were treated well, and had a lot of space. They seemed to be giving them the best life they were able to have 'in captivity', and the animals were clearly given ample rest and loads of time for free play and games with each other.

In the therapy centre part of the bay, it was mostly female dolphins, which were used to work doing therapy with clients. Generally this had to be done, with the entire family of the sick or handicapped person being there. They offered, especially, some kind of healing via daily training with a therapist, or sometimes two, and a dolphin, for several weeks at a time. This was offered mostly for healing with various handicaps, such as: Autism, Asperger's, ADD, ADHD, Trauma related sickness, PTSD, people damaged by psychotropic drugs and medications, Anorexia or Bulimia. The dolphins' 'clients' were mostly children, but also troubled grown-ups.

MY FOCUSING SESSION WITH A DOLPHIN

I met Phillip with him swimming below me, inside of his enclosed area in the bay. I made friends with him by feeding him a bit of fish. After a while I was asked to jump into the deep warm water with him.

I had my life vest on and was told by the dolphin trainer, just to let go of my body, and to let it just float in the water. He told me not to be afraid, as I would not drown; I just had to stay calm, stay afloat, upright and straight, and pump my legs in order to enable the dolphin to come close to me.

FOCUSING STEPS

1) Clearing a Space

I stayed calm, and it was so easy, as I began doing the Focusing Process Steps, getting into my usual Focusing attitude, then clearing a space, letting go of what was in the way in there. I knew that what was needed now was to be in an open, loving, and receptive state, in order to both be with my felt sense of the high blood pressure, and at the same time to stay open to an emergent fresh felt sense of the interaction with Phillip and the healing sonic radiation being received from him.

2) Get a Felt Sense

I was paddling only with my legs, carefully in the water, waiting for Phillip to get ready to listen to me... He was swimming round and round, and was quite close to me, and he was coming closer and closer and I felt some urgency to get a felt sense of all of this, including my high blood pressure. It felt very important to concentrate on 'he will soon come very near to me.'

That wasn't too difficult – I simply stayed in my Focusing attitude, and started tuning in to the felt sense of my high blood pressure, on how it was right now, in need of healing, and including 'being right here in close company with this dolphin guy.' Meanwhile, Phillip swam closer and closer, as if he was trying to get his felt sense of me and sensing whether it was ok for him to have an encounter with me.

While this was happening, I got my felt sense of 'all of this', which was like a hard fist, just over my solar plexus, with a foggy unclear edge all around it where there were beautiful glowing movements, ending in most bright converging apexes of light as if to show me 'everything is being taken care of' (or healed).

3) Get a Handle

This arrived quickly and clearly and said: 'Deep sound connections'

4) Resonate

Resonating perfectly – all the time.

5) Ask (about all of this)

Me asking in my mind "What is this handle telling me, and what does it mean?"

This is what came to me: "The sonic energies being emitted by the dolphin will release the tension via my brain and neuro-systems, especially in front of my body – in the throat, inside the belly all the way down to the pelvic area, where our Enteric Nervous System (ENS), is situated. Here it will re-create the equilibrium needed to lower the blood pressure"

6) Receive

Now being in a Focusing relationship with Phillip, I was in constant contact with my felt sense, and with Philip. I sent him my prayers in images, thoughts and emotions; he responded strongly by coming closer and closer. After a while he kept pushing his nose onto my kidneys and my adrenal glands – he was now giving me Acupressure as well!

He first pushed his nose onto my lower back (my kidneys have a strong connection with my blood pressure), and after a while he carefully came to the front of my body and pressed into the corresponding areas (of the kidneys). In between, he stopped and swam a bit, and then stopped to look at, and come very close to my head. When he did this I intuitively sensed, that he was trying to synchronise his brain waves with mine – which brought a sense of 'joy' to my head/brain.

After this close encounter with Phillip and his sonic vibrations, then came the opportunity to experience a few tricks he had learned: his trainer told me what I could do with Philip, while he was there close to me. He asked me to now move over, close to Phillip and to go close to his head – right in front of him, in the water, where he was still quietly laying and looking at me. The trainer then told me to let Phillip be guided by HIM, (the trainer) in order to let him kiss me – or really, more for me to hug and kiss Phillip!



Being in these 'dolphin waters' and in a dolphin's company, one is in such a heightened and elevated sense and state, that one naturally gets so excited that you just want to kiss and hug him all the time – it's really a heightened state of Love. For me, I experienced 'the vibration of a pure life moving forward force and love' – as well as a sense of grounded wellness, empathy and acceptance.



Phillip's Bahamian trainer then offered me the opportunity to swim with him, by holding onto his fins, and then he pulled me round his big enclosure within the bay. It was so exciting to be swimming like that, several times round the enclosure, with a big loving dolphin, and my joy hit the ceiling of the sunny sky! When Phillip layed calmly still, I found myself just wanting to hug him, to hold him, to kiss him and I was also allowed to feed him.

Before and after every session in his area, Phillip was asked to jump up to a board, near the trainer – this was the last part of my Focusing/swimming session with him.

Here is a picture... and here you see, one can sit quietly being with the Dolphin.

You can maybe see in all the pictures that I am constantly in a state of bliss, smiling and exchanging loving energy, and receiving sound healing from the dolphin. I got the centre's photographer to take loads of pictures of us.

Then, to finish my Focusing session off, I did the last, 6th, double process step, by being very grateful.

I now asked for my action step, as well as transferring the new 'healthy' pathways just generated in my brain into my future daily life. I visualized myself being free of high blood pressure, stress and tiredness, being healthy in my heart and all of my blood vessels and having more calm energy.

The message from my felt sense about my action step, was simply to keep listening, each day, to a CD I was given, which plays the sounds of a dolphin making his voices, sounds, and his talking.

In addition, each day for the next three weeks, I visualized my brain's new pathways becoming part of my daily reality, and these patterns becoming somatised.

When my swim was over, I walked back on the nice pathway along the seaway coast, to my fancy resort hotel, where I had already booked myself an Ayurvedic massage. I hoped that this treatment would help me integrate the 'new' brain pathways that had been established in the Focusing session with Phillip. This massage lasted nearly an hour, and it totally helped me to integrate the healing I received from Phillip. I felt that I was 'floating' and in a heightened state of mind and body which stayed with me for a couple of days.

The Acupressure that Phillip gave me on my kidneys and head also started a detox process which caused some side effects, due to many years of taking different medications to lower the blood pressure.

Back home, and back into my daily life, after some weeks passed, my blood pressure felt very different. As I measured it, it became a normal rating for my age. I would check it every few days and it was ok, and again ok – I was so happy! After that I managed to get a specialist doctor, who from then on monitored my blood pressure.

I have stayed well since then, and no longer need to take any medication. (I had previously been on medication for over 20 years)



Birte Robins is a certified Professional Focuser, and Founder of the Scandinavian Focusing Institute. She studied with Gene Gendlin and Mary McGuire in the 80's. She became a Professional Trainer in 1990 and a Coordinator in 1993. Birte is a certified nurse, and has also been a self-sufficient organic farmer. She has a degree in Child Psychology, is a certified Yoga/Meditation teacher, a Do-In/KumNye instructor, and a certified Dance/Aerobic instructor.

Birte has also been a Business CO of a European/ Scandinavian business (distributing the 'In-Arms-Principals' used in the Snugli Babycarrier) for 20 years. She is also an advocate for the use of uncut washable lambskin with babies to enhance growth, health and security, through tactile skin stimulation.

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The Small Steps of the Therapy Process: How They Come And How To Help Them Come (Part Two*)

By Eugene Gendlin

COMMENTS ON TWO THERAPY SEGMENTS

To finish, I would like to read you a couple of therapy segments. I ask you to look at the steps. These are Focusing steps. That means that a silence is often felt between one step and the next. The second excerpt I will read is from a person who has done Focusing for a long time. It is late in therapy. The first one is "early in therapy" and you can watch me trying to help it happen.

I have written enough about how to find this body-sense, but it is hard to convey the interactional climate around it. That is one thing I would like you to watch for. And then also: once one knows how to find this inner edge, then it turns out that there is a lot of complexity involved, there. The crudest thing we have always said is: "Do not push and do not run away." But what *do* you do? Well, you keep it company, especially if it is *sore*. You keep *it* company. This 'it' – it is a funny way of talking. Sometimes when I say these things, someone will say: "You talk funny" and I say: "Yes, I know." You keep it company; I often say: "Let's keep it company."

The client and I, we are going to keep it, in there, company. As you would keep a scared child company. You would not push on it, or argue with it, or pick it up, because it is too sore, too scared or tense. You would just sit there, quietly, I really said it all in the beginning: What that edge needs to produce the steps, is only some kind of un-intrusive contact or company. If you will go there with your awareness and stay there or return there, that is all it needs; it will do all the rest for you. If you do not know that awareness is a process in itself, it will seem very mysterious. It needs you there and that is all it needs. That is the sort of thing I would like to illustrate with these two segments.

Segment 1

C: "I did not want to come today. I do not have anything more to talk about (laughs). Really, there is a level I do not want to touch. I got there once before and I got into crying and I could not get out of it; I could not stop crying. My therapist did not know what to do. She cried too. I looked up and I could see it and I thought: 'Well, she does not know what to do either'."

While she is telling me that, I think: "Well, that is obviously a good therapist." I believe, if it makes me cry, let that be visible. But at that time, it was not so good. So you never know. Or you can say: "It was alright, but there should have been something further; hopefully it happens here."

T: "You do not want to fall in there again that way."

C: "Right. Usually, I believe in feelings and I think: if you feel it, it gets better. But on this, I don't know."

T: "So we won't say: 'just feel it'. You did that and it was not better. Whatever we'll do here, you would like it to be in a different way..."

I do not necessarily expect agreement on that, you see, I am doing something, I am preparing some sort of Focusing.

C: "Right." (Long silence) "I can feel it right there, just below where I am."

Now that is not my jargon, ok. So don't blame me for that. Just think about why a person would say that. That has it all, just that one sentence: "I can feel it right there, *just below* where I am."

T: "Let's stay here a long while, just relating to it down there, without going there." Or another way to say it: "If we do anything, let us do it very slowly." (Long silence)

C: "The way the whole thing feels is that I am no good, and I am helpless to do anything about it. And I can hardly touch that."

T: "That is hard to stand. Go slow. It is hard even just to touch that."

Now I am going to stop that excerpt, there.

Segment 2

Here is a different person:

C: "I want to leave Chicago. The noise outside bothers me."

(Therapist is silent.)

C: "You do not think that is real. I can tell."

Therapist is mobilizing to give a reflection. He says (I am saying):

T: "The noise is crowding in on you, coming into your 'far-in place'."

I really knew what she was saying in fact because I have seen her for a very long time.

C: "It is like darts hitting my body. I cannot stand it."

T: "It really hurts."

And now there is one of these silences. I was willing to hear it, so it got heard and now there is the silence. And then she says:

C: "I keep feeling a sense of 'no meaning' in my life." (More silence.) "I just want to leave everything. It is that same spot where I want to die. My wanting to live and to die are so close these days. That is why I have not been able to touch this place. It gets misty there. It is real foggy."

Now I take that to be a step. First she was saying: "I am in this place where the noise hurts me" and now she is saying: "Oh that is my life and death place and when I touch it, it gets foggy." So can you derive that from the other? If I did not read it, would you have known this was coming? I do not see how you could have. I did not.

T: "You can feel wanting to live and also wanting to die, both right there, in the same inside spot and then that gets foggy there."

Now another one of these silences comes. Almost each time, there is this kind of step there.

C: "I do not want to relate with anyone; I wish there were no people to see. They do not mean anything to me. (She has to go to work after this hour.) There is no meaning. When will my life ever have meaning? It feels like it never will and I need meaning right now." (Silence... Therapist did not respond.) "I also feel it has to do with my relating to you. I know you are there for me, but it is like I am not allowed to want that."

Now very often in that kind of situation, I will say: "Let us, you and me, be real close and connected around this place; because in it, you do not feel any connection." That has been a real valuable thing to say, very often. "Let us relate all the way around it." It is like saying: "Let us be close," but also acknowledging that right in the center somehow there is no connection, there is an isolation. But I did not do that here. Something else happened. She said: "I also feel it has to do with my relating to you. I know you are there for me, but it is like I am not allowed to want that." So I heard the "not allowed" and it sounded different to me. So I said:

T: "Is that what you said before about your father?"

And I want to notice this therapist's single attempt at a genuine psychoanalytic interpretation. And it turns out to be very helpful also. Notice this: Very helpful. I mean really; but of course wrong, but very helpful. "Is that what you said before about your father?" Now there is this long silence again. Then she says:

C: "No I can feel that this is not with him. This is different. It is not like with my father."

You see, she has tried it out: "It is not like that." And then, the therapist says:

T: "It is not about him."

That is the big difference. The big difference is not that we interpret it or do not interpret it. The big difference is that we stay with the person whatever comes there. And anybody working with me knows that I am trying to do that. So they do not even bother about some of the things that I say. But she does bother. She says: "It is not about him. It is not like with my father." And I say: "It is not about him." And then there is another silence.

C: "I can hardly touch it. There is something and it is right here on the edge, I can hardly touch it; it is... I cannot want my mother. I can hardly say it."

And I reflect:

T: "You cannot want her." (Silence.)

C: "That is where I feel the noise like darts." (More silence.)

C: "It is real early, real early."

T: "It feels like a very early experience." (Silence.)

C: "I cannot want anything."

Silence. Here come the steps...

C: "This needs to rest and it cannot rest. If it lets down and rests, it will die. It needs to keep its guard up."

T: "There is such a big need and longing to rest and let down and ease; but somehow also this part of you cannot rest. It feels that it will die if it stops being on guard."

Long silence. What comes is a step...

C: "Maybe it could, if I could trust something."

T: "It could rest if you could trust something."

C: "No, no. MAYBE it could rest if I could trust something."

T: "It is important to say 'maybe': 'Maybe it could rest if I could trust something'."

Silence

C: "Now, suddenly it feels like a house on stilts, that the stilts go into the earth. All of me on top where the noise is, that is the house. And it is on stilts. It got lifted off this sore place. Now this sore place is like a layer and it can breathe. Do you know those steel posts that they put into the ground to hold up a building? These stilts are like that. All the noise and coming and going is in the house and the house is on stilts, lifted off and the stilts go into the ground."

T: "Those steel stilts go into the ground and you feel them lifting the whole house up off of you and underneath, that sore place can breathe." (Silence)

C: "Yes, now it is breathing." (More silence.)

C: "It is bathing in warm water."

And then later, she said (these are not exactly her words):

C: "When I was little, I played a lot with stilts. I used to go between the power wires on them. It was dangerous but it was play. I used to make taller and taller ones and go on them there. Stilts: I have not thought of those for years. Play and danger."

And she is realizing that the themes are related. There was this life and death place here, and stilts have something to do with that and the play is some kind of freeing dimension. So she says:

C: "How does this process do that? It uses all these things to"

That is a good place to stop...

QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE

"For what types of clients is this approach most adequate? Do you have any empirical data on outcome and, more specifically, did you compare your approach with the traditional approach of Carl Rogers?" (Reinhard Tausch)

First of all, I would like to be clear: my approach is anything that I can try. If therapy is happening, if the client is moving, or if they do not want me to do something, I would never do it. I do not know if I made that clear enough. I am not saying: "Do not do this," or "Do that." I am not saying that. I am not saying that at all. Apparently I have come across that way, because nowadays sometimes I get clients who say: "I am not going to be able to Focus." And I say: "Well, that is fine, there are lots of ways of doing this." And they say: "But you wrote that if I do not Focus, I won't get anywhere." I wish I had not written that, if I have written it. Ok?

I will follow the client wherever the client takes me and if that is doing something for the client, then I am content. And yes, the way I am and the way I respond and the way I talk, they will probably pick up Focusing as a side-benefit. But I am not interested in approaching a person with 'an approach.' I bring Focusing in when clients do not seem to have it, and are going around in circles. So I do not know if I am answering the question or avoiding it, but this is the approach that I would counsel.

Now I would say, to answer the question. There is a large body of clients who – if they give something like Focusing half a chance – do it immediately. That is the population for whom Focusing instructions are indicated, to take the question straight now. I would define the population that the method is appropriate for this way. When you try a little bit of it and it makes a wonderful difference, then that is a good thing to do. At the other extreme there are people whom you would have to push and intrude on, and say: "Look here, stop talking all the time and do this thing that I want you to do." I do not want that. And then there are people who already have it. I am saying: "It is the people between these two extremes for whom this is indicated." But that is not a class of people by present classifications; that includes borderline and psychotic people, including people in the hospital who feel a relief that they can find themselves when they have "been gone"; you know, people with a dissociated sort of experience. We found several times that this is a helpful thing to do with people, right across the continuum of degrees of disturbance. But some other variable is involved and I do not know what it is yet.

As to the second part of your question, I do not think of Focusing instructions as an approach to compare to another approach but *within* therapies, both client-centered and some others—though not enough others to brag about—but within client-centered therapy, I would say we have a string of research studies that show that the people who do this already tend to be successful. Now we do not have anything to show that the people Gendlin teaches are more successful.

We do not have anything to show that teaching this in the context of therapy makes it more successful. That, we do not have. And I would not push it. I would teach it as something that goes along with a more normal response. Like I did here.

"What is your view of the difference between client-centered and experiential psychotherapy, and what is your view of the relation between them?" (Barbara Brodley)

I would take client-centered therapy to be the larger thing. First of all, Focusing, if that is what we are talking about, Focusing to me is a very tiny, very important process. What I call Focusing is paying attention inwardly to that unclear sense of something there. Now surely therapy and personal development are much bigger things than that. Focusing is a very deliberate way to touch something inside. I have seen that help the bigger process. The bigger process comes from behind you and takes you and expands you, and you do not know what is going to happen. Whereas Focusing is this very deliberate thing where an 'I' is attending to an 'it.' I think it is very valuable. But surely, it is not therapy. Therapy is a relationship, therapy is a process of development. These Focusing steps I described come in client-centered therapy. That is where I learnt them from, that is where I saw them and if you observe your clients, you will see that they are silent before those steps typically come.

Now the trouble that you are having is not about that process. It is about me *teaching* that process. And it is true that if the therapist teaches that process in some way, there is some problem with that. The

therapists need to check their welcome. They need to watch and see whether they intrude; they need to see that the relationship always has precedence. So you do this thing inside the relationship, just like you do when you are in somebody's house. You do not do things that they do not want you to do for very long.

"In what you just said, are you not assuming that the process of the steps is the essence of therapeutic change?" (Barbara Brodley)

No, no. That is a helpful question. I was trying to straighten that out. I assume that interaction is the broader process. And just about everything interesting is some kind of special case of interaction. And it is only as part of interaction that any of these things works well. So no, I am not assuming that an inner process can be distinguished from interaction – precisely the opposite. The inner process will give you steps in a context of interaction. And if there is nobody there, then you better interact with it in a friendly way. Otherwise you will not get those steps. You need to interact with yourself, with a certain kind of attitude; as if your inside were a child that you were keeping company. And it is much easier if someone else will be there for you in that kind of silence. So anything interesting about Focusing goes on, in the context of relating. The only difference I ever had with that part of the theory was Carl's point about perception. But it is always going to be '*interaction first*' if you ask me.

"You emphasized the 'body-sense.' However, I experience many times with myself and with my clients that there is no body-sense at all, even when I or they have this 'it' and can point to it. If this is the case, I think emphasizing the bodily aspect might be more confusing than helpful." (Rob van Woerden)

I do not want to close down any other channels. I do not think anybody has the right to say: this has got to be this way, for human beings. So if you say that there is a way that they can come differently than from this bodily sense, that is fine with me. I think we need to look and compare, not just which is better, but what the difference is.

I am sure that there is an entry to steps through the literal body. Once you come into this literal body here then you find a space that is much bigger than your literal body. It is quite clear that it is not exactly your literal body, but that is where the entrance is. There might be other entrances.

"You have said that you do not agree that the client needs to perceive empathic understanding of the therapist and the other conditions. If you do not perceive the therapist's empathy and so forth, this could mean that it does not exist for the client. Now I make a distinction between 'received empathy' and 'perceived empathy.' Does that make sense to you?" (Godfrey Barrett-Lennard)

Oh yes, we could settle on that completely. That is what it has always meant, also to Carl. It has got to have some impact on the client; and that is what I meant too: Some impact or some kind of effect. The interaction changes the person and *then* they become aware of it. At least some of us. But I would completely agree with you that receiving it in some way could be one of the conditions. Just *perceiving* sounds to me like a reflective understanding or a reflected observation that I would have to say: "My therapist understands me." And I would have said: "Nobody can understand *me*. He tries hard, that nice man."

NOTES

Gendlin, E.T. (1990). '*The Small Steps of the Therapy Process: How They Come and How to Help Them Come.*' From G. Lietaer, J. Rombauts & R. Van Balen (Eds.), *Client-centered and Experiential Psychotherapy in the Nineties* (pp.205-224). Leuven: Leuven University Press.

This chapter is a revised version of the author's plenary address at the Leuven Conference (Sept 1988). Lieve De Wachter made a transcript of the audiotape. The author adapted this first draft and provided it with some comments and clarifications. Germain Lietaer did some further editorial work and selected from the original dialogue with the audience some parts for inclusion in the text.

From http://www.focusing.org/gendlin/docs/gol_2110.html

*** This is the second part of this presentation, including two segments of client-therapist interactions presented by Gendlin, and questions from the audience. For the main (Part One) of the presentation, see the previous (Summer 2024) issue of this newsletter (available on the BFA website).**

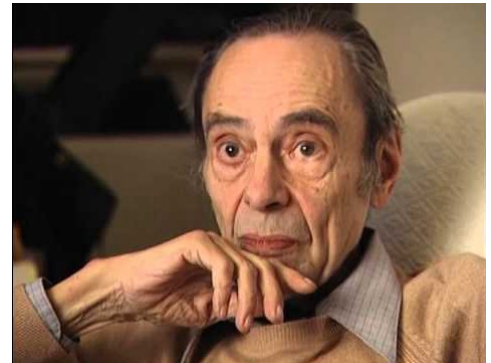
REFERENCES *(These references relate to the main part of the article in the previous issue of the newsletter)*

- 1] Gendlin, E. T. (1962/1970) *Experiencing and the creation of meaning* (2nd ed.). New York: Free Press.
- 2] Leijssen, M. (1989). *Teaching focusing to "unsuccessful" clients*. Research project in progress, Centrum voor client-centered therapie en counseling, K.U.Leuven
- 3] Hendricks, M.N. (1986). Experiencing level as a therapeutic variable. *Person-centered Review*, 1, 141-162.
- 4] Gendlin, E. T. (1987). A philosophical critique of the concept of "Narcissism." In D.M. Levin (Ed.), *Pathologies of the modern self: Postmodern studies*. New York: New York University Press.

Eugene Gendlin (1926—2017)

Eugene Gendlin's work was notable for how he bridged the fields of philosophy and psychology, as well as bridging serious academic work with popular self-help. He studied and taught philosophy at the University of Chicago, one of the world's top academic institutions. While engaged in the study of philosophy, he became a student and colleague of one of the great minds in psychology, Dr. Carl Rogers, who was revolutionizing the study of psychotherapy at the University of Chicago.

*Gendlin's extraordinary intellectual gifts were matched by his extraordinary compassion for people. When he saw that the research he was conducting at the university could have profound meaning for the ordinary person, he wrote *Focusing* (1978) as a popular self-help book so that his discovery would not languish in academic circles. Perhaps his experience as a Jew escaping the Nazi occupation of Austria explains some piece of this great compassion.*



Eugene Gendlin (2007)

Velvet Room

One person at a time invited into the dark velvet room
where secrets are kept. Everyone in the village
has their allotted time, eager to see the wise woman,
wanting to have their hearts read, their longings heard,
their problems solved.

Later, I heard how Frank chased Sadness round and round
the room until the dark round globule of it flumped down
on the small clothed table, panting, and he stroked it softly,
till the Roman candle burnt down and Sadness melted away.

Maria flung herself from one velvet covered wall to the other
and back again like a ping-pong ball, screaming crying exclaiming
sobbing, until eventually, she came to rest on the faded flowered sofa,
and her young self of seven or eight tip-toed up to her, tapped on her arm,
crawled onto her lap. The two hugged in sated silence.

At dawn, when she was rolling the black velvet curtains
into her cloth travelling bags, about to leave for the next village,
I asked her how she did it. All she said was:

*fish can't describe the sea
sun can't define flames
but they know it
deep down they know it*

Bethany Rivers

The Journey

Listen, from the distance, the road is yearning for your stride.
Go, where your heart wants to,
Where you have not allowed yourself to go,
Until now.

Allow the obstacles to melt, to dissolve,
As the mental constructs that they are,
Formed eons ago, from fear, with the intention
Of keeping you 'safe from harm'.

Allow yourself to be free of constraints,
To feel the flow of air brushing your cheek,
As you move on your journey.

Neither looking ahead nor behind,
At one with the movement of flight.

Gordon Adam

*Written from the 'random' gifting of the first line, from 'Night Alone' by Sohrab Seperhi
(from 'The Oasis of Now') at a workshop led by Bethany Rivers at the BFA annual gathering in April 2024.*

My Focusing Journal

By Nina Trebec

Reviewed by Elisabeth Weiland

It has only been quite recently that I have got to know more about Focusing, but I resonated so much with the idea of it that I decided to fully immerse myself in the approach.

When the opportunity came up to engage with and review Nina's Focusing Journal, I felt intimidated about writing an article (or should I say, something in me felt intimidated), as well as excited, about spending more time on Focusing and being more committed to a journey that would (hopefully) contribute to self-growth, self-acceptance, and being more compassionate towards myself and all of my parts.

The journal aims, as Nina puts it, "to help with reflection and integration, getting to know oneself better, honouring and loving all your parts by writing about them." Beautiful! There are some examples and ideas provided on how to write things down if unsure. The journal invites us to pay attention to: the parts in us that were present during the Focusing session; sensations we were experiencing in the body at the time; words, phrases, or images that may have come up; as well as key takeaways, and how to take things forward if one wishes to do so.

I also really appreciated the journal's invitation to be creative with what has come up, for example, drawing, singing the parts, dance them out, etc. I haven't yet been brave enough to follow up on these suggestions (maybe some embarrassed part stopping me, worth exploring).

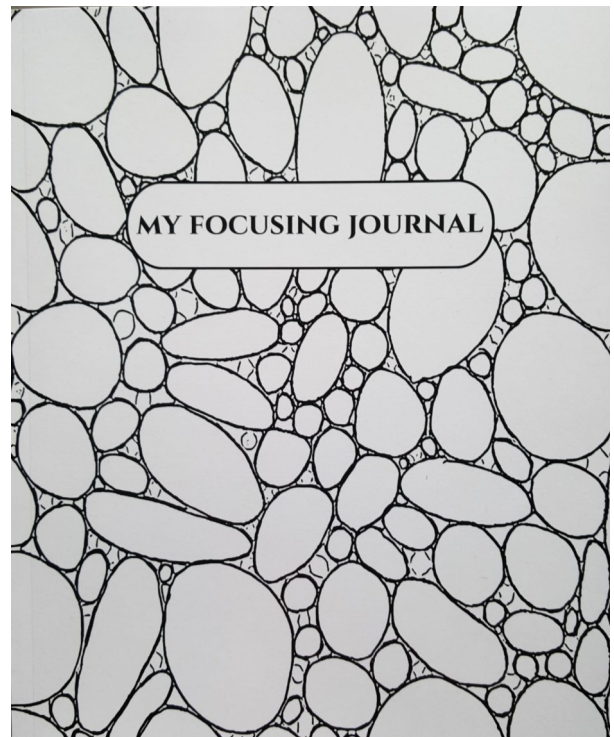
During the process of using this journal and engaging more with Focusing, I do feel like I got to know myself quite a bit better. For example, I realised how my rational problem-solving part has been such a blessing in my life. I used to think that I "should" be more able to "let go", however, I have realised how much I appreciate that part in me that has always worked so hard to understand things and has helped me so much to achieve things that have been important to me.

While I have learnt, more and more, to be truthful to myself (obviously, this will be an ongoing journey), and to my experience, I have also gained a deeper understanding of how those "gatekeepers" and "guards" in me can be so useful. Whilst in Focusing sessions we may allow ourselves to be vulnerable to discover more about ourselves, in other situations it might be appropriate to be a bit more cautious if needed.

Just now re-reading my notes in the journal from earlier, I notice myself feeling deeply touched. Rather than disapproval and rejection of those parts of myself that I didn't like, there is an increased sense of self-love and acceptance. There is compassion when I read about how sad or alone or not heard some of these parts of me may have felt. Don't we all want that? To be seen and heard and acknowledged by others? Can we try and do that for the whole of ourselves, too? Or, if that feels too difficult, can we just be with those parts in curiosity, as Peter Gill suggests in his book "The Way of Curiosity"?

While engaging with journaling, I also realised that it might not be necessary to expect myself to experience mind-blowing and loving "wow" moments in every Focusing session (even though that might happen, and may feel very exciting if it does happen). For me personally, it seems to be more a step-by-step approach of "being with" the whole of myself, and with all of these sensations and parts, rather than expecting myself to love them all/myself straight away, which can feel overwhelming.

To summarise, journaling on my Focusing experiences has motivated me to commit more to my Focus-



ing practice; helped me to reflect on what I have taken away from Focusing sessions; supported me in being with, welcoming and appreciating all of my parts; and has been invaluable in helping me to appreciate my journey and self-growth.

Unfortunately, I have not yet been able to meet Nina, however, I'd like to thank her for creating this wonderful Focusing journal. I would really recommend it for anyone who would like to dive deeper into their Focusing practice, and reflect on their journey of self-growth.

I'll finish with what I kept on writing down after my Focusing sessions, in response to "something I'd like to say to myself, my body, my parts", and which I feel we should say to ourselves and to each other more often:

"I am sorry that you've felt unheard" and "You are loved".

'My Focusing Journal' is available from Amazon <https://a.co/d/6rXrKLu>

***Nina Trebec** discovered Focusing in 2018 after moving to Bristol, UK, and has been Focusing ever since. Enthusiastic and curious by nature, she loves to express herself through various art forms, including writing, dance, physical theatre, music, and visual art. She loves sharing her passion for playful expression with others through expressive art and physical theatre workshops. Her journey of self-discovery combined with the habit of noting down what happened during her Focusing sessions inspired her to create 'My Focusing journal'. Nina is currently resident in the Portuguese island of Madeira.*

nina.trebec@gmail.com



***Elisabeth Weiland** is originally from Germany, and works as a Cognitive Behavioural Therapist in the Bristol area. She attended some training related to identifying and acknowledging parts a few years back, and has also practised 'parts work' in combination with chair work, within the context of her work. Elisabeth is about to begin training in Gestalt therapy in autumn. Recently, she discovered Eugene Gendlin's Focusing video clips on YouTube, and has since attended webinars by Peter Gill, and engaged in local Focusing groups and sessions.*

Local and Online Focusing Groups

Brighton and Sussex Focusing Circle. Meets monthly in Brighton, usually on the fourth Saturday of the month from 2–4pm. Contact: Anna anna@workpsychologyhub.co.uk

Bristol Insight Focusing Group. Meets once a month on Sunday mornings. Open to anyone interested in Focusing, regardless of experience. Contact: Gordon gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk

Focusing with Poetry Group. Meets online every 6 weeks on a Saturday or Sunday morning. Contact: Gordon gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk

London Focusing Circle. A list of people in the London area who are available for Focusing partnership. £5 joining fee. <http://www.focusing.co.uk/circle.html>

Online Focusing Group. Open to those who have done the Focusing Skills Certificate training. Meets once a month on Wednesday evenings. Contact Paula paulanewman930@hotmail.com

Manchester Focusing Practice Group. Meets in Manchester for a morning once a month from 10.30am to 1pm usually on a Sunday. Contact Wendy wendy.brocklehurst@btinternet.com

Sheffield Focusing Group. Meets weekly at Sheffield Central Library on a Saturday morning/afternoon or Wednesday evening. www.solar-active.com/focusing_group Contact: david@solar-active.com

South Yorkshire Focusing Group. Open group which meets monthly. Contact: Hugh hughknopf@rocketmail.com

Stroud Focusing Circle. Meets monthly in Stroud on the first Wednesday or Thursday of the month from 7.30–9.45pm. Contact: Peter livingfocusing@fastmail.com

WhatsApp Groups

International 'Find a Focusing Partner' WhatsApp Group

For finding a Focusing partner for a swap at short notice. Send an email to Sarah sparula@gmail.com for further information.

Bristol Area 'Find a Focusing Partner' WhatsApp Group

For finding a Focusing partner in the Bristol area—either at short notice for a swap, or for an ongoing Focusing partnership. Send a message to Isla 07876 645566 or Catherine 07726 536960

Bristol Area Focusing Community WhatsApp Group

For sharing information about local or online Focusing or Focusing-related events or courses. Send a message to Isla 07876 645566 or Catherine 07726 536960

Workshops

Full details of workshops by BFA members can be viewed [here](#) on the BFA website

Resources and Further Information

British Focusing Association (BFA) www.focusing.org.uk

For further information about all matters relating to Focusing in the UK, including a list of practitioners, articles, events, training, resources, etc.

To see past issues of this newsletter click on 'Menu' on the home page, then 'Useful Resources' or click www.focusing.org.uk/useful-resources

You can sign up to receive this newsletter regularly and freely by using the link above, entering your name and email address, then hitting the 'Subscribe' button .

BFA Facebook Forum www.facebook.com/groups/206601209671323/

An easy way to quickly connect with other UK Focusers and to see and post events.

The International Focusing Institute www.focusing.org

The International Focusing Institute (formerly The Focusing Institute) is the 'world HQ' of Focusing and is a source of all sorts of information about Focusing. The website gives access to the Gendlin Online Library as well as lots of articles on a wide range of subjects by other Focusing teachers. The website also carries over one hundred (30-50min) audio interviews conducted by Serge Prengel with a wide variety of Focusing teachers that have been recorded since 2008. These can be streamed or downloaded from the website.

Focusing Initiatives International focusinginternational.org

The European Focusing Association (EFA) efa-focusing.eu

The Irish Focusing Network <https://www.focusing.ie/>

Newsletter Involvement & Contributions

Contributions to the newsletter are welcome and invited. This includes articles, poems, book reviews, photographs, news, event & group details, etc.

Articles should generally be in the range of 500—1500 words. Inclusion of articles will be at the discretion of the editors. Some contributions may be held over for inclusion in a future issue.

Please feel free to contact us if you would like to discuss an idea you have for an article.

Help in producing the newsletter is also welcome and anyone who would like to be involved is invited to get in touch—this could be editing, design & layout, proof-reading, distribution, etc.

Feedback & Ideas

Your feedback is invited! We would really like to know what you think of the newsletter and if you have any suggestions or ideas for its development. Please send an email with feedback to Gordon. We hope to add extra features in forthcoming issues.

Forthcoming Issues of the Newsletter:

The newsletter is normally published three times a year. Submissions for the next issue in **Winter 2024/25** are welcome anytime.

The deadline for receiving contributions for this issue is **30th November 2024**.