

What is Focusing-Oriented Expressive Arts Therapy?

Focusing-Oriented Expressive Arts Therapy integrates Eugene Gendlin's Focusing with all of the expressive arts, including dance-movement, writing, music, psychodrama, drama therapy, and intermodal expressive therapy. Expressive arts therapy can be interwoven into Gendlin's original Focusing (1981), and Focusing-Oriented Therapy (1996).

Focusing provides a doorway to the expressive arts through the felt sense. When accessing a felt sense of an issue or experience, the client checks to see if there is a word, phrase, image, gesture, or sound that matches or acts like a handle for the inner felt sense. A handle or symbol is easily transferred to expressive art modalities as follows:

<u>Handle/Symbol</u>	<u>Expressive Art Modality</u>
A word or phrase-----	poem or writing
Image-----	visual art
Gesture-----	movement or dance
Sound-----	music or sound exploration

In Focusing-Oriented Expressive Arts Therapy, the therapeutic unfolding can occur in two ways:

1. **Focusing that opens to expressive art:** usually occurs after accessing a handle or symbol for a felt sense. As stated above, a word or phrase becomes a poem/writing; an image develops into art, a gesture opens into movement, and a sound becomes music.
2. **Expressive art followed by Focusing:** Focusing steps are interwoven into the arts process. For example, after the client reaches a stopping place with the arts expression, the therapist may ask her/him to check inside and to notice the felt sense; or to keep it company; or ask it questions, such as "What is the crux of it?"; What does it need? What's in the way?, etc.

Benefits of integrating Focusing and the expressive arts:

- Provides expression beyond words for the felt sense
- Grounds the client after being absorbed in the creative process
- Clarifies meaning of the creative process
- Helps the client identify congruence between the art and felt sense.
- Unleashes creative intelligence with body's innate wisdom

