

**Energy Flow
Focusing
Explorations**

**Passageways
Into Your
Hidden Treasures**

Christel Kraft, M.Ed.

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This account of my personal story with
Energy Flow Focusing Explorations
is dedicated to
my teachers, students, friends.

My thanks go to my husband and best friend, Siegfried,
who has always encouraged me to explore and learn.

My appreciation goes to my children
Gabrielle, Wolfram, Siegfried, and Ursula,
who accept and love me as I am.

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PROLOGUE - A DEEPER SPIRITUAL CONNECTION

Tears of thankfulness and relief trickle down my cheeks. The wonder and awe of living through these last moments/hours feel beyond words and description.

There have been other feelings like these before, but not as deep. This time the preceding despair and fear was suffocating my whole being. How did I get from that dark space into this glorious Light?

Slowly I remember. My whole body seemed like a big lump of paralyzing fear - a fear about everything, a fear that could not be pinpointed to anything specific. A fear beyond fear - the darkest abyss of nothingness pushing me yet deeper into a void of naked terror and separation. My inner struggle and rebellion, my cries for help, were lost in this endless bottomless pit of agony.

Finally I gave up - gave up the struggle and inner thrashing around. I allowed myself to let go - let go into wherever this whirling suction was taking me - deeper and deeper, just allowing - being in and with it. Deeper yet - - falling into - - - .

Then there was Light. A gentle caressing Light surrounded me - yes - somewhat familiar - I had been in this Light filled space before - it was holding, carrying me now. More movement, gentle at first - and then the dance. DANCING IN THE LIGHT - what a glorious floating sense of effortless dancing - my body feels light, carried forward in this Light space - forever, slowly, gracefully moving. -

A deeper letting go into this space caused another shift into BEING DANCED BY THE LIGHT. - Yes, this feels complete, whole, full. Can I stay here forever? Can I live my outer life in this awareness? EFFORTLESS BEING DANCED BY THE LIGHT.

I come out of this experience simultaneously exhausted and energized. There is a knowing now present, a deeper trust born out of experience. A deep desire of wanting to live my life in and from this place of BEING DANCED BY THE LIGHT.

Has there been a beginning, a step by step forward movement towards this fullness of knowing?

Highlights of my path bubble up, shimmering iridescent spheres of Light. It feels as if all my life has been a preparation for this mind blowing fulfillment of my deepest longing for the unknown, and yet it was always deeply known and remembered. Is this where I came from? Is this what I have longed to be re-united with from as far back as I remember? Is this what poets and saints have tried to express, when in reading I felt a deep resonating recognition?

As I allow my experience bubbles to surface, I perceive a succession of events, enlarging, unfolding. Yes, I will share my journey into the Light.

.....

WHO IS CHRISTEL KRAFT?

I want to begin the answer to this question with a quote from a woman I deeply admire. When I read her words, my heart rejoiced, and I gave thanks to the people who have helped me find my own freedom from this particular fear. I offer Marianne's wisdom and some sketches of my own story as encouragement.

*Our deepest fear
is not that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear
is that we are powerful beyond measure.*

*It is our light, not our darkness
that most frightens us;
We ask ourselves:
Who am I to be brilliant,
gorgeous, talented, fabulous?
Actually, who are you not to be?*

*You are a child of God.
Your playing small does not serve the world.
There's nothing enlightened about shrinking
so that other people
won't feel insecure around you.
We are all meant to shine, as children do.*

*We are born to make manifest
the glory of God that is within us.
It's not just in some of us;
it's in everyone.
And, as we let our own light shine,
we unconsciously give other people
permission to do the same.*

*As we're liberated from our fear,
our presence automatically liberates others.*

by Marianne Williamson
in *Return to Love*

Why do we hesitate to acknowledge our achievements? Where does a belief come from that we should hide our light when even the Bible tells us to let it shine and we teach our children the song of “. . . little light, let it shine. . .?” Which twisted teachings require us to forget loving and accepting ourselves, when self-love is the prerequisite that enables us to even begin loving and accepting others? - Why do we hope for others to give us some confirmation of our own self worth, telling us how wonderful we are? - Do we need to wait till we are dead and then maybe have others piece together our life achievements?

Why not acknowledge that we are made in the image of God? - God is perfect and so are we. - Did Jesus not teach us that He has come to show us the Way? The way towards what? - As I understand it now, the Way towards freedom. - Freedom from what? - Could it be that He meant freedom from fear? - The fear that Marianne talks about: the fear about acceptance of our inheritance as children of God, fear of the responsibility to “. . .make manifest the glory of God within us. . .”? Do we not dare to "let our light shine"?

My greatest and deepest joy in life came gradually, as I began to discard old beliefs and brainwashed programming, listening instead to that inner knowing that assured me that I am perfect in my struggles to become whole, that I am perfect in my evolutionary process of being the best I know how, at every stage in my development.

Looking back at the precious gift of now 67 years in this earthly dimension, I am amazed, awed, and grateful for all my achievements, the impact I have had on other people's lives, and the inspiration I provided for their development. Much of this has been uplifting, other aspects might have seemed wrong by some judgments. I believe that all of it has been life giving and perfect by some higher standard of measuring.

Many far reaching accomplishments and "ripple effects" of my actions are hidden from me. However, contemplating this subject, I feel a sense of achievement - my 67 years have not been wasted, even though my present “retired” life feels at times a bit void of meaning and purpose, compared to my more active years. - There is still a sense of many un-lived potentials and missed opportunities. Roads not taken haunt me in my quiet moments. At every fork in the road, decisions had to be made, yet I know, the choices I followed came from

a deep inner questioning and listening to the still small voice within.

What was my purpose in being born into my original family? I remember some meditations where I entered a knowing that I did not want to come into this world, but a gentle presence urged me on. - There was a loving mother and father waiting for just this particular soul to enter their home. Little do I know what I contributed to their lives - perhaps adding some purpose and meaning, some challenges that they needed for their own growth and development.

For my siblings I was the older sister. - Did they learn something about their own strength by resisting my controlling and bullying behavior? I hope so. - Later in life we could talk about some of our interactions and there were times when they sought and valued my advice and counsel. They appreciated that they could trust me and shared many confidences. - Although our meetings are now few and far apart, there is still a connection that is very tangible and quickly rekindled. We shared the horrors and hardships before, during, and after the Second World War in Germany. The experiences left us disillusioned perhaps, but less gullible towards propaganda. Instead of wasting away in bitterness about our lost youth, we pulled together and established a new life for our family.

In my friendships during the first years of my life I was a follower. My support and caring for my friends must have enhanced their self worth - probably doing very little for my own. I was there for them, not having any clear established boundaries of my own. All that changed as the result of a deeply mystical/spiritual experience, when I was about 17 years old. This powerful awakening seemed to set me apart as an individual who was unconditionally loved as a unique being by a God who did not resemble much of the teachings I had received about Him. My commitment to this God who loved and guided me from an inner quiet space has been and still is the solid ground of all my achievements.

Gradually, I started to let go of the pleasing behavior I had put on in order to be accepted and loved by others. I developed an inner strength to follow what was right for me. I found the courage to be different. I followed my own drumbeat, often in opposition to friends and parents. I knew what I wanted and went after it with determination and clarity of purpose. My academic achievements were important for me, and I always stayed at the top of my class.

I look back at the young woman who entered a career related men's world

with enthusiasm and ignorance of the "rules of the game". I did not play by their rules and was soon fiercely disliked by those who expected me to be a follower and cater to the male chauvinistic dominance. From others I elicited respect and was soon singled out for responsible positions and leadership. -

What happened to that willful and self determined woman when she gave up her career plans, followed an inner leading, came to Canada and married a very strong and self assured man? - I consider this one of my greatest achievements: I became a wife to my husband, mother of four children - and survived! The familiar I, the Me, Myself became submerged for many years under the well staged role of a traditional Christian, supportive, caring, loving wife, mother and frugal Hausfrau. I did it all and did it well. -

When I took time to contemplate, I realized that parts of me seemed lost. Yet, I had chosen this path and lived up to my own expectation of being the best I could be in this role as long as this was necessary in our circumstances. As the children grew up, some question haunted me: How much do we take our efforts and each other for granted? How much longer did I have to let only certain parts of me live? Who was I really? What else in me needed acknowledgment? Were there some options I could look at? -

A training course for sewing instructors caught my attention. - I started teaching in our basement, and soon had the neighborhood interested in creating garments for their families. During the next few years, several hundred people were inspired by my efforts. My business sense expanded the operation to include collaboration with some fabric stores in the city. I got a lot of satisfaction from this venture, and every dollar went into a special bank account. My first car and the purchase of our cottage in Victoria Beach, a quiet resort area at Lake Winnipeg, resulted from these savings. (This is the place were we later built our retirement home and now live permanently).

My academic education had been interrupted during the war, and my longing for more learning compelled me to enroll as a Mature Student at the University. I started out with one course a semester, still doubtful if my English was sufficient. I succeeded and gradually increased my course load. During my sewing classes I had discovered an aptitude for teaching and elected my studies in Psychology and Education.

A Bachelor degree was followed by a Master in Educational Psychology, and after 25 years of home and school, I was ready again to enter the big, wide open career world. Or so I thought. The world out there was not anxiously waiting for me, and jobs were hard to come by in the early eighties. A great deal of confidence, combined with a daring adventurous attitude landed me my first one year term position as a researcher for the Canadian Paraplegic Association. The puzzle I had to investigate related to the low employment of their spinal cord injured clients. I had no idea what I was getting myself into. - Suffice it to say that I was instrumental in establishing a program which increased the employment rate from near zero to over 60%. The approach I implemented is still working.

I had experimented with many new ideas, and learned a great deal during this first year. What next? Equipped with my well documented research report, I convinced some government officials to fund an experimental employment program for persons with various physical disabilities. The trial period was successful, and I am looking back to eight years as the director of an agency which had grown from one and a half employees to a group of ten carefully selected, enthusiastic, hard working facilitators who have assisted hundreds of clients. Friends were elicited to volunteer as members of our Board of Directors and tirelessly assisted our efforts. - I still feel a glow of satisfaction when I think back on that period in my life, and am overcome by a sense of nostalgia during my occasional visits to this still successful agency.

My studies at the University and other training courses had given me the tools to become an effective counselling therapist. This had enabled me to train my staff and establish a part time private practice, which is still part of my otherwise "retired" life.

Painting, Stained Glass, and many other hobbies had become enjoyable activities. What was to be next? - I am still in the process towards achieving a total acceptance that it is okay to "just enjoy life" without the drive to do, do, do. I have chosen Joy and Beauty as my guiding stars for the next decades of my life.

This has not kept me from continuing to read and explore the expanding field of Psychology, Mysticism, and Spirituality. I am excited and deeply grateful when I become aware how all of these blend together into what I perceive as the energy flow of Oneness in the one Spirit. And this I like to live and teach.

- - - - -

The Beginning of my Focusing Adventures.

I want to acknowledge Elisabeth, my teacher, friend, confidante, and much more, who not only showed me the way into a fulfilling and heart-centered life but lived it.

She left her earthly body a couple of years ago, after much physical pain and suffering. Her long illness was and still is one of the unresolved mysteries in my understanding. It should not have happened to her - of all people! And yet, she accepted her ordeal with only occasional complaints, serving the people around her with unwavering inner strength and faith.

I still see her regal presence as I met her almost 50 years ago. She was present when I had my first conscious mystical/spiritual experience which has greatly influenced my life. She was there as a caring, understanding support to hold me as I was swept into an ocean of something that I can only express as a "homecoming, unconditional love sensation". She put my experience into a context of her own limited wisdom and guided me for most of my formative teen years.

Who was this seemingly ageless person we knew as Tante Elisabeth? She had been called to the ministry as a Diakoness (the equivalent of a nun in a Protestant church). Together with another sister, she was running a children's nursery, and hosted a small religious group on the premises. Connected to this was a youth group, where I found a nurturing womb for my spiritual growth.

Tante Elisabeth conducted the bible studies and provided personal counselling and guidance. I consider her unique approach to counselling as one of the most valuable experiences of my life. She never gave advice or direction; she was totally accepting without any trace of judgment; she was an attentive, listening, loving presence.

I can still sense myself sitting in her little, comfortable, quiet living room where we settled after a few moments of chit-chat. Soon, a special stillness surrounded her and I felt gradually drawn into this emanating presence. I never asked her if it was her silent prayers that created for me a feeling of being on "holy grounds". Usually I was too filled with my own problems and upheavals to inquire about her preparations for these sessions. All I knew was that I was totally safe to unpack everything that felt unclear or burdensome in my life. She

listened. She listened in a way which I have never encountered again. Yes, I have, and still try to emulate her when I am with one of my clients now, but still feel inadequate when I compare myself with her and the gift she was able to give.

She created a space for me to be all I ever was, or could be. No judgment. I was free to express the totality of all my jumbled emotions, no editing or holding back. No thought or feeling was taboo. The whole beautiful and ugly truth of my complete beingness could spill out. Being received in this way, I could begin to accept all of me as an evolving, unfolding human being, perfect in all its stages of learning and discerning.

I still marvel at the unfoldment of clarity that I received every time I visited her. Where did that come from? Why could I not do that for myself? Is it the mystery of: "Where two or three are gathered in my Name. . ."? I felt the Presence of more than the two of us. I experienced the soothing of my own inner conflicts, an often piercing insight, potential for choice. I felt my own power and strength for commitment, but most of all I felt an exhilarating awareness of Oneness with this Presence, and at the same time my own unique separateness and purpose. - I always left with a tranquil joy and assurance that my life was unfolding as a marvelous adventure.

I missed her painfully when my path took me to Canada and an ocean separated us. I know now that there were other learnings for me which she could not have provided and understood. When I visited her a few times during those years, I had to face up to some of her limitations, particularly in the narrowness of her belief system. There was disappointment, and later loving acceptance of our differences.

However, the legacy of her wordless teaching and her Beingness compelled me to further pursue the career I had embarked upon. I wanted to become for others what she had been for me. I surpassed her psychological knowledge, but realized throughout my training, that no amount of learning could substitute for the unconditionally loving presence she had evolved into. She still represents a goal I am attempting to reach.

Do I want to write another book on Focusing?

For years I have contemplated this question and managed to quiet the voice inside which kept prompting me to share some of my knowledge and experiences. From time to time, friends, clients, and participants of groups I conducted during the course of 25 years urged me to put into writing what they enjoyed in my presentations, which I often interspersed with many personal anecdotes.

Before I discovered Dr. E.T.Gendlin's book *Focusing*, I was aware that what I was “doing inside” was not a common experience for many people I encountered. I could sense and feel issues in my body and made decisions from that sensing/feeling place. I used to stay with and accept **all my sensations**, “good, bad, or indifferent”, allowed them to go deeper, open up their stories, and lead me to ever new discoveries. I labeled this process “Going to the Roots”.

When a friend gave me the *Focusing* book, I recognized that I was not alone in my explorations. I got in touch with Dr. Gendlin, participated in a week-long workshop with him, and gladly joined the International Focusing Institute. For almost 20 years I have been a Focusing Trainer and Coordinator. I still teach Focusing, and/or incorporate it in my private counselling therapy practice and in group sessions.

I found a deeper spiritual connection in “The Institute for Bio-Spiritual Research” and have been affiliated with and a member of that organization for many years.

Although I draw inspiration from many teachings, I have developed my own unique intuitive style which begged for some “labeling”. I ask for and receive guidance from a Higher Source: God, Christ, Spirit, All-that-is, Universal Energy (who can name it's unspeakable vastness!), which fills me with ever increasing energies and clarity when I facilitate a person's or group's process. Here I am allowed to draw from a resource which includes not only all I have learned, read, and experienced, but adds many “surprises”, which I gratefully want to acknowledge as Spirit's gifts.

Energy Flow Focusing Explorations - EFFE, is a book about my adventures, not only with Focusing, but with many ***Passageways into my Hidden Treasures***. Enjoy!

ABOUT FOCUSING

A flash of insight, a sudden change in perception - why did I not see this before? Where was it before it entered my consciousness? - A headache relieved, a long standing pain disappearing; tensions released and changed into an unexpected energy flow. - Peacefulness and joy after frustration and depression - fear and anger gone.

Is there some way to access all this, or do we have to leave it all to chance, to some miraculous intervention? - I had asked the question, and answers seemed to come from all directions: books, people I met, circumstances which led to unexpected events, which again led to . . . led to . . .

I am tempted to prescribe my own journey for you. I will not do this, because I have come to believe that each person has enough integrity to find truth and guidance in themselves. What I will do, however, is to briefly share a method that works for me and many others I know and who I have facilitated in their process.

Visualization, Focusing, and Dream Work has been described in many books. In all three of these approaches, our rational, intellectual "knowing" is set aside momentarily, so that something new can emerge.

What usually happens when we are working on a given issue, is that our analytical mind goes through the same process over and over again, creating a vicious circle with no solution. A project might need a new creative approach, but our mind is cluttered with old concepts; repressed issues that have not been dealt with and are blocking energies in our body, often resulting in sickness and pain.

Creative Visualization and Focusing are processes which guide you to a deeper level of awareness and knowing inside your body. It is on this level that unresolved, tension producing issues are carried. When touched upon in a certain relaxed state, these change and resolve in unexpected ways. Messages carried in dreams, open up and reveal their intended meaning.

Steps for these processes can be learned and be applied for self help in problem solving, personal growth, interpersonal relationships, and peer counselling. These methods have been proven effective in the areas of healing,

preventative medicine, education, business, creative writing, and spirituality. All these areas are part of our lives, part of our wholeness, and therefore part of our health.

Talking about and being aware of our emotions and feelings is useful, seeking medical intervention for health problems has its place, but there is more to us than we have been conditioned to believe. Tapping inner resources through Focusing, will open up unexpected, surprising options and possibilities for health and healing.

In the following pages I will introduce you to a basic form of Focusing which I discovered in Dr. E.T. Gendlin's book *Focusing*. The exciting thing for me was that Gene, as I have come to know him, described a process that was very familiar to me, but in his book he gave us a framework for teaching it. I was finishing my Masters Degree in Educational Psychology and knew that his *Focusing*, which also incorporated Carl Roger's Client Centered Therapy, would be a big part of my counselling method.

Over the years, I have developed my own teaching style and incorporated many other wonderful facilitative tools. Yet, the basic focusing attitude, the unconditionally accepting listening, seems to me the vitally important ingredient for any successful facilitation of another person's growth process.

As I guide you through several of my

Energy Flow Focusing Explorations - EFFE,

as I have come to call them, you will discover or re-discover and recognize other methods for human potential and growth facilitation. Many individuals, books, workshops and seminars have contributed to my own development and become part of my teaching. I have tried to identify and acknowledge most sources, yet I have lost some during the years, as I molded and incorporated them into my own framework.

Background and Definition of Focusing

Focusing was developed by Eugene T. Gendlin, Ph.D. at the University of Chicago. He and his colleagues were exploring why therapy succeeds for some patients, and not for others. To their surprise they found that it was not the particular method of therapy, but a “*something*” that the successful patient did *inside*. This was later called FOCUSING, and Dr. Gendlin developed a step-by-step process through which this skill can be taught.

Focusing is paying attention to a *bodily felt sense* of a situation, problem, or other issue. Focusing “. . . is more physical than feelings, and not merely body sensations, but the juncture where meanings are bodily. Creative change arises at this directly sensed edge of awareness, whether in thinking, psychotherapy, self growth, art, or healing.” “Focusing and its philosophy has been applied in a wide variety of fields from Physics to Poetry to Psychotherapy. The philosophy behind focusing is part of the current Beyond Post Modernism movement.”

(Focusing Institute Institute brochure)

“Like any powerful new idea, *FOCUSING* is not readily described in old terms. It moves us into unfamiliar territory. . . it is at once a manual and a philosophy. It talks about the body’s wisdom, the steps of the focusing technique, and how to discover the richness in others by learning to listen. It looks at the potential for a new kind of relationship and a new kind of society.

(from the introduction of E.T. Gendlin’s book *Focusing* by Marilyn Ferguson)

“Focusing is a body-oriented process of self-awareness and emotional healing. It’s as simple as noticing how you feel - and then having a conversation with your feelings in which you do most of the listening. . . . Focusing is the process of listening to your body in a gentle, accepting way and hearing the messages that your inner self is sending you. It’s a process of honoring the wisdom that you have inside you, becoming aware of the subtle level of knowing that speaks to you through your body.”

(Ann Weiser Cornell, Ph.D. in *The Power of Focusing, A Practical Guide to Emotional Self-Healing*)

In describing Bio-Spiritual Focusing, Ed McMahan says: “Grace touches us first through our bodies, not our minds. . . . Focusing provides the basis for a new global spirituality that can reshape our lives by healing the violence presently destroying our relationships and by fostering our growth into community of grace.”

(Edwin M. Mac Mahon , Ph.D. in *Beyond the Myth of Dominance, An Alternative to a Violent Society*)

Brief Introduction of Six Focusing Steps.

The following are guidelines for the six Focusing steps. Focusing is a forward moving bodily felt living and the Focuser is always in charge of the process, desirably with a Listener accompanying her/him through attentive, caring, respectful "Being there", with minimal guidance. This will also be elaborated on in several examples.

Outline of six steps based on E.T. Gendlin, *Focusing* (1978, 1981).

I recommend reading this book for detailed explanations and examples of focusing sessions. Several other books on Focusing have been written since, but this one is the first and basic outline of focusing teaching, which Dr. Gendlin wrote after he "uncovered" the elements of successful therapy.

1. Clearing a Space:

Setting aside what comes: "Is there anything in my life right now that keeps me from feeling really good?" Receive what comes and set it temporarily aside. Continue till it feels "clear". (Remember, this might take several minutes).

2. Felt Sense - Feeling for the most important issue right now:

Allow your body sensing to select one issue which feels most hurting, or most urgent, or has most energy, most exciting, etc. DON'T GO INTO IT, JUST OBSERVE! Feel the **unclear sense** of "all of it", "the essence of it". Ask if it is okay to be with it, if yes, continue, if no, feel for another item.

3. The "Handle", quality of "all that":

If it is okay to be with it, sense for the quality of "all of it", how is your body carrying all that? Allow it to express itself. Take whatever comes in an accepting attitude, be with it in a caring way, sense what comes, it might be a word, a symbol, an image - let it emerge slowly from your body sensing. Allow time for it to unfold,

4. Resonating:

With everything that comes, resonate with your body feel and the unfolding "story" which your body gives you. If it feels sticky, stay with it, if it feels scary be gentle with that, - always be with what comes, no judgment, no "editing", just "being-with".

5. Asking:

You might want to ask "it" questions if it does not move on it's own, i.e.: How does the worst of it feel in my body? What would feel like a small step forward in all this? What would feel like a breath of fresh air in this? What are you trying to do for me? How do you need me to be with you right now?

6. Receiving and expressing gratitude:

Always receive with gratitude what comes till it feels like time to stop for now. It might take several sessions to move forward, BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF!

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Outline of six steps based on Edwin M. McMahon, *Beyond the Myth of Dominance, An Alternative to a Violent Society* (1993).

After I had been involved with focusing for many years, I met Ed McMahon through this book and was deeply touched by his words written from a deep inner guided gentle strength. His emphasis is on the **Caring-Feeling-Presence** that we need to bring to our hurting and scary places. While we accompany another person with that attitude, they will be encouraged to bring the same acceptance to themselves. The six steps are similar to the above, but Ed brings a more spiritual emphasis to his teaching.

Preparation:

Take a few moments to settle down into your body, breathing deeply, and noticing what is there, particularly in the solar plexus area. "How does it feel in there?" This will help to get out of the head thinking into a body knowing.

1. Finding a space by taking an inventory:

Asking the question inside if there is anything in your life that keeps you from feeling really good, several issues will surface. Acknowledge each issue, spend a moment with it and gently "set it aside". Do this with every issue that comes up, not only problems, but perhaps a dream, a challenge, something you look forward to.

2. Feeling which one is number one:

Allow your body to indicate which of all the things you have set out wants your attention now. There will be some indication of heavy, sad, exciting that you can feel in your solar plexus area; trust your body to know which one needs to be addressed first.

3. Is it okay to be with this?

Sense if your body says it is alright to be with this. Trust your body to provide the answer. If it says “no”, gently stay with what more comes with this reluctance and give “it” the **caring-feeling-presence** before you continue. Never overrule your body feelings, stay with whatever comes, even if that is something different than the original issue.

4. Letting go into it, just being in it, sensing the whole of it:

Allow yourself to sense how your body is carrying this, let go of what your head knows about it already, let something newly felt emerge. Ed says:”Most of us want to play God and control the feelings we do not like. Step # 4 is allowing them to be heard.”

5. Allowing it to express itself:

Sense if anything else comes, - a word, image, a memory, anything that resonates with the feeling inside. An experienced focusing guide might suggest just the right question to ask into this process. Ed gives us 10 forward moving examples, - follow your inner knowing for which one will be helpful. The option is always there to stop when that feels right. Remember, this is a process which will continue.

6. Nurturing Period:

Take some time to be aware of any change in how you carry this issue in your body now. Savor the moment, give thanks for your body’s wisdom in guiding you. Respect the “unfinishedness”, and emphasize even some little change in this ongoing process.

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Note:

I want to mention two other books which outline the focusing process in great detail:

Ann Weiser Cornell, Ph.D., *The Power of Focusing, A Practical Guide to Emotional Self-Healing*, 1996.

Kevin Flanagan, *Everyday Genius, Focusing on Your Emotional Intelligence*, 1998.

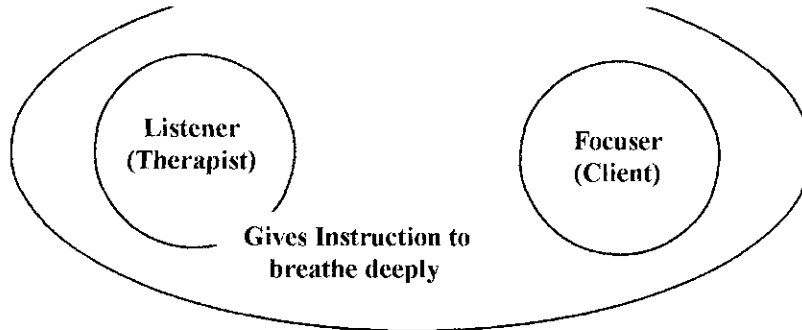
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I will illustrate two examples of a Focusing process in the following pages.

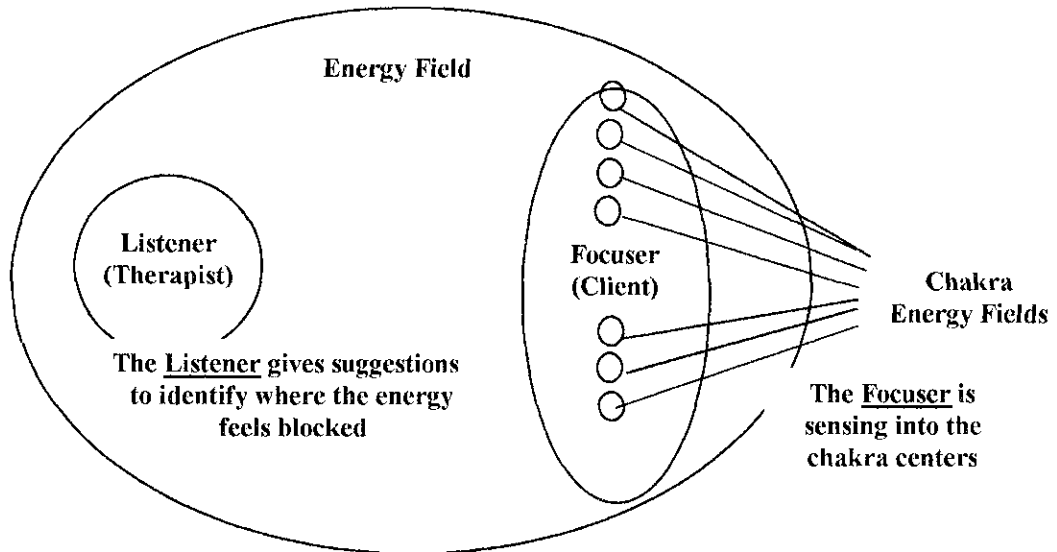
Focusing Example I

Creating an Energy Field of Caring-Feeling-Presence

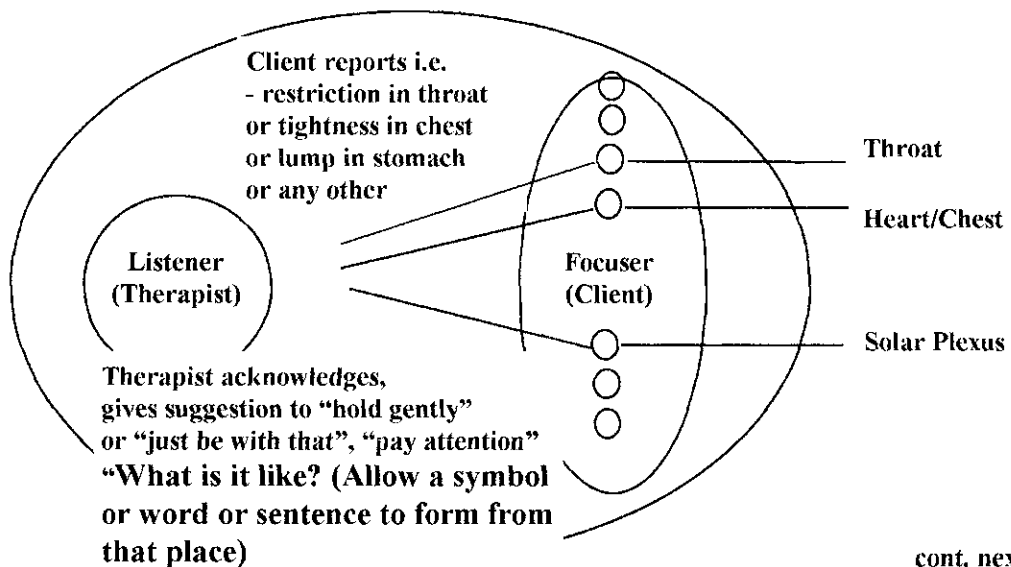
Step I



Step II

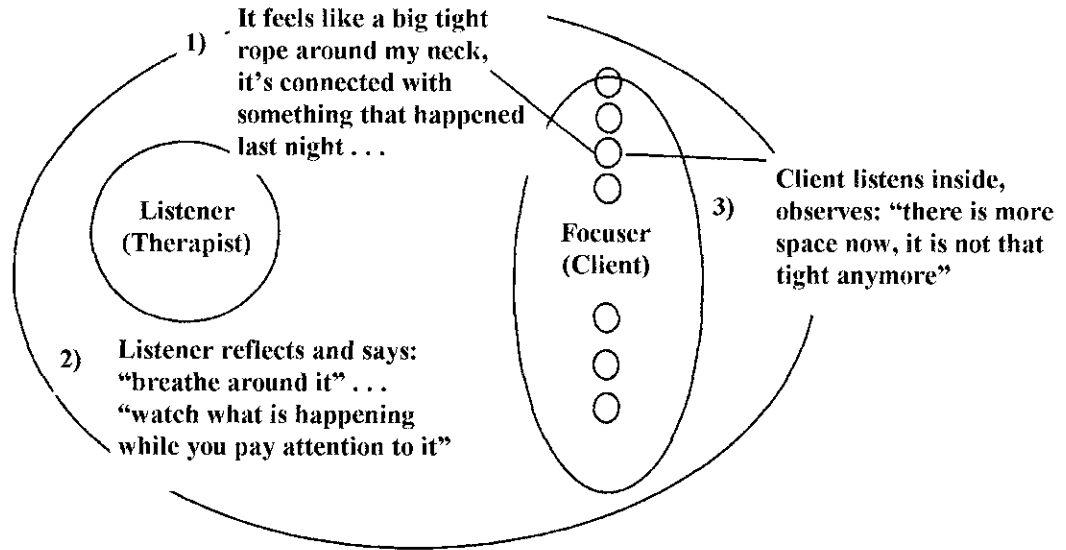


Step III

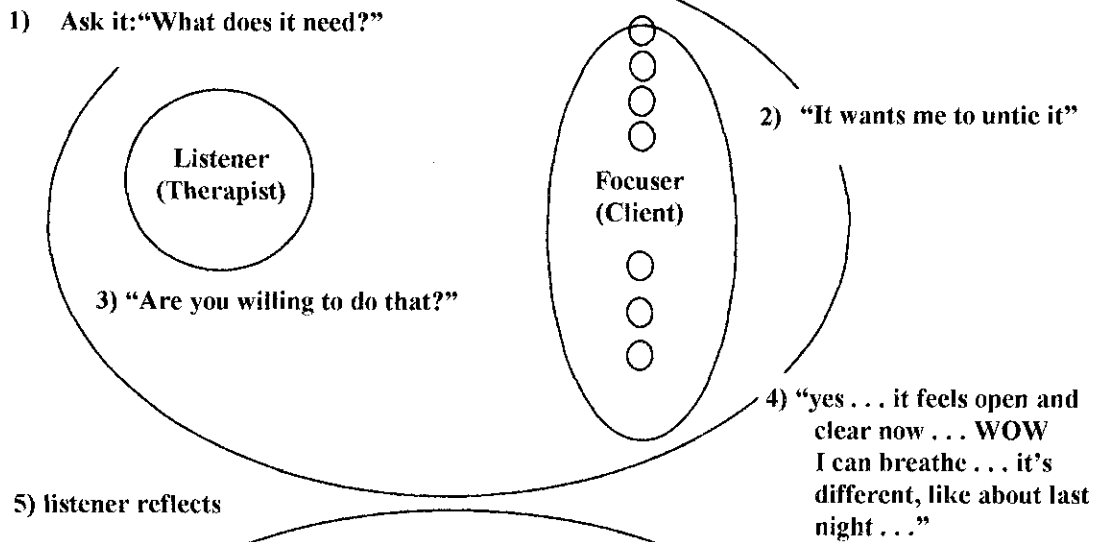


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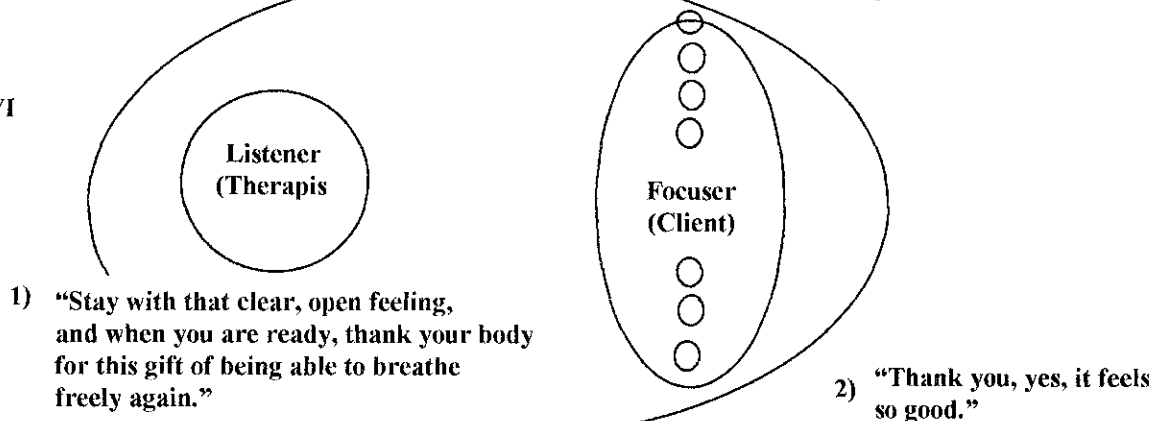
Step IV



Step V

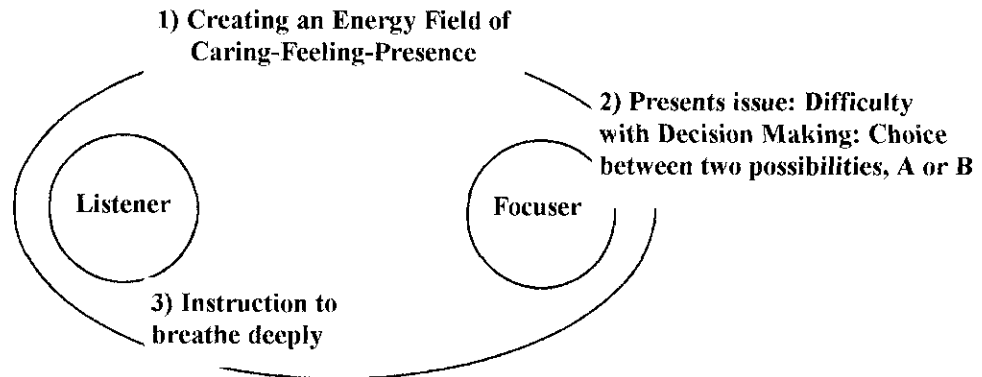


Step VI

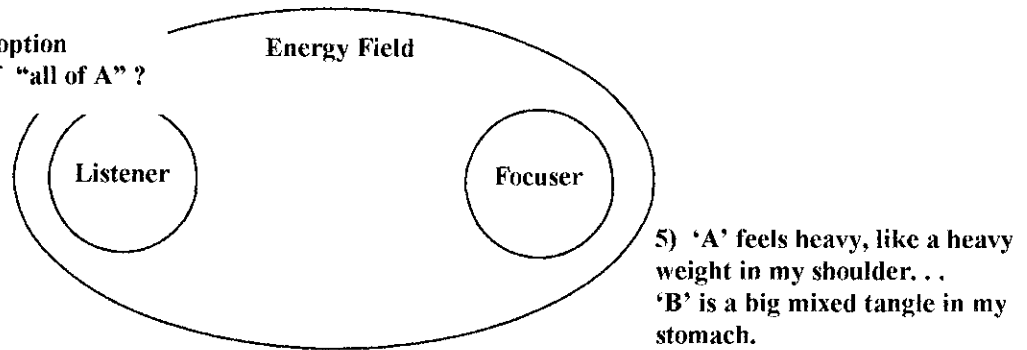


Focusing Example 2

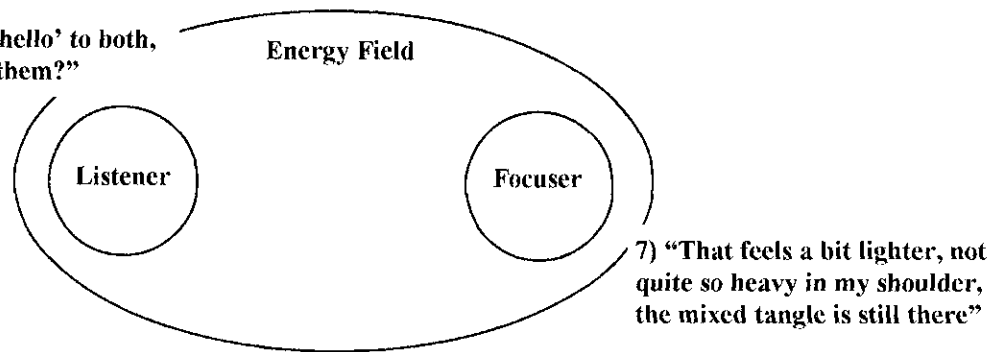
Note: The Listener always reflects first before giving any suggestions



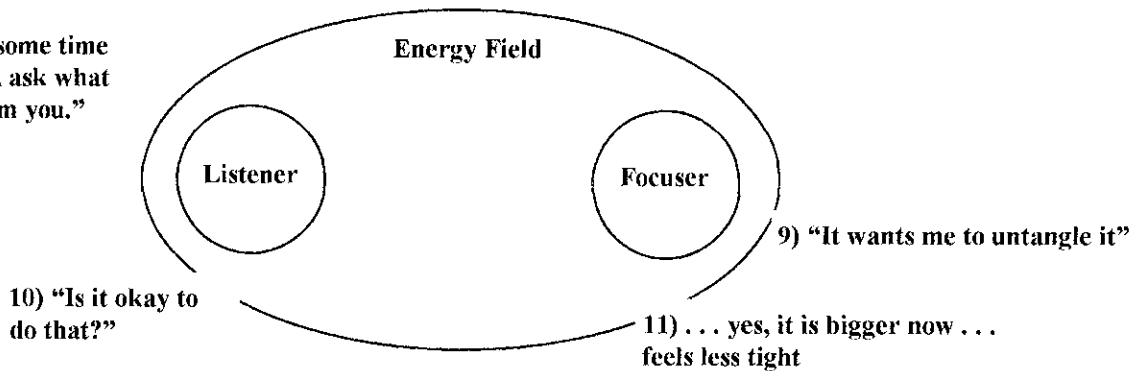
4) Instruction: Sense into each option separately, what is the sense of "all of A" ?



6) "Is it okay to say 'hello' to both, and breathe around them?"

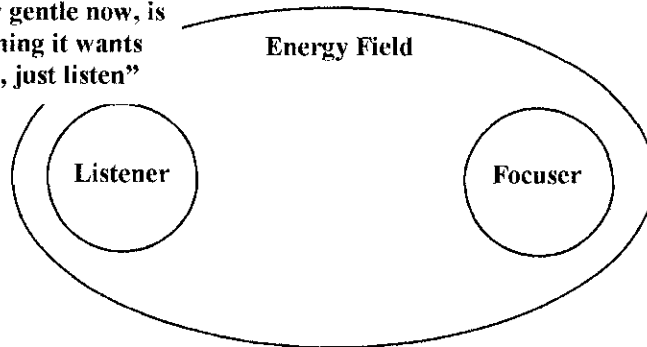


8) "Let's spend some time with that tangle, ask what it would like from you."



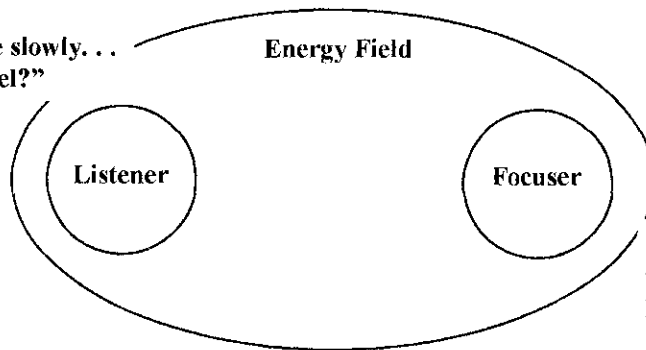
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12) "be very gentle now, is there something it wants you to know, just listen"



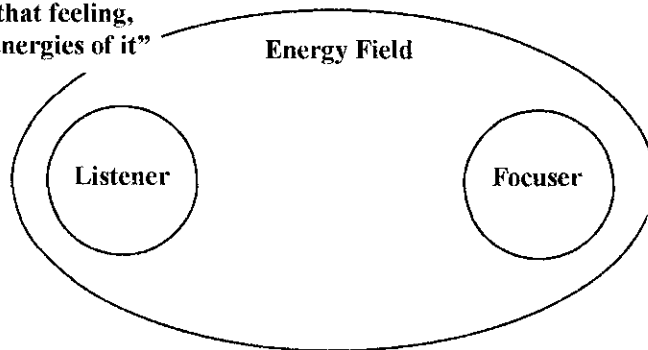
13) "it wants me to be patient with it, . . . untangle it slowly"

14) ". . . untangle slowly. . . How does that feel?"



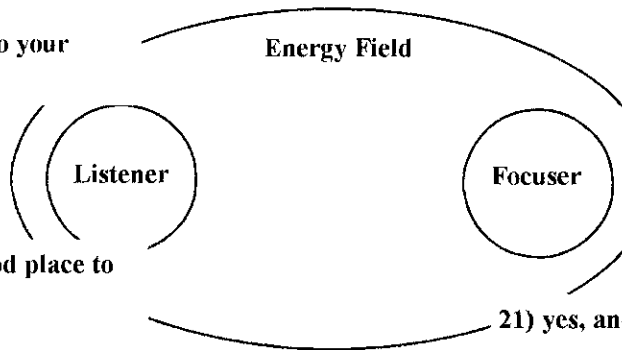
15) . . . It feels like I can breathe, there is more space . . . and some light . . . that feels good. . .

16) "stay with that feeling, sense into the energies of it"



17) . . . It feels like there is life, open, wide, . . . aah. . .

18) How does that connect to your choices?



19) I was scared of 'B' because it is new and unfamiliar, but now it feels like there is more life in 'B' and it feels I can do it. 'A' still feels heavy, I want to shake it off. . . . yeah, that feels good . . . letting it go. . . .

20) Is this a good place to close for now?

21) yes, and it feels so much clearer now.

Active Listening in Focusing

Active, Compassionate Listening is at the heart of Focusing. It is the **caring-feeling-presence** while listening to ourselves and each other that gives us the courage to sense into the dark corners of our psyche and explore the treasures that wait for us to be discovered.

Focusing is usually learned and taught with the assistance of a Listener, who is experienced in Focusing.

Listening can and needs to be learned. When we accompany another person into the unfoldment of their story, we need to know and respect some “ground rules” which I learned years ago during a week-long Focusing training workshop in Chicago. This short version has accompanied me for many years.

Purpose for Active Listening:

- To help deepen a person's process
- To help the person feel cared for, valued and special

Two Levels of Listening:

- 1) Literally, give back to someone what they have just said
- 2) Reflect the felt meaning in what you've heard

Those with no experience in this process need to reflect literally, experienced listeners reflect meaning. If the listener does not get it right, the listenee (Focuser) will say it again and again. Often, what is not right in a response lets what is right suddenly arise more sharply.

The Listener needs to:

- clear own space - to receive the other
- wait with a sense of wonder about how the other will fill the space
- have an attitude of wanting to hear it exactly
- say back literally or felt meaning of what he/she has heard
- listen for the next response
- if focuser says "that's not exactly right" - acknowledge the correction and say back what you now hear.

The Listener's Big "Do Not's":

- Don't give advice
- Don't interrupt
- Don't judge
- Don't argue
- Don't rush in to "fix it"

The Listenee (Focuser) needs to:

- take a moment to check inside what feels comfortable to share
- only shares what feels right
- when the listener says back, check inside to see if that's exactly how it was meant
- if the listenee feels uncomfortable about the response, say so

The Listenee's Big "Do Not's":

- Don't be afraid to correct the listener
- Don't accept advice
- Don't accept interpretations
- Don't accept judgements
- Don't allow "fix-its"

Remember, this is the listenee's (Focuser's) process which needs to be valued and respected!

Focusing turns can also be conducted in **Triads**, where we have:

- One Focuser
- One Listener
- One Observer

These three people rotate their roles, where the focuser becomes the observer, the observer the focuser and the listener the focuser. This order provides some quiet space for the focuser during the next turn. The task of the observer is also to ensure that the listener adheres to the above listening guidelines.

It is suggested that an inexperienced listener refrain from "guiding" the focuser. Only minimal **reflective** responses should be made. You will discover that the **attentive listening alone** allows the focuser to get in touch with their bodily wisdom.

Experiential Listening

I am grateful to Mary Armstrong, Director of The Centre for Focusing in Toronto, who gives us the following guidelines for experiential listening:

- “As much as possible, the listener wants to know what it's like to be the other person at this moment in time.
- As listeners, we need to keep the other person company, staying with them in their process - and certainly not getting "ahead" of them.
- This calls for an attitude of respect and acceptance for the other person's knowing and forward movement.
- The listener assumes the person (and not the listener) knows the answers, even if the person is temporarily confused or uncertain.
- It would be presumptuous to give advice or "know" what needs to happen for the other person.
- The listener attunes with an attitude of humility and trust in the other person's process, waiting patiently.
- Avoid the impression that the person needs to satisfy you, the listener. Ask: "Check inside...", "Ask yourself...".
- Help connect the person with the feelings, watch for "head stuff". Slow down the process at these places, bring back the body sensing.
- It's a human tendency to rush by key entry points into the organism's knowing; watch for signs of avoidance.
- Connect the person again and again with the felt sense; how "all that" feels in the body.
- By slowing down the process and connecting the person with the felt sense, a shift can happen.
- When a shift happens, new knowing or a new way of being with the issue opens up and moves forward.
- It's an honour to be a listener and to be "let in". Tread gently and respectfully of the other's process
- Don't worry if you say something wrong. The listenee (focuser) will correct you. The process tends to be self-correcting. Hearing something back helps the focuser get clearer on how it really is, whether you say it exactly right or not.”

Mary continues to share some of Dr. Gendlin's suggestions about the role of a helpful focusing listener:

“Keeping someone company in their Focusing process is a gentle act of attunement, filled with surprises, awe about the wisdom and creativity of the human psyche and ever growing respect for the Focuser's sense of whatever is uniquely right for them in that moment in time. Since the knowing of what is meant to unfold lies within the Focuser, the Focusing partner needs to attend with an attitude of respect for this knowing and a wish to facilitate, not get in the way by well-meaning attempts to help a poor lost soul by directing or leading.

Which is not to say that skill is not important in partnering. It is not a passive act of admiration. Rather, it requires knowing when to be quiet and when to come in with a suggestion to get things unstuck. It is important to develop a rapport over time with your partner so that you can signal to one another when you want help. It is important, too, to develop a repertoire of suggestions and ways of assisting when the process gets stuck.

Being the partner who is facilitating the other's process is somewhat like being a midwife. Midwives sometimes refer to their work as "catching the baby". In other words, it's not your baby. You've no idea what the baby will look like or how it will come out. As long as everything goes well, you don't interfere with the process. If things get stuck, you use one of your skilled responses to ease the stuckness. But you know there is no way you can make this baby be born. You just keep company with the mother, thereby assisting in bringing forth what emerges from her body.

We all encounter many difficulties when we begin keeping someone else company in Focusing. It can be difficult, for example, not to give advice or ask questions you think might be helpful, instead of trusting that the person will eventually come to their own right knowing. (Of course, if you have a piece of useful, practical information, you can always offer it separately, then let it go, after the Focusing process is finished.) And what do you do, when you think your view of life or your spiritual approach would help this person the way it has proved very meaningful to you? Well, if you're doing something together and calling it Focusing, your contract is that you respectfully keep the other person company in finding their own connectedness. Focusing has to be value free.

You see, we base this approach on the understanding that each individual is unique and still knows, no matter how confused and layered over with wounds,

what is uniquely right for it, if only it is given its space to move forward towards its sense of rightness. (E.T.Gendlin, *Focusing*, p.76). It is the partner's task to support the organism's knowing, trusting it is moving in the direction of its own solutions and growth edge.

So easy to say and so hard to do!

Do we need to say more about **Listening?** I would like to summarize:

Attitudes in Listening:

- Receptive
- Accepting
- Non-judgmental
- Patient
- Compassionate

Passive Listening is silent and gives minimal responses, this might appear as disinterested, while

Active Listening conveys acceptance, demonstrates caring, facilitates further development, and encourages sharing.

Blocks to Listening:

- Opinions
- Inappropriate suggestions
- Comments
- Agreements and Disagreements
- Evaluations
- Analyzing
- Intimidating questions

Focusing Listening is Listening to the other, don't confuse it with a discussion, debate, or information gathering session.

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The listener can also assist the person who is focusing to find a comfortable distance to/from any given issue. We call this

Finding the Right Distance in Focusing

After we have "cleared a space" and/or identified the issue we want to work on, we might find that our sense about it is changing. We might find ourselves either too close to it or too far removed. One person might just touch a scary subject and "drown" in the emotions, being totally identified with this issue. Another person feels so deeply relaxed after a few minutes of stillness, that "nothing matters" and everything has been temporarily resolved.

In both these extremes, we can not move further into the focusing process. We need "just the right distance" in order to address any issue and stay in a focusing interaction with it. Elfie Hinterkopf, a Focusing Coordinator in Texas has given me permission to use her article as she shared it during an e-mail discussion on this topic.

" A Certain Distance is the one at which the Focusing process moves forward. At this distance you can feel the whole, vague felt sense of the problem in your body, and you can see beyond the edges of it. At this distance you will have both connection and disidentification. Compassionate Presence for the problem may then be experienced.

1. KEEPING A CERTAIN DISTANCE - The problem is already at the Right Distance - at this distance I can KEEP a Certain Distance (the distance that I have). I can usually give it Compassionate Presence exactly where it is. For example, today I had some sadness and pain about growing older, and I was able to be with it exactly where it was, and easing came after a while. (This is not always the case with my sadness and pain about growing older.)

2. ACKNOWLEDGING AND SAYING "HELLO" - Needing a little distance - at this distance all I need to do is Acknowledge it and say, "Hello." This could bring easing to something I wasn't quite recognizing. Perhaps I was pushing it out of my attention a little.

3. ITTIFICATION - Needing a little more distance - at this distance I might use "Ittification". I might say that "a part of me" or "a place in me" feels this way, and I feel some easing. For example, I might be somewhat

irritated about something. If I recognize that "a part of me" or "a place in me" (not all of me) feels this way, there will be some release, and I can give it Compassionate Presence."

(Elfie continues her writing about various distances. She also mentions the "Critic" and our various other parts, which I will discuss later in more detail.)

"4. ASKING THE CRITIC WHAT IT IS AFRAID OF - Needing more distance - a Critic may be getting on my case. At this distance I can ask the critic, "What is it that you are afraid of?" and I can feel or sense the answer. Then I can ask it, "What positive state or experience do you want for me?"

5. FINDING A CERTAIN DISTANCE - Needing more distance because my process feels stuck - at this distance I use Finding a Certain Distance by getting a sense of the whole thing. At this distance I might feel as though I can't move or something is on top of me or I'm drowning in it. At this distance I can set the problem out as a whole, get a felt sense of it, and something new will almost always come. If there are two parts, for example a Critic and a victim, I might imagine setting them both out as a whole and letting something new come. At this distance, I often have to withstand the discomfort of feeling different feelings at the same time.

6. SETTING BOUNDARIES FOR THE CRITIC - Needing much distance - an abusive, well-defended Critic is causing another part of me, that I am identified with, a great deal of pain. For example, if I ask such a Critic what it is afraid of, it just laughs at me or bangs me over the head even harder. Someone might get an image of their alcoholic father coming home and beating them, perhaps sexually abusing them. Such a Critic may need to be put in jail for the time being. Or the Focuser may need to turn their back on such a Critic for the time being. This may be needed just to stay functional or to breathe or to protect and have compassion for the part that is being beaten. At a later time I can give the Critic compassion. At this time strict boundaries need to be set."

.....

I have found that a sensitive listener can assist me in finding this right distance by "holding the energy" and "keeping me safe" while I move around in my inner landscape.

EFFE - ENERGY FLOW FOCUSING EXPLORATIONS

What is EFFE?

What does a strawberry taste like? - You have to eat it
What is EFFE like? - You have to experience it

Based on research and application of Dr. E.T. Gendlin's *FOCUSING*, and *FOCUSING-ORIENTED PSYCHOTHERAPY*, **EFFE** is my modified version of this method, which I have used for nearly 20 years. I realized that my approach is enhanced by a conscious application of an underlying **energy flow** when I work with a client.

In **EFFE**, I do not use muscle testing (as in several other Energy Psychology approaches), but facilitate the client's body to reveal the "essence" of e.g. the knot in the stomach, the lump in the throat, the mixed-all-over feeling, etc.

By gradually moving into a relaxed space through deep breathing, and by paying attention to body sensations, related issues surface. After acknowledging each in turn, finding a safe (inner) place for them, we proceed to move into a "clear space", where the client does not need to "hold all this" at the same time. From here we allow the body to select what feels like number "One" today, what has the most energies, what needs attention NOW.

As we stay with . . . (often some images come), we LISTEN and WATCH as some subtle changes successively appear. The initial "story/issue" reveals a deeper underlying "story" which opens up during this "being with" attention.

As the listener/guide, I reflect back what comes, sense energetically into this evolving process and make gentle suggestions. After several "steps" in this process, we move into a new place which often seems quite magical. The "outer problem" might still be the same, but how the client is "holding it" in their body has changed and the "lump" (or whatever) is dissolved. The emotional charge has disappeared, and the client is now in a position to deal with the **underlying** issue.

I have found this method to be extremely empowering for clients, it makes them aware that the wisdom and strength is within themselves. They can continue with this method on their own, but a reflective, unconditionally accepting listener enhances the process and often moves it along more smoothly.

I have also used some EFT (Emotional Freedom Technique)*, and a modified version of TAT (Tapas Acupressure Technique)** when we get to the underlying deeper problems. I found that by tapping on the "root-cause" of the presented problem, some other related issues get resolved as well. Allowing this whole process to evolve in connection with body sensations (by always going back to how it feels in the body), the changes are more lasting and deeper than by using only a cognitive approach.

Nahoma Asha Clinton's *Matrix Work Manual****, and her workshops have been very valuable for my understanding of the traumatic process and the ensuing destructive beliefs, compulsions, desires, and addictions that clients uncover in their Focusing process.

Some of the chakra related exercises from *Energetic Approaches to Emotional Healing* by Dorothea Hover-Kramer, and Karilee Hale Shames (see bibliography) have also enriched my repertoire of healing tools.

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* for detailed information see: www.emofree.com - a brief description will appear in the appendix.

** for information see: www.tat-intl.com

*** Matrix Work Therapy, Training: AshaC@aol.com

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Let's Begin our Energy Flow Focusing Explorations!

I bring the same attitude that I now feel sitting in front of this clear sheet of paper to my groups and counselling sessions. - I would like to describe it as a pregnant emptiness. The unformed is there, but not tangible in a concrete, describable way. It is an openness and a knowing that something is forming/formulating itself inside.

I close my eyes, sensing into my chest area with an attitude of "letting go". My head is searching for the next sentence, the next oops, thank you head for wanting to help, but right now I want to bring my attention back into my body, want to quiet my mind and tune into the energy flow that I know is always there.

A few moments pass, I become quieter inside, . . . I listen and wait. . . . I sense the client in front of me, or the group who has formed a circle, including myself. I sense an attitude of caring and helplessness in my chest. . . . I want to be an instrument for peace and transformation. . . . The client or group waits, opens up . . . some are still closed and then I feel that I am not alone, we are all of us here together, waiting for the energy flow to guide and direct.

A quiet "Help!" to the unseen benevolent forces, and I launch into the familiar opening: *Let's take some deep breaths, slowly inhale, let go on the exhale, . . . just let go. . . and again, inhale, let go. . . you might want to close your eyes and just watch your breath, in and out. . . in and out. . . in and out . . . (about one minute) . . . You might notice some thoughts going through your head . . . just observe. . . don't hang on to anything, acknowledge what comes and let it float away as you bring your attention back to your breathing. . . in and out . . .*

You might want to gently scan your body, sense if there is any tightness, any discomfort. . . don't go into it, just notice. You might want to start with your feet, just sense where your feet are. . . notice your ankles . . . move up your legs . . . into your thighs . . . your buttocks . . . feel the support as you become aware of the chair you are sitting on . . . sink into it . . .

Bring your attention to the bottom of your spine and sense a gentle massaging movement going up your spine. . . massaging every vertebrae . . . all the way up to your neck. . . sense your shoulders. . . is there any tension? . . . You might want to gently move your shoulders, let go of any tightness. . . let your

attention move down your arms, into your hands . . . you might feel some slight tingling in your hands. . . just notice this. . . let's move up to your shoulders again, the base of your neck. . . allow the energy flow to move up at the back of your head. . . sense the crown of your head. . . and feel the gentle massaging energies move into your facial muscles. . . . Is there any tension in your forehead, between your eyes. . . just let go as you take your next breath. . . move down, sense around your nose, your jaw muscles. . . any tightness there. . . allow a little gap between your lips. . . let your tongue hang . . . feel how that makes a difference. . .

*And now we will just sense down into our throat. . . chest. . . stomach area. . . that's where we might feel any discomfort, anything that we are carrying in our life. . . What are you carrying right now? . . . What comes up for you right now? **Don't go into it, just observe!** . . . There might be several unresolved issues in your life right now, just observe as they come up. Say "Hello" to each one if that feels okay, otherwise just let them float by. At this point we want to just sort of "take an inventory", just noticing what all is there. Becoming aware of all the different issues your body is carrying. As each item comes up, let's see if you can sort of "set it down" for now, just as you would set down a heavy suitcase or bag when you need a little rest from carrying it all. . . . I'll be quiet now for a few moments while you do this inside. (about 2 Minutes)*

How are you doing, is there anything that refuses to be "set down". . . it might be something that has begged for your attention for a long long time and is reluctant to be ignored again. Assure it that you will not forget about it, that you will pay attention to it later, but for now perhaps it will agree to give you a little more breathing space, you might even want to take it into your arm and hold it gently. . . .

Now for those of you who feel fairly "clear" inside, ask your body a question, something like: Except for all those things I have set aside for now, I feel just wonderful, if all those things would be resolved my life would be just great. . . does your body agree, or is there still something there, some kind of uncomfortable background feeling that is always there . . . if so, then set that one out too. . . . How does it feel inside now? Notice how your body feels compared to a little while ago when you arrived here. . . . Allow yourself to stay in that place for a while, cherish it . . . you might get some unfamiliar sensations, notice them, . . . you might get an image. . . a word . . . a sentence . . . something that you will remember as being connected with this clear space where you don't need to carry anything right now.

In a few moments I will ask you to come back into this room. You will remember everything and we will have time to share and continue where you left off in your inside place. You will bring back any images and take time to write or draw what has come to you. . . . Give thanks to your body wisdom for whatever it has given you, do this in any way that feels comfortable for you. . . .and remember, you can always come back to this quiet place inside. . .

It's time to join this group again, move your hands and feet, stretch your shoulders, move your head gently, and when you are ready, open your eyes. . . . Welcome back.

This **Clearing a Space** exercise will take about 10 minutes. It is one of the openings I might use. I don't do this every time, it depends on the group. It is useful for a larger group where I want to allow a deep relaxation when I feel a hyper and scattered energy all around. Usually about 80% of participants will get to a fairly **Clear Space**. Everybody gets into "something" that we can start to work with. With individuals I sometimes do not clear the space at all but go right into what is there for them, what wants immediate attention.

I have found that **Clearing a Space** can be at times counterproductive for clients who use a deep relaxation for "getting away" from issues that need to be addressed. It seems that in these cases it is better to "hold on to" whatever, whenever it shows itself and pay attention to "its" wants and needs.

Clearing a Space, on the other hand, getting some visual image or word or sentence for this state, is a wonderful place from which we can begin to look at any of the issues that need attention. It is a safe place. Experiencing that such a place can be achieved inside is often a big revelation already. Some people "keep" this place in their body memory and return to it repeatedly.

"I did not want to come back into this room, into my real life, it was just too wonderful in this enchanted garden with flowers all around, it was so still and I found a special place where I could sit down and listen to the birds. There were lots of birds around and they all kept me company and I felt so much love coming from them. I want to go back there, I feel I can rest in that place forever."

Nancy remembered this place for a long time, it became a refuge in her otherwise turbulent life.

Continuation in a Group

As I said, everybody gets into “something” after this opening. A number of “issues” have been set aside for the moment and are waiting to be addressed.

Working with an individual, I would continue by going to the next step right away. If I sense that there is someone in the group who needs immediate attention, I would ask the group if it is okay with them if I continue working with that person. Usually it is, and I, with the energetic support of the group, move into the next focusing steps, guiding the individual.

Groups who are already familiar with focusing would split up into two or threes and take turns listening to each other. But let’s say these are participants who are new to focusing and are eager to experience where to go from here. I might go around the circle and each one in turn can share what happened for them inside; I might also suggest that they take some time and write or draw their inner experience. The symbolic representation “anchors” the process and suggests already the next movement into the “more”.

While listening to their accounts, I emphasize that each person’s experience is different and valuable, we don’t compare, judge, comment, or ask; all we do is LISTEN attentively. This creates a **Caring-Feeling-Presence**, which is so very much at the heart of focusing. I might do some reflective listening, acknowledging some feeling/sensing statements.

It is amazing how many people have never been listened to in this respectful way, and now feel a beginning trust and connection with the group.

“I was able to set out all my problems and feel confident that I can deal now with one at a time.”

“It felt as if my whole body is carrying sooo much, some things I could put aside, but there is all this about my job situation right now that is always there and I feel a big knot in my stomach.”

“I saw lots of colors and at the end there was a beautiful rainbow.

“At one point I felt that I was losing control, and I don’t like that, it feels scary.”

When everything has been received in this fully accepting way, I ask for a volunteer who would like to explore the next steps in this process. Often I can sense where the energy is moving towards, and might suggest that person.

Do I look for the “heaviest” issue? Probably not at this time; I want to demonstrate the simple steps first and allow everybody to get a “feel” for this process. The “rainbow” person seems to be very visual and might serve as a good example for the “classic” next steps.

“Would you like to get back into your “rainbow space” and from there allow one of the issues you set aside come forward? (I sit now across from her; I feel more connected and the energy can flow between us). . . I am now somehow surrounded by this beautiful rainbow, it is kind of holding me. . . as you feel that, ask your body “which of the issues that you set out needs your attention now, which one has the most energies. . . it’s about my daughter. . . it feels like a lump in my chest, she . . . (as she wants to launch into her “story”, I interrupt: You don’t need to tell us all about it, for now we will just stay with that lump in your chest and explore that a bit more. Is that okay? . . . Yes . . . What is that lump in your chest like, can you describe it some more. . . . It is sort of black and kind of . . . kind of shiny black . . . it’s like some rock . . . it has lots of angles. . . kind of sharp corners . . . mh, shiny black, sharp corners . . . yes. . . it’s actually quite pretty . . . (long pause) . . . (I am aware that something is happening inside and don’t interrupt). . . that’s somehow just like her . . . something feels different. . . . feels different now . . . yeah. . . maybe that’s it, maybe I could not see that. . . there is something you see now. . . how does that feel . . . (deep breath) the lump is gone . . . It feels sort of open . . . open . . . yeah, it feels like perhaps I don’t need to worry about her so much, she is actually quite pretty . . . just stay with that feeling inside right now . . . receive what your body revealed to you, and give thanks in whatever way feels right for you. . . . When you are ready come back into the room. . .

Do you notice how we went through the six steps almost effortlessly? - It does not always work that smoothly, and although she has now a changed “feel” about all the issues connected with her relationship with her daughter and her body is “carrying” it differently, the process will go on. Later we worked on some practical issues that she wanted to change, but the “shiny black rock” had given her a changed perspective to work from. We notice a surprised expression in her face as she tells us a little bit about her daughter and mentions how different it feels for her now.

I use this example to introduce the six steps briefly to the group, and point out how we can get stuck in what our head knows, repeating the same feelings over and over, drowning in it or running away from situations that are uncomfortable. If we just hold still for a while and sense into what our body might want to tell us, something changes. The issue is still there, but how we “hold it” in our body changes,

The “rainbow lady” is enthusiastic and confirms my “lecture”. She is ready to work on her next issue, but everybody needs to get a turn, and I am curious how our “scary” lady is feeling. She is now ready to give it a try.

“Let’s just take a few deep breaths. . . observe your breath. . . in and out. . . in and out. . . just notice how this “scary” is right now in your body. . . where do you feel it? . . . it feels like choking me . . . in my throat . . . let’s just observe it, this choking in your throat. . . like holding in tight. . . holding in, . . . always holding in. . . (some tears want to come, she is holding in) . . . just let it be there . . . always holding in. . . (now the tears are flowing more) . . . just allow . . . I have to be strong, I always have to be strong . . . always holding in, always being strong. . . (Something in her is being heard now, and I don’t interrupt, just letting her know that I am there). . . breathe deeply. . . I don’t always want to be strong, I don’t want to look after everybody else, I . . . I want to . . . (long pause) so there is something in there that wants something . . . let’s listen to that . . . but I can’t listen to that, I have to be strong . . . (more tears) . . . needing to be strong, always looking after everybody else. . . yeah, everybody needs me . . . (long pause) . . . (I observe her face and am aware that more is happening). . . I am so tired, I need . . . (long pause and more tears) . . . you need . . . what does that “need” want right now . . . what would feel like some fresh air for that need. . . it is so small, so fragile, like a tiny baby . . . what would that tiny baby want from you right now? . . . I want to hold it . . . it is so small . . . so small and fragile . . . (the tears stopped, and her face indicates some shift) . . . how does that feel now? . . . (a deep sigh) it’s not choking anymore, I feel lighter, . . . I need to look after myself, I need time for myself. . . You need time for yourself, you need to look after your own needs . . . Yeah. . . Let’s thank your body for letting you know what you need. . . and let it know that you will listen to what it tells you. Yeah.

The beginning process of listening to the body wisdom is often quite revealing. Although we might have an inkling of what it is that we need, our head wants to convince us that this is not so or it is not okay to look after ourselves, when some teaching from an early age has convinced us otherwise. In follow up I talk about **beliefs and values**. We explore beliefs we are holding, and everybody has something to contribute. I am delighted when we get into this topic and often

spend the remaining session with checking into our bodies how we are carrying old and outdated beliefs. Identifying beliefs and becoming aware that we have choices about keeping some and discarding others opens many new **Passageways into our Hidden Treasures**. I have found that we can do that very successfully when we bring a focusing attitude into this exploration. Our body will object to beliefs about unworthiness and powerlessness, our body wisdom knows that we are deserving and lovable, and when we listen, our body will let us know.

I might pull together a list of beliefs from the group, asking them to categorize “desirable” and “undesirable” beliefs. This brings us into a very lively discussion and I have to stress that even our beliefs and values are choices we make individually - no judgment! It’s interesting to identify which of these beliefs are chosen, which ones have been examined, and which have been carried over from outside teachings. I often ask about some “undesirable” beliefs: “Do you REALLY believe this?” - I might ask to take one belief into a relaxed body space and listen to what comes from that place. We uncover many outdated beliefs, and by bringing them into conscious awareness, we can choose to release them.

I have found this process extremely powerful and life affirming. When we clear out some beliefs which do not serve us any longer, I also stress that we bring in the affirmation of the opposite. “I am worthy, I am lovable, I am able to succeed . . .”

I want to mention again Nahoma Asha Clinton’s *Matrix Work Manual*, which is helpful for identifying probable hidden beliefs with their desirable and undesirable opposites. I want to thank her for her efforts in categorizing these and recommend her *Manual* very highly.

In this context, I also want to draw attention to Gary Craig’s *Palace of Possibilities* (in www.emofree.com). Reading this has made me aware of how much more I want to stress the importance of affirmations, and his suggestions give me many ideas which I want to incorporate into my work with focusing.

Mentioning these two Energy Psychology resources brings me to EFT - Emotional Freedom Technique, (listed in the appendix), which I have begun to teach regularly to my clients and groups. . In a follow-up to the above focusing session, I would suggest to tap on feelings of “unworthiness” when they come up again, replacing them with affirmations about “I am worthy to take time for

myself”, “I deserve to enjoy myself”, etc. During a group session, when teaching EFT in connection with undesirable beliefs, I ask the participants to each choose one belief from the list we have previously compiled that they would like to eliminate for themselves.

“How strong is that belief in you right now, how strong would you feel the resistance if you imagine giving it up? - Rate it from 0 to 10, 10 being the strongest.” After checking the numbers: “Rub the sore point and repeat after me: Even though I have a strong resistance to letting go of the belief (add yours) I deeply and completely love, accept, and respect myself.” We repeat this twice and proceed with tapping (see appendix). I might add “and I forgive myself for having this belief, and I forgive everybody who has contributed to this belief.”

Checking the strength of the resistance, it has gone down considerably, and another round of EFT with “Even though I still have **some resistance . . .**”, usually brings it down to 0. Participants are amazed that their resistance has gone down so easily, and wonder if it will last. My suggestion is that they repeat this process at home any time the old resistance comes up.

A recent e-mail message from Willem Lammers has contributed to my understanding of the lasting or fleeting success of EFT and/or other therapeutic interventions. With his permission I want to quote some of his observations:

“Do you recognize the experience of your self and/or your clients, that you feel great when leaving the therapist's office or the training workshop and that as soon as you're home you feel like "Go to Prison, Don't pass Start" in Monopoly?”

He goes on to suggest that there is a connection between the effectiveness of psychotherapy and 1) the place where you get it, 2) the presence of the person you got it with, and 3) the absence of persons you had problems with. I would want to add 4) the environment in which the problem occurs. Willem continues:

“In psychology, this is known as situation-dependent learning. In NLP, we use the technique of future-pacing to prevent it. However, thinking about this in energy terms may allow us to correct for it during our work.

If we are energy beings, we are in constant attunement to/interference with the geo-magnetic field of the earth and with the energy fields of those around us. If we treat a problem with a client, the energy field of the

person will be harmonized in the presence of the energy field of the therapist. So the client re-tunes his thought field in the presence of the therapist and in connection with certain coordinates on the geo-magnetic field of the earth.

What happens when the client leaves the office, breaks the energetic bond with the therapist and the geo-magnetic spot and comes into contact with persons who used to interfere with his energy field in a "negative" way?"

Without being fully aware of these energetic effects, we might not realize how important it is to not only facilitate our clients, but to teach them techniques which they can use on their own. When Dr. Gendlin discovered how people heal and grow in therapy, he developed and wrote *Focusing*, the book that "gives away therapy". Trainers and Coordinators of the Focusing Institute have been teaching this method to groups all over the world. Participants are instructed how to facilitate each other's process by taking turns focusing and listening. Although focusing can be done alone, a caring and accepting listener can bring a heightened energetic dimension into these explorations.

When I discovered EFT, as Gary Craig teaches it, I incorporated it in my therapeutic counselling and teachings as another tool that we can "give away". With his permission, I will include a brief description in the appendix. -

Back to our group after this diversion. We might still have time for our "lady with the job situation". I check in with her and ask about the "knot in her stomach". She looks at me a bit bewildered - "Oh, that one!"

"While we were working on our beliefs, I discovered that I have the beliefs that I have to try harder, that I have to be perfect, that I should accomplish more. I have pushed myself all these years, and when I listened to L. (the "scared" lady), I identified with her and worked through some of my own similar feelings. Later, when we explored our beliefs I tapped on my belief that I have to always be perfect. The resistance of giving up that belief felt about 8, but after the first tapping round it went down to 2. I did not want to bring it down to 0 because I want to choose the belief that I want to be a little bit perfect in what I am doing." *And the knot in your stomach?* - Oh, that's gone . . . *How does it feel now when you check inside?* . . . It feels sort of warm and open. . . . *Let's thank your body wisdom for bringing all this to your attention.* Yes, and thank you."

This finished our group session, and participants were eagerly looking forward to further explorations next week.

A Short Introductory Session

Although I prefer ongoing individual or group explorations, this does not always happen, and I use every opportunity to at least introduce the focusing experience.

A helpful visual aid is Edwin M. McMahon's and Peter A. Campbell's Video Series *The Body's Search for Spirit*, which Nada Lou taped and illustrated very beautifully and professionally. (see Appendix).

I will share some highlights from a recent 1 1/2 hour presentation to 12 participants who had never experienced or even heard about Focusing. After a brief introduction, I showed the first segment of the above tape, approximately 1/2 hour. We listened to Ed emphasize that we have the teacher inside ourselves, and if we stay connected to that teacher, we are also connected to the Larger Body of the Christ. Our body is the bridge to the Wholeness we all desire. We need not be afraid to let our feelings surface, but welcome them as our teachers into the deeper connection with Grace. The Truth will set us truly free.

During a 15 minute exercise we were instructed to bring the CARING FEELING PRESENCE to THAT in our body which most needs listening to. He illustrated the experience of this presence by imagining a sense of holding and giving comfort to an abandoned little baby.

As participants closed their eyes and got in touch with their emotional or physical pain, I observed their facial expressions and made some mental notes as to the depth of their experience. As in previous similar situations, a few fell asleep, others showed strong emotional expressions, and all of them seemed to relax deeply into the experience.

We shared around the circle. Here some excerpts:

"I got back into my scary dream and as I acknowledged the images, they felt less scary. I would like to continue working with this later."

"I have a big hard ball in my stomach, there is some idea what it is connected to, but I am afraid to get into it."

"I had a pain in my back, and as I held it . . . now it's gone."

"The pain in my throat is gone, I was afraid to stay with it, but now I am glad I did. It was not as scary as I thought it might be."

"Something about my little boy came to me, what can I do when he feels scared?"

"This was really good, I feel relaxed and something that had bothered me seems to be okay now."

I acknowledged each contribution and mentioned that I would be available for further work. Most of the selected, probably minor issues, seemed resolved. The next contribution needed further exploration:

What happened to the scary dream images? As the spiders became less and less scary while we observed and acknowledged them, we explored what in his life was "like that". What did the spiders symbolise? Something came, but since we don't necessarily reveal the content but stay with process only during these sessions, I encouraged to bring the dream solution into the real life issue and see what would happen. The perception had changed and some possible action seemed less threatening now.

The mother with the scared little boy was a welcome opening for some "lecturing" about the importance of being with our children in whatever feeling they express and not belittle or try to talk them out of them. As we stay with our own scary and painful feelings, we can teach our children that they can also allow those feelings to be what they are, holding and accepting them, waiting for the story to unfold.

The "hard ball" needed some extensive work which happened the next day when N. asked me to spend some time with her. This turned out to be a situation where we became aware of the wisdom and protection of our body. It will never give us more than we can handle at any given time. N. felt relieved when I explained to her that she did not need to reveal any content while I supported her energetically with her process.

*. . . Are you in touch with that hard ball in your stomach area?
yes, and it has a very hard shell around it and I can't get in. Let's
gently breathe around it, just allowing the breath to caress this
hard ball. . . I am also aware of another place which feels soft and*

warm and gentle . . . *soft and warm and gentle . . . let's be aware of both places, are they connected?* . . . The soft place shows that it can be different. . . not always hard and . . . (long pause). . . it feels good, but the other is there too . . . *which place do you want to pay attention to right now?* . . . The hard ball . . . I can't get in . . . there are flames surrounding it . . . and there is another place over there which is hard and surrounded by flames as well . . . *are those flames burning off something there, cleansing? (I took the flames as something transforming, perhaps cleansing, but. . .)* No, they don't let me in . . . *they are protecting you from getting in?* . . . Yes, and there is so much light now, it is taking me with it. . . I can just be in that light, I don't need to go into that hard ball . . . I don't need to know. . . *You don't need to go in, you don't need to know . . .* That's it, oh, I can relax, I don't need to know . . . it feels so wonderful, this is amazing . . . I don't need to find out, I don't need to know. . . *Let's give thanks to your body's knowing what is right for you. (I felt it would be helpful to anchor the experience with some affirmations.) Would you like to repeat after me something like: Even though I can not get into this hard ball, I deeply accept, love and respect myself (which she did) . . . But when I continued with: and I forgive myself and everybody who has contributed to this . . . she refused: No, I don't forgive. I acknowledged this and checked if it would be okay to say something like: even though I don't forgive, I deeply accept, love and respect myself.* She repeated this statement three times and confirmed how wonderful this felt.

I was thankful that I have learned long ago that it is not up to me to push for what I might consider another forward moving life giving step. I trust that eventually the forgiveness and full transformation will occur. Although I had some sense of the issues in the "hard balls", the time was not right to reveal what might still need some more protection by those "flames".

Another delightful surprise came the next day when one of the other participants shared with me how she was not able to "hold" an issue which she was carrying in a long standing pain in her lower back. It had revealed itself as something connected with a memory when she was four years old. She could allow it on her lap, but not more. During the night she was able to "hold it with compassion" and now the pain had totally left.

I am thankful that even a short teaching of the focusing attitude can contribute to some release of pain in a person's life.

Every Session is Different

In my ongoing work with clients, I am guided by my energetic intuition and use a combination/selection of Focusing, Dreamwork, Visualisation, Relaxation, Affirmations, EFT, and other Energy Psychology related modalities.

Lee's Story

Lee is a counsellor and one of my regular clients. She consults me for continuing deeper growth explorations, supervision, teaching, and "maintenance" work. We started this session with a recent short **dream** Lee had written down. In the dream Lee was part of a group who was planting flowers. The group was also connected with some other organization.

I instructed Lee to get back into the dream space: *How do you feel in that dream? - (first question I usually ask about a dream)*. Lee closed her eyes, visualizing the dream scene, and shared her feelings of joy about the beauty of the flowers. She mentioned that she likes being part of this team, but that she is also very apprehensive about "fitting in" and "doing the right thing. We continue the dream and as she is planting the flowers, she realizes that what she is doing "fits" into the patterns of this garden.

What in your life right now is like this dream? (my second dream question). While she is sensing inside I slowly emphasize some symbols: *working as a team, planning and planting something new and beautiful . . .*

After a few moments, Lee makes a connection with a new project at work which she is part of. Some tension shows in her face as she gets in touch with the discomfort about her involvement. She relates a few more details about this and I recognize one of her recurring insecurities about herself and her abilities. I instruct her to remember the feeling in the dream when the flowers she is planting "fits". . . *Now bring this feeling into your life situation . . . Yeah, that feels better. . .*

Very often, when we work with dreams and the symbols fit into a life situation, we release the tension in the dream, which then translates into a changed attitude in relation to the real life issue as well. In this case it seemed to work for Lee, but as we discussed this later, the old insecurity came back.

That's where I suggested some EFT (I had introduced EFT to her in an

earlier session but she had not practiced it lately). Her SUD (Subjective Level of Discomfort) level was 8 when she thought about the project. We tapped on her apprehension about doing the right thing.

After one round her SUD level had dropped to 2. I asked if she wanted to stay there or continue. She wanted to continue and I suggested that I teach her something else she could also use on her own. (We could have continued with another round of EFT (see appendix), but I like to use these sessions for expanding our "tools").

I instructed her in some "Spinning through the Energy Field", concentrating on her second chakra. (I am indebted to Dorothea Hoover-Kramer for her suggestions in *Energetic Approaches to Emotional Healing*, see bibliography).

We stood up and were slowly spinning clockwise, putting the attention into the second chakra, clearing with each breath and inhaling life giving energies. Intuitively I suggested several affirmations for Lee's involvement in the project, emphasizing her creative abilities and her unique contributions.

Her SUD level did not only drop to 0, but her enthusiasm about the upcoming project increased as we discussed some further steps and worked on the wording for daily affirmations.

We finished with some FOCUSING, attending to body sensations. Her chest felt "open, free and expansive", the "heavy knot" was gone. Gratefulness to the body's wisdom ended our session.

At our next appointment, Lee related lessening of her anxieties during some situations in which she would have previously felt anxious and inferior. She had used some EFT and spinning on her own.

During focusing, several other anxiety provoking incidents surfaced. We acknowledged those, held them with caring-feeling-presence and wrote down some more relevant affirmations which she was going to use daily. I also suggested that she become aware whenever she feels some anxiety, insecurity or incompetence. In these cases she should identify the SUD level and do some EFT.

Lee kept a daily diary for the next two weeks. She was amazed and delighted when she showed me how her SUD levels of 8 to 10 had gone down to almost zero each time during the tapping.

"It went so well for a few days, but then someone mentioned "failure" in his life, and it gave me this awful feeling in my stomach, and I feel that I too am a failure and have been all my life. . . . *It sits right in your stomach, and it feels like something that has been there all your life.* . . . Not when I was small, I did well at school, but then later . . . *(her facial expression indicated that painful memories were surfacing, and I waited).* . . . *just observe what was happening there, breathe into it and acknowledge how painful it used to be.* . . . *(some tears come, and then she shares some of the painful memories)* . . . *(I repeat some of the feeling statements and acknowledge how sad and unfair that was and how she is still carrying it in her body)* . . . *(a big sigh, some relief).* . . .

I realised that she was getting in touch with some root issues which had established her core belief that she was not good enough, that she was a failure.

How strong is the feeling now from 0 to 10 when you think about that situation? . . . It's better now, about 6 . . . Would you like to do the TAT pose on it? (We had done this before, and as she held one hand at the lower back of her head and the other with 2nd and 3rd finger pointed at the third eye, and thumb and 4th finger about 1/2 inch below to either side of nose) she repeated after me while concentrating on the old memory: In this situation I was required to do something that should not have been expected of me. . . . What happened? . . . It feels different, sort of softer. . . . Hold the TAT pose again and say: I am a unique and capable person. . . . How does that feel? . . . Good. . . . (We did the TAT pose again on:) All the origins of this problem are healing now. . . . and after that. . . God thank you for healing all the places in my mind, body and life where this has been held. . . . Would you like to do the forgiveness part as well? . . . Yes, I forgive everyone I blamed for this problem, including God and myself.*

We finished by checking in a focusing attentive way how all of this now felt in her body. Her stomach felt relaxed and when she thought about the memory there was no emotional charge left.

* see Resources in the appendix

Carol's Story

Carol had done some ongoing explorations into her past traumas, identifying, transforming, and reaching ever deeper into her repressed memories. She had mentioned previously that there was something which

she was not yet willing to look at, and I had assured her that her body would let her know when she was ready. The pain had become more unbearable, and she was ready to trust into the process:

"I feel this heaviness in my chest and some knotty feeling in my stomach.
(I reflect and suggest to just be with all that, waiting for what more comes).
There is something about being kind of scared to really enjoy something. . .
Let's stay with the kind of scared, . . . can you just hold that gently? . . .
Yeah, that feels a bit better, but. . . *Stay with that "but" and let it know that you are willing to hear its story. . . (After a long heavy pause)*
But then there is nobody there. *(I gently, slowly feed this statement back to her): There is nobody there. . . can you just stay with that, nobody there . . . way way back, nobody there. (Tears are coming now) . . . Go very gently now, what is that "nobody there" like? . . . It is like a big dark empty hole. . . Can you stay with that big, dark, empty hole, just allow it to be there. . . observe it . . . what does it need right now? . . .*
It wants me to hold it and be with it . . . *Are you willing to do this? . . .*
Yes. . . it is soo big and empty . . . nobody there . . . nobody was ever there to acknowledge and celebrate . . . now it feels as if it has never really achieved anything, . . . it is not worthy, it is not good enough. . .
*Can you just stay **with that part of you** which feels all that empty and dark and hollow. . . what does it need right now? . . . It wants me to acknowledge and hold it. . . (As she discovered a **nurturing part** in herself, she did no longer need to totally identify with that "empty part" and her body relaxed) . . .*

At this point, Carol shared some content, which I eliminate from this account. Although I stress that clients don't need to reveal the details of their experience, the telling of their story continues to release tension, and we explore some practical next steps. Carol realized that she could not change someone else, but that she could accept and nurture herself.

(I suggested and she formulated some affirmations) . . . I love, accept and appreciate myself and all my achievements, and I forgive myself and those who have contributed to this problem. (We ended the session with thanksgiving) . . . I thank God for healing all the places in my mind, body and life where this has kept me from fully enjoying life.

Dora's Story

Experienced Focusers usually don't need much guiding, but the energy of an attentive listener and some reflective responses will assist in moving a

session forward. EFT can also be helpful at certain stages of the process, which is shown in the following example:

Dora (not her real name) wanted to focus on an issue which she felt in her abdomen as an oval space. She identified it as some female womb-like opening. But there was also some fear about exploring all this.

Breathe deeply and acknowledge both. Would it feel okay to set the fear over there, give it some fresh air and pay attention to the womb-like space? . . . Yes, the fear feels okay for now to be left alone. . . . There is a flower growing out of this space in my abdomen . . . it has a very spindly stem, almost dead, . . . looking at it's root system, that seems okay . . . it needs sunshine. . . . There is also another smaller flower now, it looks healthy . . . it is showing me what it could be like if it gets enough sunshine. . . .

Something else is happening now, there is a little man who is climbing up a ladder out of a man hole . . . he reminds me of my deceased father. . . (she is laughing now), 'man hole' seems like a pun . . . it seems connected with my fear of men . . . needing to climb out of that fear . . . Yes, I am afraid of men.

Would it feel okay to try some EFT tapping with this fear? I will ask my Dad. . . He says it will be okay to tap on this, he is going to help me.

In one round of tapping, Dora went from 8 to 4, another round got her SUD (Subjective Unit of Discomfort) to 2. Here I asked about more specifics pertaining to the nature of her fear.

It is fear of being controlled by men, fear of losing myself. *Would you like to tap on that? Yes, it is a 10 now. . . I deeply and completely accept myself even though I fear loosing myself and being controlled by men. . . .*

A couple of rounds of tapping brought her SUD to Zero. From here we could explore now how a recent relationship could be viewed differently than before. Dora also related how her father had appeared to her in dreams several times, letting her know that he had changed. He had also suggested that she needs to clean her life of past experiences.

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EFFE in Embracing All Our Parts/Aspects

"On the one hand . . . and on the other hand. . .", *Fiddler on the Roof*, echoes our own dilemma when we have a decision to make, or when we explore the various inner voices which clamour for our attention. With experiential Focusing we discover a safe and respectful method of listening to all our parts without getting overwhelmed or controlled by habitual responses.

As we integrate the awareness and acceptance of our emotions and feelings, our physical body will respond with greater health and aliveness. During extensive work with my own "parts", and in assisting others, I have drawn from many resources, which unfortunately and with apology, I am unable to quote. One book in particular has been helpful and I want to acknowledge *The Voice Dialogue Manual - Embracing Our Selves*, Hal Stone, Ph.D. & Sidra Winkelman, Ph.D.

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Developing Conscious Awareness of Our Parts

Evolution of Consciousness is an ongoing process. We need to meet and embrace the multitude of our selves, our unique various qualities of being, the "psychic fingerprints", the deep vulnerable parts of our self, the parts we have learned to protect. Hidden behind our protective shield, we need to find the energy of our basic instinctual nature and free the energy which has been blocked. Our spiritual/transpersonal life flow is often inhibited because we have not been free to explore our multidimensional nature.

In order to gain control over our environment we evolved our personality and hid our unique being because we experienced early in life that our natural behavior brings consequences: i.e. was aggression rewarded or punished? Was submissiveness rewarded? What about our ambitions?

We learned that certain behaviors were acceptable/rewarded, or were not permissible in the environment we grew up in, and we developed a **Main Pattern, an Operative Personality** in order to survive. When we begin to

identify this and other parts in ourselves, we might find a **Rational Self, Responsible Parent, Inner Pusher, Perfectionist, Frightened Child, Inner Critic, Judgmental Self**, and many others. We become also aware that we display various patterns in different situations.

When I first consciously discovered that I am so many different "persons", it frightened me, and I thought that something must be very seriously wrong with me. I tried to hide from others what I saw inside myself and continued to play my various roles even more successfully. When and where do we "play" our favored parts? Have we changed over time? Have we discovered and owned other parts? What have we learned from this? Where and when do we feel empowered?

In order to fully function and be our **Whole Self**, we need to uncover and honor all our parts through 1) Awareness, 2) Experience, and 3) Development of an **Aware Observer**.

While paying attention to ourselves with a caring-feeling-presence Focusing attitude, I want to highlight several points:

1. We need to **witness life** - without judgment and without attachment. I call this **objective witnessing** and sometimes visualize a part of myself lifting high up into the air and looking down on what "she" is experiencing and doing "down there". This little exercise gives me quite a different perspective, and I am able to sort through a lot of emotional entanglements. It also helps me to "come back" and bring the caring-loving presence and acceptance to all my parts.

2. We need to be aware of our **physical, emotional, mental** and **spiritual** states. I need to pause occasionally during the day and ask: How am I right now, what's going on for me? Am I listening to what surfaces?

3. We need to develop our "**Choice Maker**". Only when I am aware, can I make choices. Do I rest for a few minutes when I am tired or do I charge ahead? Do I acknowledge my anger or push it aside? Do I allow the tears or swallow them? Do I acknowledge what is there and make a commitment to myself to spend some time with it?

4. We need to identify our conscious and unconscious **patterns**. How do I perpetually respond in certain situations? When I became aware that I kept reacting to certain people by falling back into a "pleasing little girl" pattern, I could consciously prepare myself and access my "strong and capable" part. It was not easy at first, but as I continued being aware and making choices, the "sinking feeling in my stomach" whenever I encountered "pushy people" disappeared and I felt increasingly better about myself.

5. We need to face and honor our **Shadow**, and make peace with it. The shadow is made up of all that we have denied, discounted, defended against. The shadow parts are all aspects of ourself we pretend don't exist. It contains all the "should" and "should not" of being selfish, greedy, questioning, creative, in touch with feelings, inquisitive, assertive, ambitious proud, independent, etc.

Think about some aspects you have denied - can you identify them? Where would you look for your **Dark Shadow**, your **Light Shadow**? Yes, we don't only hide the "negative" parts, but we are also afraid to own and develop the immensely beautiful and uniquely creative parts of ourselves.

In an attempt to eradicate the rejected parts, we drive them into the unconscious, where they operate beyond our control. We can not hide them forever, those rejected parts become stronger and erupt unexpectedly as the accumulated energy needs to live and express.

We rejected parts of ourselves in order to belong, becoming what others expected us to be. We repressed not only the "ugly", "sinful", undesirable parts, but also our God given limitless potential.

The Shadow contains everything that the **adaptive child, the panicking adolescent, the struggling adult**, repressed in an attempt to survive, to be accepted, to find security, to belong, to be approved of, to gain praise . . .

We need to honor all our parts

We need to take responsibility for Choice, it is not a question of if, but when

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The Shadow Parts.

My Shadow taught me that:

- Wholeness involves choice which brings transformation, not repression.
- I have to be willing to accept opposite aspects in myself and honor both, tolerating the tension that exists between them.
- Fear of the dark shadow presents a barrier to further growth.
- The light shadow contains the strength that embarrasses me and makes me afraid that I might be seen as "arrogant", or that I might be wonderful and powerful beyond measure.
- My real depth and real meaning of spirituality is also contained within my shadow.
- My shadow holds my ability to be free of the past, to be and live with dignity, respect and self determination.

The greatest gift as a human being is to love and be loved

- Our shadows contain our full capacity to be loved and to give love
- Our shadows contain all kinds of undeveloped, unexpressed potentials

We need to honor all our parts

Where and how do we meet our Shadow?

The shadow is erupting unexpectedly in moments when we are possessed by strong feelings of shame or anger. Usually it recedes quickly because it feels frightening and shocking to our self-image. We quickly shift back into denial. We can look for it:

- In our exaggerated feelings about the desirable or/and undesirable behavior of others
- In negative or positive feedback from others who serve as our mirrors
- In those interactions in which we continually have the same troubling effect on several different people
- In our impulsive and inadvertent acts
- In situations where we feel humiliated
- In our exaggerated anger about other people's faults and successes

*"The range of what we think and do is limited by what we fail to notice.
And because we fail to notice that we fail to notice,
there is little we can do to change, until
we notice how failing to notice shapes our thoughts and deeds."*

R.D. Laing

KNOW THYSELF
"The truth shall set you free"

Owning the Shadow

The aim is to develop an ongoing relationship with our shadow, to expand our sense of self by balancing the one-sidedness of our conscious attitude with our unconscious depth. When we are in a proper relationship to it, the unconscious is not a demoniacal monster. C.G. Jung points out that the shadow becomes only dangerous when our conscious attention to it is lacking.

A right, accepting, creative relationship with the shadow offers us the gift of leading us back to our buried potential. We can:

- achieve a more genuine self-acceptance, based on a more complete knowledge of who we are in our wholeness.
- defuse the undesirable emotions that erupt unexpectedly in our daily lives.
- become free of guilt and shame associated with our negative feelings and actions.
- recognize the projections that color our opinions of others.
- heal our relationships through more honest self-examination and direct, open communication.
- use the creative imagination via dreams, drawing, writing, and rituals to own the disowned self.

**The shadow is both,
the container of darkness and the beacon pointing towards the Light
It is the redeemer that transforms one's life and alters one's values.
It can lead us to the hidden treasure -
win the princess, slay the dragon.**

(Regrettably, I have lost the source of this quotation)

We can meet the Shadow through:

- Guided Meditation - Imagery (castle, landscape, continents)
- Higher Self Meditation - Use the protection of the Light, ask for guidance from your Highest Source
 - Focusing, talk to the disowned self (critic?) What does it think, feel, what would it do if it could run things? Feel its energy
 - Looking at the reflection of the shadow in intimate people in your life:
 - Mother - what do you like and dislike about her?
 - Father - same
 - Siblings
 - Spouse
 - How are you like them, how don't you want to be like them?
 - What feels very strong in you about them?
 - Where do you feel a strong emotional reaction?
- Repeat patterns in your life:
 - exaggerated "negative" emotions
 - exaggerated "positive" emotions
 - repeated "negative" feedback
 - repeated "positive" feedback
 - any other compulsive or obsessive behavior, secrets, lies, fantasies
- Projections:
 - List all the negative qualities about one person that you dislike
 - choose 3 or 4 that really bother you
 - List all the qualities about a person that you like and admire
 - choose 3 or 4 that affect you deeply

Bring it all inside in a Focusing way.

Be aware that all these aspects are aspects of your shadow.

Don't judge, don't reject! Own the Shadow! Stay with it!

Let it be part of you

Communicate with it

Dialogue with it

Ask, Listen

Working with shadow parts can be done alone or with a trusted friend or therapist who can assist in identifying our "blind spots". This process requires our willingness and commitment to grow and evolve into **Wholeness**

Mary's Story

Unresolved shadow parts can fill us with guilt and tension which spills over into our environment. "I am tense and my family life is deteriorating because I am snapping at everybody when I come home from work." Marie told a familiar story. During a few Focusing sessions she was able to resolve many issues.

After some introduction, Mary identified her main issues, which sounded like unacknowledged and disowned parts of herself. She "set them out" at a comfortable distance and could see "all of that" out there as a ball with fuzzy edges. It appeared to be a very vicious ball which she wanted to have far far away from her. When I asked if she perhaps could touch it a little bit, she tentatively did so.

When she realized that the ball did not snap at her as she had expected, she became a little friendlier with it, till after a short period of "being with it", she took this fuzzy creature on her lap, stroking it and experiencing it to be warm and cuddly.

As Mary was actually going through the motions of stroking it, she became fond of this creature. *What does it need from you?* She identified that if she would not ignore it, it would stay cuddly. We established that she would take it out several times a day and give it some friendly hearing and attention. A bright warm light appeared and a pain in her neck disappeared.

The next week she related how she had been awake one night when the little fuzzy creature had told her that she should withdraw from a course she had enrolled in. When a colleague tried to persuade her later that she should stay, her Fuzzy grew very agitated and became peaceful only when she assured it that she would not give in to this advice.

She was less tense, but a pain in her shoulders had become stronger while she relaxed during the second session. It did not leave, and I suggested she stay with it gently. The pain became stronger and extended into her arms. . . .*Ask the pain to reveal its essence. . . .*"It is guilt!" . . . As she looked at it, it symbolized itself as a branch with many little branches. She wanted to break them all off. After a while

I asked if it would be OK to build a fire where she could throw them all in. That felt good to her and she proceeded to do so.

She looked at the ashes with relief. The pain was gone and her face brightened as she exclaimed that the bright light was there again. She bathed in that healing warmth. The change in her was remarkable and she cried with relief and joy.

After working with the symbolic representation of unacknowledged aspects of herself, Mary could now take some concrete actions in her life to integrate what she was learning.

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The Inner Child Parts

In the make-up of our energy patterns or aspects of ourselves, the various aspects of our **Inner Child** are most vulnerable and often disowned. A disowned (not acknowledged) energy pattern has gone underground because it has been punished or been disapproved of every time it has emerged.

Disowned aspects of ourself accumulate energy - just like water which will slowly accumulate behind a dam - and these energies will sometimes express in dreams, and/or can be tapped through Focusing. We can talk to the disowned part directly and get in touch with a source of new ideas, inspiration, and new solutions to problems.

Our **Inner Child** parts have been the most neglected aspects of ourselves. As we begin to listen, we will discover a **Vulnerable Child** which embodies sensitivity and fear. Its feelings are easily hurt and it lives in constant fear of abandonment.

The **Playful Child** knows how to play as only a child knows how to, and it might be easier to reach than the vulnerable child.

The **Magical Child** holds our imagination and fantasy, our intuition and creativity, it is a source of vision.

The inner child never grows up. These parts of ourselves know how to **BE**, while the rest of our parts know how to **Do** and **Act**. The loss of our

inner child part is one of the tragedies of our growing-up process. In re-discovering them we will again get in touch with the magic and mystery of living, with the delight and intimacy of relationships.

I got in touch with part of my inner child by working through a recurring uncomfortable situation in my life:

It was sticky and yucky and wanted to cling and not go away. I let it disappear way into the darkness of a forest, knowing that I would have to deal with it sometime.

Letting it sit there and touching it gently from time to time brought many shifts and changes, and finally this particular sticky issue resolved itself but another related issue at a deeper layer began clamoring for attention.

I began focusing on: "What is all this about that brings on these sticky issues in the first place, this stuff that sticks and clings to me and does not let me get away?" - It went something like this: If I always allow my pleasing and accommodating part to live and be nice, I get to a place where I am resentful. I became aware that the 'loving caring niceness' in this case is not genuine, and the pretense feels like the sticky, yucky something.

I was stuck with this issue for many weeks. It felt okay to be patient with it and not get it resolved right away. I was determined to get to the bottom of this recurring theme in my life. As I let it know that it would be valuable for me to know its origin, I found a **crying hurting little girl** inside. In several dialogues with this little girl I learned her many stories of rejection and coping strategies. Over many years she had developed a belief that she had to be always nice and accommodating in order to be loved and accepted.

My **Adult Self** could now come in and assure the little girl part that it had done a wonderful job way back then, but this strategy was no longer useful when it did not fit anymore into the life of the person "we" had become.

I realized that I have come a long way in accepting and loving myself without needing constant outside reassurance that I am okay. However, the 'niceness' is still running away with me at times and then it feels like too much, and I get myself into these situations where afterwards I feel resentful.

I decided that I still want to be nice and pleasing, but much less so. I also decided that I want to watch myself in a focusing way in my interactions with people and sense the difference between my genuine-concern-part and my 'need-to-please-in-a-phony-way -part.

When I find myself slipping into an old familiar pattern, I now ask myself: What would feel life-giving and real in this situation? - When I follow my body's suggestion it all becomes very interesting, alive, risky, scary, daring and vulnerable.

The old pattern had been so much a part of me that I asked myself: "Who or what am I without that?" Learning about all my different parts and aspects has helped me to accept that I have many choices. Being the **Observer**, acknowledging **all parts** and sensing in a focusing way what feels right can become a way of living. It feels like: **I AM THE AWARENESS OF MY CONTINUOUS FOCUSING PROCESS.**

This ongoing process leads into many successive "shifts" in my inner landscape. I have found that there is a space inside me which is always "clear", where I can be, live, and function for extended periods of time. It almost seems to be too good to be true, but focusing as a way of life can be and has created this experience for me - not always, but increasingly so.

It is a space which seems to transcend joy and pain, depression and exhilaration - all the opposites - a place where it is just quiet. When I am in it, everything just **Is**. There are no value labels of good or bad or perfect/imperfect.

There are those focusing times when little things which had become blown out of proportion led to new discoveries of aspects of myself which I had been reluctant to face and deal with. I discovered the beauty and ugliness of my being. I tried to reject the darkness, the shadow I found within myself and puzzled about its persistence.

A short dream seemed to give an answer: I saw rings of white and black circling each other and expanding into space. A voice was saying: "Could you see the white without the black?" My felt sense was relief, acceptance.

At some other time I experienced a number of disappointments which had developed into a very big bulky package in my chest. It was difficult to put that aside even for a moment. I cuddled it in my arm, I breathed deeply and I felt myself being surrounded by a Light space, but then the darkness and fear came back, clouds all around. As I stayed with that, it fiercely told

me that it "wanted to snuff out the light". A shift happened when I held all of it gently inside: "The Light can nibble away at the darkness!"

This felt very powerful and I watched as the Light gradually overtook the darkness. It continued into: "The Light will effortlessly permeate the darkness." I could sense the warmth and fresh air transforming the darkness.

Later, an image of a silvery straight path opened in front of me. There was a pushing, piercing drive which thrust me through the veil of the remaining black/white into a golden/orange Light and propelled my whole being into a "blissed out" space. I stayed there for many days, going about my daily activities and being surrounded by this gentle loving Light.

There came a day when I wanted to tightly hold on to this wonderful experience, but then it went away. Only when I could relax into it without clinging could I sense that it is always there. It feels like a deep deep well into which I can immerse myself and be connected to at all times. It is like sending down roots into this ever present sustenance, drawing nourishment for the surface activities.

It becomes more and more a habit for me to be conscious of any issues that cloud the clearness and to deal with them right away. Shifts occur in very quick succession and blocked energies are freed again.

Letting go of control, letting go of the known, and accepting, watching the process unfold, these are the steps on the way which I've experienced and have seen others experience. We do this often with great reluctance, but also with increasing trust. There really is a "peace which surpasses understanding", and the source of "the fruits of the Spirit" can be tapped into and experienced.

The Critical Parts

When we begin to listen to our inner voices, to all our parts, it is sometimes difficult to distinguish those aspects that are beneficial and life giving from those that are programmed into us and/or come from habitual outdated beliefs and values.

As beginning Focusers, we deal with the critic by setting it aside, by being firm with it and not allowing it to interfere with our Focusing process. Often we recognize the critic by its harsh and critical voice that makes us feel depressed, unworthy, guilty or shameful, as the following session illustrates:

I have been offered a new job which I would really like, but I feel very scared and when I think about it, my whole body tightens up. *Allow yourself to sit back in your chair, take a deep breath, and let your attention move into your body . . . be very gentle as you do this, accepting what you sense right now. . . .* There is some feeling of excitement about this job, and then there is this voice that says 'you can't do it'. . . . *So there are two feelings there, the excitement and this voice which says you can't do it.* Yes. . . and there is much more in that voice, it tells me that I never do anything right, that I might goof up this one. . . it always puts me down. *Can you put this voice over into the corner for now so that the excitement can have a say, we want to listen to all our inner parts. . . .* yeah, the excitement is in my chest now and it is like a bubbly little creature, it is jumping up and down and says 'do it, do it'. . . *So that one says 'do it, do it'. . . , yes, and it feels so alive and happy. . . . Allow yourself to really feel this excitement in your body, feel the aliveness. . .* It is very strong and says 'I can do it, I am capable, . . . it is growing now, . . . it is very tall and happy. . . *(I reflect)* . . . That feels so good . . . my body feels strong and big, it feels that I can really do this job . . . I don't need to listen to that other voice . . . I can see this creature in the corner shrivel up now . . . I feel like I want to let it sit in that corner and not bother with it . . . but now it is very sad . . . perhaps I could . . . no, for right now I just want it to stay in that corner. . . *So it feels right to just leave it in that corner and enjoy your capable and happy feelings . . .* yes. . . *So, let's thank your body for showing you what you are really capable of doing . . .* Oh yes, thank you. . . .

As we progress in our move towards Wholeness, we will observe that the critic's voice becomes subtler and more difficult to distinguish from all the other well meaning voices. Besides that, the critic is part of us and its energies need to be integrated. When we ask the critical voice what it wants **for** us, it might even turn out to be helpful after all.

I had a headache and a scratchy throat. I closed my eyes and listened and observed in a focusing way, paying attention and asking what "all of it" wanted to tell me. . . .

"You are pushing yourself too much, you are rushing around all the time . . ."

"I" answered: "Yes, I really don't like that part which is always doing that;

I will put it out there under the apple tree for now. It has to stay there for now. . . ."

I became aware of my hurting stomach and listened to that - *an ugly bulky little being appeared on my right, stuffing itself with both hands, gobbling up everything in sight*, - I hated, hated it, always eating too much, always wanting more and more of everything, I can't stand it! It's ugly, it's awful . . .

Over on my left was this critical voice which reinforced me in really putting both of the other parts down: the one under the apple tree and the little ugly one. I moved over to that blaming part, cuddled into this voice and became totally identified with it, hating and blaming, but feeling somehow safe and self-righteous in this position. . . .

My "counsellor part" came in now: *You need to disidentify from the critic!* . . . But I don't want to, that's where I feel safe and understood . . . well, let's see how it feels if I move over here a bit. . . . I look at that ugly being still stuffing itself, I really don't like it any better, . . . well I'll get a little closer and perhaps it will tell me something . . . *it feels empty and helpless and lonely* . . . oh well, so do I, . . . and so I decide to keep it company . . . and it seems to like that, at least it stops stuffing itself. . .

As we are sitting there together, I put my arm around it and now we both feel better. . . . Later, I invite the pushing part from under the apple tree over to join us, . . . now we are three . . . but what about the critic? I invite him (yes it is a he) to come over too and ask if he wants to help us. He certainly wants to, he tells us that the headache and the scratchy throat was his way of getting my attention. . . *How is your headache and your throat?* . . . I realize that I feel fine. . . I ask the critic if there is another way to get my attention. *He tells me to listen, listen, pay attention, he is my friend, he wants to help* - - -

For a whole day after this experience I listened every time I caught myself rushing, and slowed down. Every time I reached for food or more more more this or that; I paused and listened, checking if I *really* needed that - - my head and throat felt clear - - - there was some pain in my shoulder - but that would be another session.

How to identify the Critic

Let's look at some helpful tools which will assist us in delving a little deeper into the origin of our critical voices.

Although some of the explorations we will use can be applied intellectually, bringing a Focusing/listening attitude to each, will enhance and deepen our insights. - This in turn will assist us in dealing more effectively with our critic and create a

more lasting transformation of its energies.

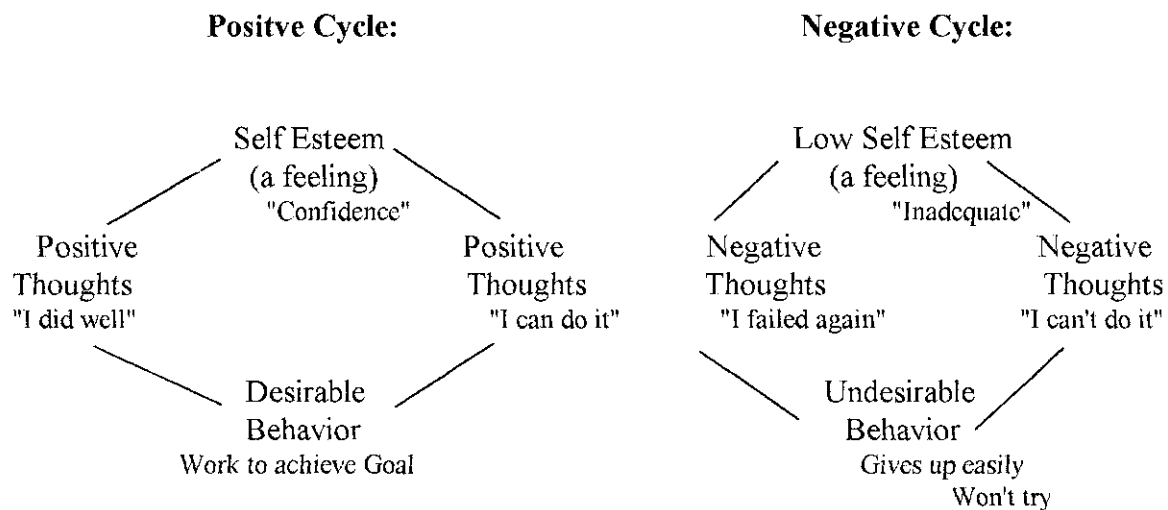
The following suggestions are by no means exhaustive of all the subtleties which have gone into creating our inner worlds - and our critic, and not all of them will be equally helpful to all individuals. Explore the ones that strike an inner recognition for you - and as always, be guided by your own inner wisdom.

We will discuss, and explore some of the following topics, relating them to our unique critical voices:

- Lack of Self Esteem
- Behavioral Patterns
- Irrational Ideas
- Beliefs and Values
- Lack of Assertiveness

Self Esteem

The pattern of how we feel about ourselves is created very early in life, and once established becomes difficult to change. It takes persistence and the will to change. Through Focusing we can become aware of these patterns, trace them to their origin and create a new life giving positive cycle of increasing self-esteem.



Behavioral Patterns

Our behavioral system is working all the time. It is trying to get us what we want, and if we understand it, we can make it work **for** us, for our highest good, instead of against us.

Parts of the Behavioral System:

Our behavioral system is composed of four interlocking parts. They operate together every time we behave. When we behave we

DO, THINK, FEEL and GET PHYSICAL.

All four parts are involved every time we behave. The only person who knows whether your behaviors are effective to meet your basic needs of

**LOVE, POWER, FUN AND FREEDOM,
IS
YOU**

Which behaviors can I change easily?

The easiest behaviors to change are your **doing** and **thinking** behaviors. You have control over them while you do not have direct control over your feelings and your physical behaviors. However, if you change what you are **doing** you will change how you are **feeling**.

Deciding what you want

Deciding what **you** honestly want to meet your basic needs is essential if you want to be happy. You need to understand your personal survival alarm system. You can listen to your positive and negative signals which are related to what **you** want. After you recognize these signals you can do one of two things:

Positive Signals: Give yourself credit for getting what you
wanted

Negative Signals: Figure out what you wanted that you didn't
get

Then

Decide if you can try **another way** or ways to get it

Or

Decide if **another want** could meet the same need

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Focusing Exercise:

Meeting your Basic Needs of Love, Power, Fun and Freedom

Name an important activity: _____

Questions to ask yourself about this activity:

Love: When I do this, do I feel like I belong to a team, a group, a family, a club? Do I feel good about myself?

Power: When I do this do I feel important, skilled, competent, disciplined?

Fun: When I do this, do I feel pleasure, am I having fun, am I making discoveries, am I truly enjoying myself?

Freedom: When I do this, do I feel in charge of myself, independent, able to make choices and decisions?

Name a significant person in your life: _____

Questions to ask yourself about this person:

Love: Does this person meet my need for love and belonging?
Does s/he love me no matter what? (unconditional love)
Do I feel a true sense of belonging and closeness
Does s/he care about me and what happens to me?
Is s/he there in good times and in bad times?

Power: Does this person meet my need for power?
Does s/he respect my opinions?
Do I feel important when I am with him/her?
Does s/he respect my skills and competence?
Does s/he give me recognition, praise?

Fun: Does this person meet my need for fun?
Do we laugh together?
Do we play together?
Do we share good times?
Do we learn together?
Do we make discoveries together?
Do we have adventures?

Freedom: Does this person meet my need for freedom?
Does s/he allow me to be independent?
Does s/he let me make my own decisions?
Do I feel free with this person?
Do I make some of the choices about what we do?

Note: If this person is not meeting your needs, you probably are not meeting theirs either.

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Focusing Exercise:

Let's look at some Irrational Ideas (and find some alternatives):

The listener will slowly read the following "ideas" while the Focuser takes each one in turn inside and checks them against her/his "felt sense". Move slowly with what comes, it might be a deeper insight, a change in perception, or just an acknowledgement about what each statement means to the person. Might there be a "critic" in our answers?

Go only to the next statement when the Focuser indicates that there is nothing more coming in relation to each statement:

1. You must - yes, must - have sincere love and approval all the time from all the important people in your life.
2. You must prove yourself thoroughly competent, adequate, and achieving, or you must at least have real competence or talent at something important.

3. You have to view life as awful, terrible, horrible, or a catastrophe when things do not go the way you would like them to go.

4. People who harm you or commit misdeeds rate as generally bad, wicked, or villainous people and you should severely blame, damn, and punish them for their sins.

5. If something seems fearful, you must become terribly upset about it and preoccupied with it.

6. People and things should turn out better than they do and you have to view it as awful and horrible if you do not quickly find good solutions to life's problems.

7. Emotional misery comes from external pressures and you have little ability to control your feelings or rid yourself of hostility and depression.

8. You will find it easier to avoid facing many of life's difficulties and self-responsibilities than to undertake rewarding forms of behavior.

9. Your past remains all important and because something once strongly influenced your life, it has to keep determining your feelings and behavior today.

10. You can achieve happiness by inaction or by passively "enjoying yourself".

Beliefs and Values

Our beliefs and values contribute to our high or low self-esteem. They create critical voices in us and inhibit our growth potential. Examining our beliefs and values, determining if they are really our chosen ones or have been "inherited", will open up new options of 'being' and behaving.

Our body wisdom knows what is life-giving for us. Through Focusing we can tap into that wisdom every time we are willing to listen. In identifying

critical voices, we can get a clue about beliefs and values which no longer serve us.

Ruth, a mother and grandmother, burst into tears as she dropped exhausted into the chair. "I just can't go on like this any longer. I am tired all the time and there is never an end to all the needs and expectations of my children. . . .I should be doing more for them, but I am so tired ". . . (She went on to relate her story as I listened and reflected). . . *So there is this 'tired' and this 'should' in there. Let's acknowledge that . . .* (she starts crying) . . . I am angry. . . it is churning inside. . . wants to burst. . . *And there is this churning, it too wants you to know about itself.. . .* I want to live. . . I don't want to continue catering to my children. . . (*I reflect*). . .

As we continued to explore all the different aspects of her inner voices, she began to realize that she had choices in what she wanted to do with her life. It took several sessions until she could fully embrace all of her needs and find a satisfying balance of helping her children and looking after her own needs for relaxation and other creative pursuits.

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I like to close this chapter on the Critic by sharing the following summary from Mary Armstrong, Director of The Centre for Focusing in Toronto. She offers us her insight and experience in the article: *THE CRITIC OR THE STILL SMALL VOICE WITHIN* :

'The **Critic** is that voice within that diminishes you, cuts you down, tells you how inferior you are and generally keeps you from living as fully as you might. The Critic can sound like the voice of your conscience, like a well-meaning advisor or the part that keeps you on the "straight and narrow". You might recognize it as the voice of an authority figure in your earlier life.

Our job is to recognize The Critic for what it is, then reduce its power over us. Each of us has to find our own best way of doing this. Sometimes it helps to speak very firmly and rudely to The Critic, telling it you're tired of it dragging you down and spoiling the joy of life. "I know you're trying to be helpful, but you're not, so please go away". In other words, treat the Critic as you would an actual person in your life who ran around behind you, constantly telling you how inferior you are.

In time, we want to be on friendlier terms with The Critic. After all, it is part of us. In the beginning, dialoguing with the Critic often proves too dangerous. The Critic is much too entrenched and powerful. If we enter into an argument with it, we're bound to lose or even end up agreeing! Later, when we clearly recognize a "Critic Attack" for what it is and are skilled at disarming The Critic, The Critic can hold some very useful knowing for us. Often The Critic is really trying to protect us, for example, but misunderstands our present reality.

The Critic can be very difficult to recognize. The more psychologically sophisticated we become, the more subtle it becomes. It can easily sound like the still small voice within, that part of us we want to listen to.

So, how do we tell the difference? Both voices may say essentially the same thing. The acid test lies in how *you feel* about the message. The Critic usually speaks harshly. It has a strident tone that leaves you feeling depressed or unworthy or guilty or shameful. While the inner voice of insight and wisdom speaks softly. We need to be quiet in order to hear it.

For example, The Critic may say, "You're just lazy and nothing you do will ever turn out right." The inner voice would say something like, "You're really having trouble getting started on that project. You're just so worried it won't turn out right." Essentially the same message - but the second one leaves you on better terms with yourself, more able to deal with the situation.

Recognizing The Critic, cutting it down to size, refusing to be laid low by it can make the difference in how we relate to ourselves and to our worlds."

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THE USE OF FOCUSING FOR HEALTH AND HEALING

The Key to Healing is in Receiving and Retaining the Vibrations of Love

It is amazing how many books and tapes are emphasizing this truth, and yet we are slow to learn and practice what we preach. Do we really believe that each individual cell in our body has a consciousness? Are we responsible for the task of raising this consciousness, and awakening the cells of our body to receive and retain the vibrations of love? Are we aware that the body's ability to heal itself is directly proportionate to the amount of love each cell is able to receive and retain?

When I met Ann Marie she was a living example of bubbling vibrant health, and it was difficult to imagine that she had battled Multiple Sclerosis for many years. She shares her story in *Awaken the Healer Within*, where she talks about High-Level Wellness and Low-Level Wellness. From her own healing journey she describes that there is one disease: low-level wellness. Everyone is on a continuum of wellness, and at the midpoint is the absence of symptoms. Symptoms at the lower level relate to the toxic emotions, toxic chemicals and genetic weaknesses within our system. As we increase the flow and amplitude of our **Life-Force Energy** we raise the level of wellness and awaken the body's ability to heal itself.

We have been separated from the Love of the Creator through judgment and fear through generation after generation, but we can return to the soul's connection to the Creator. Each cell in our body can return to Love. As we open our consciousness to the concept that each cell in our body is part of the Creator it begins to fill itself with Love.

Based on her extensive research and on the discoveries she made throughout her journey, she teaches that the cells and systems of the body begin to degenerate as the distorted vibrations of fear begin to accumulate throughout the being. To protect themselves from distorted energies, the cells tense up, create walls, which restrict the flow of life-force energy. As the life-force energy decreases, the cells begin to degenerate. They are not open to receive. They have blocked the very love that can save their life.

As the creator and overseer of our body, it is up to us to clear out the blockages and to reawaken the consciousness of the cells to accept the pure vibrations of love. As the life-force energy increases, the cells are able to regenerate and rejuvenate themselves.

Ann Marie's account resonated strongly with my own experiences through Energy Flow Focusing Explorations, and Mary Armstrong, the Director of The Centre for Focusing in Toronto, shares with us her insights about Focusing in Health and Healing.

"In Focusing we access deeper levels of awareness than are usually available to us. Through learning to pay attention to our body's physically felt response to life situations, emotional reactions and thoughts, we come to a truer knowing than would otherwise be possible.

Through Focusing we can access deep and significant information about the body's physical health and needs.

What we think in our conscious minds sends powerful messages to our physical bodies. We cannot separate the mind from the body or thoughts from health and healing. By gaining more awareness of what passes through our minds, we can help our bodies to greater health. Through Focusing we become aware of our resistance/blocks to wellbeing and our conditioned fears. With awareness and the Focusing attitude, we can gradually change what passes through our conscious minds and thus help the body to greater health both mentally and physically.

Focusing is helpful in making known to us the workings of the mind which are out of our usual range of awareness. Focusing is full of surprises as we come face to face with our deeper mind and bring to the surface lost memories, conditioning and attitudes which block our healing.

Blockages in Inter-relatedness and Inter-Connectedness influence our mind and body. An awareness of these is an important element towards health and healing.

Case studies have shown that Focusing will lower depression, modify the coping style of helplessness and hopelessness in the direction of mastery

and control, will enable the reintegration of a positive body image, and will sustain a physiological process of recovery."

Deepak Chopra in *Perfect Health*, (Harmony Books, 1991) states:
"There exists in every person a place that is free from disease, that never feels pain, that cannot age or die. When you go to this place, limitations which all of us accept cease to exist . . . This is the place called perfect health. . . even the briefest visit (to this place) instills a profound change. . . the mind exerts the deepest influence on the body, and freedom from sickness depends upon contacting our own awareness, bringing it into balance, and then extending that balance to the body. This state of balanced awareness, more than any kind of physical immunity, creates a higher state of health."

Although Deepak Chopra uses other methods in his treatments, Focusing guides us to that inner place of awareness that leads towards the inner body knowing. Combined with exercise and diet to which Focusing can also guide us, we have a powerful tool for our perfect health and well-being.

. . .

After my student and friend Shirley had learned Focusing, she began to use it successfully in many situations of her life, but her physical condition continued to have a disabling effect on her private and career life. She gave me permission to relate her wonderful story about how Focusing changed all that:

"The diagnosis stated: ' . . . an incurable, hereditary condition relieved by surgery and braces. No prolonged standing, walking or climbing stairs.'

The pain never left my bones. That gnawing, grinding constant ache became my bitter companion in waking and sleeping.

Another unwelcomed guest forced itself upon me every three weeks: PMS. I dreaded the headaches, cramps, fatigue, imbalance and confusion that accompanied my 'guest'. My family dreaded the depression, mood swings, and anger.

There had to be relief - somewhere - somehow -. So I persisted in years of surgeries, treatments, specialists, medication, laser and vitamin therapies. Nothing had any lasting effect. I did not know then that there might be another way. I never listened to the wisdom of my body. I never allowed a felt sense to appear.

And most of all, I never believed that I am responsible for my pain or the absence of it.

My friend Christel introduced me to Focusing. Another therapy? I'd try anything!

The pain became an image of red hot knives invading my legs asking me for 'something' from within. From my cleared space the 'something' emerged as a warm, golden honey-like substance that flowed over my bones. It needed me to see the value of acceptance - not only of my suffering, but acceptance of people I had rejected all my life.

The PMS introduced itself as a tiny, fuzzy green creature that immediately requested my friendship and a 'cuddle'. As this little being sat on my shoulder, it wrapped its wee arms around my neck and giggled, whispering: 'Yes, I am very much here - and I need you to be my friend!'

I received. I touched. I felt. I accepted. I **thanked my body**.

I went back to these Focusing 'places' time and time again. The pain gradually became less and finally left me completely.

Every so often, for very brief moments, the pain and PMS symptoms return to remind me to live in a cleared space of acceptance. Now, I receive, touch and welcome their messages.

The release of energies has been channeled into a renewed awareness of life. Family, career, university, aerobics, jogging, and horseback riding are all part of my life now.

But so is Focusing - because the pain went away!!

This account dates back 12 years, and Shirley has continued to lead a very active, successful and joy-filled life. She became a Focusing Trainer and has used her skill by helping other physically challenged persons.

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SYMBOLS AND DREAMS AS PASSAGeways INTO YOUR HIDDEN TREASURES

What is a dream? What part does the dream play in my life? The dream seems a great mystery. We do not know where it comes from, but it can become a passageway towards personal transformation, self-reflection and guidance for our daily lives.

C. G. Jung said that dreams provide the most interesting information for those who take the trouble to understand their symbols. He talks about "another" in us whom we do not know. This other speaks to us in dreams and can give us a different perspective on ourselves from the one we usually identify with. When we find ourselves in a difficult situations, our dreams can assist us in untangling our perception and illuminate our vision.

Many books have been written about dream interpretation and I will give you an extensive selection from my book shelf (see Bibliography). Each author has a slightly different version of how to approach dreams, some even claim universal meanings of certain symbols. C.G. Jung identifies archetypal symbols, and I have found it interesting to look for them in my dreams.

For years I enjoyed Ann Faraday's book *The Dream Game*, 1974, which introduced me to remembering and interpreting my nightly entertainment. She had come to the conclusion that ". . . The surest guide to the meaning of a dream is the feeling and judgment of the dreamer himself, who deep down inside knows its meaning." She goes on to say: "The only 'correct' interpretation of a dream - that is an effective interpretation - is one that gives the dreamer a joyful 'aha' experience of insight and moves him to change his life in some constructive fashion." (p. 12)

I followed Ann Faraday's suggestion for unlocking my dreams, keeping a dream journal and delving into the symbols which express feelings, emotions and intuition in picture language, identifying the thoughts of the heart.

I had been intrigued when she quoted Masters and Houston who believe that ". . . major blocks to creativity are caused by the mind's energies becoming locked in some deep inner conflict rooted in what they call the 'cultural trance', a fixation on outmoded values and institutions". Ann

continues: "This links directly with my own experience that when dreams are used to confront and overcome such inner conflicts, an immense amount of creative energy is released."(p.148).

Something in me resonated deeply when she encouraged that ". . . dreams can help us break out of the cultural trance to reclaim our lost independence, vitality, and creativity." (p. 148).

My journal entry December 1977 (!):

I am aware of so many **different aspects** in myself that clamor for attention. where to turn, what to think, what to do? There is conflict. There are too many possibilities, I feel really helpless and confused. Can a dream give me some kind of clarity? I'll try.

With pen and paper beside my bed, I gave myself the strong suggestion that I will remember my dream, that I will wake up and before rushing out of bed, I will write down what has come to me.

A wide open, slightly hilly plain. We, my partner and I (I did not recognize him) have just come out of the forest where we were protected and sheltered. Now we are on this **wide open plain**.

The thought scares me that there would be the same number of **wild animals** as in the forest, but here we are exposed, they would find us, we have no place to hide.

And there they come already, running towards us. I see them appearing over the crest of a hill - others are coming from the right side. I don't know what kind of animals they are, they look black and fierce, some are bigger, some smaller.

I want my partner to shoot me before they tear me apart, I prefer the quick moment of death over the painful prolonged tearing apart. He can shoot me and then himself.

But wait - is this the only alternative? . . . What if I love them and have no fear and . . . while these thoughts are going through my mind, the animals have surrounded me already. . . I feel almost suffocated by them, but am mainly conscious of one black bear on my right. While **I reach out in love**, it cuddles into my arms and I feel the softness of its fur on my cheek. I feel happy and cuddly and warm. I seem to **embrace** them all and be embraced by them.

We continue walking together, other animals join us, but I feel the protection of

those I encountered first. We come into a city and the animals change into human forms. We keep walking, but I stay behind and walk slower. A **giant male being** walks beside me and puts his arm around me for a while. I feel grateful but amazed that this special being would do that to me. He does not resemble anyone I know.

We keep walking through modern clean rich beautiful city streets. I am tired and recognize the hotel where I live and started out from. I want to go back and sleep. But I now recognize that it is really a different place, it just seemed like the same. I am disappointed and a bit sad, but then my tiredness is transformed into more energies. There are energies around me which seem to have changed me and I feel alive and excited as I wake up.

Even now, after over 20 years, this dream has a lot of energy, and as I look back I am flooded with memories of this period in my life. My notes after the dream mention only: "Animals in your dreams represent parts of yourself, different aspects of your personality." ?? "Am I coming to terms with them in a fuller and deeper sense - accepting and embracing them all?" I also learn that the giant male being is a part of myself that has been neglected and wants to help me with his strength. I feel encouraged by this dream to become more aware and trust **all my parts**, allowing them to live and be .

From here on, my journal entries contain many synchronistic events with people, books and insights. It seems as if a flood gate had been opened through my initial dream invitation. At some point, a friend suggested to "pay attention" and "go with it". I asked for a dream about this.

It seemed as if I dreamt the whole night long. There were so many pictures, images, the whole world seemed to flood into my dreams. It seemed like a dream in a dream in a dream. Scene after scene appeared in rapid succession.

At the end, two symbols seemed significant: an expanding circle at the horizon and a vertical rod. These seemed to be representative of it all. I had an overwhelming feeling of fullness and wholeness . . . everything was good, just as it is and has to be. The whole world as represented by the expanding circle was at my disposal; and the rod indicated movement in the up and down direction.

I woke up with these clear images and feelings. I still felt flooded with too much fullness and a need for some specific guidance in all that. It seemed to correspond to my life where I saw too many options and had difficulties choosing in which direction to go. Did the dream help? I saw the rod as

something solid, strong, grounded, something to hold on to. The dream also encouraged me to accept that there is not only one way, but many to choose from, and **it is all good**. Did I still doubt? Was I still hung-up on traditional ways? Was I still scared to enter into the fullness?

Some definite guidance came during the next night where a friend appeared with clear instructions about some steps I could take in an upcoming situation. I still had a choice, but decided to follow his advice.

I remember this period in my life as very confusing. I was in a process of breaking out of old habits, molds, values. I wanted to know, really know what is "Truth", and where could I find an infallible direction towards some ultimate goal.

In my dreams I encountered a **sun flower** who encouraged me to play and forget my heaviness. I met an **eagle** who taught me that I could fly. I climbed a high mountain and visited an **Old Wise Man**. On my insistence, he allowed me to look into a mirror where I perceived a whole world in conflict. He told me that it was not my place to see everything because my limited vision could only behold confusion where harmony and order existed.

When I began to trust this **Old Wise Man**, he guided me towards a table on which I found a huge basket overflowing with fruit. He told me that it is a symbol for fullness and plenty in my life. He pointed at the lush green grass where I could rest, and then the **sun flower** was there too, and the **eagle**. He told me that all this will always be there, and that's all I need to know.

I woke refreshed and rested, and a calm acceptance stayed with me for a long time after these dream experiences. The message seemed to have finally penetrated my consciousness: I don't need to know everything ahead of time, it will all work out.

A couple more dreams from later in this period reflected and confirmed for me that I was finally letting go of the old and moving into something new.

I went into a room where several odd looking women were sorting old stuff, mainly **shoes**. They pointed to a pile of shoes and suggested I should take what I needed. I politely refused because I did not want or need them.

While walking down from our apartment, I suddenly realized that I had forgotten my **shoes** and went back. The door was locked and nobody opened. After knocking for a while I decided to go without shoes. I shrugged my shoulders and felt relieved that I did not need them. It was more important to go and do what I wanted to do.

I don't want to give the impression that I constantly work with my dreams. They have been helpful during difficult times in my life, and once in a while I wake up with a dream that feels significant and I spend some time with it.

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Teaching a Dream Workshop

While teaching Focusing, I get many questions about symbols and dream images. Many books have been helpful for my own understanding and I enjoy sharing some of these insights.

Symbols and images permeate our lives. They are a major part of our waking life, but much more part of our dream life. Symbols are the language of our dreams. When worked with properly they can be a mine of personal, emotional, cognitive, and spiritual resources.

Symbols from dreams and waking life have energy and wisdom for us. Their potential waits to be discovered and used to empower our daily actions and choices.

In working with symbols we apply techniques to clarify and evoke the conscious and unconscious psychological and spiritual energies contained in our symbols. This is done not so much by analyzing, explaining and interpreting the symbol, but by staying with the symbol itself, working and interacting with it, until it releases the energy contained in it.

Symbols need to be treated as containers or channels of energy. Usually, a symbol does not have only one single meaning, but a cluster of meanings; it does not release a single energy, but a complex of energies.

Energy is contained in all symbols and symbolic events, not just in symbols from our dreams. Becoming aware of our favorite symbols, symbolic objects, places, things, or symbolic events, is an enriching experience. There are religious symbols, artistic symbols, commercial symbols, which all carry a particular personal energy for us.

Some Symbol Techniques:

(Some excerpted from Berne, Patricia, *Dream Symbol Work*, New York, 1991)

- Identify symbols in a dream - what are the major symbols?
- Choose a symbol on which to focus - what symbol do I want to work on?
- Get immersed in the symbol - What is the symbol in all its details as it is experienced?
- Amplify the symbol - What function does this symbol serve in ordinary life?
- Carry the symbol forward in time - what happens to it when you carry it into the future? Where does the symbol go from here?
- Carry the symbol backward in time - How did this symbol evolve to its present context? What are the origins of the symbol? How did it arise?
- Associate with the symbol - What does this particular symbol remind you of? What are some other symbols from your daily life that connect with this dream symbol?
- Name some energies released by the symbol - What kinds of energies are being released in me by this symbol's appearance?
- Dialogue with the symbol - Why is this symbol in my dream now? What is it trying to communicate?
- Create expressive artwork based on the symbol - story, poetry, drama, music, dance, costume, drawing, painting, collage, sculpture
- Meditate on the symbol - To what transformation (wholeness, greatness

etc.) does this symbol call me?

- Research the symbol - What are some of the cultural, historical, and archetypal roots of the symbol?
- Ask key questions about the symbol - How else can I explore the symbol and put its energies into action in my life right now?
- Bring the symbol's energies into your inner life - How can I use the energies released by the symbol to help transform my inner life?
- Bring the symbol's energies into your outer life - How can I use the energies released by the symbol to help transform my work, my play, and my personal relationships?
- Look for dreams that give guidance and confirmation - How can I use my dreams to tell me if I am on the right track? Do my dreams tell me where to go from here?
- If this were my dream - using other's dreams to ask what would this symbol mean to me?

Points to remember:

When we discuss and interpret our dreams it is important that we **own** our dreams.

Nobody **knows** the meaning of our dream except yourself.

We can ask for **suggestions** about our dream meaning, but need to check them by sensing into our deeper wisdom if they fit for us.

Confidentiality during dream interpretation is important, share what feels comfortable.

Have fun with it.

Some Levels of Dream Interpretation:

Dreams can give us some literal information about things and people in our lives.

Dreams might reveal our feelings about those things and people at a deeper level, which we might not be aware of during our waking life.

Dreams might provide subtle feelings, vibrations and impressions we have missed during the day.

Dreams can reveal the workings of our own inner world, with all its conflicts and healing power sources.

Dreams may reveal hidden talents, buried beauty and unsuspected creative energy.

Dreams assist in the realization of undeveloped potential.

Dreams dramatize thoughts of the heart and exaggerate in order to make an emotional point.

Carl Gustav Jung said about dreams that in each of us there is another whom we do not know. He speaks to us in dreams and tells us how differently he sees us from the way we see ourselves. When, therefore, we find ourselves in a difficult situation to which there is no solution, he can sometimes kindle a light that radically alters our attitude - the very attitude that led us into the difficult situation. (I have lost this source.)

Keeping a Dream Diary:

Keeping recording equipment beside your bed will help you remember your dream: pencil, paper, flash light.

Before falling asleep suggest or pray about guidance in your dream, the intent to remember will work for you.

Don't trust your memory for later, record immediately on awakening, even a few words will help you to remember more later.

Do not dismiss anything as too trivial - more will be revealed later when you read what you have briefly recorded.

Record as fully as possible, some seemingly insignificant details might reveal some hidden treasures.

Transcribe your dream notes the following day while the dream is still in your memory.

Relate your dream to the events of the previous day, some consciously unnoticed sensations might be highlighted during your dream state.

Symbols reveal rather than conceal the truth in precise, condensed form, they give us the whole constellation of feeling. They are an expression of a feeling or intuition in all its complexity, subtlety and depth.

Symbols have a specific meaning for each individual, depending on life circumstances at the time of the dream. Always focus on your own personal life.

Some Dream Questions:

I found the most comprehensive guide for dream interpretation in Eugene T. Gendlin's book, *Let Your Body Interpret Your Dreams*. With his permission I have used these questions in my dream workshops and will outline them briefly below. His book is filled with detailed explanations and many examples.

The following dream questions do not apply to every dream. Use the first inquiry with every dream, but then you can go over the list and ask the questions which seem to resonate. They are meant to be addressed to the **dreamer's body**. As you allow the question to be **felt** in the wisdom of your body, some insights will surface. Go slowly, sense into your intuitive guidance.

I find it helpful to have a listener ask the questions while the "dreamer" stays in the dream and senses what comes as the questions are directed to her.

16 Dream Questions:

Three Ways of Associations:

1) What comes to you?

What are your associations in relation to the dream?

What comes to mind as you think about the dream?

Or pick a part of the dream. What comes to you in relation to that?

2) Feelings?

What did you feel in the dream?

Sense the feel-quality of the dream. Let it come back as fully as possible.

Choose the most puzzling, oddest, most striking, or most beautiful part of the dream. Picture it to yourself and let a felt sense of it come in your body.

Or pick one part of the dream, then ask:

What in your life feels like that? or

What does this feel-quality remind you of?

When did you ever feel like that? or

What is new for you in that felt sense?

3) About Yesterday?

What did you do yesterday? Scan your memory of yesterday.

Also recall what you were inwardly preoccupied with.

Something related to the dream may come up.

Three Elements:

4) Place?

Visualize and sense the lay-out of the main place in your dream.

What does it remind you of?

Where have you been in a place like that?

What place felt like that?

5) Story?

First summarize the story-plot of the dream. Then ask yourself:

What in your life is like that story?

Summarize the events of the dream in two or three steps: " first. . . and

then . . . and then . . .". Make it more general than the dream.

Ask: "What is **like that** for you?"

6) Characters?

Take the unknown person in your dream, or if you know them all, take the most important, or take them up in turn.

What does this person remind you of? What physical feel-quality does this person in the dream give you?

Even a person whom you didn't see clearly may give you a bodily sensed quality.

With familiar people: Did the person look and feel as usual?

Working with characters in three different ways: (The following three questions are from C.G. Jung and Fritz Perls, but the role of the body is specific to Focusing.)

7) What part of you is that?

According to some theories, the other people in your dreams are parts of you. You might want to try it out:

What feel-quality does this person give you?

What sense comes in your body?

If no quality comes, ask yourself: What is one adjective I could use for this person?

Now think of that adjective or feel-quality as a part of you.

If that is a part of you, what part would that be?

You may not like this part of you, or know much about it, but let it be here for the moment anyway.

Does the dream make sense, if you take it as a story about how you relate

to that part of you?

8) Be that person?

Stand up or sit forward on the edge of the chair. Loosen your body. Now imagine that you are preparing to act in a play. Now you are just getting ready, feeling yourself into the role. You are going to play that character from the dream. **Let the feel-quality of being that person come into your body.**

Exaggerate it. What comes to you to say or do. Wait and see what words or moves come from the body-feel.

These questions can be applied to any thing in a dream, not only to people. Use the question for any object in the dream, become it.

You can also act yourself as you are in the dream. Exaggerate it, see what you are like when you let yourself be even more so.

9) Can the dream continue?

Vividly visualize the end, or any one important scene of the dream. Feel it again. When it comes back as fully as possible, just watch it and wait for something further to happen. Don't invent it, just let it happen.

Later: What impulse do you have to do something back at the image once it has done something of its own accord?

Three ways of decoding your dream:

10) Symbols?

What is that kind of thing anyway? What is it used for?

What does some object in your dream "stand for"?

What is that object used for? Say the obvious.

11) Body Analogy? Especially: High, Low, and Under

Something in a dream may be an analogy for the body.

A house may be your body, does that fit?

The attic or other high place might mean thought, being in your head far removed from your feelings.

The basement, underground, or under water can mean the unconscious.

Odd-looking machines and diagrams often make sense if viewed as body analogies.

12) Counterfactual?

What in the dream is specifically different from the actual situation?

Exactly, what has the dream changed compared to your waking life?

Why did my dream show this counterfactually?

Could it mean that this person or situation might be different than I am aware of? Is my dream telling me something to watch for?

Four developmental aspects:

13) Childhood?

What childhood memory might come in relation to the dream?

If you think of your childhood, what comes?

In your childhood, what had this feel-quality from the dream?

What went on in your life at that time?

14) Personal growth?

How are you developing, or trying to develop?

What do you struggle with or wish you could be or do?

In what way are you a one-sided, not a well-rounded person?

Could the dream or the characters in it represent what you still need to develop? Suppose the dream were a story about that? What might that mean?

15) Sexuality?

Try the dream out as a story about whatever you are currently doing or feeling about sexuality.

Or: If it were a story about your ways of being sexual, what would it be saying? Is there something in your life like that?

16) Spirituality?

What creative or spiritual potential of yours might the dream be about?

Are there dimensions of being human in the dream that you don't take much account of in your life?

Don't try to use all these questions on one dream. The above list gives you some possible moves to make with a dream. When one question does not fit, try another one. Each question leads to more insight from your inner body guidance. You can also use variations of these questions as they occur to you.

I enjoy teaching dream workshops and am delighted when I am allowed to participate in the growth process of my students. Yesterday, as one of the synchronicities which I am experiencing while writing this, I received the following dream from one of the Senior's I had taught at a Creative Retirement Center. She gave me permission to include it here:

"I was a young teenager [there was absolutely no doubt it was me], tasting some grown-up but innocent joys and feeling pretty happy. I

returned from wherever I was to a place that was familiar to me in the dream, only to be met with an outcry from both men and women about my behavior. There were three tall, slim women wearing clothes of the 30's and 40's, you know, the hats and gloves and the simple lines of dresses from that period. They were the most outspoken of the group, standing 4-square in front of me with stern faces and although they were not shaking their index finger at me, they left no doubt that they were scandalized and made it abundantly clear that I needed to mend my ways and behave in a manner that was acceptable to society. At first I was threatened by all the fuss then realized that I had done nothing wrong except **be who I am**. There was a shining radiance around me at that point, also at the time I woke up.

I still felt glowing and looked inside for an explanation. It was right there. I have come to be the person I was intended to be and felt glorious in the knowledge. Then on further introspection I went back to a time when I was working with a therapist. At that time I created a teen-age person whom I called Ophelia, who was very like the Ophelia in Hamlet. All the time I worked with that therapist, Ophelia matured, until at the end she was a wise woman, wearing a long, beautifully draped gown in olive green trimmed at the hem and wide sleeves with a soft, rich gold. My therapist told me she thought Ophelia had a gift for me and to be aware of her. When the dream analysis burst in on me, Ophelia visited me with such a wise smile. I got the impression she felt like a proud mother, gave me a silent accolade then reached out to touch me, saying that she was no longer needed and she was proud of my efforts and what I had become. She regally walked away from me, head held high and obviously deeply contented. Tears flowed at that point, both because of the affirmation and that she felt her job was done and would no longer be with me.

If you are including any dream work in your book, feel free to use this as it was a glorious experience, and the analysis came to me because of the work we have done together.

. . . I will tell you how wonderful I am feeling. . . My body is so pleased with itself and I seem to be sending out messages that there is nothing I can't do and do it well. Doors are opening all over the place, and I smile and walk through them knowing, "I can do that!"

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Using several dream questions

I will use the following dream to illustrate how I work with symbols and the above dream questions. After writing down the dream,

highlight some words or sentences which **feel** meaningful, which seem to carry some energy. Sense into your body wisdom.

I enter a big hotel where apparently a **workshop/meeting** is taking place. I am looking for **my room** - the number is **500**. I get into the **elevator** which gets me to the **third** floor. I look for my room number 500. In passing I see a big **meeting room** where some **people** are gathered already. I am looking around and can't find number 500.

Over there to my left is a **bird house**, and as I move over, I realize that number 500 is hidden behind the bird house, somehow **hidden away in the corner**. I open the door and get very angry. It is a **little attic room**, with barely enough room for one **dilapidated bed**. My **mother** is sleeping in this bed. I arouse her and complain bitterly that she did not "do" anything about this - we were going to share the room, she, **my husband** and I - but this room is not at all what we had booked and she should have looked after this matter when she arrived.

Meanwhile **my husband** arrives at the door. He is **playing around** with a kind of chair on wheels and is fixing something there, driving around in it and having a lot of fun. I am angry with him too - it's okay to play, but he should have also looked after getting a decent room for us.

No way am I going to stay in this attic room. I look around and there is another sort of platform around the corner, not big enough for another bed. - Mother goes back to sleep, My husband/father continues playing - so it's up to me to "do" something about the situation. That's where I feel the most energy in the dream: **I know how to do something about the situation and I am going to take control again, not depending on the sleeping mother and the playing husband/father.** I will go to the management and get the room we need.

I anticipate some struggle - they might not give us another room, so I make a big announcement that I will go to the Better Business Bureau, I will call the Press and Television and Radio Crew. **I will get what we need and deserve - I am not going to stay in the attic.** With these strong energies I wake up.

At first I was puzzled. What am I so angry about when in my waking life I feel so peaceful? The **attic room** - I am not ready to be put into the attic (where I put stuff I want to hang on to, but don't really need any more). **I am not ready to be "put away".**

Ah, that resonates. During the last few days I have been sorting through lots of files, organizing them so that **my daughter can use them** maybe at some time in her life. There is so much good information in there, I hope she will want to use it. Ah, that resonates again with a recent conversation we had when I tried to convince myself that **I am retired and now she can take over**. She made me aware that **I cannot live my life through her**. She strongly refused to be pulled into that agenda (of course!)

Now I am looking at the three persons/parts (?) of me in the dream. **I am my mother, content in the attic room, tired and wanting to sleep. I am my husband, wanting to play and be creative with my hands**. That fits, I can identify with that in my life lately. - - - So what is this angry part that is not satisfied with sleeping in the attic room? I feel into the energies and yes, there is still so much more in me, so much more "unlived potential" as I sometimes call it. **There is so much more to Be and Live**. Perhaps this part is okay after all (while I write this now I am struck again with: did I have some notions that it is not okay?) -

Well yes, - sort of. The "**sleeping/resting**" part and the "**creative/playing**" part of me have been very satisfying and have been reinforced by my husband's now retired lifestyle. But - but - my restlessness lately seems to **need more, the attic is not where I want to be**. I have been judging this stirring as "still wanting the glitz and glory" (and of course that's not okay, that's ego stuff - - or is it?) - Sure, I have been still doing some part time counselling and group work, but more or less with the intention of "letting it go" sooner than later. **I am not ready to give it up**. My dream tells me **there is still lots of energy left - angry energy? - don't label it, don't judge it, it is all creative energy!** (That's how I facilitate my client's movements! - forgetting to use it for myself?)

The dream stayed with me for a couple of weeks - I sensed into it from time to time. The 500 was still puzzling, what does 500 mean? - A friend who interprets the Voyager Tarot deck put my nose into that one. It had not occurred to me to look it up: Number 5 - The **Hierophant**, the teacher and sage, and still the student, still more learning through life's many lessons. Also the warning, not to get caught up in tradition, not to become lethargic and comfortable in previous rites and rituals (retiring at 65!?).

That's the dream - and what does my Higher Self have to say to my musings? **Be still and know - Be in the Light, - Be the Light.**

The "angry" did not feel like "Being the Light" - so the pushing and "getting the media attention" does not feel like the way to go - but what does feel okay is the **integration**, the "**not letting that energetic part go**". Did it need to come out so angry and forceful in the dream because "it" was beginning to feel neglected? - - - -

Accepting some requests to do a couple of workshops myself rather than "giving them over" resulted from this dream. **I want to be still and know when to "do" and when to rest and play, or better yet, to rest and play in the "doing" - or is it the BEING which IS ALL OF IT TOGETHER?_** - There it comes again, deep from inside:

**DANCING IN THE LIGHT
BEING DANCED BY THE LIGHT
BEING THE LIGHT**

.....

BRINGING IT ALL TOGETHER: ABOUT PARTS, DISTANCE, STUCK PLACES AND CHOICES

When introducing a process, we need to identify various elements, while in its application we begin to see the movement which might or might not include all of them. I need to also stress, that Focusing is an ongoing energy filled exploration during which we might reach certain "resting places", but the journey can and will go on if we persist. In my experience, Focusing has become a way of fully living in each moment, growing into ever deeper awareness of my various parts. I will illustrate this with a recent exploration which will also introduce a few advanced guiding suggestions.

I was back in a frequent, well known **stuck place** where nothing so far had helped me to get unstuck for a long time. I had been sort of "smelling" at it for a bit, holding it, being with it and then just moving on to other things.

Some reading about **parts and distance** triggered it again, and back I was in that same uncomfortable stuck place. I decided to try again. I held both parts - yes, they definitely are parts of me that I have been painfully aware of. They sit in the same place **in my chest** and seem to pull me apart.

I was gently holding them both, but at the same time getting deeper into BOTH - feeling in some way identified with both, because they feel like they ARE ME - two very distinct parts of me - it SEEMS like ALL OF ME - it always SEEMS/feels/senses that way, and that's why it feels stuck.

Usually I like the Interactional way of working with parts in myself and while assisting others, but here with this particular "relationship" I have been very stuck each time it comes up. So what happened next probably was triggered by the article I had just read - I put both parts, this whole inner relationship, out into a fairly **far distance**. That's when a shift began to happen. I could see both aspects/parts of me very clearly in the distance, I could sit over here as the **observer**, looking at them, - one very happy/content, the other very unhappy/discontent. Let's call them A and B.

Both had been and still were equally strong, although at times one had felt more dominant than the other. They seem to be totally exclusive of each other - and yet they are both parts of me. I remembered an illustration that Ann Weiser Cornell, a Focusing Coordinator in California, uses when we are seemingly caught in a place like this. Her instruction is to **hold them both**. I had done that before, but in this case it did not get me unstuck.

When instead of continuing to hold them, I had put them **into the distance**, something looked different. My husband's **real listening, facilitating presence** was very comforting at this point. In focusing, being tuned in to my body, I sometimes forget that my **head** perceptions are also part of my wholeness, but seeing part A and B at a distance, I became aware that there was actually some overlap between A and B, I could see that some of the B part had actually always spilled over into the A part living. That felt better, and yet it still felt that living my A part has kept me from living part B fully.

Part A is mainly connected with my **private relationship/home/family part**, while in this process, I am calling my **professional/career related aspect part B**.

There has been a feeling of **regret** that I could/can/never will be able to live both. My **critic** comes in and wants to say: "that's a silly crazy notion", but I acknowledge where all this is, and hold **the regret** together with the **gratefulness** of having lived/living my life as it is now. But again, I need to put that at a distance because in holding both the feelings/sensings/emotions seem overwhelming. Some "I" needs to stay separate from "that".

When something is that much stuck as this one, I know that it is there for a wonderful growing purpose. My friend, Ann Weiser Cornell, had given me a few advanced guiding suggestions, which I decided to try: saying hello to each in turn, **sensing its emotions from its point of view**. (from Ann's workshop: *Treasure Maps of the Soul*)

I started with **part B**, over on my right side. B is hunched up, sits there all shriveled up, - behind it I see a wide open space, a big space, wide open, airy, light. It feels that this wide open space is empty, it has not been used, it could be filled with lots of beautiful things, decorated, colorful - it feels sad about all the waste, - it's crying, - I sense its sadness, - I put it out a little further so that I can observe what it is feeling, - letting it tell me.

It feels so small and almost dying. I hear its pain of not being able to live. It's like a little creature that has all this unlimited open space there which it would have liked to fill with beauty for all to see, yes, that's what it would like, putting all that it could/would like to be and do on display for all to admire and see. It feels sooo sad. I can now **hold the sadness** and confirm that I hear all that. It likes it when I hear it.

I move over to **part A**. It feels like "Much" and "Full". It is sitting there with arms wide open, filled with Muchness, gobbling up more and more and more, its arms are still wide open for more. It is holding all of it, it

feels very protective of what it is holding, it likes all of it.

After a while it sort of closes its arms around what it is holding, like wanting to make it all feel secure, holding it, keeping it safe. It wants me to hear that it feels very protective of what it has gathered. It feels content and contained.

I can clearly **see both**, I need a little **more distance** so that I can separate them in my perception and not identify with either one. **Part A.** seems fairly small, contained in its place, while **part B** is huge with all that unlimited space behind it, sort of carrying it on its back.

How do I feel about them now? **Part A.** seems very solid, condensed, insignificant in comparison to **part B.** which is very airy, open, unlimited, somewhat brittle. I **sense them both in my stomach**, burbling, churning. . . . The sensation moves up higher, . . . into my heart area . . . and up into my throat, . . . some crying comes. I accept and acknowledge that **sad feeling** for a while, holding it for a few moments and then want to get back into the **observer part.**

The next question comes again from Ann's suggestion: **What do you NOT want me to have to feel?**

I start with **part A.** The question is hardly posed and it blurts out what it does not want me to have to feel: lonely, insecure, unprotected, lacking anything, out in the dark alone. I see how it is now surrounded by a soft darkness, how it is closing its arms even tighter around all that it has, very protective. I thank it for letting me know what it does not want me to feel.

I move over to **part B.** It gets up from its hunched over position and becomes very angry; it shouts at me: I don't want you to have to feel invisible, useless, meaningless, insignificant, nothing, limited . . . I am a bit shocked at its force, but listen to it, tell it that I hear all. -- After a while of listening to it, I begin to hear some **critical tones.** It is accusing me of not allowing it to live. It is angry that I did not let it live. It is very big now in its anger and I move it a bit further away.

I become aware of **part A.** being afraid of **part B.** I need to bring **part A.** a bit closer. . . I hold it in my left arm now, as **part B.** is becoming overwhelmingly huge. I don't want it to gobble me up now and move it still further away while holding **part A.**

I let **part B.** know that I hear it, . . . how I hear its anger of not being allowed to live, . . . how it has shriveled up, . . . how angry and sad it feels

about that. . . The more I acknowledge that, the more anger comes out, it shouts and screams and tells me over and over how it does not want me to have to feel invisible and useless and not living my full potential.

I can feel all of that now in my body. I start crying in **anger and sadness**. **Part A.** seems to want to console me, I feel good to hold **part A.** I need **part A.** to protect me from the fury I sense in **part B.**

I decide to let **part A.** speak to **part B.** I want to move away from both and observe. I get another **visual image** about **part A.** and **part B.** **Part A.** is very solid, it condenses even more and becomes a fist- sized gold nugget. **Part B.** is very huge, beautifully colored, airy-like with flowing gowns, dancing, floating, moving - - it is so immensely beautiful.

They are both soooo beautiful. Do I really have to chose between them? I want to be and live both!!!! -

After allowing some more **crying and sadness**, I move into the next question which in some way has run alongside, but I have tried to keep the question in waiting, which seemed a bit contrived, but I am in charge of this, so I have tried to first stay with the "not wanting me to have to feel" question.

Next question from Ann: **What does that part want me to be able to feel??**

I start with **part B.** It wants me to be able to feel wonderful, beautiful, admired, useful, meaningful, fulfilled, complete. The sense in my body is that it wants me to feel "not hungry". It wants me to feel full in the place that is frequently hungry and reaches for chocolates.

Part A. wants me to be able to feel protected, restful, loved and cared for, solid, accepting of limitations (here I budge), content, warm and safe, appreciative - oops, I hear some **critical** tones here - now it starts preaching, telling me about all the wonderful things and people in my life that it has given me and that it wants for me to feel appreciative about, it tells me how thankful I should be.

I listen, I hear it all. I let both of them know that I thank them for letting me know how they feel. What do I feel? Angry and sad.

No happy ending so far. I am disappointed, but that's how this process goes. I know that it will continue. It's at times a bit like a soap opera, except it is my life and fortunately I have learned to see some humor in these inner creatures that seem to have a life of their own.

I am judgmental of A. and B. I sit with that **critical judgment**. It feels I "should" appreciate knowing them, but right now I don't like them and they are sad about that. They so much want to be accepted and loved for what they are. So do I. I feel more stuck than before.

What comes next? It's interesting how I can feel and observe all that. I am aware of **part A.** and **part B.** and **resentful Me, Critical Me.** "**Another Me**" is observing. Am I going in circles with all this?

It is wonderful to have some Focusing friends and teachers with experiences and insights which come only through years of practice. There is always more to discover when we are living this process, and we continue to share with each other. Ann Weiser Cornell responded to my plea for help, - here is an excerpt from her letter which moved my process forward:

" This wanting to be and live both, needs to be fully acknowledged. It sounds like you are **assuming** that this **can't** happen. This assumption must come from a further assumption that each part is attached to a particular expression. **Let the parts detach from particular outcomes**, and just tell you about their "**feelings**".

It is our minds that try to tell us that certain outcomes are or are not possible, or that two things are not possible at the same time. The body doesn't have these limitations. . . . As Einstein once said, the problem cannot be solved at the same level it was created. We need a paradigm shift, a quantum leap. Here's how to get it: **invite the body to feel both positive feelings at the same time.** Then walk around in your life with this new body--the body that has both positive feelings at the same time. If the mind pipes up, say hello to its fears but resolutely don't buy them. **YOU DO NOT HAVE TO CHOOSE ONE OR THE OTHER, YOU CAN HAVE IT ALL.** And to get it all, you have to let your concept re-configure. In other words, be willing to walk in the unknown and not know what is happening for a while."

I know that for me this has been a process that has been waiting to go deeper. When I say "going in circles" and "no solution" it's because it has come up again and again and again and always got some Band-Aid fixing, and then felt okay for a while, till it came up again. I had been listening to **all my parts** - but now my sense is that I need to go with this issue to somewhere where I have never been before. - - -

Something came the other day as I was walking. This insistent **part B.** this "need to be seen", this "wanting the glitz and glory" part seemed like an

addiction/compulsion. . It feels like something that might need letting go.?? I am not sure though. This would mean rejecting what is there and that does not feel okey, that's like old patterns. . . .This whole thing feels like "more". I want to go very slow with it, really being aware of all the "steps" it takes.

I became aware, that I was attached to a certain outcome . . . , I wanted the tension to go away. Seeing that, I laughed, . . .my **impatience** wanted a quick fix. I said hello and felt sort of a warm hug for it (the impatience) and in turn felt a loving embrace from it. . . .

During the next few days I sort of "smelled at all of it" from time to time and stayed open for what would come. . . .When I looked at the attack which had happened in **part A** and **part B**, I could feel the fear in both of them of not being fully heard and perhaps being abandoned in favor of the other. I let them know that I was willing to continue and fully hear. . .

Time elapsed and something unexpected happened when I took the time to listen some more:

They each had two parts. They talked to me about that in examples, lots of examples. It was as if I could see my whole life and **A.1, A.2, B.1, B.2** were in control in different situations. I must stress here, that all of it felt strangely **Whole** even though I saw the differentiation. (I can live with that paradox.) I could also see that there was some **overlap** between **part A.** and **part B.** When **part A.**, which is my nurturing, caring part, becomes **too much** of it, I now call it **part A.2** - too submissive, too pleasing etc. At that moment **part B.2** comes in. While **part B.** is assertive and active, taking charge, innovative, career oriented etc., **part B.2.** is belligerent, aggressive, pushing too hard, either/or kind of feeling, etc.. It seems now that it comes in when it wants to save **part A.2.** from it's **too muchness.** Somehow it seemed like it was saving **ME.**

This felt like a really big shift in me. I did not see it right away, but in observing **both parts in action** I became aware how crucial it is to have these two parts not in opposition but working with and for each other, **working for me, Being Me.** I needed to see and acknowledge them separately first before I could identify their importance for my **Wholeness.**

Part B. wants me to know how strong it is, and it does not want me to forget it by falling asleep and becoming too much of **part A2.**

The process is not finished, the tension is still there, but I am more willing to "hold it". I notice that at times it all feels balanced, and I know that there will be other times when it will again feel like not enough.

It is **part B2** which will NEVER have enough. It's in some way strange how it comes in nagging from time to time, almost like a **critic**, and I have an inkling that it has some **critical old pattern** in it - this need for more and more. I want to explore that a bit further. It feels like a very "unrealistic" (?) part since it should know that I can't dance in two places at the same time.

.....

This might sound like an unfinished story, and in some ways it is. However, my life did not end there. As I continued to listen, I found many ways to allow both parts to live. As my part A. became less engaged in daily living and learned to control its excessiveness, part B. could come forward and surprise me with many wonderful new creative ideas in how it wanted to express its potential.

Writing about my experiences and through that perhaps encouraging others to move into a fuller life feels very gratifying to all my parts. There are so many aspects in us which can be discovered if we will just explore the many available passageways and find the hidden treasures.

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Note: The following two sections on Focusing in Career Counselling and Interactional Focusing contain some repetition of Focusing steps and can be used as individual teaching units in conjunction with Focusing methods explained in previous chapters.

APPLICATION OF 'FOCUSING' TO ADULT CAREER COUNSELLING

(I have presented this paper at the Canadian Employment symposium in Ottawa in 1980)

Many men and women in mid-life find themselves dissatisfied with the present role they play. They are dissatisfied with their employment, their roles as housewives/husbands, mothers/fathers, their professional status, etc. Others have lost their jobs and are looking for new employment avenues. Career counselling, in applying itself to the whole person, can and will help them to uncover the hidden potentials which clamor for attention at this period in their lives. How can we as counsellors assist them in this?

Various methods and techniques have been and are being used. One of my favorite ones which I employ for counselling in general, and in particular for career counselling and career exploration, is based on Gendlin's *Focusing* (1978). In this book he explains in great detail the technique which he calls focusing. His research with thousands of taped counselling interviews led him and his colleagues to some interesting unexpected findings in terms of successful counselling. They found that the successful client could be picked out fairly easily from the recorded sessions by his/her way of talking. They came to the conclusion that success with these clients was dependent on what these people did inside themselves. The purpose of his book was to explain and show how this inner shift can be accomplished. As he states:

"... this uncommon skill, this internal act, is useful not only in a psychotherapist's office, it is a way of approaching all life's problems, major or minor, painful or pleasant ... the skill is for everybody in all of life's situations.

Among those who know how to use it, it becomes a tool to be used every day ... It will enable you to find and change where your life is stuck, cramped, hemmed in, slowed down. And it will enable you to change - to become more fully the person whom you have felt living inside you but who somehow has never been able to emerge (p. 3 ff.)."

My experimentation with this method has shown that people in counselling sessions as individuals and in group settings can get in touch with those aspects of themselves which, according to the investigations of adult development, have been repressed or buried during earlier life stages. These aspects are those which cause dissatisfaction and frustration in their present life situations. In the process of focusing they can release energies which have

been blocked, and they are able to make new and often unfamiliar decisions towards their career exploration and development. I have found this method to be extremely effective in itself, as well as when used in conjunction with other counselling tools, e.g. personality inventories, tests, etc. Clients who have been helped to use this Focusing method have had a clearer understanding of the options that are open for them. As Gendlin (1978) described, the method has been applied and tested in various situations involving resolutions of personal problems, and it has also been applied in relation to business concerns, problem-solving, and creativity. Further research and investigation is being done at the present time.

My own research on the application of focusing to career counselling is still in its experimental stages. I have not found that this is a method that should be used exclusively, but it is useful when applied in conjunction with other counselling techniques and methods. In this way I have found it to be an extremely powerful and effective tool.

One of the reasons why I think focusing can be a valuable counselling tool for mid-life career change lies in the nature of the particular problem which faces many adults during this time. As Jung (Jacobi, 1962) and others (Gould, 1978; Levinson, 1978; Sheehy, 1974) have acknowledged, a shift takes place during mid-life which propels men and women into crisis and potentially into growth. While during the first half of our lives the focus is on outward reality, the second half begins with an initiation into inner reality. Unlived aspects of the personality, hidden potentials, and counterparts of the conscious ego need to be discovered (Jacobi, 1962). The creative depth and energies that are buried during role performances of earlier years need to find new expression (Gould, 1978). Jung (Jacobi, 1962) talks about the shadow side of our being, the anima/animus aspects, the spiritual principle which need to be acknowledged towards the goal of self-realization. The influx of those hidden aspects of our beingness very often bring with them a state of psychic imbalance. The role of counsellors is to assist these individuals in their task of removing obstacles to further development of their personalities. This leads to creation of a new balance and a centredness in their inner strength and creativity.

The Focusing method with its emphasis on "felt sense" and "body shift" assists individuals to get in touch with their inner wisdom which can guide them to deeper insights into various problems they have to face and deal with.

The counsellor functions as a facilitator of this process and provides the I-Thou atmosphere, the creative listening presence, which is very often the vital requirement for this process to take place.

The six steps of focusing as outlined by E.T.Gendlin in *Focusing*, 1978, can be learned and used by clients and counsellors in various situations. The following six steps are fully explained and described in his book:

- (1) Clearing a Space
- (2) Feeling for the Problem
- (3) Finding the Crux
- (4) Labeling
- (5) Checking back with the Feeling
- (6) Another Round.

The actual experience of focusing moves smoothly from one step into the next, without strongly defined boundaries. In a state of relaxation the client pays attention to the special part of his/her body, where feelings of sadness, anger or fear are located, and allows the body to present a sensation of the particular problem which needs to be dealt with. It is important not to go inside the feeling which comes up, but to stand back and let this and other feelings present themselves. The client is instructed to feel "all of that" without allowing him/herself to drown in these feelings and/or start intellectualizing. The body will come up with one particular new feeling sensation which it communicates either through visual images or new and different words. An inner shift takes place at this point, and the client is instructed to go with it, allow it to change again, and feel what is new in it. The counsellor becomes a listening presence and allows the client to go through several shifts till the facial and bodily expression signals a releasing shift which will take place after a few minutes. The body has communicated something new in the experience of the client and words and images will be there to capture this new insight which now can be utilized for further explorations. Unknown aspects of a given problem come into awareness and

the client is now able to deal with these real issues in a more creative and productive manner.

As I have tried to relate focusing to career counselling, I have found it valuable in the following situations:

- The client is confused because there are too many problems facing him at once, and he is totally helpless in dealing with any one of them. Focusing guides him towards the issue that is most important now, and attention is paid to this one particular aspect of his experience before going on to the next relevant issues. If the problem which comes up is not career related, it needs to be dealt with before any next steps can be taken. Focusing can aid in this exploration and moving towards a solution of the issues involved.
- Career related questions of What, Where, How, etc. Questions in terms of courses that have to be taken, actions needed, can be explored in focusing.
- In the area of job search, focusing helps to find the real sensations and implications of the individual situation, which in turn leads to other methods of career counselling.
- In preparing clients for job interviews it is important to locate areas of fears and tenseness in the client. Focusing can be instrumental in this before other methods are used.
- Dealing with questions about job change can lead to unexpected new insights when focusing is used. Checking what the body really wants and needs can reveal a need for additional activities, leisure time activities, rest, or a totally different area in one's life that needs to be dealt with.

I will give a few examples of "Focusing" during career counselling sessions:

Although I prefer to use "Focusing" in individual counselling sessions, I will use it occasionally with a group. After three sessions of cognitive exploration of career possibilities with a group of women, where they became familiar with various occupations which matched their interests, temperaments and abilities, I introduced them to "Focusing". It was obvious

that something exciting was happening to some of them during the approximate 10 minute period while I led them through the "Focusing" steps. The sharing period was a surprise as one of the women who had been very eager to go back to work had discovered during the "shift" that she did not want to go back to work at all and had been influenced very strongly by peer pressure, which she now knew she could resist. Another woman became aware of her attachment to her children which prevented her from serious consideration of employment possibilities. One woman shared her deep seated guilt feelings which "focusing" had uncovered.

After identifying these obstacles, we could now proceed to deal with each one in turn, using Focusing or other methods.

Interviews are a major concern to some clients. Becoming aware of the root of these concerns during "Focusing" has lessened the tension experienced previously, and clients can concentrate on the issues which come up during the Interview instead of dealing with previously hidden but influencing anxieties. A neurotic need to please was discovered by one young girl which prevented her from being relaxed during job interviews. Another woman had a deep seated abnormal fear of persons in authority positions which caused her body to "shrink away", and she became very inept and almost paralyzed during job interviews. We could eliminate these problems with further focusing sessions.

One of my favorite examples is the experience of a young man who did not know if he wanted to work or go to University, or please his father, or a number of other things. He was totally confused and learned throughout several "shifts" that what he really needed was to stay in touch with an inner well of strength that seemed to him like fresh air. After moments of breathing-in the fresh air of this experience he became relaxed and ready to explore one problem at a time. When, after a while, an overwhelming fear took possession of him again, he was able to get back to the place where the fresh air changed into clear water and he became a sponge. The fear was a big hand which squeezed the sponge, but - - the sponge was flexible and could give - - and take in - - and move with it. His face became radiant with relief when he experienced these movements and through this bodily felt symbolism conquered his fear. Alternative possibilities moved in from there on, resolving the previous confusion. The symbols stayed with him as a reminder of the power which he had found within.

Video tapes of my counselling sessions using this procedure have allowed much in-depth study of its application. This Focusing method will also allow collaborative study of its possible uses and applications, as well as needed modifications for a variety of career counselling settings.

The experiential application of focusing has led many participants into a beneficial learning experience which they have wanted to explore further. This method can be used in counsellor training programs.

Discussions with counsellors are encouraging because they show a growing interest in using this method. They point out their need for further and more detailed instruction and experimentation in and with this technique however, before they would be confident enough to use it with their clients.

Some reluctance to its use is based on the time and place limitations currently prevailing in some employment centers, although counsellors and others have envisioned many possible adaptations and uses with which they hope to experiment.

Note:

In 1981, Christel Kraft was employed as an Employment Study Officer with the Canadian Paraplegic Association in Winnipeg, Manitoba. She researched and documented the employment rates and needs of paraplegics and quadriplegics in Manitoba, organized and co-ordinated an employment preparation and job placement project for that agency.

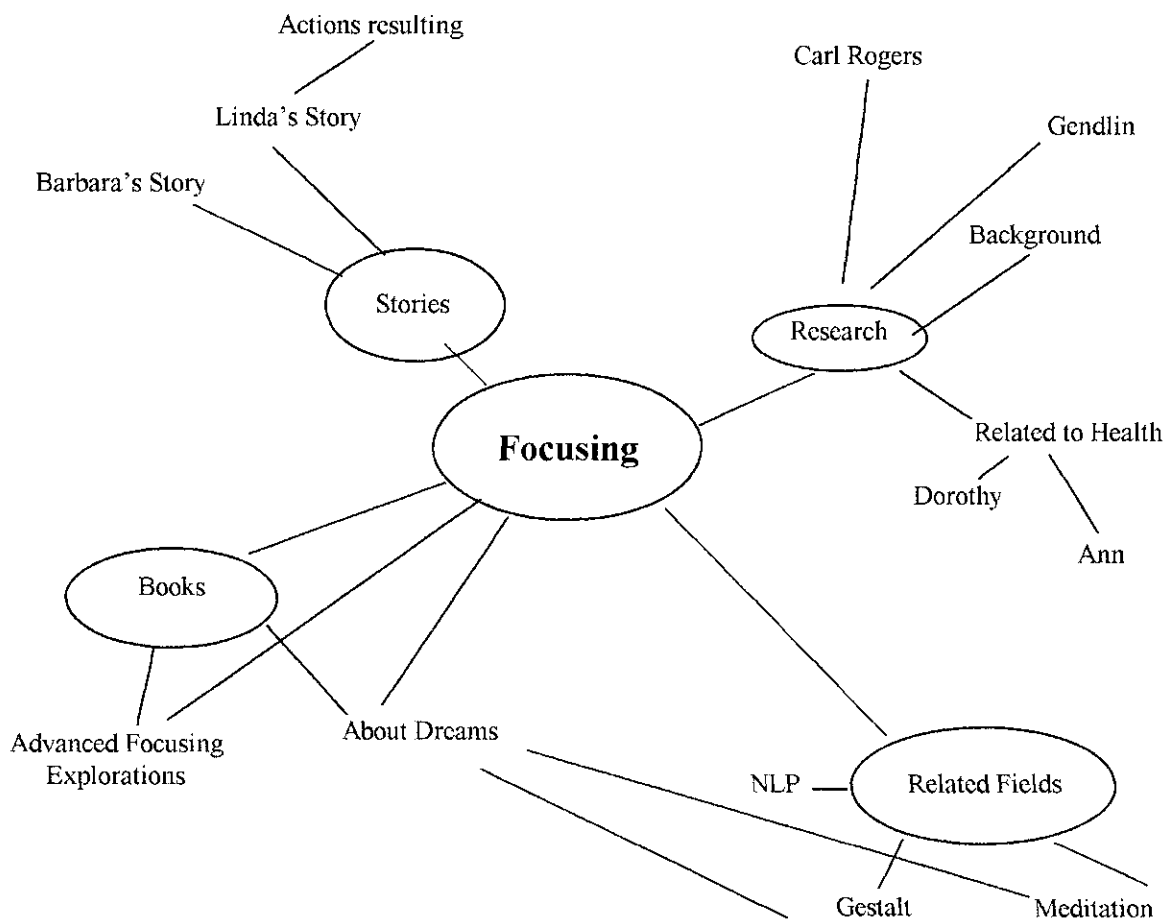
Following this she designed and developed a program for employment counselling and job placement for persons with various physical disabilities, and was the Executive Director and Project Coordinator for 8 years. Application of her above presentation was utilized for staff training.

The above project continued, and in 1999, the described methods are still applied. Some informal follow-up showed that staff continues to use Focusing for themselves and with clients.

Using Focusing and “Clustering” for Employment Counselling and Other Explorations

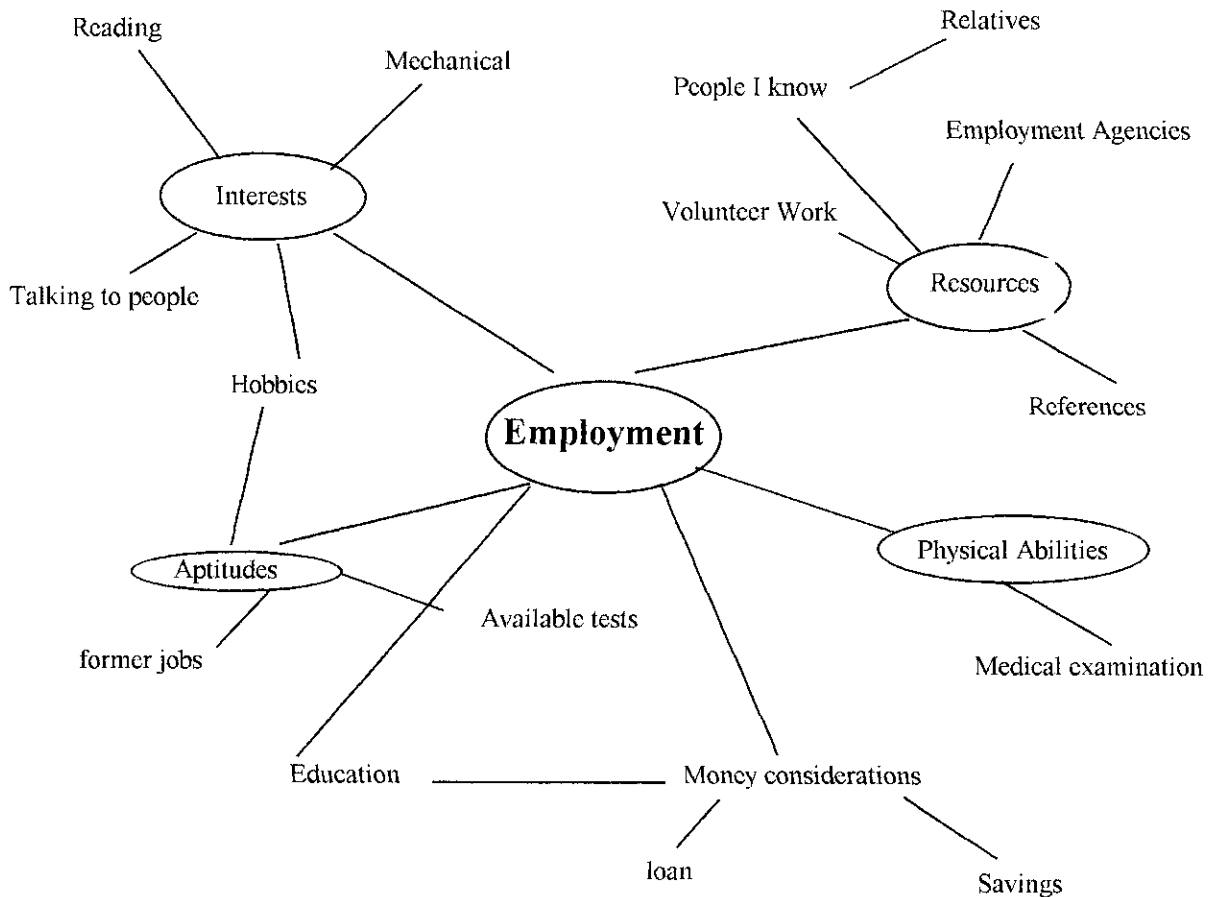
Our friend Dr. Tom Carney introduced us to an organizational tool he called “Clustering”. As he was going through the steps of the procedure, I realized that it could be enhanced by a Focusing approach.

In “Clustering” one starts by choosing a topic to be explored. This might be for the purpose of writing a paper, a book, or in organizing a path for the discovery of a subject of interest. It might look like this:



The possibilities for these explorations are endless. When we bring a softly felt Focusing attitude into this musing, we can let our bodies bring up subjects in no particular order. We can group them visually without getting lost in any one thread of this exploration. Later we can attach many pages to each item before we organize all of it into a linear thesis or further discoveries.

Clustering is a useful tool for **career explorations**. What needs to go into this? You might think of employers you know, resume writing, contacts to make, interests you have - all of it seems a “big elephant” which is impossible to tackle. How about some Focusing Clustering?



As more ideas come to us, we organize them through this clustering and before we know it, some action steps will crystallize and the seemingly unmanageable maze of a job search takes on a life of it's own.

As we contact one person or agency, another possibility opens up, which leads to another and so forth. We can not reach our goal in one step, but we have to take the first one, and then the next one.

I have found Focusing in combination with clustering to be a valuable tool for self discovery and exploration in many situations.

INTERACTIONAL FOCUSING: A MULTILEVELLED APPROACH TO PROBLEM SOLVING AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

How it evolved and how I teach it

(I want to acknowledge the assistance of my daughter Gabrielle Kraft during the evolving process of this method. This paper has been previously published in *The Folio*, Vol. 14, No. 3, Winter 1995)

In Part I of this paper I will briefly outline how my understanding and application of INTERACTIONAL FOCUSING developed, giving some background and examples. In Part II, I will present my evolving model for teaching INTERACTIONAL FOCUSING for problem solving and conflict resolution. Part III contains the process of a recent INTERACTIONAL FOCUSING session, using the above model.

PART I

Early Beginnings:

I have experienced "something" that is now called FOCUSING for as long as I remember and was delighted and excited when a friend presented me with Gendlin's first edition of FOCUSING, in the late seventies.

In our marriage my husband and I experimented with "something" that is now called INTERACTIVE FOCUSING for 40 years. Beyond that I have increasingly incorporated these concepts into my life as parent, therapist, teacher and friend.

I should be an expert by now, right? - Wrong. It is an evolving process that challenges, fascinates and stimulates me continually. I am eager to share what I have discovered and evaluate and compare it with experiences and developments in this area that seem to have evolved simultaneously all over.

While I taught FOCUSING since the early eighties, some "other thing" that I did in there seemed to be "something more" - I began to call it MULTIDIMENSIONAL INTER-ACTIONAL FOCUSING. "It" happened in unique and unpredictable ways in my interactions with those who were open to "it".

The deeper I became true to myself the more often "it" happened - sort of a meeting at "multidimensional" levels of recognition of each within the other.

Increasingly I let go of preconceived ideas of how I should do therapy or FOCUSING training. As long as I listened and stayed true to my bodily feelings and intuitive checking, nothing was taboo. Set ways of doing evolved into wide open spaces for Being in relationship, Being in communion, Being the teaching.

Steps in the Evolution:

1) As I guide a client or group into "clearing their space", I enter my own inner sensing, using words that come from that bodily felt place. They are never the same but seem to evolve from my being fully present to the space in which we are in this moment.

Gently, I follow the process, - I feel into the process, creating a space, creating "a womb" where it feels safe for both of us, all of us to be. From then on I say what comes for me in response to the other's exploration. I am conscious that it is the clients/Focusers process and as I enter theirs, it becomes ours.

Shifts happen, changes happen - there are no longer the prescribed "FOCUSING steps", the interaction has shifted into the "more": the INTERACTIONAL FOCUSING.

2) Our training group is meeting again. I begin by sharing some of my hopes and visions for our next forward step. The group listens and resonates silently with "all of that". The next person continues sharing from that inner place while all of us listen. (The rules of FOCUSING apply: no critique, no advice, no interpretation etc.)

We go around the circle and listen to the bodily felt ideas and needs of each participant. During another round, some of us have nothing more to add and silently pass the "talking stick" (yes, we use a talking stick) to the next person. After a third round a wonderfully graphic vision has emerged which "fits":

We are sitting in a circle around a freshly plowed field. A few sprouts are peeking through the fertile ground. We are sending them energies and watch them grow. Other circles are beginning to interlock and intertwine with ours. A gentle swaying movement envelopes us as we sense a "rightness" in our decision to move forward one step at a time. Practical suggestions follow, guided by the inner bodily felt vision.

3) We are FOCUSING partners. H. guides us into an inner space and from here we move into an Interactional Focusing:

As she shares how it is for her, I respond, feeling the resonance in my own body. We are working on our relationship as it is in the 'Now'. Some resentments surface, emotions, tears well up - there is some anger, it stirs some old hurts in me - we hold them gently, sharing the story. The sharing resonates in H. opening up a new insight,- a shift in how that fits with an estrangement that has crept up in our relationship lately. We hold that and watch in awe as this stuck place opens up into a vision of a brilliant light that engulfs both of us.

4) I am angry with a decision my daughter has made in support of her son. I start criticizing her actions and begin with my motherly advice. She suggests a round of Interactional Focusing:

We clear a space, breathe deeply, and putting her own frustration aside for now, she listens as I explore the deeper story of my old unacknowledged pain and guilt of not having been able to provide a similar support for her. - She resonates into her own mother feelings for her son, and simultaneously finds and offers understanding and forgiveness for my past actions. - In deep mutual caring and acceptance we hold each other.

5) INTERACTIONAL FOCUSING with my husband is quite another story. How I wish that we would have had some guidance on how to resolve our disagreements. Without any guidance but our own inner knowing and determination we fumbled our way into each other's truths.

My deep need to be heard and known as I gradually uncovered my lost parts kept us going. I did not want to hide and pretend and live up to outdated patterns any longer, I was desperate enough to shove and push my way through the defensive, self-sufficient rational male armour, which I could never do with my father, but I now felt safe enough to do so.- As I learned to translate my emotions and sensings into a more "comprehensible" language, communication began to flow easier.

We did not always label it as INTERACTIONAL FOCUSING,- we just did it. We called it "sorting things out". - How did we "sort it out"? - By talking and talking and some more talking. Then, sometimes, almost by accident, we hit the jackpot and COMMUNICATION happened. What "felt" different when "it" became communication? The change came through a felt incorporation of ACTIVE LISTENING* with mirroring confirmations and further reflections. We became willing to listen, really listen to each other.

We discovered that we always needed to "make some space for **one at a time**", which is **very** difficult when emotions run high and both want to be listened to. We learned to take turns, passing a "talking stick" object to each other as an indication when the listening turn could change. We learned to clarify values and expectations, and we learned to differentiate between surface impulses and deeper feelings and desires. An added difficulty, which I only now begin to know how to articulate, is the difference in our mode of processing. I used to say that he did not "hold me in his womb" but was "holding me in his head" which did not feel safe enough.

Only after more reading of Carl Jung and other psychological textbooks did we begin to realize and accept our differences in personality and uniqueness of process. We probed and pondered, psychoanalysed and "behaviorized". Being each other's therapist as well as friend and lover keeps our relationship interesting.

As we continued to explore our ways of dealing with some inner stuff, it dawned on me that these differences would also influence the way we do FOCUSING.

"My" way of FOCUSING might not be "His" way of FOCUSING, or is it still FOCUSING?

When I looked at it in terms of female oriented (intuitive, sensing, visualizing) versus male oriented (intellectual, rational, problem solving) FOCUSING - both going in a circular fashion from body awareness into "their thing" and back into the body to check, and back again - a whole lot began to "click".

I had expected my husband's FOCUSING process to follow a similar flow as mine: I focus by going deep inside, sensing, visualizing, "mucking around" in there. When I sensed his frustration (although willingness to mirror) with my way of moving "with it", I did not feel totally safe and accepted. It felt "okay", but not as deeply trusting as with a guide that is able to enter my process fully.

When he, on the other hand began to talk about "how all of it is for him" I had a hard time following him into his "abstract intellectually problem-solving" mode, which to me seemed like "out there stuff". I used to insist, that **that** was not FOCUSING - only "my way" could be labeled FOCUSING.

Now I am beginning to see it differently. He too goes through his body sensing, but translates it into a "male oriented" mode, which is as difficult for me to "be present to" as it is for him to follow me into mine. Only through our willingness to "switch" into unfamiliar modes of processing can we enter a mutually satisfying INTER-ACTIONAL FOCUSING space. The following experience has been very helpful for that.

6) In 1993 my husband and I participated in the International Symposium of INTERACTIVE FOCUSING in Alaska, where Leon Webber and Linda Olson Webber introduced us to their jointly developed model.

I appreciate and value their approach in the context of marriage and family therapy. The structured outline is very helpful in other situations as well. However, for my purposes I have changed the organization of the communication elements by observing how they evolved in my experience.

The "Alaska" model places a strong emphasis on the written account of the interaction and allows one person at a time to move through all elements of the communication before the mirroring and response takes place.

As we tried this approach in our training group, it became obvious (to experienced Focusers) that a vital ingredient of FOCUSING was missing: the "caring-feeling-presence" as Ed McMahon calls it. Without the fully attentive presence of the listener (who was busy writing), the process felt fragmented

and devoid of that familiar FOCUSING connectedness. One "felt sense" illustrated it as a "court procedure".

By using the suggested structure without writing but with immediately mirrored reflections and confirmations of each statement, we brought the FOCUSING/LISTENING attitude back.

An additional surprise insight happened for me during this process. As issues, goals, thoughts and values were reflected back, I became aware of an "inner shift": what had started as statements from my "head thinking", slipped into my "body sensing" while I listened to the mirrored reflections. This in turn began a further shift of the original emotions, with or without optional impulses, that led into the deeper FOCUSING steps.

7) Over the years I observed Janet Klein's INTERACTIVE FOCUSING model evolve. (THE FOLIO, Vol. 13, No.1). Although I recognized some familiar elements, it bears little resemblance to the model I developed. Identification and clarification of values by both partners was definitely a missing element that became crucial in my application, which I'll demonstrate in the following example:

Our "adopted daughter" and I had run into a stuck place with each other which had become still more uncomfortable for me because she did not "need" to resolve it as long as my husband was still available for her. - I got into my "whiney, weepy, resentful spiel, I wanted to be rescued. (my old co-dependency pattern?)

I got the response from my husband of having to look after myself, standing up for myself. That seemed right and rational and I know how to do that (fight instead of flight), but - my body wanted a different solution. -

After insistent exploration and talking I "hit" on the place where all this was stuck: VALUES! - In a marriage relationship, my value is cooperation and presenting a solid Oneness to children so that they can not play out one against the other or push the partners into competitiveness. Once we could identify and agree that the situation with our "adopted daughter" fell into the same category of values, I finally felt acknowledged, and the "stuck place" moved quickly towards a healthy resolution.

With this I want to stress the importance of exploring VALUES during INTER-ACTIONAL FOCUSING. Other aspects of Focusing, i.e. staying

with feelings which surface during the interaction, watching for denial of "what is present", avoiding blame and advice giving, are also necessary.

All these are the big NO-NOs in FOCUSING. As exciting and connecting as INTER-ACTIONAL FOCUSING can be, an adherence to the basic FOCUSING elements becomes so much more important and needs to be preserved for all persons involved. The role of the facilitator is critically important here.

PART II - How I teach Interactional Focusing

Introduction:

Every issue in a problem situation involves aspects of our MENTAL, EMOTIONAL, PHYSICAL and SPIRITUAL process. All of these have to become conscious and be acknowledged before we can begin the steps towards a resolution.

The following outline presents an organized approach which can be utilized for two or more persons involved in a problem situation. It is strongly recommended that at least one facilitator be present, monitoring the process.

With two or more persons involved, the process becomes INTERACTIONAL FOCUSING where each person will take their turn talking and listening reflectively. The TOPIC elements are to be agreed upon by all involved. (The facilitator guides this process.) Then each in turn is heard through steps 2 to 6.

Each person will move through these steps before the next person takes their turn. **Active Listening * is the key to success in this approach.**

For persons not familiar with Active Listening and FOCUSING, the facilitator will initially model these two essential elements of the conflict resolution process. As participants become more comfortable with this type of communication they might still request the facilitator as a guide during FOCUSING (step 5).

PROCESS STEPS:

1. Topic:

The "Trigger": What specific incident triggered this issue right now?

The broader issue: overall or recurring theme

Goal: What is the desirable outcome?

2. Rational/Intellectual:

Thoughts: What comes to mind around the issue?

Values/Beliefs/Assumptions: What values, beliefs and assumptions are connected with the issue?

3. Emotions:

Emotional Impact: currently felt emotions

4. Physical:

Body Sensations: Bodily sensations experienced in relation to the subject

5. Focusing:** Outline will follow

6. Summary:

Action Step: Expressing an action or request as a step towards accomplishing the goal

After each person has been heard, the facilitator asks each person to respond with two comments:

Receiving: Welcoming what has come and acknowledging that it is only one step

Appreciation: brief and clear appreciation for the listener(s) and oneself

7. Moving forward:

Suggested next steps: each person will suggest the next action to be taken - the issue might take several sessions of listening before a solution can be agreed upon.

Note:

These structured steps can be used for FOCUSING with an individual as well, in which case the facilitator will guide, listen and give appropriate feedback **to each process step at a time**. I found that by identifying the VALUES , BELIEFS AND ASSUMPTIONS involved in a particular situation, the underlying cause of a problem could be more readily addressed.

***ACTIVE LISTENING:**

Active Listening deepens a person's process .

The Listener needs to:

- clear own space to be able to receive the other
- wait with a sense of wonder about how the other will fill that space
- have an attitude of wanting to hear it exactly
- say back verbatim or felt meaning of what was heard
- listen for the next response
- if the listenee expresses disagreement with the feedback, acknowledge the correction and say back again what is now heard.
- the listener's **Big "Do Not's"**: Don't give advice
Don't interpret
Don't judge
Don't argue
Don't rush in to "fix it"

The Listenee needs to:

- take a moment to check inside what feels comfortable to share
- only shares what feels right
- when the listener says back, check inside to see if that's exactly how it was meant
- if the listenee feels uncomfortable about the response, say so
- the listenee's **Big "Do Not's"**: Don't be afraid to correct the listener
Don't accept advice
Don't accept interpretations
Don't accept judgments
Don't allow "fix-its"

It is each Listenee's process which needs to be valued and respected!

****FOCUSING:**

Each person is encouraged to develop their own FOCUSING/LISTENING approach by tuning into the intuitive body knowing. The following are guidelines only of the six FOCUSING steps based on E.T. Gendlin, *FOCUSING* and Ed.M. McMahon, *BEYOND THE MYTH OF DOMINANCE*. Reading of both books is strongly recommended, and participation in ongoing workshops will assist in the experiential learning of FOCUSING.

FOCUSING is a forward moving bodily felt living and the Focuser is always in charge of the process, with a Listener accompanying her/him through attentive, caring, respectful "Being-there" with minimal guidance.

1. Preparation, clearing a space: Settling down into your body, breathing deeply and noticing what is there, particularly in the solar plexus area. "How does it feel in there?" This will help, getting out of the "head thinking" and tuning into the body "knowing".

Initially, setting aside what comes, will clear the space for the issue at hand. Continue "setting aside" what comes, till it feels clear. (This might take several minutes).

2. Feeling for the most important aspect : In working with the particular issue, select what feels most urgent, hurting, or what has the most energy etc. OBSERVE what is there. Feel the unclear sense of "all of it", the "essence of it". Ask if it is okay to be with it, if yes, continue.

3. Handle - Quality of it all: Sense the quality of it, how is your body carrying all that? Allow it to express itself. Take whatever comes in an accepting attitude, be with it in a caring way, sense what comes, it might be a word, a symbol - let it emerge slowly from your body sensing. Allow time for it to unfold.

4. Resonate: With everything that comes, resonate with your body sense and the unfolding "story" which your body gives you. If it feels sticky, stay with it, if it feels scary be gentle with that. - Always be with what comes, no judgment, no "editing", just "being-with".

5. Asking: You might want to ask "it" questions if it does not "move" on its own: How does the worst of it feel in my body? What would feel like a small step forward in all this? What would feel like a breath of fresh air in this? What are you trying to do for me? How do you need me to be with you right now?

6. Receiving and expressing gratitude: Always receive with gratitude what comes till it feels like time to stop for now. It might take several session to move forward. BE PATIENT WITH YOURSELF!

Recommended Reading:

E.T. Gendlin, *Focusing*, Bantam 1980.

E.M. McMahon, *Beyond the Myth of Dominance*, Sheed and Ward, 1993.

PART III Example

Using the above Interactional Focusing Model (written by Gabrielle Kraft)

My mother, Christel, and I had been working fairly intensely to polish up our work with the INTERACTIONAL FOCUSING, when I suggested we work through the process one more time incorporating all the new revisions, as a "final test run". She agreed most readily, but to get my father's agreement was more of a challenge, particularly when my mother suggested using the process to work through a recurring conflict in their relationship. He did finally agree. What follows is not only a powerful example of INTERACTIONAL FOCUSING in action, but a moving testimony to the work required to bring deep intimacy into a relationship where priority is given towards achieving a deep understanding of one another.

As a facilitator for my parent's process, I gained tremendous insights about this particular tool, FOCUSING in general, and what it takes to

communicate in the face of differences, as well as about myself. I welcome you to learn with us as you follow the process.

PROCESS STEPS:

1. Topic:

The "Trigger" this time was a disagreement about driving at night through thunderstorm activity, rather than waiting it out till morning.

This brought up many unfinished feelings for Christel, that even now, after some time had passed, remained unresolved. Siegfried agreed to further processing, even though this particular incident was long past and resolved in his mind.

Issue: With much thought and discussion, they agreed to the following **Issue:** Whose needs take priority in terms of actions and decisions?

Goal: Again with some discussion, Christel and Siegfried agreed to present separate **Goals:**

S. Solidarity in terms of finding a unity in needs.

C. Finding a way towards mutually agreeable solutions where needs are in conflict.

With the topic elements agreed upon, I invited both to find their "Clear Space" and from that space to feel into who would be heard first. C. felt that since she had suggested the work on this issue, she wanted to hear from S. first. S. agreed.

Again I invited both to move into their "Clear Space", S. to explore the various aspects of the issue and C. to receive what S. had to say. Here I stepped back a bit to offer guidance with the process only, and to intervene if the process wasn't honored in a FOCUSING way. Both had requested that after mirror reflecting steps 2 to 4 with each other, I guide them through FOCUSING (step 5).

2. S. : Rational/Intellectual:

S. Thoughts: If solidarity can't be reached it (the relationship) would always simply be compromise or giving in.

C. heard a value judgment on "compromise" here. S. assured that there was no judgment intended, simply a statement of how he saw it.

S. Value:

There is no strong value attached to this issue, so it would be easy to compromise in this. (C. interjected here: "But can't you remember how it was then?" - - I perceived this as critical and made her aware of it, while agreeing that similar situations would occur. I brought S. back to his process, acknowledging that it might be difficult to reconstruct the past feelings, but encouraged him to continue.) S. took some time, feeling into it.

3. S. Emotions:

"Cheesed- off" at having to stay another night instead of going home. (With reflection and clarification from C., this became): annoyed that something is blocking my expectation.

(S. continued to explain that for him emotions are always brief.) I don't hang on to it. I can let it go.

4. S. Physical: Body Sensations:

In the solar plexus there is a gnawing and a twisting feeling.

(Here I moved into a more active role again, inviting C. to follow the process inside herself while I stayed with S. during his FOCUSING process. The flow from emotions to the body sensations into the FOCUSING was very natural.)

5. S. Focusing:

As I invited S. to stay with that gnawing, twisting feeling in his solar plexus, he suddenly became impatient and asked how he could be with the feeling of an incident long since past when now all he wanted to do was to go out and enjoy the beautiful day in his garden.

G. Aah, so you've found another face for the issue. You want to spend time in your garden and (Christel) wants time to process this. Your needs are in conflict with her needs. Where are you feeling this now?

S. There comes a question in my head, how can I be true to myself, to my own drum beat?

G. Where does this question ... resonate in your body?

S. It resonates as a sadness in my chest.

I continued to stay with S. in his process as questions and statements formed in his head and I invited him to find where they echoed in his body. He began to reflect slowly about how he desired it to be, how he became aware of different parts in him competing for attention: the ego-self and the more loving "Higher Self". With the "Higher Self" he felt a total calmness through-out his body and a soft warm feeling in his chest. At this time S. finished his FOCUSING and I invited C. to reflect on S.'s FOCUSING experience around the issue. Not having to carry the responsibility of listener/guide, she was able to allow herself to bring S.'s process into her own body. As she shared her feelings about how his process felt in her own body, S. felt he had truly been heard, understood and listened to. Out of this knowing that he had been heard as deeply as possible, S. was able to form the **Action Step** to summarize his turn, still from a deeply focused attitude. Thus:

6. S. Summarizing Action Step:

S. (I want) to get away from ego-stuff, self-centeredness. As I do that it will be easier, not as compromise, but it will be a wanting to consider the needs of others.

What is ego - what is higher self when you hear the drumbeat? I suspect it is often the ego that makes a drumbeat. If you hear the drumbeat (that comes) from the higher self, there will always be solidarity and it won't be compromise.

I want to be more centered in the higher self rather than having things determined by my ego needs.

I asked C. to summarize what she had heard, allowing space to confirm with S. that it was in fact heard as he had intended it. When both were ready to continue, I invited both once again to clear a space for C.'s work through the process steps 2 to 6, and for S. to receive her process. (S. mirror reflects steps 2 to 4.)

2. C. Rational/Intellectual:

Thoughts: The issue is sooo big. Not overwhelming, but sooo big.

Values: Respect and integrity for both of us. (She obviously dealt with the **Issue**, while S. initially had concentrated on the **Trigger**.)

3. C. Emotions:

Sad and frustrated. There's a little voice saying, "Do I always have to fight to be heard and respected?"

4. C. Physical:

I feel a constriction in my throat that feels like crying.

At this point I invited S. to silently enter into C.'s FOCUSING process while I took on the listener/guide role.

5. C. FOCUSING:

G. It's constricted, crying. . . .

C. Yeah, and it feels helpless, again and again - - - there is a lump - - it wants to scream: "I need to be counted too, my feelings count too." It eases a bit - but no, it feels helpless- - -

G. (reflects)

C. Helpless - - yeah, but - - it's like **I can be** very big - I can see it like really growing very big and tall, but then I see Siegfried down there, very small - -that does not feel good - - that's not loving (I notice a critic, but wait) - and then he would not love me - - (crying again), how can I love and be loved? - - - something comes in here now- - - some real old stuff from Sunday School sort of "lose yourself and you will find yourself" - - is that it? - - - My chest wants to scream: no no no, I don't want to lose myself - - -

G. very gently now - there is a voice from way back, and your chest wants to scream no no.

C.'s body allowed her to find the place where she, as a child, felt she always needed to find approval to win love, particularly her father's. As C. felt into the relationship with her father, the picture of a submissive little puppy waiting for an approving pat on the head, came to her. Even as she moved into her own strength, as a

tall, strong Goddess, the puppy remained present. As she explored the strong Goddess image, she felt S. "down there" and herself much taller. That didn't fit either. As she reached out to bring them together, the image of a Teeter-totter came to her, with S. at one end and she at the other. As this image evolved, she saw that as long as the alternating up and down balancing act was maintained, there was growth - the Teeter-totter with them on it rose higher. There were times when the board was held suspended in balance, and while these times were calm and peaceful, there was no growth. This dynamic balancing act that saw growth in both partners on the Teeter-totter, was the image that fit the issue. As the certainty of this made itself felt in her body, C. moved of her own accord to the next step.

6. C. Summarizing

Action Step:

C. I need to accept this motion. I am strong and equal. I need to remind myself of that. I need not be afraid to be what I am. Please help me (Siegfried) to love you in that strong way, to help maintain that balancing act. -

G. I invited S. to share his feelings in response to C.'s process

An important reason to allow a third party facilitator to guide the FOCUSING part of the process, particularly in the beginning or with emotionally heavy issues, became clear. S. had felt an impatience with C.'s process as soon as he thought he could see where it was headed. He valued the image that C. had found inside, but commented how hard it is for him to follow her long inner process without becoming impatient and "wanting to solve the problem quickly". C. confirmed that she would have felt S.'s impatience and that would have interfered with her process. While S. went through the FOCUSING steps, C. appreciated not having to guide his FOCUSING because she initially felt a frustration and resistance to the "head-stuff" in S.'s process, but then in simply being with S. in her own body, she could let go of that too.

After S. had reflected the action step back to C. and they had shared the above, I invited both to move to **Receiving** and the **Appreciation** for each other and the process:

S. Expressed his appreciation of Gabi's guiding and presence. He also appreciated that Christel stayed insistent about working this through. "I like you to be strong, even if I get angry at times - just let me be angry."

C. Siegfried, I am grateful that you agreed to do this. I appreciate Gabi's presence and guiding. -

I felt deeply moved as I listened to their further sharing in this receptive, appreciative space. What had become clear was not only an understanding of how my parents could work with conflicting needs in their relationship, but also a deep understanding of the background, the "seed", that makes conflicting needs such a difficult issue between them: My mother had a deeply rooted pattern that taught her that love is not unconditional, but was dependent on correct action to win the love of a loved one.

The effect of this in the marriage, is the need to be affirmed in her strength. My father had experienced unconditional love as a child, truly believing that his actions do not determine whether or not he is loved. He now could go with her into her pain and on a felt level, know where she was coming from

S. and C. 7. Moving forward:

The **Moving forward** came out very clearly in both S.'s and C.'s body knowing. There is no end to this dynamic process. An end would mean stagnation and death. Some time ago my father commented to me that as much as he resisted and even resented the storms my mother so regularly confronted him with, he also saw how without these storms there would be no life. My parents are choosing a relationship with life! And what a heck of a lot of work that is. Yet they are committed to that work.

AFTERTHOUGHTS AND REFLECTIONS:

When I was first introduced to the idea of INTERACTIONAL FOCUSING something in me responded deeply. I recognized a tool with an incredible potency for healing, maintaining and challenging new growth in all of our relationships. In developing and working with this model, my first feelings about it are confirmed and strengthened. Even my parents in their forty year old marriage find new understanding with this as a tool.

As their relationship remains dynamic, I expect this tool too will remain dynamic. Even now having reached a certain feeling of completion with the model, there are still questions that don't seem to have an answer with things as they stand.

Perhaps one of the biggest questions for me is the question of time. The example given, took roughly two hours to work through. For people to choose to spend this amount of time on a conflict, they need to be pretty committed to each other and to finding a solution to difficulties between them.

Many immediate situations might cry for a "McDonald's Version" of this model. That's something that still needs work. I would like to see this kind of tool universally accessible (yes I tend to dream and I am idealistic - why should I expect less). I would hate to think that successful communication and conflict resolution can happen only for those who have more time than most of us.

Another concern I have arises out of a comment my father made when we were "finished" with the whole thing. He suggested that this could only

work as well as it did for them, with a skilled facilitator. While I felt complimented and affirmed, I find it disturbing that healing and growth should be so dependent on the skill of another. It seems to me that part of Gene Gendlin's vision for FOCUSING is that ultimately people will be able to use it for themselves without dependence on a vast array of professionals. To what extent can one learn to be a "skilled facilitator" in a process that seems to require some kind of guidance from above and beyond (call it intuition if you will)? It seems to me this can only come with a commitment to work on one's own issues to bring you to the point where you are no longer frightened or overwhelmed by other's issues - that, and a deep letting go into trusting yourself with the inner process, no matter which end you are on.

It is up to me to make the concluding remarks here. I feel I can only say that this is as it is for now. And it is good - for now. But it is alive and dynamic, so it is with anticipation that I finish this writing, already eager to discover what is around the next corner.

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Resources:

www.focusing.org – Information on Focusing and The Focusing Institute,
Book list, Resources

www.emofree.com – Information on EFT, Palace of Possibilities and
Related Energy Psychology links

Video: Bio-Spiritual Focusing: Ed McMahon and Peter Campbell,
The Body's Search for Spirit. Produced by and available from Nada Lou,
908 Lake Str. Louis Rd. Lery, PQ J6N 1A7, Canada
Tel. (514)-692-9339

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Appendix

Energy Points and Sequence used in EFT - Emotional Freedom Technique

with thanks to Garry Craig EFT (tm) Gary Craig & Adrienne Fowlie, 1995

1) Identification:

Put your attention on the emotional or physical problem you desire to address. Rate the intensity (SUD - Subjective Units of Disturbance) of the feeling(s) or pain on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 = none, 10 = extreme).

2) The Setup

Rubbing the **Sore Spot** (see next page) or tapping the Karate Chop point (KC), repeat 3 times:

"I deeply and completely accept myself, even though I have this ____ (here you enter the presenting feeling or pain)."

Or, for children: "I really, really like myself, even though I have this ____ (enter the presenting feeling or pain)."

3) The Sequence

Tap each of the energy points about 7 times while putting your attention on the emotional or physical problem:

EB, SE, UE, UN, CH, CB, UA, Th, IF, MF, BF, KC

4) The 9 Gamut Procedure

Continuously tap on the Gamut point while performing each of these 9 actions:

Eyes closed, eyes open, eyes hard down right, eyes hard down left, roll eyes in circle, roll eyes in circle in other direction, hum 5 notes, count to five, hum 5 notes.

5) The Sequence Repeat

Repeat the sequence, tapping about 7 times on each of the energy points:

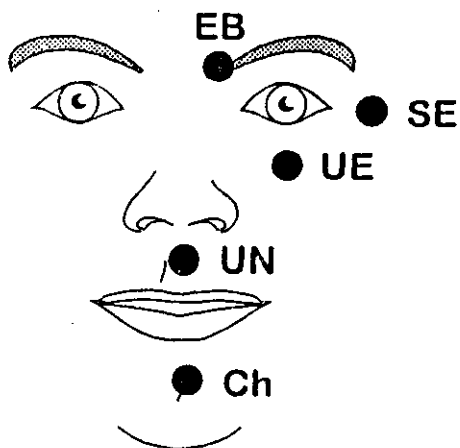
EB, SE, UE, UN, CH, CB, UA, Th, IF, MF, BF, KC

6) Reassess the intensity of the feeling or pain on the 0 to 10 scale.

Note: In subsequent rounds the Setup affirmation is adjusted to reflect that you are addressing the **remaining** problem:

"I deeply and completely accept myself, even though I **still** have **some** of this . . ."

Energy Points



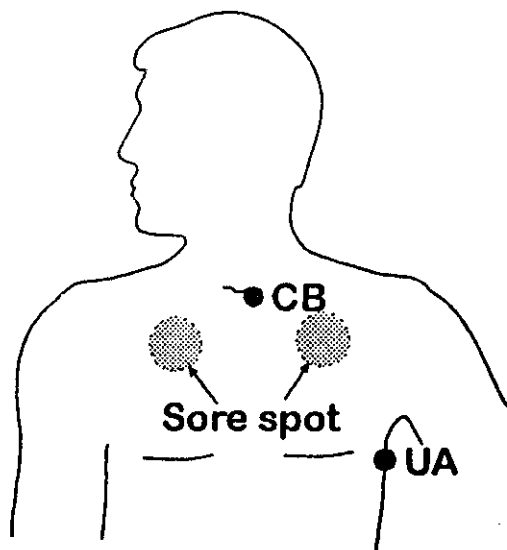
EB - EyeBrow - at the beginning of the eyebrow, just above and to one side of the nose.

SE - Side of the Eye - on the bone bordering the outside corner of the eye.

UE - Under the Eye - on the bone under the eye, about 1" below the pupil.

UN - Under the Nose - on the area between the bottom of the nose and the upper lip.

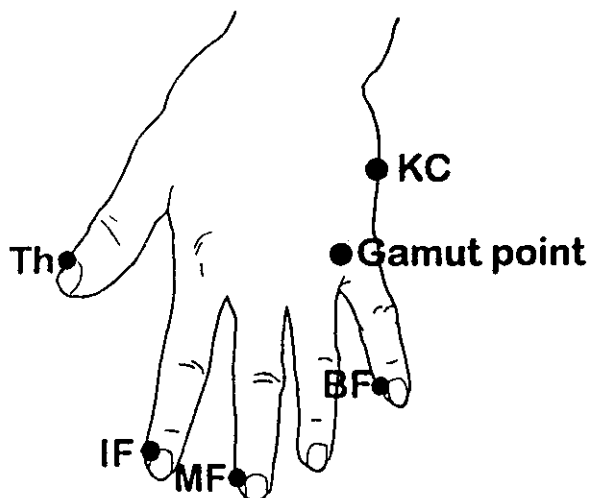
Ch - Chin - midway between the bottom lip and the point of the chin.



CB - CollarBone - at the beginning of the collarbone. It is located about 1" diagonally from the U-shaped notch at the top of the breastbone.

UA - Under the Arm - on the side of the body, about 4" below the armpit - this spot is often identified as being tender to touch.

Sore Spot - on the upper chest area. From the U-shaped notch at the top of the breastbone, go down 3" and out to the side 3". This is an area of about 2" in diameter that is tender when pressed.



Th - Thumb - on the outside edge of the thumb at a point even with the base of the nail.

IF - Index Finger - on the side of the index finger facing the thumb, at a point even with the base of the nail.

MF - Middle Finger - on the side of the middle finger facing the thumb at a point even with the base of the nail.

BF - Baby Finger - on the inside of the baby finger at a point even with the base of the nail.

KC - Karate Chop - on the outside of the hand, halfway between the top of the wrist bone

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