

My personal process with WBF

WBF was developed by Kevin McEvenue, an Alexander Technique practitioner who combined Focusing with Alexander Technique to enhance both and has been continuing to work on their development for over twenty-eight years.

I am lucky to have been able to attend Kevin's WBF workshop/retreat over the last five years. Having done Insight Meditation, several different kinds of movement work (Qi Gong/Yoga), Five Rhythms dance, healing work (Reiki, reflexology and animal healing), I instantly felt a natural empathy with his approach to Focusing. Also I gained much benefit from his work in my private life as well as a practitioner.

Through dancing and movement work, I learned to let movement happen to express my emotions and thoughts. The deeper I immersed myself in this, the more I discovered its healing aspects, and realised that certain postures and gestures have the capacity to unfold something within us. I remember my first experience of this was when I was in a still movement class, without music. Matching image came with this movement/posture. *"I was alone in the dessert"* I could still in touch with this felt sense even now. I didn't know why I was in the dessert but I could sense *it is pure, quiet space*. *"I was alone but I could sense sun and warmth on me"*. I was lying down on the floor. I couldn't find a way to get up. I didn't have any energy left in my body. I was just lying there. I didn't know what my body wants to do next. About a few minutes must have passed. . If I think it now in Focusing way I must have really with this part that wanted to be just there. I remember I had a sense of whole of my body that was with this part. Also I was aware of where this posture came from. It was a part that wanted to have support but unable to get it and felt so desperate, all I could do is just to give up. I was feeling sad but also aware somewhere in me was feeling peaceful when I could just let my body to do whatever it needed to do. I could just let myself lying there giving ample time for it to be in the way it wanted. I remember that there were feeling sadness but being able to accept it, opening up to something else. I felt some kind of shift happening within and from there I started to feel some live energy. Next thing I noticed I felt I could get up slowly, as I did I felt lighter. I got into next movement as if I was invited to do so. As I think of it now that is how I do when I practice WBF. It was probably my first experience of having trust in my body wisdom in this way. I knew the value of it but it was just sitting in my memory on its own till I came across WBF. . I attended a few more classes of the same sort but left as I felt that there should be something more to explore further. After having practicing WBF for some years now I can explain what was happening there. If I knew Focusing that time, I would have made this experience more meaningful when it was happening. Good thing about Focusing is that I could still go back to this image and the posture to see how it feels in my body right now. As I'm sensing it now it feels different. This is still a familiar place but *'it's not in desert anymore I could sense I am alone but not all the time.'*

A few years after this experience my searching for something more led to an informal counselling session with my old friend. And he knew Focusing. He and his partner recommended me to read 'Power of Focusing'. I finished reading it without stopping which is very rare for me. Soon or later I heard an introduction afternoon class happening in Exeter where I met my first (Eileen Fendick) and 2nd Teacher (Fiona Parr). When I was led into my inner world, I instantly felt at home. This sense of inner peace made me remind of the time when I was meditating regularly, also the benefit I got from it. I loved this gentle, loving and respectful way of being inside. To this day Focusing has been my main source of support for my personal growth.

When I started practicing Focusing 8 years ago I already developed tendonitis in my right shoulder. It has spread to left shoulder, depending on which part I've been over

using the pain could be anywhere in my arms/shoulders/hands. Although it has been mild, occasionally it becomes acute pains. There are lots of restrictions because of this. It's been hard not to be able to dance freely. If I do I need to be very careful how I move my arms otherwise it becomes painful next day or sometimes it takes weeks to get back to what it was like before. Through Focusing I've been finding a way to express/release all sorts of things without actually moving my body, if it moves it's very different from any other movement work I've done. To me it has been like an inner body movement combined with healing.

Particularly I'm finding WBF is very helpful for my personal growth. I would like to write my understanding of WBF and how it has been benefiting my life.

How to get into WBF.

1. Sensing your body to see what position you want to take to start with: standing, sitting or lying. Taking account for what is needed and what is comfortable
2. Sensing how you are in the room and bring your attention into your body.
3. At first finding your feet and connection with the floor if you are standing. If you are sitting, find your feet and the floor, also being aware of the connection between the chair and the parts of your body that are touching the chair.
4. Resting into the support of the floor/chair. Allowing the support from your environment to come to you, and taking sometime to receive it. Having a sense of being held rather than holding your body up. Once you are grounded physically, invite whatever wants to come and be known. And also you give an invitation to your body to move anyway it wants to.
5. Your head is just resting on the top of your spine and observing whatever happening in your body. If you start to have any thought or doubt, just acknowledge that is there and bring your attention back into your body.
6. Up to this point If you feel like moving your body anytime in anyway, welcome that and make a space for more. In the process of relaxing into your own space, your body may sway side to side to find a balance or some parts of your body may move to come down to a sense of grounding or wanting to carry on moving. You welcome whatever happening in your body, giving consent to each step.

If something gets in the way of feeling of 'I am here', acknowledge it if you can. If you find it's difficult to acknowledge it, invite your body wisdom, sensing what's needed here. You may need to keep company with something or you might like to keep sensing this something that gets in the way even if it's not clear. Keep allowing for whatever is there in the way it wants to. You might find a way for you to be grounded by moving your body. If that's what your body wants to do then best to follow that. Our body moves in a way it wants to create our safety container. I often let my body move; shaking or whatever it needs till it feels settled. Once you find the parts of your body that feel grounded, you can go back to this place anytime during the session when it feels it needs. Keep sensing what's right for you at each step.

This grounding exercise is very relaxing; also it gives you a sense of secure and strength. You might notice your body is releasing some tension while you're doing it. You might start to feel your body weight heavier than normal. Or you might feel like

you are getting taller and bigger. One of my favourite sessions with Kevin, in which I felt like 'I am a giant.' was warming and empowering. It was a good example of WBF way of grounding and it was lovely to share with lots of people in the workshop.

I was feeling very emotional already before standing in the circle of people at the workshop. It felt like I am in the sea of water, almost was drowning in it. . I couldn't stop crying. But something in me felt wanting to carry on, so I stayed in. I don't remember well what happened ayt the beginning.....but when Kevin suggested "Ask your body wisdom how you can be with this. You don't know but something in you knows." My feet were ok. Then, there came a sense of going up and down, bending my knees and straighten up. As I was doing this movement some sound wanted to come out, too. I heard a few people in the class were making similar sound, too. I felt so supported. I got a bit carried away but when Kevin suggested 'Bring your attention back into your body and sense how it feels in your body.' As I went inside I felt water is still around me but it wasn't overwhelmed any more. Actually it was opposite. I felt loved from this water around me. I felt this water had been waiting for me till I'm ready. I felt so supported by it and wanted to feel the support more. It felt like it's possible to float in this water. I noticed my upper body was moving backwards, feeling the support on my back. Then my reality check came in and I thought I wouldn't be able to go backwards like that, I would fall backwards. Kevin suggested may be you may like to carry on standing up right. I wanted to try how it feels if I carry on standing. Next second I noticed that I felt I have gone taller. I felt all of my bones gone long and big. I felt like "I am a giant." Then I looked down the water. The water was only a half way up my knees. Me being giant, the sea felt like just a small paddle. There were cheers from the people in the class. I felt so encouraging being in the centre. The time has come to finish the session. It was a very good resting place. I felt much stronger in myself afterwards. I couldn't be with emotions during the session but my body knew that I needed to feel support and grounded before spending sometime time with the emotions. The body created so much space in me; it made me feel I can handle these emotions ok afterwards. I can still feel the quality of me being giant in me. I didn't really know where this giant came from that time. As I'm sensing it now it feels like it was created in somewhere between me genuinely asking my body wisdom and support (presence) from the people in the class.

As your body is relaxing and being in presence, something in you might start wanting your attention. You keep sensing what this part wants and its point of view. As you do in normal Focusing you keep checking any words, image, posture and gesture that came by taking them back to where it came from till it feels right. Being aware of your body movement if it moves however tiny it might be and being open for something more to come. In WBF when we stay with something happening, we also keep an awareness of your wholebody that is supported by the environment. From this physically grounded wholebody in being now space, you find a way to be with the part that needs your attention. Letting it to be in a way it wants to and staying with it as much as it needs to, and being open something more to happen are all very important in WBF. If something in you having a difficulty to do this, may be that is the one you bring your attention first. As you keep sensing how this place has been and letting it know you hear/sense its point of view, it starts to release whatever it has been holding. You feel it in your body. When a part of your body starts to move, you may not know what it means at first. As you welcome it, make a space for it and allow more to happen at the same time you are aware of your wholebody, you will start making a sense of what the movement means for you.

It took a while for me to be in presence through grounding exercise. I needed to go through acknowledging all the parts that needed my attention first. Then a sense of being presence comes. Once I was focusing with my practice partner, she suggested me "You might want to find a way to hold all of them". There were so many parts of me criticizing and attacking...I was on the edge. Later she said 'hold' wasn't appropriate word to encourage me to the right direction. But it worked marvellously well with me. The word 'hold' triggered something in me. I realized I couldn't hold them anymore, then what I felt in my body is actually it was ok not to be able to hold. **In fact it was quite nice to be held up.** Soon as I let go I was able to feel support from the floor and the sofa. Also I had a sense of whole of my body connecting up. It was a big realization to mark that I could let go. I didn't need to hold them all. I was afraid of losing something. Something to do with unless I hold them they would be gone. I think it's about not being able to have enough trust in life. Since this experience I'm finding easier to find my presence through this grounding exercise. I am learning that my body is living every moment despite of what I've done in my past. I thought I had to sort all the problems within me to really start enjoy my life. There is something in me that have been always living the moment to moment, waiting for me to be awakening to connect with my true being. **Even carrying all those my past I could be just simply being me who I really am is a huge relief.**

Inner Directed Movement

During practicing WBF, parts that are my weak/painful area of my body gets often most active and sometimes inner directive movement comes from this place. When it happens it is so healing. I am often amazed that the part that hurts which I normally want to ignore actually being there unconditionally just waiting for me to turn to it. When inner directed movement comes, you just let it unfold itself. It has it's own pace and know what to do next. I found that images and messages that come with inner directed movement are very clear. There is no space for doubt. Also I have a sense of my whole being is there with this process. It is a moment when our body is re-experiencing it, unfolding it, re-thinking it. In that moment the space feels like timeless zone: Past, Present and Future are all in one.

WBF evoke effectively something that is there but isn't yet known. Movement helps. I'm finding more and more of this by working with other people and listen to them. It has its own wisdom that is separate from our mind. It also knows how we can be with the part that we normally find difficult to be with. One of difficulties in our life is how we can be with physical pain. Here is my experience with WBF.

WBF and My Physical pain

I wear magnets for easing the pain. Also I'm finding Chinese acupuncture is helpful for treating my neck where actual problem of pain lies. Focusing way of being with this pain has been helpful, too. Because the problem is chronicle and the cause of it goes back to long time ago, it has been an ongoing process. What Focusing has been helping the most is that I have been making an inner relationship with this felt sense. I call it felt sense rather than naming it pain/ache. Because there is more than just pain there and also it connects up with other part of my body when I listen to it in Focusing way. In deeper sense I can related to how my life has been as well. I got in touch with other parts of me that finding difficult to be with pain, wanting to ignore or running away from it, and also frustrating, angry having to deal with pain, feeling me sorry parts and depressed part of me. All these parts create stress and tensions in my body. By being able to acknowledge them makes my body much relaxed. I notice my shoulders go

down and I breathe better. It took a while to be able to come to this stage. It doesn't mean that the part not wanting this pain gone. But if I can let it know that I understand how it feels and keeping company with it, not just my body relax it brings healing energy and a sense of peace. If I'm not having enough rest this place lets me know immediately. One time when I was standing WB Focusing, my left arm was much closed to left side of my trunk. It felt like it stacked to the left side of my body with glue. When I could let it be and stay with it I felt so touched on how much this place had been relying on me like my little child. When I felt so sorry for not giving enough attention to "her", she became immediately a part of my body. She was resting on my trunk with complete trust in me. I felt very affectionate towards "her". At the same time whole of my body is receiving healing energy, too.

Other times during practicing WBF this place gets active and I can feel tiny movement happening in my left shoulder. It feels like current or stream of water from this painful part in my shoulder moving downward towards my left elbow and wrist. It feels very soothing and healing. Sometimes the pain goes away.

How I'm finding trust in life through WBF

I was practicing Reiki healing on people and animals some years ago. I found tiring to give healing to people because of lack of grandness in me. In fact in my entire life not being able to ground has been my life issue. Also I have boundary issues as well. When I started my first WBF workshop, each time I brought my attention to my body I went into the same posture which my upper body is bending forward going down slowly. As if I've been carrying so many burdens on my shoulders. I realized that I tend to receive other people's problems and take them on board on my shoulders. No wonder I always had tension in my shoulders. Another reason why I stopped healing work is that I didn't know how to be open for me to receive healing when I was working on other people. Even I wasn't aware how much I was closed. It has been a long journey to be able to say 'yes' I also need healing as much as for other people. Accepting my wounds, realizing what it needs and expressing what it wants, really honouring it as much as I can.

In WBF it stresses the importance of physical grounding- our body's connection to our environment- in order for us to be in presence. In fact my personal journey started from how I rediscovered my connection to my environment. My habitual posture and how I stand physically are representing how my life has been. WBF helped me not just being aware of my habitual postures and my thought patterns but also how I can be different with all those.

At the beginning stage of my process through WBF I couldn't stand without feeling ok. In fact I was feeling sick. The floor felt like a sponge and it felt like as if I am standing on uncomfortable feeling. It didn't feel natural for me to feel and sense my feet. Each time I stood and did WBF I had to go through this uncomfortable feeling. Kevin's advice was "You're doing well. It's good to stay with it." I remember that those time support was coming from nature. I couldn't find the bodily presence. When I asked my body wisdom to find a way for me to be in presence was a good quality from the big tree in the garden. I saw it when I went for a walk in break times. I wasn't particularly looking for anything on walking. But my body was receiving it, and it let me know how it can be helpful. I still remember the quality of the tree and can sense it's strength. It feels the spine of the tree is strong. I now know that if

we ask genuinely and open to receive, help will come from somewhere because we are living and supported in our environment. Now I'm finding my feet are my friends. They always remind me that "I am ok". I'm gradually finding good connection with the floor/ground now. I can relate the uncomfortable feeling I initially had to my doubt in close relationships. I wasn't very open, and that was stopping to receive support. Through WBF I am learning to stand on my feet, having a sense of who I am, and to be open and receive support that are here and also to appreciate what I receive.

Junko Miya
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