

British Focusing Association



NEWSLETTER

Supporting Your Focusing Journey

Issue 4: August 2014

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Editor's note

This issue delves into the riches of 'spirituality' and Focusing. We explore the resonance of the 'spirit', 'soul', 'living source', 'heart centre' ... different ways of describing that realm or inner journey which goes beyond our 'selves'. The articles show how different Focusing teachers explore this mysterious domain of Being, whether on retreat, in therapy sessions, in a quiet meditative circle, by themselves at home or in nature, or on workshops and courses. Several of our contributors are also giving workshops at the UK Focusing School this autumn, so you can gather a flavour of them here in this newsletter, and then meet them in person in October. A programme of the workshops for the UK Focusing School appears at the end of this issue.

For ideas, offerings and feedback, please contact me!

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News from the Sofa

By *Fiona Parr and Jerry Conway*

Greetings everyone. BFA has had an eventful few months. Notably, there have been big changes at The Focusing Institute. BFA and its members part-funded Barbara McGavin to attend the Coordinators' meeting in New York in May. She was able to contribute some of our good practice in consensus decision making (more about that in the next issue!). Barbara has since been invited to be part of the International Leadership Council. Congratulations to Barbara! And to Rob Foxcroft, who is giving so much to The Focusing Institute as an interim Board Member.

The other big news is that bookings are rolling in for the UK Focusing School in October (Wednesday 22nd October 2014, 6 p.m. to Sunday 26th October 2014, 2 p.m.). This is looking exciting. We have a great line up of teachers for the morning workshops and a whole array of afternoon offerings for shorter workshops. Do book soon (<http://www.focusing.school.co.uk/bookings.html>) if you want to come. It's a wonderful gathering and a great opportunity for learning more about this delightful and profound process called Focusing, with its many and various applications. The sense of community is palpable and creates a special atmosphere for those few remarkable days.

We wish you a great summer and hope you have lots of Focusing time.

Fiona and Jerry

Fiona Parr and Jerry Conway have been sitting on the sofa together for 2 years (as co-chairs of BFA). They both offer individual sessions and Focusing training; and meet regularly to keep BFA on track.



Exploring the 'soul's journey' through Focusing

by *Manjudeva*

We silently walk to the brook. I carry a small bowl full of stones, others in our group carry their own. When we arrive at the bridge crossing the brook, we offer these stones to the flowing water. Each stone symbolises a loss for someone in the group: a grandmother, a father, an unborn child, a job someone valued We honour and witness each one as they pass into the water. Silently we return to the house.



This ritual was very near the end of a series of four workshops I recently co-led with Jutika Healy. Using simple ritual to hold our experience is something we have used on our Buddhist events but this was a first for a more mixed group.

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Our collective journey that led to this point lasted seven months, keeping the same group of nine participants all along; everyone Focusing with each other in between our four weekends. Our overarching theme was 'the soul's journey'. A phrase that conveyed an exploration of the deepest forces that move us in our lives.

Each workshop had a theme; existential themes, such as our birth and arrival in this world, and the family and cultural 'field' we grew up in. We explored things we were passionate about and those things that have wounded us and brought loss and trauma in our lives.

Primarily we used Focusing to explore and hold the process. As each theme was brought in, we simply let our beings resonate with it. This was a different way of working for me as I often give an open invitation to whatever wants attention; or I welcome in more specific life issues. But these big themes were big enough for everyone to respond to, and gave a safe Focusing space for exploring the stories that we all carry.

During the final weekend, before our final visit to the brook, we all had some space to offer some kind of ritual. By 'ritual' I mean some kind of symbolic enactment of what we carry, and what might be its carrying forward.... The healing of what was missing, if you like. This part was new and scary for us, and yet in the end deeply moving.

Participants were invited to find the symbols for their ritual from their Focusing practice. We allowed the felt sense to guide what was enacted. Each person decided to have the whole group witness and join in their ritual (they were not asked specifically to do this, but everyone took this option).

It was not a performance in any way. More of a held sacred space for listening and healing. To give you an idea: one person simply told a story from her history and wanted empathy for what she carried. Another person just wanted to be looked at completely and directly by everybody in turn. Another asked to be lifted from the floor and then to hear some sentences that spoke to what needed healing. Someone else wanted us to witness rage. Everyone had permission not to do anything at all. It was very moving and strong for all of us.

I was struck by how we can each hold a piece of each other's carrying forward. In witnessing and holding someone's wounding and healing, we not only held it for them but for us too. Sometimes it was very specific, as if someone's theme deeply touched your own; and at others it was more as if the individual stories were less clear, and all that was needed was for us to simply witness and hold the story of being human.



Creating a longer ongoing group enabled a deeper process to emerge. Over those months, life brought big changes for some. Two people lost their fathers, one person had to sell a family home, another person contacted their parents asking about a difficult birth, something never broached before. The course was a larger container for a longer process of exploration and then carrying forward. What a rich and rewarding journey!

Manjudeva will run this course again in 2015, along with his other workshops and coaching programme. Keep an eye out for news on his website (www.livingfocusing.co.uk) or the BFA website (www.focusing.org.uk). Manjudeva is also a key organiser and MC at the UK Focusing School in October.



Spirituality in psychotherapy: random notes on the living source in FOT (Focusing-oriented therapy)

by Greg Madison



When my client sits down there are many directions we might go: into stories of the week, stuck patterns, discrete problems that need practical action. Others come to therapy shattered by a specific traumatic event. Focusing-oriented therapists, of course, sit with people who are facing all these life issues and more.

My therapist ego is awake because someone has come to me for help. I worry; can I in fact be helpful? Psychotherapy is rife with techniques to reassure me. Unfortunately, Focusing can become just another one of those techniques. But whom am I trying to help with Focusing? The client as they currently conceive of themselves? Sometimes I think of FOT as being about change. But change from whose point of view? More radically, FOT invites us to let go of who we think we are, who we want to be, and the change we think we need.

We usually live wound tightly around words. Our clinging to structures, identities, concepts, names, reveals the limits of human faith. Working somatically already brings us to the edge of spirituality. We gain the opening that the 'as if' quality of metaphor protects. The FOT process evokes answer after answer, each one undercutting or refining the previous one until we find ourselves in an unknowing flow – and realise, surprisingly, that is the answer.

So sometimes the attention shifts from the content, the 'problem' as currently conceived, to the process itself. Together we become curious about how the felt sense shifts situations and feelings. How does 'it' know better than 'I' do what is right for 'me'? What is this 'it'? Gendlin is fond of saying 'life lives us'. Increasingly I have come to see how insistent life is, how it wants to have its vehicle back. It seems that life wants it's own point of view to prevail and it is only because we are it that its point of view also resonates as our best interest.

We do not need to understand what 'it' is in order to put the 'living source' or 'god' at the centre rather than psychological theory. It turns many assumptions upside down. Does the unconscious create the body? Is the body a manifestation of awareness? Heidegger used to say we have eyes because we are 'seeing beings' not that we are seeing beings because we have eyes. Through the session something pre-historic and pre-biographic is circling. It needs our consent to allow the colonised self to dissolve into a process-self.



Gendlin says that humans live in 'situations' and that between two people in therapy there is 'one situation'. Perhaps the whole cosmos is our human situation? Maybe the whole of human existence is implied within every concrete situation? So where

do we draw the situation? Are personal mortality, or echoes of the big bang, implied within each situation? If not, then where are they?

So often we stay rooted at the ego end of the spectrum and forego the joy of the slippery slope. Through the practice of Focusing and FOT, I feel the universe inhabiting me with love, as if it is wholly focused on me alone, persistently wanting for me what I am not wise enough to want for myself. I look my client deep in the eyes, and there behind the appearances I sometimes see this same ageless source looking back, responding to the life it has just resurrected in me.

Greg appears in the 'Members' Corner' below, where you can see his contact details. You can also meet him in person at the UK Focusing School where he gives a series of morning workshops called, 'A Forum for Focusing-oriented Therapists to Share their Triumphs and Challenges.'



... meditative listening

by Rob Foxcroft

The known life is no more than a clearing in the forest. There is another life in the shadows, treetops and margins.

This hidden life is rather felt than thought. It is mysterious, fertile, moist and passionate.

Life is a moving edge. Everything flows, nothing remains the same. Since life is so hard to pin down it is natural to feel lost or bewildered.

Meditative listening is a form of spiritual accompaniment in which you talk about your life to a listener who intends only to understand and is sure that you will find your own way forward.

When you sit down quietly and close your eyes, you feel your life all around you. Soon you begin to know what you want to talk about.

For the listener it is like being taken by the hand and led into a new country. The listener is ready to meet you face to face and to hear your words with understanding.

When you feel heard a silence falls. In that silence more may come. Often it is something deeper. You can feel it just now forming at the edge of being.

In meditative listening you are received very gently by somebody who feels with you as you speak. Little

by little a sense of mutual tenderness grows as the silence deepens.

... the open listening circle

We begin in silence. Each thing that is said is first received and then allowed to fall into silence. We end in silence. Silence is all around us. Silence holds us.

As we sit here together in a circle there are four things that you might like to do.

You might like to sit quietly, listening to what other people say and allowing it to touch your feelings.

You might like to offer one of the speakers a meditative listening response. You say what you heard in a tentative way that invites the speaker to correct you. And you take great care to add nothing of your own.

When you find some feeling stirring within you, you might turn inwards to be with it.

And you might want to say something about this feeling you have that is just now stirring freshly.

If nobody says anything, we will have a very quiet time together. Even so, many things will happen in the silence.

... coming home

It is all very well having a friend who is happy to listen to you for an hour now and then. But often you are alone. What happens then?

It is hard to say. The inner world is individual. Nobody can tell you how to do this. What is needed is not a method that somebody shows you, but patient search for a way that is right for you.

Sometimes you may need to do something vigorous to let out all the energy that is pent up inside you.

Sometimes you may need to be in nature, in the woods or by the sea. Or to lose yourself in an activity – gardening, writing, painting, music, cooking or whatever. And while you are otherwise engaged, the inner world quietly remakes itself.

Sometimes you may need to be quiet and still. You pray, you meditate, or you just gaze dreamily out of the window.

Day after day I find time to be alone.
I sit down quietly and listen to my feelings.

There is nothing to do.
Whatever happens, happens by itself.

Little by little a sense of peace may come,
a sense of stillness.

Once in a while there may be something more,
a breath of happiness, an awakening, a clear sky.

It is like coming home.



For more about meditative listening, please write to rob@robfoxcroft.com. You can also attend morning workshops on meditative listening at the UK Focusing School with Rob in October.

The Clay Jug

Inside this clay jug there are canyons and pine mountains,
And the one who makes canyons and pine mountains.
All seven oceans are inside, and hundreds of millions of stars.
The acid that tests gold is here, and the one who values jewels,
And the music from the strings that no one touches,
And the source of all water.

If you want the truth, I will tell you the truth:
Friend, listen: the God whom I love is inside.

from Kabir: Ecstatic Poems (tr. Robert Bly).

Finding 'heart-centre'

by Viv Stacey

This may be stating the obvious, but nowadays I like to say that when I am 'contemplating' and when I am 'Focusing', I am doing the same kind of things on the inside. And also, quite simply, that when I am contemplating / Focusing – I love doing it!

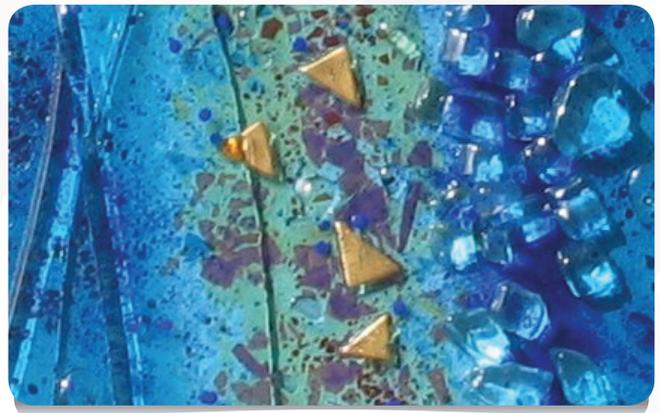
I love creating open and safe spaces for other people, whatever their spiritual path, to bring Focusing into their inner journeying. I love the gradual crossing of Focusing and contemplative spirituality going on in me as we talk about our experience. This particular crossing just seems to be the natural direction that Focusing takes me, because I have spent so many years immersed in contemplative practice, mystical writings, wisdom stories, poetry and sayings. And also, Focusing is already alive and well in my ongoing work of spiritual companionship (or 'spiritual direction' as it is often called).

Here is one of my own particular lively crossing points. When I make a Focusing pause and bring my awareness inside to what feels like the centre of my body ... this feels like returning towards the same place as in a practice taught widely called 'centering' or 'centering prayer'. Centering has been my daily practice (well almost daily!) for twenty-something years. It carries with it many layers of meanings. So before I begin Focusing, or right in the flow of Focusing when I feel a bit stuck, I return again and again to this feeling of centre – which I name 'heart-centre'.

In my thinking from my personal feeling of 'heart centre' I have been writing some sentences to share.

- *Heart-centre is where I go inside to say yes – to be open.*
- *Heart-centre is where I go inside to gently let go – to rest from my repetitive thoughts.*
- *Heart-centre is where I go into and wait 'in the dark' of not knowing – waiting for something new to form.*
- *Heart-centre is where I go to sense with subtle body awareness – to see with 'the eye of the heart'. My personal naming for that is Christ-Body awareness.*
- *Heart-centre is where I go to connect with new potentials being brought to life in me – to receive them like gifts.*

- *Heart-centre is where I go to tune into oneness – from where I see everything is connected to everything else.*



And there is always more, of course. But even from these few sentences fresh questions come to my mind to bring into my Focusing practice. This is my growing edge, so I end these musings with a 'watch this space' moment

Viv Stacey brings Focusing into spirituality; contemplating sacred texts, stories and poetry and art, and becoming a companion for spiritual journeying. She is offering a series of Focusing workshops and Focusing-orientated retreats as part of a wider programme on contemplative spirituality. Her email address is vivienst@googlemail.com and a web link to the learning community of contemplative spirituality is www.contemplativespirituality.org. Viv is also offering an afternoon workshop at the UK Focusing School called 'Finding a Rite that Feels Just Right: Creating Healing Ritual with Focusing'.



Focusing and spirituality

by John L. Threadgold

How to start? Well my felt sense, says that I start with some self-disclosure. I am a Christian Quaker, with a passion for spirituality and Focusing.

In broad terms, the word 'spirituality' covers a range of experiences which are related to the 'spirit'. For example, a person has a sense of being connected to a reality greater than themselves. It covers intuitive experiences, insights that come concerning life situations, visions, dreams, and phenomena that are on the edge of our awareness. Such experiences can give a sense of purpose and meaning in our lives.¹ For some, these experiences are regarded as evidence of transcendent metaphysical reality. For others, the source is us, phenomena that spring from and are dependent on the material world ('materialism'). Whatever your philosophical assumptions, there is no doubt that such experiences are widespread.²

Focusing is in many ways a simple and natural process. When I Focus, I deliberately bring my awareness into my body. I sense my body from the inside. And as Peter Afford states, guided Focusing brings access to spiritual experiences, however conceptualised.³ There are two scriptures that I love, from two different faith traditions linking the body to spirituality. From Jewish scripture: *'God has put eternity into the hearts of Man.'* (Eccles. 3 v. 11)

From a Muslim, Sufi tradition: *'The body is the gateway to the ocean of being'*.⁴

Both scriptures point to the 'transcendent reality' of a connection with something or someone greater.

While teaching Focusing-oriented therapy at the Association of Christian Counsellors Summer School this summer we experienced a group exercise combining focusing with Christian spirituality. We grounded ourselves by noticing the floor beneath our feet. We quoted Psalm 40 v. 3: *'He put my feet on Rock, and made my footsteps firm.'*

We went deeper into bodily awareness, remembering that the Psalmist declares that our body is 'fearfully and wonderfully made' (Psalm 139 v. 14). We

sensed inside, floating a question, 'what are the inner resources, that God has given us?' We could also invite God, Jesus, the Holy Spirit into our inner world as we experience it.

People shared experiences including a sense of the presence of God, a sense of being held, of grace, spiritual insights connectedness and well-being.

The above outline was adapted from a Quaker spiritual practice called an 'experiment with light' where no reference is made to God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit. This allows non-theistic and atheistic Quakers to join in.⁵ The exercise can also be adapted for people from other faith traditions.

¹ See West, W. (2004) *Spiritual Issues in Therapy. Relating Experience to Practice*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. See also Thorn, B. (1998) *Person Centred Counselling and Christian Spirituality*. London: Whurr Publishers.

² See Hay, H. (1992) *Exploring Inner Space*. Harmondsworth: Pelican. Hay found that transcendent experiences were widespread, but that in our western materialistic society many participants in his research were initially reluctant to talk about this because of the fear of being labelled mentally ill.

³ Afford, P. (2005) *Reflections on Being (some sort of a) Focusing-Oriented Therapist*. *Self and Society* vol. 33 no. 2. Pages 16-23.

⁴ Anonymous Sufi saying cited by Levine, P. (1997) *Waking the Tiger: Healing Trauma*. Berkeley: North Atlantic Books.

⁵ Lampton, J. (Editor) (2008) *Seeing, Hearing, Knowing: Reflections on Experiment with Light*. York: Sessions.

John Threadgold has been Focusing since 2005. He is a Focusing-oriented therapist, supervisor and Focusing teacher. He offers courses on Focusing (Levels 1-5, by Skype and in person) as well as specialist Focusing-oriented Therapy courses for therapists. For more information, see our website, or contact John directly at www.newfocustherapy.co.uk; email: lesleith@aol.com.



Focusing retreats: an unfolding journey

by Gordon Adam

'Why does one go into retreat? One goes into retreat to understand who one really is and what the situation truly is.'

Tenzin Palmo

Background – a calling

Running my own retreats has come as a quiet but insistent calling from within and has developed into an important creative 'carrying forward' of my own unfolding life journey.

Having attended various types of (mainly Buddhist) retreats since my early 20s, it took a leap of faith to organise my own first week-long retreat at a friend's property in Italy in 2007. This was the first time I ever introduced Focusing to a group of people – the Focusing element was not planned as I had only learned to Focus myself earlier the same year, but it was well received, and, to my relief, the retreat was a great success.

Since 2009 I have led an average of three Focusing retreats a year (usually in Spring, Summer and at New Year), all, apart from one, at the wonderful Bala Brook Retreat Centre near South Brent on Dartmoor. I have come to recognise that in running these retreats, I am both providing a needed healing space for others, and I am healing myself by following and allowing my own emergent truth to manifest. Repeatedly checking in with how that is received by the groups, I adapt and develop the retreats accordingly.

What a retreat offers

A retreat has something different to offer than a course, a workshop, or going on holiday. In the retreats that I run, Focusing is one of several elements that combine to create a particular type of environment – a sort of safe container that participants experience as supportive, holding and nourishing, and which acts as a space for deepening, connecting (with self, others, and the environment), coming to rest, and healing. Often clarity, insight, new ideas and renewed appreciation of one's 'life path' also arises during the retreats.

The 'ingredients' other than Focusing are: a small supportive group of people (usually no more than 12); a comfortable venue and beautiful natural environment (usually Dartmoor); gentle holding and structure; shared group activities such as walking,



Morning meditation – La Cantina, Italy, Easter 2007

qigong, meditation, dancing; cooking and eating good food together; quite a bit of silence; sprinklings of music and poetry; freedom to rest or wander alone in the afternoons; and sometimes fires, celebration – and whatever else might arise from the group energy.

The role of Focusing

Focusing is a wonderful tool for helping me connect with how I am right now – it thereby supports, and is also supported by, a bigger sense of presence that is cultivated in the retreat. Focusing also enables me to connect with how it is for the other person right now, and so supports a sense of interconnectedness and communality. The energy on a retreat (as in Focusing workshops) always shifts or deepens after everyone has had a first Focusing session. It's as if we are entering into a deeper 'ground of being' which changes the quality of being in the group. On the retreats there is the opportunity for two (or more) lengthy Focusing sessions each day. Focusing this frequently in a group has a powerful effect and

enables a deepening and enriching of experience for both the individual and the group. Focusing is also great for addressing any issues or 'difficult parts' that invariably surface during the retreat.

The power of the group

The feedback received from my last 5-day retreat in April showed that the thing that people most appreciated about the retreat was – the group! Focusing came a close second. My own experience of 'self-development' or 'spiritual growth' or simply becoming more fully myself, is that I need other people to help me do this. I believe that a 'sangha' or group of like-minded people is essential for any real growth and development. People (many of whom live alone) really value being part of a temporary community and all that goes with it. This includes, at times, being challenged or irritated by another person – 'having one's buttons pushed' – but this is all grist for the mill of the retreat process, and is in fact one of the gifts of being on retreat with other people. Focusing and regular open group sharing sessions give space for such issues to be addressed. People generally feel held, supported, and stimulated by being part of the retreat community, and enjoy both interaction through conversation and group sharing, as well as being in silence together.

The power of silence

Much of what we do is done in silence. And the silence has an important role to play, particularly being together with others in silence – something that tends not to happen so much in our daily lives.

Silence supports presence, and being here now. Silence allows the mind to settle. Being together in silence has an extra quality – a supportive and nourishing sense of togetherness that is experienced and needs no words. Silence within a group has a fullness and aliveness and energy in it. Being in nature supports silence. Silence supports listening, and listening supports silence, and both together support deepening and insight:

*It is as though he listened
And such listening as his
Enfolds us in a silence
In which at last
We begin to hear
What we are meant to be.*

Lao Tzu

Allowing the felt sense to act as guide

Retreat participants are encouraged and supported to extend the influence of the felt sense into the whole retreat, for instance in making choices in relation to the schedule. I invite people to prioritise 'What needs to happen right now', coming from a place of felt sense. So for instance, someone might choose to go for a walk alone rather than turn up for a timetabled Focusing or meditation session. This 'felt sense in action' cultivates more authenticity and spontaneity on the retreat, and overall supports the energy of the retreat.

A bigger sense of presence

A particular growing edge (for me) on the retreats is an increasing incorporation of the landscape. This involves cultivating an experience of my whole body within the landscape as a sort of 'seat of presence'. This cultivation has its roots partly in my own ongoing qigong practice (in the park where I live) and from Wholebody Focusing. I am finding more and more of a wonderful 'enabling' that happens when presence comes from this bigger whole, and when 'refreshing presence' means reconnecting with my whole body in the landscape (whether outside or indoors). For me, this bigger presence brings particular gifts and supports Focusing on bigger issues – i.e. beyond the 'personal' and more into the 'transpersonal' domain of experience.



On the moor – Bala Brook, April 2014

What people experience

I'd like to end this short reflection by sharing some words from people who have joined me on these retreat explorations over the last 7 years:

"The structure of the retreat worked really well with me – having silent mornings and the right balance of Focusing, meditation, communal being and fun. I liked having the space to do my own thing as well as the group activities."

"I loved the silences especially being around other people in silence – I find it a very profound way of being."

"I slowed right down in my thinking, everything became clearer and simpler rather than overwhelmed and muddled."

"I've experienced a big shift in feeling glad to be alive! I have a much wider, deeper perspective on long-term tricky issues. I feel happier, more balanced, calmer and slightly less like a rebellious teenager!"

"I feel nourished on all levels."

Further information

Further information about Gordon's Focusing retreats can be found at <http://www.newportclinic.co.uk/classes-events/focusing-retreats/> . Or you can contact Gordon on gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk or tel. 0117 9080494. The next retreat will be the New Year Retreat, from 29th December until 3rd January 2015 at Bala Brook.



Your body is your home;
your body is the only home that you have in this universe.

John O'Donohue from Anam Cara

Members' Corner

In this issue we meet Greg Madison and Susan Jordan

The self-challenge of a Focusing practice

Greg Madison

I was a 19-year-old psychology undergraduate when my professor took his copy of *Focusing* off the shelf and handed it to me. It was 1980 and after reading that little book, I began to practice Focusing daily, and I was hooked. I am a seeker at heart, not easily convinced by 'knowledge' or authority, and Gendlin gave me permission to use my own knowing as a guide. This knowing didn't offer conclusions but it was determined

to tell the truth and to my relief, it would not be convinced by even the cleverest of my self-deceptions.

In the early years, there was The Focusing Connection, then a Focusing Institute, then certified trainers, etc. I felt disappointed that conventional structures seemed to be forming around such a radical and liberating practice.

After a lot of coaxing by Mary McGuire, then-director of TFI, and my new friend Barbara McGavin, I decided to go to Chicago in 1991 to train to be certified. Fifteen years ago I became a Coordinator.

So, since the beginning, my studies in psychology and psychotherapy were assessed by what I was learning from my bodily experience. I had become a horribly sceptical student – I didn't automatically believe anything I was supposed to. In existentialism I found a 'home' because it does not insist I put any theory before my own lived experience.

My practice as a Focusing-oriented Therapist combines the existential approach with the Focusing process because both work together to retain this deconstructive 'un-knowing'. For me FOT offers both therapists and clients this radical, fundamental reassessment of what life is, and I find that inquiry so exciting. It is a relational sharing of the question 'what really is this?' challenging our assumptions about our issues, our relationships, our complex lives. I look forward to offering that radical edge to our

FOT study group in the upcoming UK Focusing School. I anticipate that we will discover many new things about our FOT practice, deepening our abilities to stay with the level of unknowing that is exciting and challenging and feels so alive.

Greg teaches Focusing and FOT to training groups and at universities internationally. He lives in Brighton and has a small private practice there and in London, where he also offers a two-year FOT certificate. Greg is interested in how Focusing can help us understand the experiences of 'home' and 'belonging' and how the Focusing process might serve as a model for a form of community building that brings that same process to the social level. For more information, see: www.gregmadison.net or www.empowerpointcoaching.com



Focusing - and everything else

Susan Jordan

I first came across Focusing during my psychotherapy training at the Karuna Institute in the early 1990s. Although I suspected it had something to offer me, I didn't take to it straight away and struggled to get a 'felt shift' – which I imagined would be a powerful experience that would change everything. In those days I was so busy hoping for transformative experiences that I often didn't notice the more subtle changes taking place. Gradually I began to sense difference between being in an emotion and being with it and realised how good not being immersed in it felt. My favourite Gendlin quote is still, "If you want to smell the soup, you don't stick your head in it."

It was several years before I looked into Focusing more seriously. I hadn't set out to become a practitioner, but I found the initial five weekends with Barbara McGavin so powerful that I wanted to go on. As I introduced friends to Focusing I was delighted that many of them took to it immediately, and since I was already used to training, I was keen to teach it to groups too. Teaching deepened my experience of the process, and spending a whole weekend immersed in a Focusing atmosphere, which I have helped to create, still feels very special.

I've been a practitioner/teacher since 2003. I still find that the Inner Relationship approach

feels right for me and connects with my Buddhist practice. I have gradually brought more of my experience as a meditator and psychotherapist into my teaching. I enjoy teaching Focusing to psychotherapists and helping them learn to use it by understanding it from within.

Since moving to Devon in 2011 I've been less active as a Focusing professional, though I still run some courses and offer one-to-one sessions. I've been fortunate to have regular Focusing partnerships with Fiona Parr, who also teaches in Devon, and Katrin Werner. The three of us meet regularly on Skype for peer consultative support and have a website, Focusing Devon and Cornwall.

In 2010/11 I did an MA in Creative Writing. It was a life-changing year, and since then writing has played a much bigger part in my life. I'm interested in bringing Focusing and writing

together and ran a poetry workshop at last year's BFTA/BFA gathering. I'm looking forward to giving a workshop on Focusing and writing at the UK Focusing School.

Susan works part-time as a Core Process psychotherapist and Focusing practitioner in Ashburton, Devon, and runs some training courses. Her particular interests are Focusing and psychotherapy, Focusing and writing, and Focusing and Buddhist meditation. Her website is www.susanjordan.net and the Focusing Devon and Cornwall website is www.focusingdevonandcornwall.org. Susan is also running an afternoon workshop at the UK Focusing School in October on 'Focusing and writing'.



Letting go

has no colour a glass of cool water
or the space left in air
by what was once

you step into now hand empty
not clutching at before
seeing what's there

Susan Jordan

UK Focusing School

Wednesday 22nd October 2014, 6 p.m. to Sunday 26th October 2014, 2 p.m.

Bookings, travel and practical information [here](#).



Participants are invited to choose a theme for their morning workshop for the duration of the event. Choosing one will not only give you a 'home' for the event but will also deepen your learning experience. You can choose between:

- Creative Thinking at the Edge, with Peter Afford
- Meditative Listening, with Rob Foxcroft
- A Forum for Focusing-oriented Therapists to Share their Triumphs and Challenges, with Greg Madison
- From Spark to Beacon – The Dance of Creating, with Barbara McGavin
- Level 1 – Introduction to Focusing, with Paula Newman and Fiona Parr
- Fresh Perspectives in Wholebody Focusing, with Astrid Schillings
- Being Seriously Playful, with René Veugelers

You can find more information about each workshop on this page.

For the afternoon workshops you can choose each day between mini-versions of some of the morning topics and a selection of other offerings. You are welcome to offer a workshop or activity for the afternoon session if you wish. You are of course free to rest during the afternoon or to find a Focusing partner and enjoy some Focusing time.

Each afternoon workshop slot is 2 hours (4–6 p.m.) and we will have several running each day. Here is

the list of all the offerings so far (all the afternoon workshops listed here are to be confirmed):

- Barbara McGavin – 'Focusing-oriented Consensual Decision-making
- Peter Afford – Creative Thinking at the Edge
- Rene Veugelers – Focusing with Children
- Frank Bock – Introduction to FOT. Focusing within a therapeutic relationship: how this allows us to articulate our human registers of response and relationality
- Jerry Conway – Community Wellness Focusing
- Manjudeva – Welcoming the Tiger
- Fiona Parr – Listening Circle
- Locana (Elizabeth English) – Focusing and Dreams
- Viryakumara (Peter Kuklis) – Laughter Focusing / Focusing with Gibberish
- Susan Jordan – Focusing and Writing
- Judy Moore and Christiane Geiser – A New Way of Recognising Relational Patterns and Working with Stuck Processes
- Kay Hoffmann – Focusing-flavoured Yoga
- Viv Stacey – Finding a Rite that Feels Just Right: Creating Healing Ritual with Focusing
- Sandy Gee – Focusing Dialogue
- Sandy Gee – Living an Authentic Life
- Celia Dawson – Shamanic Journey to the Drum
- Karen Liebenguth – Focusing with Archetypes
- Sally Tadmor – Tiger Focusing
- Sally Tadmor – How to use Focusing in Business

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We will also be putting a link on our [website](#).

Thank you for reading our fourth issue.