



British Focusing Association NEWSLETTER

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CONTENTS

Page No.

Editorials	2
From the Sofa <i>by Carolann Samuels & Helen Bower</i>	3
A Safer Ride with Intense Feelings—Keeping Focusing Safe <i>by Ildiko Davis</i>	5
When Are You Focusing Exactly Right? <i>by David Garlovsky</i>	8
Relational Wholebody Focusing for Life <i>by Karen Whalen</i>	9
Focusing & Insight Meditation: An Experiential Comparison <i>by Gordon Adam</i> ...	13
The Way of the Implicit <i>by Barbara Robinson</i>	16
Focusing as a Remedy for Bingeing on My Smartphone <i>by Pamela Carr</i>	18
Being Here Supported by the Environment <i>by Jutika Healy</i>	20
BFA Focusing Community Camp 2018	22
Making the Most of the Newsletter <i>by Pamela Carr</i>	23
Practitioner Profile <i>by Elizabeth Smith</i>	24
Workshops, Events, & Groups Listing	25
Focusing Resources & Information	27

From the Editors

Gordon Adam



I'm once again amazed at the range and variety of articles that we've managed to materialise from what seems like nothing over the past few months! The international flavour continues in this issue, with contributors from Hungary, Canada and Ireland, as well as the UK. I think we've also succeeded in striking some sort of balance between 'the old and the new' from within the large and diverse Focusing world. This ranges from the 'classical Gendlinian' perspective of David Garlovsky's and Barbara Robinson's articles, to the more 'cutting edge' introduction to Relational Wholebody Focusing in Karen Whalen's article, which introduces the relational 'we' of Focuser and companion as a valuable Focusing resource, whilst Jutika Healy's piece is a lovely affirmation of the power of connecting with the landscape as a resource for Focusing and meditation.

Finally, as one of the organisers of the BFA Focusing Community Camp, I'm delighted that we've managed to confirm dates and a venue (the same as last year) for a 2018 camp! Last year's event was a great success, largely thanks to the amazing warm and sunny weather which enabled four days of Focusing outdoors. I doubt if we will strike it so lucky two years in a row... but you never know!

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Pamela Carr



Thanks again for the warm and wholehearted support for our work that we received from BFA members at the AGM (Nov 2017) and for the valuable feedback in our Newsletter Survey. This is already helping to guide our decisions and it is introducing us to some new writers and supporters. As always, we're inviting all your contributions for the next and future issues. Do contact one of us, even if what you have is still just an idea. Combined together in the Newsletter these offerings can, like platters of 'friendship food', help create a Feast of Focusing to nourish, support and inspire us all.

I've had some rich Focusing sessions about my relationship with my Smartphone since I lost most of my data in December, forgot to take it with me on an important day trip to meet relatives in January, and noticed a growing tendency to over-indulge in web surfing in February. As a result, I'm choosing some ways to explore more 'in-person' and 'hands on' creative pursuits and to reduce my exposure to and interaction with smart technology. It's an ongoing balancing act – one which may be familiar to you too.

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From The New Sofa

By Carolann Samuels, Helen Bower and Fiona Parr

Hello to you all and a warm welcome from the Sofa. This year there have been changes and an expansion. First and foremost, the new Sofa would like to thank Susan Jordan and Rob Foxcroft for holding this space for the past three years, with charm, love and good Focusing energy. Thank you both for your contributions to the world of Focusing in Britain, and helping promote this awakening of a gentle yet powerful body-mind intelligence for more and more people.

What is the Sofa?

It's a Sofa rather than a Chair, as there were two, and now are three of us. We share ideas, experience and responsibilities. But in no way are we figureheads of the British Focusing Association (BFA). The BFA has no geographical base and our members are spread across the entire country. As we see it, our role is to hold together the different strands of the Association, and to try to ensure that projects agreed at the AGM move forward. We also want to ensure that our ways of consensual decision-making continue.

And who sits on the Sofa now and why has it expanded?

Sitting here are Helen Bower and Carolann Samuels. Fiona Parr has kindly agreed to sit with us, acting in a support and consulting role, as she has many more years of experience of Focusing and the BFA. Many of the current BFA members have already donated their time and energy to 'sitting on the Sofa' in the past, and since we are much newer to the Association, we appreciate Fiona's experience and guidance to help ensure that the spirit and ethos of Focusing can continue.

The year ahead

BFA members will have had the opportunity to read the minutes of the 2017 Annual General Meeting. There are things to continue, and a few new aspects we would like to take forward.

Summer Focusing Camp

At the AGM, those of us who were unable to join in 2017's Summer Focusing Camp were highly envious of the warm glow that still surrounded people who did attend, when they reflected on their experience there. It was a huge success and several people said they hoped it would be a regular fixture. We hope that it will be possible to announce a date and venue for 2018.

The BFA Website

Our website www.focusing.org.uk is an important showcase for the BFA, both in Britain and abroad. It was clear at the AGM that many members support improvements to its design, ease of access, and the information that is available there. Rob Matthews, who currently nurtures the website, is considering some changes and is setting up a small group to consider the best way forward. We want to support this so that our website can provide information about Focusing, how to access Focusing, training opportunities, and be a source of inspiration for all.

Social Media Groups

As well as the website, BFA has a Focusing Forum Facebook page. This is a membership group, and you can ask to join in the usual Facebook way. John Threadgold is one of the administrators and he invites members to use the site to advertise courses and workshops, and to ask questions of others in the Focusing community – you are sure to get responses quite quickly.

Paula Newman is looking at other ways of using social media to increase the awareness of Focusing in our communities.

The BFA Newsletter

BFA members are delighted with the new-look newsletter, and huge thanks go to all those involved. We

are committed to its continuation – and we all have a responsibility for its future. Please share it widely (not just to Focusers), and continue to send your articles to the editors.

Diversity, Inclusivity and Equal Opportunities

We fully support the work that is going forward on Diversity, Inclusivity and Equal Opportunities and hope that it will continue and will strengthen these aims in our Association. We regard this as one of our main priorities for the forthcoming year.

Other Focusing get-togethers

At the AGM there was energy for more Focusing get-togethers, retreats, peer support sessions, and other innovative ideas which might include in-person and online events. If, dear reader, you would like to arrange something, then the Sofa can support you.

We like to think we have a virtual open door, so please do get in contact if you have any questions or would like to discuss anything about the BFA.

European Focusing Association (EFA)

The EFA is a European network for Focusers, Focusing professionals and Focusing practitioners, who wish to develop Focusing and the Experiential Approach through collaboration, openness and mutual support. You don't have to be a member of any Focusing organisation to be a member of the EFA.

The BFA is delighted to support the EFA and some BFA members are also members of the EFA. The first European conference on Facets of Focusing, is being organised by the EFA and will be held in Loutraki, Greece from 10th to 14th May 2018. We wish this new group and the conference success in its aims of bringing Focusing to new communities. If you would like to know more, or attend the conference, please visit their website: <https://efa-focusing.eu>

***Carolann Samuels** teaches Focusing 1:1 and in small groups. She incorporates Focusing into her own Yoga practice and teaching and each is enriched by the other. www.carolannsamuels.co.uk csamuels@carolannsamuels.co.uk*



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A Safer Ride with Intense Feelings – Keeping Focusing Safe

By Ildiko Davis

Focusing is known to be a gentle, yet potent way to heal past hurts and find steps towards a more fulfilling life. But most people who have tried any form of therapy or inner reflective practice know that we can experience rather intense feelings when we look within. As a Focusing Practitioner, I encountered clients early on, who would quickly run into something 'too scary' inside when turning their attention to their body. At times, experiencing strange or overwhelming feelings even scared people away from doing Focusing altogether. This taught me the importance of teaching clients some important safety guidelines before doing any Focusing whatsoever. For me, there are a couple of essential points to get across to anyone who would like to do Focusing.

Basic safety guidelines for Focusing

— It is essential to pay attention to what feels safe to do inwardly and what brings up anxiety. **A key principle is to avoid 'pushing' into anything that brings up anxiety** and learn that turning with friendly attention to these anxieties that show up, is what makes Focusing a uniquely valuable inner practice. The best tool I have found for reminding people of this key principle, is to suggest that the Focuser **'check, if it feels OK to be with this'**, whenever they encounter something inside.

— It is also important to learn how we can pull back to safety if we run into something too intense during Focusing. I remind people that usually we already know quite well how not to feel something we don't want to. Most of us can distract ourselves from uncomfortable emotions with external things. This also works well in Focusing, when we encounter something 'too scary'.

Turning our attention to external things with neutral or positive associations can help, such as looking at a picture, a plant or a radiator. **Naming or counting things or retrieving some facts can also bring us back to safety.** These actions require left brain functions which seem helpful when we are trying to create a safe distance from our feelings.

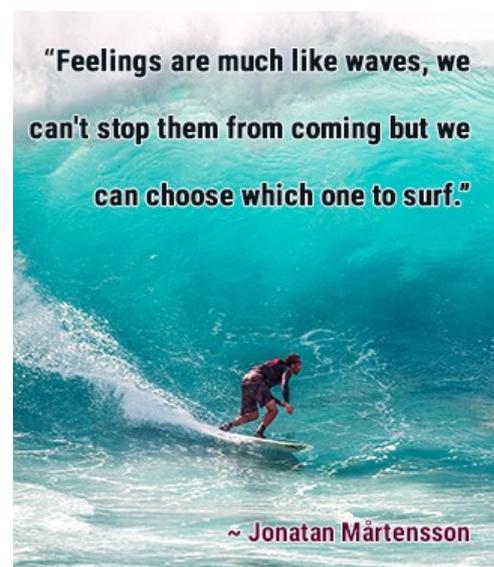
Bearing these guidelines in mind can keep your Focusing safe, even when you are new to this self-healing practice.

Further ideas for keeping Focusing safe

As well as these basic safety principles, it can be valuable to have a range of ideas about how to keep your Focusing safe when it may bring on feelings that are too intense. Even experienced Focusers can benefit from techniques that can help them to avoid getting overwhelmed by some inner experiences.

— As a Focuser, what helps me with overwhelmingly big feelings, is turning my attention to the physical sensations of the feeling (instead of the 'story' of it) and describing the sensations I experience with a lot of detail. The task of **naming sensations and describing the experience seems to pull me away from the experience itself** a bit. This can work well, even when your feelings come fast and intensely.

— **I often wait with big feelings that come during Focusing and imagine growing my 'inner container for feelings' to be large enough to contain the emotion.** As odd as this may sound, it seems to work well. Something in us seems to know how long we have to wait with a feeling at arms length until it feels safe to get closer. This is a bit like an inner de-sensitisation process: staying in touch



with the anxiety that gets stirred until it doesn't feel quite as scary any more. Another way to understand what helps here would be to say that I am cultivating the wider, containing space of Presence.



— You can also visualise putting scary feelings in a box and imagine it so far away, that it does not feel scary any more. This tool can help you keep contact with something scary, and give attention to what can increase your sense of safety with it. You can vary the distance, or the thickness of the box for example to feel safer. When using this tool, I may quote Gendlin saying: "If you want to smell the soup, you don't stick your head in it". This is not just wonderfully to the point, but can also ease tensions with a bit of humour.

— Finally, I also learned the importance of accepting whatever is coming in Focusing. So, if my (or my Focusing partner's) process brings a lot of story and thoughts, I tend to go along with that. I may mention that a lot of thoughts are coming, when I notice this, but **I do not force myself to Focus on the body, if that is not what comes naturally.** The relative safety of staying with our thoughts can be necessary for bringing some shifts in our understanding. This can pave the way to strengthening our ability to stay with the physical sensations, even when our process feels intense.

Taking safety further – avoiding re-traumatisation

The idea of this article arose from a lively exchange in the BFA email group about how we can avoid re-traumatisation in Focusing. **When we talk about re-traumatisation, we can mean both re-experiencing past trauma or dissociating due to a new trauma.** Unfortunately, both shut down (emotional freeze) and hyper-arousal can occur while attempting to heal past traumas in therapy or Focusing. For example, someone suffering from PTSD, would by definition easily re-experience a traumatic event that has occurred in their life.

Understanding better what trauma is can be as important as knowing what kind of events can cause re-traumatisation. Trauma can be defined as: "anything that is too much, too soon, too fast for our nervous system to handle, especially if we can't reach SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION." According to this, **re-traumatisation can occur during Focusing, if we encounter something that is too overwhelming for our nervous system to handle.** Another helpful way to define trauma would be as stored up toxic stress – overwhelming stress that forced us into hyperarousal or dissociation, which we were unable to release. According to this, **re-traumatisation can be also seen as adding more toxic stress to our system instead of releasing it.** Seeing how easily this can happen for some of us can help to normalise being affected by trauma and to demystify how we can avoid it.

It can also be meaningful to see trauma as a blocked process. **Focusing is uniquely capable of navigating us safely through the perilous maze that our inner world can be, if we are affected by trauma.** Our process can take us on a wandering path to create resources and resilience first, until we are strong enough to release some of our blocked processes. **There is a lot of inherent safety in the Focusing process, making it even safer for some people than therapy.** Paying attention inwardly can help us to notice when something may be too much for us to handle. Going slower than usual can also safeguard us against feelings that can come up too fast. Focusing was born after all from the discovery that successful therapy depends more on what clients do than what the therapist does.

We can however bring our harmful unconscious patterns to Focusing as well. For example, we can tend to ignore our anxiety, if some anxiety is always in the background. Or we run away with our thoughts, instead of checking against our felt sense, if we feel more at home in our mind than in our body. Even choosing a good Focusing partner or Focusing Oriented Therapist can be difficult, if you are used to settling with relationships that are far from satisfactory.

Luckily, over time the Focusing process itself can bring these unhelpful habits to our awareness and then we can correct our ways.

I have focused in this article on safety principles and tools from my Focusing experiences and learning, which can help to avoid experiences that may tip us beyond what we can handle safely. To understand better how trauma affects Focusing, it could be also helpful to look closer at what our nervous system can handle safely, and what constitutes successful resolution of trauma. I hope that I have encouraged everyone to continue to heal and grow with Focusing and I wish everyone lots of safe inner adventures.

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Ildiko Davis is a Focusing Practitioner, Counsellor and HSP* Consultant trained in the UK and currently based in Hungary. She offers Focusing, Focusing Oriented Counselling and HSP Mentoring sessions via Skype/Zoom in English and Hungarian. She is also the Newsletter Editor and Website Coordinator of the [National Centre for High Sensitivity](#). She is interested in the healing power of community and releasing trauma safely to bring back vitality and joy. She also specialises in mentoring highly sensitive people, so they can manage their innate sensitivity to their environment better and fulfil their essential role in our troubled modern world.

*HSP stands for 'highly sensitive person', as defined by research psychologist Dr. Elaine Aron www.idcounselling.co.uk ildiko.davis@yahoo.co.uk

When are you Focusing exactly right?

By David Garlovsky

In my attendance at the BFA gathering in 2017 I read to the group a note I received from Mary Hendricks when she was teaching Focusing to a small group that I was a member of at Changes in Chicago back in 1970. I feel it important enough to disseminate again along with some notes from when I was learning Focusing at the same time from Eugene Gendlin at Changes.

The Focusing group with Mary is where I experienced that Focusing was a way of getting in touch with oneself. We took time each week, away from the hustle and bustle, to come down inside and see where we were. It was a way to remember amidst everything else, who we were from week to week, where our lives were really going and what it was that we most needed and cared about. Slowly an inner reference we can go to builds. Gradually stuck places resolve and real change happens.

Mary wrote with tenderness and insight:

"Often when people are really Focusing exactly right, they feel one of two things. Either they feel that nothing happens and the whole thing doesn't make sense. Or they feel that they Focus all the time and it's nothing new. What you said, I think maybe you haven't really had the Focusing experience exactly yet. So there's a good thing waiting for you.

I think maybe you're thinking that a felt sense is the same thing as an emotion. A felt sense is not an emotion exactly. It sounds like you're pretty much down in your emotions all the time and the problem is to express them to someone, so you can get a little order into your inside place, and not be sort of submerged by your emotions.

Focusing can help with that, although it doesn't, of course, take the place of getting listened to."

Gene would say:

"Listening and Focusing to me are the same things from two sides. I learn more and more that that's true. Focusing is how to get into yourself, and with many new people here tonight, let me first say very briefly, a couple of things about it. Mostly that thinking as we do about our problems isn't much good. First of all we can only think one thing at a time. Secondly what we think very often just duplicates where we're stuck anyhow."

Mary wrote:

"Part of the Focusing process is to get some exact, clear words out of all that emotion so that you can see and get a hold of what's going on in there; and for you a release would probably feel a little like getting freed for a moment of some of the being overwhelmed by feelings – a breathing space, where you could feel some control of your own space—instead of the feelings being in control. Does that ring any bells for you?"

Focusing has now involved for me a sharp and complete shift in direction. I have ceased talking to myself inside, and now ask: "What's wrong?" or "What is the worst?" then keep quiet. I refrain from answering myself and wait for what arises from the felt sense. It is understood that everyone knows a great deal about what is wrong; nevertheless, it is a totally different matter to wait and listen to what meaning can arise from the felt sense of what is wrong.

David Garlovsky (BSc, MSc, Certificate in Social Phenomenology, Certificated Focusing Professional and Trainer) I am based in Sheffield, UK. I am from Chicago where I was first introduced to Focusing and empathetic/active listening in 1970 at Changes by Eugene Gendlin, Mary Hendricks and others. I am a primary/secondary teacher/teacher trainer. I have pioneered a teaching approach along with practical solar science and engineering based activities which makes learning enjoyable. The approach focuses on students gaining problem-solving skills and values failure.

I am also a research scientist focusing on effects of security lighting on trees, wildlife, health and well-being and effects of building materials in building air quality.
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Relational Wholebody Focusing for Life

By Karen Whalen



Introduction

Relational Wholebody Focusing co-developed out of Karen's mentorship and Focusing partnership with Kevin McEvenue over many years. Gene Gendlin always stated that life happens as a living interaction of the person with their situation, organismically connected to their environment and other persons. Traditional Focusing creates safe inner and outer space to find the Me Here and Now, in bodily conscious connection with my situations and issues. The subtle and ever emerging phenomenal felt sensing exploration is one we love and practice regularly with our Focusing partners.

From Me Here to We Here

Relational Wholebody Focusing brings in the elements and practise of Wholebody Focusing to explore the inter-relational field of We Here and Now, between Focuser and Listener. We recognize the value of exploring the relational embodied space between us as an important source of information and life energy about my life situation and also your life situation. As Developmental Psychology and Attachment Theorists clearly state (Bowlby, Ainsworth, Cozolino, Schore, to name a few), we develop and thrive inside our early home environment through nurturing bodily contact and resonance between primary care-giver and child.

This journey towards healthy and securely attached selfhood, begins with contact at the mother's breast and extends out to include other members of our relational world. I lie on my father's chest. I am safely held by loving grand-parents, aunties, older siblings, teachers and cousins. My warm animal body recognizes safety, acceptance and affirmation to explore my rapidly developing sensori-motor capacities through interaction with my relational world. The sense of self grows and emerges through this tactile exploratory interaction of my whole living body, in connection with the living bodies of my childhood world. My living Brain-Body grows and develops when these intimate relational connections are present in healthy, supportive and mutually satisfying ways. I continue to grow and develop as a happy and functioning adult through mutually satisfying connections of inter-dependence.

However, a living Brain-Body also develops holding patterns and social coping mechanisms to adapt to unhealthy, incomplete and unsatisfying attachment bonds between child, caregiver and their relational childhood world. The contents of my unconscious and implicit *relational history* most often drive the direction of my life choices, challenges and new relational possibilities. Relational Wholebody Focusing invites the Body Wisdom of shared relational space to reveal the underlying mechanisms of my very way of being in the world (in connection with or disconnection from others). There is a kind of embodied *relational knowing or wisdom* that emerges from this exploration. I discover how I habitually stop myself from opening up to, or receiving another person. Or, I discover that I have an innate capacity to be received by

another person, but know this consciously now as a resource for my ongoing relational life.

Exploring the Embodied Relational We Here Space

Real life happens in the back and forth of embodied relational interactions, enactments and situations. While Focusing partnerships support the Me Here aspect of my complex life situations, Relational Wholebody Focusing supports the opening up to new We Here possibilities in my everyday life, which underlie those complex life situations. We take 15-20 minutes to find the Wholebody Heartfelt Connection between us. We explore *Relational Grounded Presence* and follow *Relational Inner Directed Movements within the shared We space*. Something larger than both of us begins to imply and inform a shared We opening and forward moving process, connected to the personal issues and situations of both.

Wholebody Heartfelt Connection – Process Steps

PHASE 1:

For Focuser:

- 1) Finding larger Self in relational wholebody grounded presence which includes You. Really sensing into the embodied Self, the Environment, and You There (5 min)
- 2) Listener shares how their body and being is impacted by Focuser and takes time to do Step One (5min)
- 3) Focuser and Listener resonate with the Whole Living Space of WE HERE from an experience of the Larger Self and each share how that is for them (5 min)

PHASE 2:

For Focuser:

- 1) From an expanded sense of my larger Self, which includes the shared space of WE HERE, I invite my organism, the body wisdom, the larger Self, to invite in a sense of You There. I allow myself to engage with you in a more bodily conscious way. I allow my whole organism to sense into You There. I notice what supports me opening up to You there and I also notice what gets in the way of me opening up to You There (5 min)
- 2) The Listener shares how they are impacted by the Focuser's exploration of Self in part 1). The Listener also takes five minutes to explore step 1) from a sense of themselves (5 min)
- 3) Both Focuser and Listener resonate with the shared space of WE HERE and take turns sharing how they may be experiencing themselves differently or how they have been changed or touched in some way by this exploration (5-10min)

When I sit with another person, Wholebody Relational Self to Wholebody Relational Self, my historical relational and attachment-based stoppages, behavioral and energetic coping strategies of disconnection, all arise into awareness. My structure-bound stoppages need a healthy, new and adult relational space of shared presence in mutuality, so that they can now get what they need to begin sorting themselves out and opening themselves up to an open-ended life process. I may begin the process by noticing my own nervousness and tightness and worrying about what might happen inside of our We space. My partner is often relieved to hear me share my discomfort; they are welcome to also share and express their nervousness, shyness or discomfort. The Focusing space between us gets much larger as a result of this genuine sharing and showing ourselves as we are.

Implied within my *Relational Bodily Knowing* are all of the *We Here's* which are internalized inside my Body-Mind, lodged inside the billions of cells of my animal body and its relational nervous system. For example, I hold inside my Body-Mind the *We Here* of father and Me. The *We Here* of Mother and Me. The *We Here* of Brother/Sister and Me. The *We Here* of Grandparents and Me. The *We Here* of Spouse and Me. The ways that all of the significant people in my life hold their *We Here* of Me, is of course quite different. All of the ways that my *Me Here* and the child's *We Here's* were sometimes frustrated or unsatisfactory, and how the child coped with that frustration, all of that history touches my current *Me Here* and *We Here* in some way.

A Living Example

As one of five children, sometimes I was fully seen and received and other times not. There developed quite unconsciously in my relational repertoire, a carefulness and an automatic stress response to meeting another person. Will they see me this time? Will they want to see me? I learned to cope with this underlying relational worry and stress by developing a strong personality structure that will survive alone. Sometimes, when my partner looks everywhere except directly at me, I can become triggered and believe they are not interested in our partnership. This is the kind of information I can share with my partner, from my own relational knowing and suffering. I have frequently discovered that my belief is entirely erroneous. You can imagine that the child's and adolescent's social coping mechanism of being too careful and independent to open to others created unhappiness in my intimate life. Life situations are sometimes coloured by my earliest relational response pattern of uncertainty and fear in the face of new directions and experiencing. Exploring my social coping mechanisms as part of my Focusing time has been fruitful, expanding greatly my personal repertoire of possible action steps in any given situation.

When I meet the Wholebody Focuser/Listener inside the spacious relational container of *We Here*, each of us discovers we bring a whole history of relating, quite differently from one another. Each of us with our own relational habits of Body-Mind and also our own unique expectations of how another person might be with Me or might not wish to meet Me Here. We can explore the dynamic living space between us. When challenges around mutual triggering or conflicting world views arise, we have established between us a depth and genuineness of connection that has the stability to endure heated up and fraught relational situations.

Following the inter-relational Wholebody Heartfelt Connection Process, each partner has 20 minutes for Wholebody Focusing. The dyad continues to be aware of the relational space between us, that it has become a larger holding space around us. Often, the Focuser tunes into the presence of the other person as a source of additional information and life energy to inform their personal process. The Listener continues throughout to practice Relational Grounded Presence and to pay attention to the Relational Inner Directed Movements which show up as a kind of intuitive wholebody responsive listening presence which seems to be directed by the larger *We* space itself.

Relational Wholebody Focusing: A Safe Shared Space of Heartfelt Connection to Complete Attachment Based Stoppages

The relational practice of Wholebody Heartfelt Connection, inside of a spacious relational field of wholebody awareness with another person, gives my relational nervous system the space, acceptance and safety it needs to awaken to its own consciousness and healing. Only another breathing living animal body, inside of a whole person with their whole history of relational stoppages and internalized *We Here's*, can offer that relational support in a new dynamic way. Once I have gained some confidence in my own embodied relational naturalness with my Listening partners, I begin to notice shifting in my experience of intimacy with my spouse, my family members, a long-standing difficult relationship.

Over time, I develop the skill of maintaining a stable and dynamic connection with wholebody awareness within the relational space between me and the other person. Opening up to this living relational space of *We Here*, is gentle and must feel safe for both participants. I connect to my genuine bodily human experience inside of this meeting space of *We Here* and Now. I learn to trust my own bodily signals and intuitions. I learn to track and name the precise and very minute bodily signals flickering inside of my field of awareness. I learn to make space for pain and suffering inside of the *We Space*. I learn to sit with an-

other person, quite differently from me, and facilitate and guide their own opening up and completion processes.

I discover again and again that the living body of We Here, contains a breadth and depth of vitality and information for both Focuser and Listener. We recognize and embody our shared Body Wisdom as a kind of engaged practice of Mindful and *Bodyful* awareness of Self in Relationship with Others and with the World. As far as I can tell, this practice is one possible instantiation of Gene's vision and philosophy of the Process model. We are indeed living beings, emerging through embodied interactions with other living beings and our environments.



Karen Whalen Ph.D. is a Person-Centered Psycho-therapist specializing in Complex Trauma in Canada, and a Certifying Coordinator of the Focusing Institute of New York. She co-developed the practise of Relational Wholebody Focusing (with Kevin McEvenue) and developed its clinical application 'Relational Wholebody Focusing Oriented Therapy'. Karen offers training and supervision worldwide.

Relational Wholebody Focusing explores whole body listening and resonance with another person in connection with the living world body. Inside of this larger bodily conscious WE HERE space, the process of emergence found in more traditional Focusing practice is enlivened and brought to the relational field of human interaction. A dynamic process of co-emergence unfolds with more information and life energy becoming available for each.

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RWBF Workshop Opportunity in the UK

If you are interested in attending a workshop with Karen in the UK to taste this Relational Field Focusing practise, contact Gordon Adam gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk

Focusing & Insight Meditation: An Experiential Comparison

by Gordon Adam

"The point is not to change who we are, but to make friends with who we are already."

Pema Chodron

Background

I have practiced Insight Meditation on and off for about 30 years, and I've practiced Focusing pretty continuously and intensively for the last 11 years. I've 'held the space' for the monthly 'Bristol Insight Focusing Group' for the last 10 years. The group is open to anyone who is interested in Focusing regardless of previous experience (of either Focusing or meditation) and attracts a lot of people with experience of meditation practice. I have observed that people who are familiar with Insight Meditation tend to 'take' to Focusing quite readily, which suggests a certain compatibility between the two practices.

I wrote an earlier version of this article two years ago for the Bristol Insight Meditation newsletter. My aim then was to present meditators with a sort of 'alluring doorway' into Focusing. In this revised version for Focusers my aim is to compare and contrast the two practices which have much in common.

What is Insight Meditation?

"Insight Meditation (Vipassana¹) ... is the practice of developing a calm and mindful investigation into the nature of experience, leading to wisdom, compassion and the end of suffering."²

Most meditation methods have in common the provision of a focus of attention for the mind – thereby providing an alternative focus for what has popularly been described as 'monkey mind'. In Insight Meditation, attention is placed on whatever may be arising, within a certain domain (or totality) of body-mind experience. The focus for attention could be 'specific' – e.g. meditating on body sensations, breathing sensations, emotions, thoughts, connection with the ground, external impressions, etc, or 'open' – maintaining an open and inclusive awareness of all that arises, inwardly and outwardly in the field of experience.

Insight Meditation practice is usually done seated in a comfortably upright posture, on a cushion on the floor, in a chair, or sometimes lying down, standing or walking. Sitting meditation is usually done with eyes closed, either alone or in a group, with periods of meditation typically lasting anything from 10 minutes to an hour. Daily meditation is generally advised, if possible, to get maximum benefits.

Although generally regarded as a technique for 'calming the mind', one central aim of Insight Meditation practice is that of *changing one's relationship with thoughts and thinking*. This is done by cultivating presence or awareness of body-based experience through the meditation technique. It is generally accepted that it is the nature of the mind to generate thoughts – so no attempt is made in this form of meditation practice to control thinking – rather the emphasis is *to cultivate presence and from there to witness thoughts coming and going*, as opposed to getting identified with the thoughts themselves.

Sustained meditation practice can lead to a 'freeing of the mind' and an increased sense of presence, self-acceptance, and ease in day to day life.

Similarities and differences of Insight Meditation & Focusing practice

Common to both practices is the intention and willingness to sit with my experience from a place of presence, acceptance, warmth and curiosity. In meditation I tend to acknowledge or 'label' any experience arising with something like *dispassion* and then let it go and allow something else to arise in my awareness. In Focusing I am *more interested* in whatever arises and there is more emphasis on going more deeply into my experience and allowing it to unfold or 'tell me a story'.

In its inclusivity, and the notion of the felt sense, Focusing has more emphasis on the bigger picture of what is happening inside me, rather than discrete parts of my experience. This is not to say that I can't Focus on 'parts', but I am interested in how the different parts relate to each other within a bigger whole body context where the sum experience of all the parts constitutes the felt sense.

From my own experience, I am more likely to bring a subtle agenda to my meditation practice – that is, I am doing this in order to... settle my mind, be more relaxed, be more mindful, be more spiritual, or even to reach enlightenment. With Focusing I would say the emphasis is more on *being with* whatever arises as an end in itself, knowing that the being with, in itself leads to a 'living forward'.

The most significant difference between Focusing and meditation in my experience is **the presence of the partner or companion**. The presence of another person brings a different, almost palpable, quality or *field of interaction* to my process. I am no longer practicing on my own, but in the presence of, and being heard and witnessed by another person, who is bringing an intention similar to my own, of presence and acceptance of my experience. Put another way, the companion supports me in 'being who I am'.

"The companion (in Focusing) supports me in 'being who I am'"

This empathic presence of another human being is very powerful and can enable new possibilities of experience for the Focuser – experience that may not be possible to access in solitary meditation practice.

"It is my strong sense that certain kinds of processes will not happen at all unless there is someone else there. The loving company of another invites things that will not feel safe otherwise." Peter Gill³

A second major difference between Focusing and meditation is **the use of spoken words** in Focusing. As I have written above, the use of words to convey my experience to my companion, then hearing the words reflected back, enables more single minded attention to be given to my experience which in turn leads to a deepening and unfolding to happen.

Also, the use of words by the Focuser, allows the companion to **listen...**

"When I have been listened to and when I have been heard, I am able to re-perceive my world in a new way and to go on. It is astonishing how elements that seem insoluble become soluble when someone listens, how confusions that seem irremediable turn into relatively clear flowing streams when one is heard. I have deeply appreciated the times that I have experienced this sensitive, empathic, concentrated listening." Carl Rogers⁴

Why Focus? Why meditate?

"Both are practices based on increasing our awareness, or attention, with the result that different parts of ourselves 'wake up' or come alive as we practice."

"This gradually affects everything about us – our thoughts, feelings, behaviours, attitudes, responses, impulses and so on. Then our trust in our practice grows. This trust brings with it a sense of meaning, purpose and direction. It is firm ground to stand on. We know, increasingly and instinctively, where we fit within the universe; we feel our intrinsic belonging in a world that is not really other than us. It's a kind of coming home to ourselves." Locana⁵

My own comparative experience of Insight Meditation and Focusing

I think the first thing to mention is my observation that practicing in some form of partnership suits me. *Working with a partner has the effect of significantly enhancing my ability to be present and to stay present with my inner experience, which leads to deepening, unfolding and insight.* This runs through my experience of different partnered practices that I've done through my life, including Co-counselling, Interactive Inquiry, and Insight Dialogue, as well as Focusing.

I find that irrespective of whether I am the Focuser or companion, I am more present, more interested, and much less easily distracted than during meditation practice. After a Focusing session I invariably feel more present and enlivened – this does not always happen with meditation in my experience. I find that

through Focusing, I get all of the benefits that I previously got from meditation practice, but with some 'extras'.

I resonate with what Locana has written above – I would say that my life has changed significantly with both practices, and that my meditation practice has provided a good *foundation* for Focusing. In terms of observable change, I would say that this has occurred more obviously, and more powerfully and deeply with Focusing, particularly in the areas of compassion, and acceptance of myself and 'what is'.

Some experiences of others with both practices

Some verbatim quotes from others, comparing their experience of Focusing and Insight Meditation:

"In both practices there is a greater sense of presence to whatever is going on, which, in itself, helps me to be more accepting of what is happening in my life. For me acceptance is such an important process, which can help me gain a deep sense of inner peace, no matter what is going on in my life. And of course in Focusing the loving presence of the Focusing partner really helps that process."

"(compared to meditation)... Focusing helps me feel more connected with others, who have similar experiences, and to the world around me."

"I first started Focusing 'naturally/spontaneously' during a 3 month retreat when difficult experiences arose during meditation. I would turn towards the parts in me that were struggling and offer attention, kindness, acceptance, and a kind of adult holding. What happened was transformation, insight and a deep letting go. This profoundly altered my relationship to myself in a way that I've never really lost but rather developed."

"I feel the practices of 'presence' in Focusing and awareness/'being with' in meditation are two different ways of practicing the same thing. They have given me so much more inner strength/trust/ground and given me faith in my Buddha nature. This is very different from the doubting, fearful and raging inner critic that used to dominate my world."

"Focusing is as beneficial as prayer or meditation to me—spending time with me and another. It's come at a stage of my life that involves an integrating of body, mind and spirit that I haven't explored before in this way. It's a very fundamental tool."

Notes & References

1. 'Vipassana' is a Sanskrit word, which, in the Buddhist tradition means 'insight into the true nature of reality' or 'seeing deeply or clearly'.
2. From the Gaia House website www.gaiahouse.co.uk
3. Gill, Peter (formerly Manjudeva) (2013). *Reflections on the differences between Focusing and Meditation*.
4. Rogers, Carl (1980). *A Way of Being* (12-13).
5. Locana (Dr Elizabeth English) (2012). *Focusing & Buddhism*. The Focusing Connection (March 2012)

Gordon Adam lives in Bristol, and as well as having a passion for Focusing, he has a strong interest in helping build Focusing community. He runs introductory workshops in local communities, introduces friends and acquaintances to Focusing, facilitates an open monthly Focusing group, and sends out a regular local Focusing newsletter. He recently proposed and co-organised the first BFA Summer Focusing Community Camp. Gordon has been running 5-day Focusing retreats on Dartmoor and in the Southwest for the last 9 years, combining Focusing with elements of Buddhist and other practices. He also works as a homeopathic teacher and supervisor and is co-editor of this newsletter.

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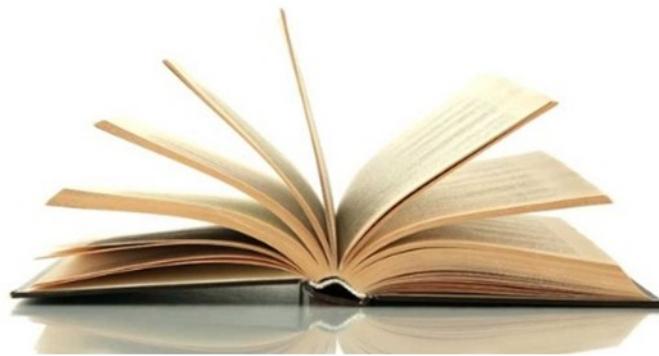
The Way of the Implicit

By Barbara Robinson

We all have, and even in the most traditional culture everyone has – such complexity. It is and remains implicit, and unchanged, unresolved, bodily cramped whatever way it is. There are not direct referents (felt senses) there, in some “unconscious”. The unconscious is the body. But direct referent (felt sense) formation is a new kind of sequence, not known in other times except to a few odd people. Direct referents (felt senses) are not there, implicitly, but the whole complexity is there, and is implicit in every sequence of action, feeling and thought. When a person does engage in direct referent (felt sense) formation and then speaks, we can understand and “recognize” – not literally what was there before, but more exactly, what now forms from what was there. What was there was implicit complexity, implicit sequences, some never yet sequenced, but also all that ever were, situations mutually implicit in each other, the interactive life context (not totally unified, to be sure). From this complexity of ours the speaker to whom we listen, forms, in us, what we call “recognizing” that we always “were” like that, too. And yet when that “same” meaning forms, it is made of some different implicitly functioning experience. Ours.

(Gendlin 1997, p231 and 2017)

This quotation from Gendlin's *A Process Model* (APM) expresses the complexity and, paradoxically, the simplicity of our relationship with the implicit. For the last twelve years a Focusing friend and I have been meeting every two months or so to explore a couple of pages of text from APM and gently working our way through the book...



We started meeting after attending annual meetings, each lasting a week on the island of Cumbrae, just off the coast of Scotland. This Course, called Focusing and the Power of Philosophy, had attracted a group of Focusers from around the world. They had answered the call from Rob Foxcroft who initiated, organised, and hosted these extraordinarily engrossing and surprising explorations of APM text.

Left to our own devices, after the luxury of having access for five years to the learning of Campbell Purton, Rob Parker and Rob Foxcroft, my Focusing friend and I stumbled into a sort of method of reading that has served us. And yet each time I contemplate travelling the couple of hours journey to meet up with her I inevitably ask myself “Why am I doing this? Have I gained anything over these years of study that can be translated into something that I can articulate or usefully communicate to anyone else? What is it that draws me back?”

We start our time together with a ten minute Focusing session which creates what I can only call a 'right brain' experience. From this short session we will both have a felt sense of something from our individual lives which gives us a symbol of some kind. The symbol which has arisen for each of us from the connection to our separate issues can become a useful metaphor, something which can also be subsequently used as a key to an understanding of the text. Whenever we find ourselves unable to make headway and find ourselves trying to wrestle with the language, we stop, and begin to Focus with it instead. In letting go of our need to grasp and understand, we drop into another level of connection. Which is when one or other of the symbols from our earlier personal Focusing session can transform how we relate to what we are reading, and from this a new understanding surprisingly arises.

It never ever becomes any easier to begin opening myself to the profound strangeness and unfamiliarity this text poses, for it fundamentally challenges my left brain's need for clarity and a sense of security. But what it offers is this radical newness – Gendlin uses language in such a way that it requires us as readers to open in ourselves a level of attention to the interrelating forces which are interacting in us as we interact and interrelate with the world. He calls that the 'implicit', which lies within and around us but only takes form as we engage with it. Though even this 'it' is only a concept until I am able to experience a bodily sense of knowing. That moment of 'knowing' is always a surprise and an elation. It confirms that the engagement with the text has created in me a connection to something that was implicit but is now embodied and the experience makes the hard work of reading a joy.

I don't know if I'll ever be able to utilise what I've learnt but I do know my life has been enormously enriched by this slow exploration of a new way of thinking. To my Focusing partner, to Rob Foxcroft and of course to Eugene Gendlin, my heartfelt gratitude is boundless, but then that is the way of the implicit!

References:

Gendlin, Eugene T. (1997) *A Process Model, The Focusing Institute*

Gendlin, Eugene T; Foreword by Robert A Parker. (2017) *A Process Model*, Northwestern University Press



Barbara Robinson is a Person Centred Counsellor and Scottish Focusing Association Teacher. She was introduced to Focusing in 2000 at an International Person Centred Conference in Chicago by Mary Gendlin, who led an inspiring workshop on 'Gendlin and Focusing'. Later Barbara met Rob Foxcroft, who lives and teaches Focusing in Scotland, and he became her Focusing mentor and teacher. She has taught five workshops on 'Focusing for Therapists' at Strathclyde University for their Advanced Professional Courses.

<http://www.focusing.org.uk/Barbara-Robinson>

Focusing as a Remedy for Bingeing on My Smartphone

By Pamela Carr

I just did it again. Last night, mid-evening, I reached for my Smartphone and began searching online for holidays: Europe, spring departure, flights from Manchester and so on. After a while I noticed some tiredness – and kept going, I noticed my eyes getting tight – and carried on, I sensed my legs aching – and didn't get up. Something in me was caught up in searching, searching layer after layer of online information and details, and was refusing to fully acknowledge and respect the rest of me.

The tiredness increased and, sometime after 11pm, after at least 1.5 hours online, I logged out and switched off. As I put the phone to charge overnight and got ready for bed, I finally acknowledged what had happened and how I felt. I could sense some vague feelings of guilt and self-criticism and my body was tired and wanted to go to bed and have a good sleep.

Luckily my sleep was good but that's not always been the case. Often after a long session on my phone or laptop in the evening, I'm really tired and over-stimulated, can't sleep, and have to get up. I end up losing an hour or two of sleep, which impacts how I feel next day.

Why am I Focusing and writing in my journal about this now?

It seems important. I've had my Smartphone for a couple of years and I want to understand and moderate my online presence and I know Focusing on it can help. The word 'bingeing' comes as I acknowledge again the addictive relationship I'm experiencing with my Smartphone. It is bingeing. It's about having too much, overloading, in an automatic and repetitive way, with very little awareness, little self-respect and minimal self-discipline.



Bingeing on food or alcohol may involve a sore stomach or head and maybe vomiting too, thus bringing some immediate feedback from the body and a loud call for attention. It seems that the feedback from digital bingeing can be equally powerful and potentially harmful but is slower to manifest and much less obvious.

And I'm realising that regular self abuse in this way could definitely affect my health and wellbeing and I don't want to choose that. What I do want is to be more mindful and moderate, to enjoy the benefits of using a Smartphone without the excesses.

Pausing now to sense – what was going on last night?

I was very tired but it wasn't quite bedtime. I was too tired to do most things – when an idea came: "I could search about holidays," and instantly there was a move into action. They were easy, small movements, with little effort as I picked up the phone and pressed a series of buttons. The rest of my body was ignored as my mind and right index finger became engaged like a cog in a wheel, which turned round and round...I was merged. It was so easy physically, so captivating mentally. I had been very focused, but with a kind of tunnel vision. I had lost the spacious awareness of my surroundings and of my inner environment. It was as though I had been looking down a microscope for a long period. A knowing comes now, that tiredness makes it even harder to be in presence, and to hold both focused and spacious awareness at the same time.

Inviting – what wants to come now?

"I need some ways to limit and manage my exposure to my phone." (Continuing to write...)

- Take time to fully acknowledge when I am tired and rather than engaging in digital surfing, sense for some healthier alternatives.
- Pause every time I pick up the phone, to become aware, to sense, to check before I engage.

- Set a timer when searching the internet and have a time limit each session, then take a break, even if I continue to search some more after the break.
- Pause every time I change function, to look up, look around, expand my view and expand awareness.
- Slow the process down. The phone allows me to go fast, very fast. My bodymind needs time to become aware, 'mindful of what is happening, when it is happening', in order for me to have choices.
- Pause after a session, to acknowledge and reflect on what I just did, with clarity about any difficulties and with gratitude for any benefits – to create a positive feedback loop.

I'm recognising all of these steps as mindfulness moves which have the power to create choices and positive actions made from awareness.

Pausing to sense the whole of it – this bingeing on my Smartphone

"Bytes – biting off more than I can chew!" These words surprise me by their aptness to my issue. They express a knowing about what has been happening and how easily I can fall into 'biting off more than I can chew.'

And a question comes: "Could long periods searching online actually be overloading my conceptual capacity and reduce my attention span, my ability to be with, settle, spend time relating with one thing at a time?" It's a 'yes'. Then a memory comes about 'Multi tasking'. When I first saw it demonstrated, it was a Smart Screen with several things happening on it at the same time. I remember feeling a reaction, a resistance to engaging with it. But look at me now, a few years later, I've been drawn in without realising. And I've actually developed some useful skills of screen awareness, and of interacting, searching and re-sourcing from the web.

Any more before I end my Focusing session?

There is some apprehension about this powerful challenge. I want to access the 'Smart' technology to keep up to date, communicate and interact in this easy way that I've come to accept. And it's so sticky, it's addictive and I'm susceptible.

Focusing on my experience has been very helpful and I am grateful for what has come, and there is more. There is a wanting to understand more, more about addictive behaviours, more about others' experience of using digital technology and more about how I can help myself and maybe others too. I would like to develop a middle way and maintain a healthy relationship with it.

A couple of weeks later

Having spoken to a few people about my attempts to bring more balance to my digital life, I've discovered that most of those who also have Smartphones are experiencing similar challenges. If you resonate with this theme, and are interested in the role Focusing can play, I would love to hear from you.



***Pamela Carr** is a certified Focusing Practitioner and Teacher and is co-editor of the BFA Newsletter. She loves to introduce new people to Focusing and is also enthusiastic about crossing Focusing with Healing, Mindfulness Walks in Nature, Relaxation for Living and Creative Writing. Pamela enjoys exploring new opportunities and places – always supported by and sharing Focusing along the way.*

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Being Here Supported By The Environment

By Jutika Healy



Loch Voil, Dhanakosa Retreat Centre, Lochearnhead FK19 8PQ

I was on the team for a seven day Focusing retreat at Dhanakosa retreat centre in Scotland a few weeks ago. My friend Jamie was leading the meditation. He has a strong connection with Dhanakosa and the landscape around it, having lived there for several years. He also does a lot of Wholebody Focusing in which there is a strong emphasis on connecting with the environment you are in and the qualities of Presence that come with that — like being grounded or earthed, feeling stable, spacious, open, alive....

He spent a fairly long time, twenty minutes or so of a forty minute meditation leading us in connecting with the landscape of the glen, the water in the loch, the trees on the mountainsides, and having a sense of our bodies in that space with the earth underneath and the sky above. The effect on my meditation practice was really noticeable and positive. My usual experience of meditation first thing in the morning is of my mind running around thinking about lots of different things until it gets tired and settles down. However with the long lead in and taking time to really feel the elements outside and my body in that bigger space, my mind was noticeably quieter and my experience much stiller and deeper.

In my Focusing sessions during that day, I was able to stay connected more strongly to the landscape outside and feel the support of that. We don't have to be in the middle of the countryside to feel that. No matter where we are, there is always earth below and sky above and life all around. Taking time to really feel that connection during our Focusing sessions, or as we get ready to meditate, can strengthen those qualities of Presence like stability and spaciousness. Really feeling the support from the earth below in our bodies means we can turn towards what needs our attention in Focusing or engage with whatever meditation practice we are doing.

One of my favourite poems we often have on Focusing Retreats is about that alchemy between 'outside' and 'inside'.

Dark Pines under Water

This land like a mirror turns you inward
And you become a forest in a furtive lake;
The dark pines of your mind reach downward,
You dream in the green of your time,
Your memory is a row of sinking pines.

Explorer, you tell yourself this is not what you came for
Although it is good here, and green;
You had meant to move with a kind of largeness,
You had planned a heavy grace, an anguished dream.

But the dark pines of your mind dip deeper
And you are sinking, sinking, sleeper
In an elementary world;
There is something down there and you want it told.

Gwendolyn MacEwen

Jutika Healy

After 24 years of living in the UK I moved back to Ireland in 2012. I've finally settled in the last year in a house with my husband a few miles from where I grew up in West Limerick. After my sister's death in 2002, my meditation practice ground to a halt. It was only through learning Focusing from Barbara McGavin that I could 'go back inside' with more kindness and open interest. I've taught Focusing mostly in a Buddhist context but I'm looking for ways to make Focusing more widely known. Any suggestions gratefully received!

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BFA Focusing Community Camp 2018

The Barns Centre, Toddington, near Cheltenham GL54 5DQ

8th—12th August 2018



The Yurt—2017 Focusing Camp

Following the success of the first ever BFA Focusing Community Camp at The Barns Centre last August, we are delighted to announce that we have secured the same venue for a 2018 camp. The camp will be another opportunity for Focusers and their family members to get together to Focus, socialise and have some fun in a relaxed outdoor setting.

As last year, our aim is to create a 'tribe' feeling and the size of the camp will be limited to about 40 people. Activities will be mainly outdoors or under canvas and a camp fire will be lit each evening (weather permitting). We also have use of indoor facilities including meeting space and the kitchen. Our resident cook(s) will be preparing a vegetarian lunch and dinner each day for those booking the catered option, which will include self-serve breakfast.

As well as 1-1 Focusing time each day, the camp will offer opportunities for: workshops, presentations, group sharing, yoga, qigong, walking, playing games, skills-sharing, singing, music, dancing, and anything else we co-create as a group.

Our vision is that of a peer-led community camp. We organisers have established the event and the infrastructure – but we don't wish to assume a leadership role, and the content of the camp is up to everyone who attends! So please bring along your ideas, decoration for the camp site, and any useful camp-site accessories, and come prepared to help with collecting wood, carrying water, washing up and other odd jobs. Please let Kay know in advance if you would like to offer a Focusing workshop or other activity during the camp.

There are some rooms available in the centre for those who don't wish, or are unable, to camp. We expect the camp to fill up, so early booking is advised.

Gordon Adam, Kay Hoffmann, Camilla Sim

For booking form and booking enquiries contact Camilla camillasim9@googlemail.com

For general enquiries and workshop offers contact Kay kay.hoffmann@homecall.co.uk

Making the Most of the BFA Newsletter

By Pamela Carr

The BFA Newsletter is currently produced three times a year and a link to each new edition is emailed to approximately 500 subscribers worldwide. The current and past editions of the Newsletter are published online on the BFA Website.

VALUE TO READERS

- Your personal interest, resourcing and networking
- Sharing with others, including your clients and students
- Global online sharing via Google, Facebook, discussion groups and websites

WAYS TO READ

- Read online by going to the BFA website and opening the link to the Newsletter
- Read digitally by opening the pdf you have saved to your computer, tablet or Smartphone
- Read a printed version of the whole Newsletter pdf, or of individual articles

MAKING THE MOST

- Save the Newsletter pdf as a word document on your computer
- Bookmark the links to past issues of the BFA Newsletter
- Save the Newsletter pdf to an SD card on your Smartphone or tablet, e.g. to access when travelling
- Print off a copy on your home printer or at a Print shop (cost approx £6-£9)

SHARING WITH OTHERS

- Encourage new people to go to the BFA website and subscribe
- Share the Newsletter online using the link (rather than the pdf document) so we can collect more accurate reader statistics
- Label up a printed copy as 'Display copy – do not remove' and make it available to clients in the clinic waiting room or to students on training days and courses
- Print out specific articles which are relevant to your clients/students and use for reference or as handouts

FUTURE PLANS

- After seeking permission from authors, we are planning to create separate links to each article so these can be found and accessed easily online via tags. Over time this will be done for the articles in past editions too.
- We are assessing feedback about a possible change of name for the BFA Newsletter.

Practitioner Profile – Elizabeth Smith

I'm sitting in a hall full of about 150 people at a person-centred counselling conference. The presentation I'm about to witness is of Focusing, about which I know nothing. The first surprise is that the presenter asks for a volunteer, not to Focus but to simply repeat what she says as **she** is Focusing. Over the next 20 minutes, I witness a demonstration of Focusing which brings me out in goose bumps. It is so powerful and moving. The presenter is Mary Hendricks who came over to the UK in 2002 to attend the 1st BAPCA (British Association for the Person-Centred Approach) Conference, in Durham.

Despite this powerful experience, it was another couple of years before I gave more attention to Focusing by which time I was co-training with a colleague who was a Focusing-oriented person-centred counsellor. Teaching on a counselling course, I needed to read up on and practice Focusing myself, and so my Focusing journey accelerated.

Going back a bit in time, I trained as a person-centred counsellor at a course in Harrow, qualifying with a Diploma in 1996. I then developed a private practice, adding supervision of counsellors in 2003. From 2004 I began to develop the application of Focusing in my client work, supported by teaching and practising it with students on the Diploma course I was teaching.

The next step in my journey came in 2007. For some time, I had been interested in further training to Masters level. My colleague trained on the Diploma in Focusing at University of East Anglia, so I looked into that as it also at that time offered a further year to Masters level. I am thankful that I was able to join the final cohort taught by Campbell Purton and Judy Moore and was awarded the MA in 2010. The course enabled me to develop Focusing partnerships with other trainees, record Focusing sessions and develop my understanding of Gendlin's work through writing assignments. I also took up an option of 6 days' training in 'Thinking at the Edge' which was so enlightening.

Discovering Focusing has been transforming, enabling me to relate to my inner self in a healing way, and becoming more accepting of all I find within. Acceptance had been such a struggle, seemingly easier to offer to clients than myself. Now I find myself much more grounded. Also, Focusing has transformed my client work as it opens up that fresh edge where something new can come, rather than the client being stuck going round and round in old patterns.

I joined the British Focusing Teachers Association (as it was then) in 2010 and I have appreciated being part of a community which expresses genuineness and acceptance in relationships. I agreed to be Membership Secretary in 2012 and have enjoyed the contact this role gives me with the whole BFA membership, including welcoming new members.

In addition to my counselling and supervision practice, I also joined Paula Newman in offering the BFA Certificate in Focusing Skills. Paula started developing the course in 2011, and we teamed up in 2012 to carry on further development of Levels 1-5. We aim to offer the Certificate course annually, and also one day workshops on related subjects, to date – 'Wholebody Focusing', 'Grounded Presence' and 'Self Care'.

I am looking forward to further possible opportunities as a secondary mentor, in supervising more counsellors in Focusing-oriented approaches and also Pastoral Supervision offered to those engaged in religious faith ministries.

***Elizabeth Smith** is a Focusing-oriented Person-centred counsellor and supervisor in private practice, based in Harrow, North London. She also offers one-to-one Focusing training and practice, and in collaboration with colleague Paula Newman, teaches the BFA Focusing Skills Certificate.*

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Forthcoming Workshops & Events

March & April 2018

Focusing Foundation Skills (BFA skills certificate) Online Skype course with Simon McKibbin
14th March—14th Nov. www.mindfulnesswithcompassion.com info@mindfulnesswithcompassion.com

The Gifts of the Body (Wholebody Focusing) Weekend workshop with Kay Hoffmann
Bristol. 17th/18th March. kay.hoffmann@homecall.co.uk

Deep Listening (Beginners) Weekend workshop with Peter Gill
Bristol. 17th/18th March. www.livingfocusing.co.uk livingfocusing@fastmail.com

The Art of Listening (BFA skills certificate Level 2) Weekend workshop with Peter Afford
London (Clapham). 24th/25th March. www.focusing.co.uk peter@focusing.co.uk

Deep Listening Day workshop with Peter Gill
Gloucestershire (Nailsworth). 25th March. www.livingfocusing.co.uk livingfocusing@fastmail.com

Deep Listening 5-week Online Skype course with Peter Gill
Starts 5th April. www.livingfocusing.co.uk livingfocusing@fastmail.com

Children Focusing Symposium Weekend symposium with guest Astrid Schillings
Netherlands. 7th/8th April. <http://kinderfocussen.nl/programma-8-april-met-astrid-shillings/>

Everyday Focusing (Bringing Focusing into everyday life) Online Skype course with Peter Gill
Starts 10th April. www.livingfocusing.co.uk livingfocusing@fastmail.com

BFA Focusing Skills Certificate (Workshop 2) Weekend workshop with Cecilia Clegg
Edinburgh (Peebles). 14th/15th April. <https://www.facebook.com/Cecelia34> ceceliaclegg44@gmail.com

Applied Focusing (BFA skills certificate Level 5) Online Zoom course with Fiona Parr
Weds 2-5pm: 11th, 18th, 25th April & 2nd May. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

The Gifts of the Body (Wholebody Focusing) Residential weekend retreat with Kay Hoffmann
Warwickshire (Nuneaton). 20th-22nd April. kay.hoffmann@homecall.co.uk

Focusing and Dreams (for experienced Focusers) Weekend workshop with Peter Afford
London (Clapham). 28th/29th April. www.focusing.co.uk peter@focusing.co.uk

May & June 2018

A Companion on the Journey (BFA skill certificate Level 2) 5-week evening class with Peter Gill
Gloucestershire (Stroud). Starts 8th May. www.livingfocusing.co.uk livingfocusing@fastmail.com

European (EFA) Focusing Conference: Facets of Focusing First ever European Focusing conference
Greece (Loutraki). 10th—14th May. <https://efa2018.weebly.com>

Being a Focusing Companion (BFA skills certificate Level 2) Weekend workshop with Fiona Parr
Devon (Liverton). 19th/20th May. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

BFA Focusing Skills Certificate (Workshop 3) Weekend workshop with Cecilia Clegg
Edinburgh (Peebles). 19th/20th May. <https://www.facebook.com/Cecelia34> ceceliaclegg44@gmail.com

Introduction to Focusing Weekend workshop with Jutika Healy
Sheffield. 19th/20th May. Contact Karen Sage for details/booking sage.karen@gmail.com

BFA Focusing Skills Certificate (Workshop 4) Four session online Zoom course with Cecilia Clegg
From 20th May to 5th June. <https://www.facebook.com/Cecelia34> ceceliaclegg44@gmail.com

The Art of Listening (BFA skills certificate Level 2) Weekend workshop with Peter Afford
London (Clapham). 26th/27th May. www.focusing.co.uk peter@focusing.co.uk

Introduction to Focusing (10-day BFA certification course—day 2) Day workshop with Suzi Mackenzie
Brighton. 3rd June. suzimac55@hotmail.com www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training

The Path of the Focusing Practitioner (Practitioners and trainees) residential retreat with Kay Hoffmann
Warwickshire (Nuneaton). 8th—11th June. kay.hoffmann@homecall.co.uk

BFA Focusing Skills Certificate (Workshop 5) Weekend workshop with Cecilia Clegg
Edinburgh (Peebles). 9th/10th June. <https://www.facebook.com/Cecelia34> ceceliaclegg44@gmail.com

Focusing-Oriented Therapy (BFA skills certificate Level 3) Weekend workshop with John Threadgold
Manchester. 10th/11th June. <http://newfocustherapy.co.uk> john@newfocustherapy.co.uk

Companionship (BFA skills certificate Level 3) Weekend workshop with Fiona Parr
Devon (Liverton). 16th/17th June. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

July & August 2018

Healing the Fragmented Self (Deep Bodywork and Wholebody Focusing) 3-day workshop with Alex Maunder and Greet Blanckaert
Belgium. 6th—9th July. www.wholebodyfocusing.org alex.maunder4@gmail.com

Let Your Body Make Your Mind Up (for experienced Focusers) with Peter Afford
London (Clapham). 7th/8th July. www.focusing.co.uk peter@focusing.co.uk

A Companion on the Journey (BFA skills certificate Level 2) Weekend workshop with Peter Gill
Bristol. 7th/8th July. www.livingfocusing.co.uk livingfocusing@fastmail.com

Reminders (BFA skills certificate Level 4) Weekend workshop with Fiona Parr
Devon (Liverton). 14th/15th July. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Experiencing & The Body (BFA skills certificate Level 3) Weekend workshop with Peter Afford
London (Clapham). 28th/29th July. www.focusing.co.uk peter@focusing.co.uk

BFA Summer Focusing Community Camp 4-day family-friendly camp (some bedrooms available)
Gloucestershire (Toddington). 8th—12th August. gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk

Local Focusing Groups

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

Bristol Insight Focusing Group. Meets monthly in Bristol on the second or third Sunday of the month from 10am–1pm. Contact: Gordon gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk

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

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

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

Resources & Further Information

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

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

To see past issues of the newsletter click on 'Resources' on the home page, or www.focusing.org.uk/resources and scroll down till you see 'Newsletters' and click on the button.

To sign up to receive this newsletter regularly go to the home page of the BFA website. Enter your email address in the subscribe window on the right below the pictures .

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

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

The International Focusing Institute www.focusing.org

The International Focusing Institute (formerly The Focusing Institute) is the 'world HQ' of Focusing and is a source of all sorts of information about Focusing. The website gives access to the Gendlin Online Library as well as lots of articles on a wide range of subjects by other Focusing teachers. The website also carries nearly 100 (30-50min) audio interviews conducted by Serge Prengel with a wide variety of Focusing teachers that have been recorded since 2008—these can be streamed or downloaded from the website.

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

Newsletter Involvement & Contributions

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

Articles should generally be in the range of 500—1200 words. Inclusion of articles will be at the discretion of the editors. Some contributions may be held over for inclusion in a future issue. Please feel free to contact us if you would like to discuss an idea you have for an article.

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

Feedback & Ideas

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

Forthcoming Issues of the Newsletter:

We currently aim to publish the newsletter 3 times a year and would appreciate receiving your submissions as soon as possible for the next issue in July 2018.

The deadline for receiving contributions for this issue is **20th May 2018**.