



British Focusing Association NEWSLETTER

Issue 14: March 2019



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From the Editor

Gordon Adam



This is the first issue of the newsletter that I've compiled and edited on my own following Pamela Carr's departure as co-editor. Pamela is now busy in her new role as grandmother to twins Sebastian and Elijah who were born at the beginning of November! At the start of 2019 I was thinking that this would be a very sparse issue – however it's now looking like it won't be so threadbare after all! Contributions, some unexpected, have gradually come in. I've done a lot of writing for this issue myself, and also got permission to re-print a 'golden oldie'.

My main creative contribution to this issue has been to commission, compile and write a report on contemporary Focusing groups. I'm pleased to have put this piece together as I believe that Focusing groups have a lot to offer us as a

Focusing community and I have benefited hugely myself from being involved in my own Bristol group for the last 12 years. A report from this and several other Focusing groups is included in this piece, and also a additional report from David Garlovsky of his experiences at the original Changes group way back in 1970.

The 'golden oldie' is 'Twenty Ways to Start a Focusing Session' by Rob Foxcroft which was originally published in *Focusing Connection* in 2006. I think I originally got a copy of this article from Peter Afford when I did my practitioner training with him. I think this is a helpful article and is a great reminder that there are lots of ways to move into a Focusing space. I recently used the article as the basis for input to my Bristol group and it was well received. Part of my justification for re-printing old articles is that many people reading this newsletter, perhaps even the majority, are newish to Focusing and may have missed the opportunity to read some classic articles of bygone days. This will be an occasional or perhaps regular feature in the newsletter henceforth.

Finally, I would like to give special thanks to Blanca Ruiz (from Seville) for her three photographs which appear in this issue. These include the lovely front cover image, and the 'hands' and group photos that appear in my article on Focusing groups. I met Blanca and her husband Ciriaco at the International Focusing Conference in Cambridge in 2016 where Blanca and I both took many photographs of the event. My connection with her led to two members of the Seville Focusing group coming to the first BFA Focusing camp in 2017, further connections being made, and my own visit to Seville and attending a meeting of the Grupo Cambios last summer! See page 10 for more information about the Seville group.

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News from the Sofa

By Helen Bower, Carolann Samuels and Fiona Parr

2019 looks set to be another turbulent year around the world. May Focusing be a resource for sensing freshly and inspiration!

New developments within BFA emerged from our AGM in November. This proved to be a lively event with 24 people attending the weekend and 21 present at the meeting on Sunday. As a third of the membership, this is an impressive turnout for an AGM. The weekend was very forward-focused, with lots of participation and energy for developing and re-shaping themes and groups. Do let us know your ideas or needs at our Sofa email address bfasofa@gmail.com

Discussion has started on re-forming a Focusing Network for non-BFA members to widen the reach and scope of UK Focusing and towards establishing connections between local Focusing groups and networks. A Wellbeing Hub is also being formed to support members, starting with establishing measures to support newly qualified practitioners and developing guidelines for issues arising between members.

We have agreed a new Diversity and Inclusivity Policy, and all members are encouraged to familiarise themselves with its text and the underlying ethos. Members offering teaching of Focusing, or organising Focusing Gatherings or any other type of Focusing event will take positive steps to ensure that as far as possible, events/sessions are open to all, in line with this policy and philosophy. You can read the policy on our website here <http://www.focusing.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/BFA-Diversity-and-Inclusivity-Policy.pdf>

Feedback on the existing website is now being turned into a specification for a developer to create a new -look website in the next 6 months, built on the work done by Rob Matthews and Paula Newman over the last couple of years, which we would like to thank them for.

We are all happy that the Summer Camp is happening in late August this year at a new venue in Suffolk, organised by a fresh team. We hope to see lots of you there!

We look forward to warmer, joyfully shared times in the year ahead!

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Fiona Parr is a BFA Recognised Focusing Teacher and Mentor, Focusing Institute Trainer and Certifying Coordinator. She teaches in Devon and online, and she offers individual Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy sessions.
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Summer Focusing Camp 2019

A British Focusing Association Event

Ringsfield Hall, Beccles, Suffolk

28th August – 1st September 2019



BFA Focusing Camp 2017

Summer is coming and the next BFA Focusing Community Camp is taking shape. This year we are changing venue and will be at Ringsfield Hall, just south of Norwich, in East Anglia. It's a family friendly country house with over 14 acres of gardens, ponds and woodland, animals, volley ball court and a fire pit.

As before, the camp is for us to co-create and will be a space for us to come together as a community, to connect, Focus and have some fun. There will be 1:1 Focusing each day and opportunities for workshops, presentations, group sharing, yoga, qigong, walking, playing games, skills-sharing, singing, music, dancing and anything else we decide to create as a group.

As organisers we are providing the structure and we ask you to take some responsibility and get involved with the everyday running of the camp – by washing up, cleaning, chopping vegetables, or offering workshops or fun events such as dancing, poetry, fireside stories.... There are great outdoor spaces for camping, a mix of rooms in the house to sleep in, a yurt for outdoor activities and indoor areas where we can gather and eat together. We have caterers providing a vegetarian lunch and supper with a self serve breakfast, or you can choose to be self catering.

So do join us, we have space for around 40 people including children, however pets aren't allowed by this venue due to the presence of their own animals on site. There are 13 bedrooms for singles, doubles or room shares. Do let us know in advance if you'd like to offer a Focusing workshop or other activities during the camp to aid planning, though impromptu offerings are also welcome. The camp was fully booked the last two years, so early booking is advised if you know you want to come. Costs to follow.

Ringsfield Hall, Beccles, Suffolk, East Anglia, NR34 8JR

<http://www.ringsfield-hall.co.uk/> for photos and further details

Booking form, enquiries and workshop offers contact: focusingcamp2019@gmail.com

Isla Macdonald, Mary-Louise Morris and Catherine Feeny

A Non-Official Report from The International Focusing Institute (TIFI): An Overview of the Membership Committee

By Ruth Hirsch *Certifying Coordinator, Member International Leadership Council*



TIFI Membership Committee Meeting (October 2018)

Top Row: Ana Zunic (France), Susan Lennox (USA), Nada Lou (Canada), Monika Lindner (Germany)

Middle Row: Caroline Copestake (Spain), Mariana Pisula (Argentina), Elizabeth Cantor (USA), Catherine Torpey (USA)

Bottom Row: Wendi Maurer (USA), Roberto Larios (Mexico)

For this edition of the news about what's been happening in the TIFI world I thought it might be interesting for readers to know something about the relatively new Membership Committee: its history, goals and a few of its accomplishments to date.

To prepare for writing this article I turned to Susan Lennox, one of the founding members of the Committee as well as the chairperson for the first three years of its existence.

In late 2015, Susan was asked by David Rome, at that time the Director of the Board of Trustees for TIFI, and Catherine Torpey to take on the task of creating a membership committee. After Susan created and chaired the committee for three years, she turned the chair over to Mary Jennings, another former member of the board.

The goal of the committee is to offer more connection and value for membership in TIFI. The committee currently includes 13 members who represent a variety of countries, languages and perspectives.

Some of the projects that the committee has undertaken include creating and coordinating the Focusing Roundtable series which is open and free of charge to all members of the institute. There have been roundtables in English, Italian, and German. They are currently also working on putting together programs in French and Greek. A related offering is the Cafecitos Webinar series in Spanish. In the past, more than half of roundtable participants have been outside the US.

Here are the titles of some roundtables that have been held in the past year:

- *Somatics and Focusing: Informing Each Other & Working Together*
- *Focusing and Mindfulness*
- *Bringing it All Back Home: How Focusing can Illuminate and Transform your Challenging Moments as a Therapist*

- *Long-Term Focusing Partnerships*
- *Focusing Research: Exploring the Realities and Possibilities*
- *How Can Focusing Help Us Embrace Our Creativity?*
- *Focusing and Cancer*
- *Meet the TIFI Board*
- *TIFI's International Leadership Council: An Informal Dialogue*

For professional members of TIFI, a series of Trainer Talks on topics including 'Research in Focusing', 'An Introduction to Gendlin's Philosophy', 'How to Run a Virtual Changes Group', and 'How to Build your Focusing Business' have been offered as a free benefit.

The membership committee is also working on reviewing and updating the Focusing Institute's Partnership Pool, which they have renamed The Partnership Network.

The next phase of the membership committee's work will be to help with testing different aspects of the new website before it goes live. It is expected that the website will be live and available for everyone sometime in the next several months.

In order to continue to build resources for members, the committee is interested in finding volunteers to help with various aspects of their activities. The committee meets once a month on Zoom; most of the work however is done by subcommittees between meetings.

For a comprehensive list membership benefits, please see: https://www.focusing.org/eShop/store_membership_benefits.asp



Ruth Hirsch, MSW, MPH, CMT has been enjoying teaching Focusing internationally for over 25 years. Based in Jerusalem, Ruth is a Therapist and Focusing Trainer who shares Focusing online with therapists, coaches, and others as a life-enhancing practice as well as to enhance and deepen their work with clients. Besides teaching all levels of Focusing, she offers Guided Focusing Sessions and Focusing-Oriented Therapy to individuals world-wide both in-person and online.

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A Brief History of Changes

By David Garlovsky

David first met Gene Gendlin and Mary Hendricks, and learned Focusing and Listening directly from them and others at CHANGES Listening/Focusing Community in Chicago in 1970.

Mary Hendricks was one of the founders of Changes and was in many ways the heart and soul of the Focusing Institute alongside her husband Gene Gendlin.

Changes was started in early summer 1970 by a group of Human Development and Clinical Psychology graduate students of the University of Chicago as a response to the shootings of students, protesting the Vietnam War, by the National Guard at Kent State University.

Changes was a community therapy network where clients, students, and therapists were introduced and trained in Listening and Focusing at the Blue Gargoyle of Disciples of Christ church, Chicago. We had a crisis phone housed at the Blue Gargoyle. We tried to get with whatever a person was calling about. Anyone who called was invited into the Changes community big open meeting on Sunday nights at the Blue Gargoyle. We were not just a phone or a service but a community to come into, for just one night, or ongoingly. Our structure had both a big loose open grouping and a number of closer, small groups.

We were a bunch of people with whom you could *carry your living forward in a growing way*, and take the steps which were next in your life. We viewed hang-ups not so much as bad stuff inside someone, rather as messed up relations or dead relations between people, and as more living that needed to happen. What we needed and gave each other was support about trying to live. People came to Changes for different reasons and we tried to act as a resource network for each other.

Many people lack being part of community (sometimes they lack people in their lives altogether, let alone a community). An important part of community is the provision of a place where people can try to find new ways of being themselves. In Changes, community was a place where you could be in touch with all parts of yourself, including the inside stuff that's not all clear, or that doesn't look good, or that's isolated or seems like nothing is there. This means that in Changes we had great tolerance for differences.

One historic moment, though, came in the realisation that a group with as many different points of view as ours was so loose that no one in a leadership position could take power. When someone became concerned enough they initiated their own program of suggestions. For us, structure was good if it was flexible, not mandatory, and open to change by the group.

This meant that our large Sunday meetings were where training or other ways of getting into each other happened while business was taken care of by a small group. Our model allowed anyone to participate in decisions who wanted to (anyone could be a leader, planning meetings were open) but didn't put the whole group into interminable hassles on trivia. In a way, most organizations in the world don't put their main energies into what they are supposed to be about, but instead, waste it on infighting and organizational hassles, and this seems just as true of the participatory model. It was good for us to spend our main big group time on what we were really about and keep business separate but open to anyone who wanted to be involved.

We found that it could be unhelpful to mix business with getting into each other – everyone was impatient to get essential business done and nobody wanted to hear anybody else. Personal feelings were just in the way and weren't heard, but business also didn't get done. The division made it possible to enjoy each other's experiences and growth steps.



Mary Hendricks Gendlin

References

McGuire, Kathleen. *The Changes Book*

Glaser, K & Gendlin, Eugene. *Main Themes in Changes, a Therapeutic Community*

David Garlovsky (BSc, MSc, Certificate in Social Phenomenology, Certificated Focusing Professional and Trainer) I am based in Sheffield, UK. 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 the effects of security lighting on trees, wildlife, heath and well-being, and effects of building materials on building air quality.
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A Review of Focusing Groups Today – How they Work & What they Offer

Compiled by Gordon Adam



Photo by Blanca Ruiz

Changes groups, Focusing groups and Focusing circles have been around since the beginning of Focusing. In fact the original Changes group (*see article by David Garlovsky on p.7*) pre-dates 1-1 Focusing as we currently know it. This was an open ('walk-in') group started in 1970 in Chicago where people could come to be listened to and learn how to listen, and to learn Focusing. Many different Changes groups, with varying formats, were formed by different Focusers in Chicago in the 70s and 80s. Most of the later groups were closed (i.e. not walk-in) groups and some required basic pre-existing experience of Focusing/listening for membership.

Fast forwarding to 2019, one of the first things to say about Focusing groups is that there are not many of them around, in fact there are only four Focusing groups in the UK listed in the 'Local Focusing Groups' section of this newsletter. I'm aware of some other groups that aren't listed but these tend to be closed groups for experienced Focusers, and I don't think there are too many of those either! In this article my intention is to highlight some particular groups currently actively meeting in the UK, and one in Spain, with individual contributions by members of each group.

Most groups meet once a month, but some meet weekly or fortnightly, generally for two or three hours or in some cases for a whole day. Most are peer-led, but some have a leader or facilitator. The format varies from group to group but all include periods of group listening and one-to-one Focusing. Groups meet in members' homes or in rented spaces. Most require some basic Focusing experience as a prerequisite for membership, but some are open to Focusing beginners.

Some contributions from individual groups follow:

Bristol Insight Focusing Group *by Gordon Adam*

This group was established early in 2007 following an introductory Focusing workshop for Bristol Insight Meditation group led by Chris Wilson. I have organised and facilitated the group since 2009 and we meet once a month for three hours on a Sunday morning. The group rotates around members' homes or we meet in a rented space (Bristol Zen Dojo) if no one volunteers to host on any particular month. There is no fixed attendance fee but a donation is invited to cover hosting or rental costs and towards my facilitation of the group. Attendance of the group generally varies between six and twelve people, averaging at around eight participants.

The format of the group includes: initial sit in silence with Focusing-style lead-in (15 mins); introduction/sharing round (15 mins); input & discussion on a Focusing theme (25 mins); tea break (15 mins); Focusing in twos or threes or small group (90 mins); final group sharing (20 mins).

Unlike most Focusing groups, this group has always been open to complete beginners. This is enabled by me taking time with any new people whilst experienced Focusers go off to Focus in pairs (or threes). The beginners group is generally two to four people, and I tend to ask someone to volunteer to just listen whilst I do a ten minute Focusing demo, then we swap and I companion, bringing in the reflective

element. Then we have some time for questions and answers about the process. I find this to be the most effective and efficient way to convey a real sense of Focusing to new people in a short period of time. We might then continue with each person taking a turn to Focus and to companion within the small group, or else split into pairs for some Focusing practice, ending with everyone coming back together and sharing their experience and asking any further questions.

I think one of the most important and valuable things about this group is that it creates a regular, readily available, minimal cost 'open door' into Focusing. Over the years that the group has been running it has enabled hundreds of people to have a first experience of Focusing, many of whom have gone on to become regular Focusers. The only other ways to experience Focusing for the first time would be to pay to do a weekend 'Level 1' workshop or to find a Focusing teacher and pay to do a 1-1 Focusing session.

In the early days of the group my hope was for a committed group of Focusers who would meet up regularly – however the reality has proved to be somewhat different, and attendance varies from meeting to meeting from within a pool of about 80 people (as well as newcomers) who are on the group email list. Initially I found people's irregularity of attendance and lack of commitment very difficult and frustrating – I felt the group could be a richer and fuller experience if a body of committed people were to attend. I have come to accept that this level of continuity and commitment just isn't going to happen with the group. Since I have accepted the 'actual' nature of the group it has been a lot easier for me – it is what it is, it works well as what it is, and I appreciate and enjoy what it is!

Group Contact: Gordon Adam gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk

Grupo Cambios, Seville, Spain by Alejandra Johnson



Photo by Blanca Ruiz

When Gordon asked me to write about our Changes Group in Sevilla, Spain, I saw it as an opportunity to invite each member of the group to engage in reflection after many years together: How would *you* describe this group in *your own words*? What would you highlight about the way the group works? What role does it play in *your life*? These questions were included in a guided exercise for whoever wanted to participate. The suggestion was to find a moment to pause before our next meeting and to allow the answers to come in a short sentence or a few words, from a place of Focusing.

In the responses that came back to me, words such as warmth, trust, respect, care, community and family appeared again and again. One member emphasized "*the respect for each person's individual process, in a safe environment where trust and freedom pervades*". Another member valued "*the benefit of having a safe place where I can show up with my vulnerability*" and one other expressed that "*this is a reference space where I can cultivate Presence*".

There is a general sense that the group offers a space where people can pause, feel heard and have a feeling of belonging. What was appreciated about the way the group works was the regularity of the meetings and the commitment of the facilitators and each member in showing up and sharing a lifelong learning process.

These responses match Ciriaco Uriarte Ayo's original vision. Ciriaco founded the group in 2013 after leading his first workshop as a certified Focusing trainer. He had a clear and altruistic intention of offering a space for consistent learning and the larger goal of integrating Focusing into daily life; this is what he had missed when he had been a student himself.

Since its foundation, the group has been meeting weekly in the beautiful space of Sala San Francisco Javier, Centro Arrupe. The centre is used for a range of activities and it is where Carlos Alemany S.J., Focusing pioneer in Spain, studied a long time ago. Walking down the hallway one reads "*It is not knowing much, but realising and relishing things interiorly, that contents and satisfies the soul*" (Ignatius of Loyola).

The group has grown gradually since 2013 and now has over 20 members. Blanca Ruiz has played an essential role in this by maintaining close contact with all members including those that for whatever reason can't attend the meetings. She sensitively takes care of the practicalities and the modest rent of *the sala* is distributed evenly among all members.

Each meeting starts with a centering exercise inviting Self-in-Presence. We might sense whether there is a need to Focus at that moment or if we are available to accompany someone else. We then self-organize into pairs and agree when to return to the large group again, allowing some time at the end of our meeting for whoever wants to share something about their Focusing process.

When reflecting on this way of organizing the meetings, one member highlighted:

"Regardless of whether I'm Focusing, accompanying or observing that day, for me this meeting is an opportunity to PAUSE, in capital letters, because the quality of the pause allows me to connect with my friendliness, respect, non-judgement, patience and acceptance".

On the first Wednesday of each month something different happens: we create a space where we delve deeper into the Focusing process and reflect on a chosen article that has been distributed previously among all members.

In December 2017, we organized a weekend retreat in the country which included time for Focusing as well as time for creativity and fresh air. We have started planning a second retreat in Spring this year.

I conclude this brief piece with some open-ended questions about the way groups are formed and maintained. What is alive in a group beyond each individual's personality and contribution? How does a group have the capacity to remain open to diversity and self-regulate in a harmonious way?

At a time of increasing polarisation and fragmentation in society, it is a sign of hope to see how a community can be created and maintained. The very same qualities that allow a Focusing process to unfold are the ones needed to maintain community.

Grupo Cambios, Sevilla

Location: Sala San Francisco Javier del Centro Arrupe, Sevilla, Spain.

Frequency of meetings: Every Wednesday, September – June, 17:00 – 18:30 with a break at Christmas and Easter.

Facilitators: Ciriaco Uriarte Ayo and Blanca Ruiz.

Member profile: The group is open to anyone who has at least a basic level of Focusing (levels I and II from a certified trainer of the International Focusing Institute).

Fee: Annual rent of space is distributed equally among all members. Guests who want to try the group before joining are welcome.

Contact: Blanca (+34 637847441), or Alejandra (+34 667071970)

South Devon Peer Group by Justin Haden

There is something special for me about learning in a small group. Not only is it an opportunity to learn more about myself and develop new or existing skills, but there is also the potential to develop bonds with other people interested in similar things. When I trained as a therapist, our group got on so well that somebody suggested we keep in touch with each other after the end of the course by meeting regularly. A fair few attended our first get-together but then numbers dwindled rapidly until there were just me and two others left! Sometime later I undertook a post-qualifying course and at the end I advocated continuing to meet for peer support. Everyone agreed and so we all met up regularly for more than a year before people started to drop off until it no longer seemed viable to meet as a group.

So when I went through the BFA Focusing levels offered by Fiona Parr and someone suggested our group continued to meet, it was a definite 'yes' from me. What is different with this group is that four and a half years later we are still meeting several times a year. How does it work? One member lives centrally and kindly opens their home in South Devon for the four of us. We start with a drink and a Focusing-style check-in, updating each other about issues of importance in our lives (this can take half the morning). We tend to Focus in pairs or as a group for an hour or more. We all bring contributions towards lunch and continue to share as we eat, often something related to Focusing. We finish when we feel we need to go.

I've been reflecting on what has been different, i.e. what has kept us together for four times longer than my other learning groups. I think one key aspect is how we handle agendas. My two previous learning groups both suffered from unexpressed agendas that (certainly in one case) contributed to their demise. Focusing helps us become more aware of our implicit, internal agendas. Having acknowledged them we can, without judgement, be curious about their provenance, learn more about ourselves and then act from a better informed basis. I believe that extending the same attitude to other people not only increases safety and interpersonal depth, but also reduces the chance of hidden agendas scuppering the group.

Here are some quotes from the other members of our group about what benefit, meaning and value they associate with us continuing to meet:

"A kind of day retreat...a safe space."

"A long standing container...a ground built on shared experience, time and a delightful openness."

"A place of warmth and ease, laughter and weeping."

"A healing balm; heartfelt compassion always given and sensed."

"The advantage of common ground and the advantage of learning from our diversity."

"The trust that comes from having accompanied each other for several years now creates a safe space in which to examine and explore Focusing practice."

Justin Haden is a BFA Member, Focusing-oriented Therapist and International Focusing Institute certified professional & trainer. He runs a private counselling & psychotherapy practice in Torquay, South Devon. info@greenshootstherapy.uk

Stroud Focusing Circle by Nick Naydler & Gordon Adam

A Focusing group was originally started in Stroud in 2010 by Gordon Adam after running an introductory workshop at the home of Caroline Redmond. Meetings were monthly at Caroline's place, and for a period combined with the Bristol group, with meetings alternating in Stroud and Bristol. The group ran for two or three years and then meetings stopped due to lack of attendance.

The group was revived as 'Stroud Focusing Circle' by Peter Gill and Helen Bower in 2015. The group meets for about two hours once a month on the first Wednesday evening of the month and the venue rotates around members' homes. The group is peer-led and is open to anyone who has done an introductory Focusing weekend or equivalent. No money is involved.

This report was compiled by Gordon Adam from reflections by members recorded by Gordon and Nick Naydler at two separate meetings of the group in late 2018.

People value and appreciate:

- Focusing with people we otherwise wouldn't Focus with; Focusing with a variety of people
- Formation of deep connections and friendships; networking of events and activities
- The opportunity to find a Focusing partner with whom to meet independently of the circle
- Experiencing different styles of Focusing and companioning
- The opportunity to Focus in threes and (thereby getting twice as much listening attention!)
- The check-in which "marks people's journey through the year"; both the 'check-in' and 'check out' parts of the evening
- The group relating in an embodied way; the fact that it's peer-led
- The regularity of the group; the ritual and structure of the evening; the five minutes silence at the beginning; the roving venue
- It enables new Focusers to join a Focusing community; the opportunity for newcomers to work with more experienced Focusers

On a more 'felt level' people appreciate:

- Being listened to; being heard; being seen; being held; being supported.
- Being understood; being known; being accepted; being validated; being allowed/permitted.
- BEING PRESENT!

Group Contact: Peter Gill info@livingfocusing.co.uk

Sheffield Focusing Group by David Garlovsky

In September 2017 David Garlovsky, a certified Focusing practitioner and trainer facilitated a discussion and interactive activities at the Sheffield Central Library in honour of and to celebrate the psychology and philosophy work of Dr Eugene Gendlin who died earlier in the year. Twenty five people attended and were split into groups of three to experience practical steps to understand and use empathetic listening and Focusing. To quote from one participant: "The techniques seemed to help with the management of change and as an approach to coping with issues."

David invited anyone who attended in September or who had contacted him, to join him in convening a Sheffield Focusing group. As a result sessions were set-up at the Library and the group has been meeting weekly for one or two hours for the past year.

Notices go out to twelve people and one to four people attend each week. The focus of the meetings is on how to positively attend to emotive feelings in personal and professional life such as in therapy, teaching, decision making, writing and conflict resolution. I have developed new activities in the application of Focusing entitled: 'Over-whelming Feelings', 'Hope' and 'Writing' (*these can be found at www.solar-active.com/focusing-group*). One member found the session on Hope "reassuring and life affirming. Life sometimes feels very gloomy, depressing and difficult. It felt great to focus on something pleasant and be surprised, however briefly, by joy." I am now also moving towards getting members of the group to formulate instructions from their own process.

There is no agreement to attend regularly by anyone (including me) and there is no money involved. The point of the group is to Focus silently – but not alone. The group is structured to facilitate each person's attention to their own inner process, through relaxation, silence, Focusing and listening to each other after their individual Focusing experience. Each individual is ensured privacy and safety. Within this context full attention to internal process can begin. [M. Hendricks, *A Focusing Group*]

We meet in a small Pod meeting space in the Reading room of the Library. The group starts with giving each other a chance to say what is on our minds – an opportunity to clear-the-air so to speak. Focusing instructions are then given out loud – this takes about 30 minutes. I also give them to myself (which is the point of the group for me – to Focus with others present). After the Focusing instructions, I invite anyone to say what has happened for them at each step of the instructions. This is both a way of verbally sharing what had gone on in the silence for those who wish and a way of working with any specific difficulties in Focusing that arise.

In giving the Focusing instructions I give a version which seems right for me, rather than a standard set of instructions [E.T. Gendlin, 1963]. I sometimes start with a YouTube clip of Gene teaching Focusing. [Nada Lou Productions www.nadalou.com 2018/19].

During the go-arounds I often go first, sharing my exact process steps. For example, I first model transparency of my inner process although I also state that it is not necessary for such detail. Each person in turn is then given empathic listening attention by the group.

I reflect in a client-centered fashion. Each person's sharing is received and not judged and open to group discussion and input. One member "found Focusing invaluable in understanding the complex physical and emotional interplay of reactions to serious problems. The reactions of the other participants are invaluable as is the chance to listen to their processes. It is a technique which provides practical help to cope with problems and make decisions."

One member "found that my experience of Focusing is an ongoing process. It sets off a train of thought for me that takes on a life of its own and has helped me gain new insights and new ideas about issues in my life. It has helped me gain different perspectives on situations... I feel more resilient."

Another member wrote: "I do not use Focusing as a regular part of my daily life. Although I use it in a more ad hoc and infrequent way, it has on occasions helped me think through issues, isolate and contain feelings, and control situations. Practically, with Focusing, I have thought through and understand the boundaries of issues and the senses this gives. On occasions I will look to Focusing as an appropriate way to unpack a situation. It is a positive and helpful technique. The use of Focusing as a self-development and self-knowledge tool is somewhat of a challenge. There was one occasion when I have used Focusing with a family member. This was in the context of uncontrollable feelings. The session worked for the other person."

A Focusing group is an interpersonal structure which enables an inward experience for each member. Some people, seeing no alternatives, bring their "self" out and the self remains experientially undeveloped. However, an individual using Focusing can get in touch with their own process by facilitating their felt experience. [M. Hendricks, *A Focusing Group*]

Group Contact: David Garlovsky david@solar-active.com

Conclusion

From the accounts above, especially the quotes from participants, it is clear that Focusing groups have something unique to offer beyond the benefits of 1-1 Focusing. From my own experience of having been involved with several Focusing groups over the last 12 years I would sum this up as follows:

Focusing Groups offer...

- A safe, supportive and accepting space where people can be themselves in whatever 'shape, colour or form' they are in at the time
- Being listened to, being heard, being witnessed, being accepted by a group of people
- A space to pause, be present, be silent, turn attention inwards, reflect on what really matters
- Building a sense of Focusing community, identity and belonging
- A place to meet other Focusers and form Focusing partnerships
- Learning more about Focusing and hearing about Focusing events
- Communion with like-minded people; building social connections and relationships

It needs to be mentioned that Focusing groups are hard to keep going in my experience, and I think one key ingredient for success is the presence of someone (or a group of people) who is committed to the group and who decides to stay with it through thick and thin. Thin' periods will undoubtedly come - this

is the nature of groups – people get caught up in life events, lose interest, move to another area, etc. I have ‘stayed with’ facilitating the Bristol group for the last ten years and although at times this has been challenging and demoralising, and on more than one occasion our ‘group’ has been just me and one other person, in balance I would say I have benefitted hugely from ongoing involvement and participation in the group, and it is currently ‘going strong’ with about ten people showing up at recent meetings.

If there isn’t a Focusing group in your area, but there are some Focusers around, maybe you could set up a group? There are lots of ideas about how to run it in the reports above. Also, in my experience, people are often willing to do a one or two hour journey once a month to get to a Focusing group, so the ‘catchment’ for your group may be wider than you imagine!

If you organise a local Focusing group and are open to new members please send me details of your group and it can be listed in the ‘Local Focusing Groups’ section at the end of this newsletter.

Labyrinth: Focusing with an Image

By Jutika Siobhan Healy

When I moved to Ireland nearly seven years ago, I put a lot of effort into Focusing with friends over skype, with up to five sessions a week. As the years went by and especially with the pressure of renovating our house here, I found it harder to keep up regular sessions and gradually my Focusing partnerships dropped off. There was also the call to making this place more of a home and to my connections here – rather than so much of my emotional connection happening online!

Sue Akehurst and I have been Focusing with images for the last few years. I did a two year art therapy course fifteen years ago and I found it really helpful after my sister died. The images helped me hold the many aspects of grief and loss. I started Focusing not long after that and really appreciated how this also helped me be with my experience. Doing Children Focusing with Rene Veugelers a few years back brought the two practices together. Sue and I wanted to keep up the momentum of that training and have been Focusing regularly with images since. We spend about five minutes to create an image or sometimes we may start on our own before the session and then we each take about twenty minutes to Focus with our respective images.

During a recent session I was distracted by noise downstairs. Spending time writing later that night allowed me to continue the practice of looking at the image, noticing how that felt in my body, and giving voice to the different aspects arising. A shift came through following this process.

Labyrinth



The walls of the labyrinth are pink, soft light pink, dark red pink. The lines of paint are loose and watery. It reminds her of intestines, pink tubes, soft, vulnerable, squashed into a space. When she sits with the image it leads her to 'the labyrinth of the heart' – now there is a phrase! What it means she isn't sure. There is a sadness and heaviness she feels in her chest when she looks at the image despite the bright colours.

There are inky squiggles in the spaces between the pink tubes in. They are happy, they have fresh life in them. They fit in-between the walls of the labyrinth but are not squashed or confined. They are free to express, to wiggle, to change direction like the folds of a vagina or a flame.

There are a few short fat lines of green and some blue ink blobs like the promise of spring or rain. She is curled up in herself. Her heart is not an open book. It has folds, inner chambers, outer chambers. It carries her history with all the love dissolved in the tissues and with all the losses carved into the flesh like the bark of the old yew tree.

My girl is sad, the weight of her life hangs heavy. She cannot walk a straight line but needs to dance and duck and dodge, to weave in and out, to take a step forward and to take several sideway steps. She has disappointed people and she doesn't like to do that. She wants to please everyone. Impossible! She has had to say good-bye and let go, not follow up, not fill in the gaps. Disappoint, not be there, not be as supportive as she would like to be. Debts not yet repaid. Old friendships floundering. Sad, sad, sad loss – inevitable loss.

This hard life she has chosen means she has to make hard decisions. She has always found it difficult to take a definite position. Her default is always to be reasonable – "well it can be this" or "we can look at it this way or that way". In her life here, like a wrestler she is sometimes pinned to the ground and must choose and lose.

The scribbles in ink are her new life and they make her smile. They just are, funny and free. Anarchic, tricky, silly, slinky. Undefined, they can move. Little tickles of electricity.

She feels love as she looks at the image. She doesn't know what it means to be mature but nonetheless she can feel herself maturing. Her heart is fermenting, she is going from grape to wine. Her taste is stronger, deeper, more rounded yet still a little fizzy. She has a few more years to go in the ground.

Jutika Siobhan 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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Twenty Ways to Start a Focusing Session

By Rob Foxcroft

I've come across at least twenty ways to start a Focusing session. I'm against getting stuck in any one of them. Why get in it rut before you even start? If anybody tells you that one of these is "the right way," please complain. Neil Friedman writes, in his elegant way: *"This is a start. We all have to start somewhere. There is an art to knowing what and when to start."*

1) Start with body sensing

You can gently bring your attention into your body, particularly the middle of your body, your stomach or chest. Then wait. Notice what feelings or sensations are already present. Little by little, you will feel connections to your situation, your ongoing life. Barbara McGavin has often encouraged people to start Focusing with body sensing, as I have myself. Bev Shoenberger comments: *"Interesting how much some people can be thrown by this one. Sometimes I just add the words - 'There may be a sort of vague, nudgy sensation, for example."*

2) Start with emotion

Ask what emotion you are feeling. *"Am I happy? Sad? Scared? Angry? Surprised? Disgusted?"* Or something more subtle? What is it in your life, which brings this emotion? Can we go further and further, not into the emotion, but into the describing of it, its meaning, its nuances? We have sometimes been warned not to start from emotion, but this is a mistake. Don't start here if you're likely to drown, obviously. But if you easily get stuck in your head, or if you've done lots of scanning the body in meditation, this may be just the opening you need.

In my first ever Focusing session, I was overwhelmed by emotion – but Bebe Simon was entirely at peace with that, as a starting place. Bev again: *"I tend to have a close process, and actually find it helpful to start by giving the emotion attention otherwise I'm identified with it and it interferes."*

3) Start with a life-issue

What is bugging you today? What's not fine? Or maybe fine, but you're full of it, and need to give it some time? What is the feel of all that? Often you just know, this is what is demanding attention right now. One of my Focusing students generally comes in and says at once: *"Today it's...."* I've learned from that.

4) Start with an image

Relax. Let an image come. For many people, this is the natural way. If you're one of them, hey, why not try something else? If not, then you may need a little more help. Let yourself just relax a little, so you're almost too relaxed for Focusing – almost as if you were just dropping off to sleep. In that in-between zone, images start to bubble up naturally. Once an image is there, you can attend to its mood, quality or aura. Some people who find it hard to learn Focusing learn very easily in this way. Imagery is not easy for me, but like so many of us, I learned it from Reva Bernstein.

5) Start by telling a story

You might like to talk to your partner at first, or write in your journal. Tell your story, but set a watch. The watcher is there to draw your attention, when you come to the edge where Focusing begins. The watcher may be a part of you, or your partner. Robert Lee has observed how widespread this pattern is, and it is part of his 'Domain Focusing'. Janet Klein too brings story-telling into Interactive Focusing. As we all know, it was in this context that Focusing was first described – in early writings, Gene Gendlin talks about clients in therapy who found their own way to an edge, pausing to sense into it.

Bev: *"We talk about the story telling leading to Focusing like a dog circling its bed to find just the right moment to 'lie down,' to settle down and Focus."*

6) Start by clearing a space in the regular way

Notice what is between you and feeling fine. Get a felt sense. Find a handle, a symbol which comes out of that felt sense, and will evoke the felt sense again, when you lose it. Picture the whole issue in some way, and then imagine you are placing the whole thing out in front of you. Notice the next thing... and

the next... until you sense more of a 'clear space' inside. Then sense which issue needs more Focusing time. Begin there. This approach is the one we associate with Gene Gendlin. It is quite wonderful, of course. Notoriously, however, being told that "*You have to start by clearing a space*" has got more new students of Focusing stuck in a rut more than any other single mistake.

7) Start by directly evoking a clear space

Picture a time and a place when you were truly happy. Evoke it vividly. Be there. Don't let anything contaminate the space. You can do this really elaborately, especially if your person is in deep trouble. If you find yourself with a person who is very distressed, this may be the best single thing you can do. Now allow your attention to turn to what could disturb that clear space, noticing one issue at a time – very faintly and remotely – as if you were watching it. But you yourself – stay always in the clear space.

Make sure that nothing clouds it.

I learned this approach from Ton Coffeng who gives the credit for it to Mary McGuire. Ton says it is really handy when your person is seriously freaked out. Bev: *"It also reminds me of Kevin McEvenue's work – in Wholebody Focusing there is the experience of taking a breath and coming back to an experience of the whole Body, and then going with the part, alternating between them. How remarkable to go back and forth between an evoked clear space and the content! Hmm."*

8) Start by saying, "Everything in my life is going fine. It's all fine..."

...and then wait for something to go, "Ugh." This is quite different from the last starting point. In a sense, you are being ironic. Of course, you would like it if your body said, *"Yes, it's all clear and wonderful in here today. None of your issues are troubling you!"* But what you expect is that something will push back against the "fine" and say *"Not true, pal, not true. How about me?"*

I first heard Gene Gendlin's voice on tapes of him teaching Focusing. When I heard this bit, I was helpless with laughter. I wonder now, that it seemed so funny.

9) Start by saying, "Now where was I?"

That is, *"Where did I end last time?"* Perhaps you wrote down a handle, sketched an image, paused in the path to lay down a *patteran*, as a gypsy does. We don't have to start over every time!

I remember a piece by Carol Bellin about the importance of 'hanging out with the felt sense' over a period of time. Robert Lee is also eloquent on this theme in the work he calls 'Changing the Unchangeable'.

10) Start by saying, very directly, "Now, where is the forward movement stopped right now?"

Perhaps you are working, or listening to your Focusing partner, or reading or writing. Then you find your attention blocked. Naturally you start exactly here, where you are. Kye Nelson has often said to me, *"We make the turn to Focusing when the forward movement is blocked."*

11) Start by noticing any "something"

Something may be already at the edge waiting for you. The word 'something' which has proved such a lifesaver, will always be associated with Ann Weiser Cornell. Thank you, Ann.

12) Start by saying, "Now, what do I really want to say to you?"

Look at your companion, the person who is going to be listening to you. Sense who she is, what your connection to this person is like. Notice the atmosphere of the space you are in. *"What is it that I most specially want to share with you? What is the us-ness of us?"* If I was going to claim to have thought of any of these openings it would be this one. I found it for myself during my partnership with Barbara McGavin. In a community, however, I feel that no idea really belongs to anybody.

Jim Iberg, with his profound sense of radical human equality, has illuminated this sense of Focusing as encounter, as a true meeting of persons, without veils.

13) Start by saying, "So what is it that I can only explore with you?"

Perhaps there is some issue that it's possible to explore only with this person, which needs a special quality that only she can give. Some things you can say far more easily to one person than another. *"So what is it that I can only explore in the company of this person?"*

At the International Focusing Conference in Ireland in 2001, Simon Kilner was listening to me. We were interrupted. Some years later we were able to pick up the session where we left off – and astonishingly,

the process which had been cut off was still there in each of us, waiting for the moment when it could be carried forward. I had lost a crucial bit without which the process was not moving forward. Simon was still faithfully holding that piece. Sometimes there is only one person who will do. These ways of felt sensing into which the companion is invited so directly owe much to Kathy McGuire.

14) Start by saying, "OK – what residues are left from the past day or so?"

A good approach at night or in the morning, or any time your energy is sinking. It's what Peter Campbell and Ed McMahon are thinking of, when they recommend 'the habit of felt sensing.' Bev says: "*Yes it reminds me of what happens in meditation.*" So I realize that I learned this one from Akong Rinpoche

15) Start by saying, "What is the problem or pain?"

You may want to notice the pain itself in a Focusing way, sensing into it, or perhaps by seeing what comes in the inside space in relation to the problem. Doralee Katonah Grindler has written about the power of felt sensing to relieve the pain of cancer: "*When there is an intense experience of physical pain, we guide in relation to the physical pain.*" There has been a lot of debate about this. People say: "*It isn't Focusing!*" (How frightful!) "*Focusing is when you pay attention to a feeling which is clearly connected to your life.*" Will somebody please explain to me, what a sensation which was not connected to my life would be like?

Bev explains "*I've worked with clients with chronic pain. It's rare to have a pain that doesn't have something more, some context or meaning. Maybe I just once heard someone have pain and not have some sort of storyline. Who knows? However, it's not so rare to have someone who gets stuck in the concrete. It's not that the more isn't there. It's just that the person doesn't yet get what they're looking for.*"

16) Start by being with your resistance to Focusing

Sometimes you have a distinct sense that you don't want to Focus at this time. You might start here. But go delicately. Sometimes the resistance is right. This may not be the time for Focusing! Often however, there is just a sense of resistance. I have no idea where this came from. I guess I got it from Bebe Simon, who has such an immense fund of helpful specific knowledge about the Focusing process .

17) Start by sensing towards the next action

It's good to be felt sensing within the flow of activity. What do I need to do next? What are the possible next actions? Which one is calling? There was an interesting piece in 'The Focusing Connection' some years ago, by a woman who learned to respect her resistance to "the usual Focusing" – she chose instead to use felt sensing in this way, to sail freely from one action to the next.

18) Start by learning something from what you just did

Maybe I just finished a letter, a phone call, a piece of work. Where am I now? What is the feeling, which the action leaves behind it? What can I learn just here? I just learned to play a Bach Partita. There's something here about holding all those notes. When I try, that's fatal. It destroys 'the zone.' When I get sloppy, it slips away from me. Is there a middle road? Ah yes – if I attend to just one movement at a time, one dance tune – but holding a sense of the whole. Now I'm moving forward again. I've learned about felt sensing within the flow of action from Campbell Purton, from Jane Umanoff, and from Susan Lennox.

19) Start by being with the quality of the blank or the nothing

"There's nothing there." "*Oh, how interesting! What's this nothing like, I wonder*". I don't know who the genius was that made this suggestion. It seems to have reached me through Erna de Bruijn and Christine Langeveld. Ann says "*That instruction has never worked for me and would have resulted in me murdering the person who suggested it!*" It just shows – you can never be too careful!

20) Start by saying, "Be deeply real..."

Bev writes: "*My most powerful way to start is to say to myself – 'Be deeply real.' When I am being deeply real with whatever needs to happen, it does happen, and I'm in right relationship with it*"

Bev remembers asking Mary McGuire to "just repeat that phrase every couple of minutes" right through a session. "*Deepest session ever – an amazing experience*". I (Rob) learned more from Mary than from anybody. Another person who has taught me more than I can say is Ray Carrick, who says: "*The radical acceptance is to be with whatever is really there. It's so tempting to retreat into theory. There's a longing for something simple, which can only be had by denying pain and contradiction*".

A note about the people I've quoted in this article: I wanted to point to the shared nature of our wonderful conversation about process. I've named a few people. I could name so many more. Focusing belongs to no one person. Who knows where really good ideas come from?

Oh yes – and when somebody tries to say there's a 'right way', try not to laugh too obviously, ok?



Rob Foxcroft

Many years ago, when I first began to teach the piano, I tried hard to find ways for human beings to learn and grow and relate to one another that would not be essentially authoritarian, but respectful, benevolent and free. In 1988 I went to Chicago to study with Gene Gendlin and became a Focusing Coordinator. I studied the person-centred way of being with Brian Thorne and his colleagues. Now I teach piano-playing, offer spiritual accompaniment, and teach people the principles of meditative listening. Recently I published a book about listening: 'Feeling Heard, Hearing Others'. I live and work in Glasgow, Scotland.

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Editor's Note

This article by Rob was originally published in the March 2006 issue of 'Focusing Connection' and is reprinted here with Rob's permission. I think its message is as useful now as it was 13 years ago: let's not get stuck in a particular way of Focusing or entering into the Focusing space! Republishing it now makes it available to a whole new generation of Focusers who may not have seen it before, and also serves as a reminder to more seasoned practitioners. Let's face it – we can all fall into limiting habits in any area of our life, including Focusing! (also see my editorial on p.2 for further comment on this).

The Supportive Presence of the Environment in Focusing... and Two Poems by David Whyte

By Gordon Adam



Bridle path near Bala Brook Retreat Centre, Dartmoor, UK (July 2009)

Poems arising during a Focusing session is not an unusual occurrence for me – I have a large collection of poems that I like on my laptop and sometimes one of those will come to mind during a Focusing session and I'll bring it into the session.

During a wholebody Focusing weekend workshop with Kay Hoffmann in Bristol last November, I had a powerful experience of Focusing with someone outside in woods and open green space as we both walked and paused. I brought attention to this and other experiences of Focusing outdoors in a Focusing session just after the workshop. It was during this session that these poems by David Whyte came to mind and I located them and Focused on them in the session. This revealed the strong resonance of the poems with my experiences of Focusing outdoors and also with the idea of relationship with and support of the environment which is inherent in wholebody Focusing.

Opening to support from the environment in Wholebody Focusing

Wholebody Focusing was developed by Kevin McEvenue through amalgamating the principles of Focusing with the principles developed by F.M. Alexander who created the Alexander Technique. McEvenue writes¹:

"Alexander also saw that the body had to come alive as a whole in order for change to happen in a part at the level of automatic functioning. He observed that change happened out of a conscious relationship between an activated whole body self and a part and by making room for something new to happen rather acting upon some kind of agenda of how that should be."

This "conscious relationship between an activated whole-body self and a part" can be extended to a conscious relationship between an 'alive environment' and a part (or felt sense). When I'm Focusing in a room I can sense into the aliveness in the room and its contents. If I'm Focusing outdoors I can sense into the aliveness of the natural environment. In each of these cases I can form a conscious relationship between my inner experience/part/felt sense and the aliveness of my surroundings. (All of this is of course as well as the relationship with my companion which also offers me significant support.)

In practice, this means holding both the part and the environment with 'equal positive regard', and moving my Focusing attention between the part, the environment, and the relationship between the two.

This brings something fresh into my Focusing experience – it's like it gives me a bigger platform to Focus on, or a bigger 'seat of presence' to Focus within.
'The environment' can be the landscape if one is outside, or simple everyday objects if Focusing indoors...

Everything is Waiting for You

Your great mistake is to act the drama
as if you were alone. As if life
were a progressive and cunning crime
with no witness to the tiny hidden
transgressions. To feel abandoned is to deny
the intimacy of your surroundings. Surely,
even you, at times, have felt the grand array;
the swelling presence, and the chorus, crowding
out your solo voice. You must note
the way the soap dish enables you,
or the window latch grants you freedom.
Alertness is the hidden discipline of familiarity.
The stairs are your mentor of things
to come, the doors have always been there
to frighten you and invite you,
and the tiny speaker in the phone
is your dream-ladder to divinity.
Put down the weight of your aloneness and ease into
the conversation. The kettle is singing
even as it pours you a drink, the cooking pots
have left their arrogant aloofness and
seen the good in you at last. All the birds
and creatures of the world are unutterably
themselves. Everything is waiting for you.

David Whyte

This poem wonderfully captures and describes the 'aliveness' of everyday things which have a "swelling presence" and with which we can "ease into the conversation". The poem is all about the relationship between me and my immediate surroundings, the intimacy of the relationship, and how I can be supported and informed by this relationship. "Conversation" implies a sort of communication or exchange between me and my environment.

Focusing in nature

In this next poem, the surroundings extend beyond the intimacy of a room into the bigger more expansive space of the natural world:

Sometimes

Sometimes
if you move carefully
through the forest,
breathing
like the ones
in the old stories,
who could cross
a shimmering bed of leaves
without a sound,
you come
to a place
whose only task
is to trouble you
with tiny
but frightening requests,
conceived out of nowhere
but in this place
beginning to lead everywhere.

Requests
to stop what
you are doing
right now,
and
to stop what you
are becoming
while you do it,
questions
that can make
or unmake
a life,
questions
that have patiently
waited for you,
questions
that have no right
to go away.

David Whyte

Something more radical is intimated here – the idea that something completely new, in the form of “requests” and “questions” can arise from my presence in the natural world. This again resonates with the idea of a conversation between me and my surroundings. The sense is that if I respond to an initial request to pause and “stop what I am doing right now” then, in that pausing, something new might arise from my relationship with the environment – new territories, new possibilities of who I am.

I have run Focusing retreats on Dartmoor in the UK for the last 10 years – in total about 18 retreats. Over that time I've become increasingly aware of how the wild Dartmoor landscape informs and supports what happens on the retreats, and an increasing sense of relationship between me and the landscape has been unfolding. I wrote about this a few years ago in an article about my retreats²:

"A particular growing edge on the retreats is an increasing incorporation of the landscape – this involves cultivating an experience of the whole body within the landscape as a sort of 'seat of presence'... A wonderful 'enabling' 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). This bigger presence brings particular gifts and supports Focusing on bigger issues – i.e. beyond the 'personal' and more into a 'transpersonal' domain of experience."

Every time that I've Focused outdoors in recent years something different happens that doesn't happen when I Focus indoors. It's hard to pin down what that *something different* is.

My most recent experience of Focusing outdoors was on retreat at Bala Brook on New Year's Day. We were blessed with a particularly lovely first day of 2019 and having given some input on wholebody Focusing that morning I encouraged people to Focus outside if they wished. I Focused outside with two others as a threesome, each of us taking about 20 minutes to Focus. Our location was a sunny meadow flanked by the brook on one side and some woodland on the other – there was space, light, trees and the ever-present sound of Bala Brook.

What happened in that session could be described as *archetypal* or even *mystical!* Each of us, in our own way, connected with inner archetypes in the form of *king, warrior, crone*, etc. Each session was particularly powerful, a dramatic highlight being the synchronistic appearance of a white bull on the other side of the brook just at the end of someone's session about claiming her power! It was as if the universe spoke to us at that point – we all had this sense – a tingling, prickling, wakeful surge of recognition that something much bigger was present than we three mortals! It is very clear to me that we would not have had these experiences if we Focused indoors, where the Dartmoor environment would not have been able to participate in such an alive and immediate way!

Walking and doing qigong outside has been part of my life for many years – more recently, Focusing outside is becoming an increasingly important growing edge of my Focusing practice and is opening a doorway into a new dimension of experiencing – one where I am making new learning about my place and resonance in the bigger scheme of things!

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- ¹McKevenue, Kevin. *The Alexander Technique and Focusing*. www.alexandertechnique.com/articles/focusing/
²Adam, Gordon. *Focusing Retreats: an unfolding Healing Journey*. BFA Newsletter: Issue 4 (Aug 2014)

Gordon Adam lives in Bristol, UK, and as well as having a passion for Focusing, he has an ongoing interest in helping build Focusing community. He runs introductory workshops in local communities, facilitates an open monthly 'changes' type Focusing group, sends out a regular local Focusing newsletter and is co-creator of the BFA Focusing Community Camp. Gordon has been running 5-day Focusing retreats on Dartmoor and in the Southwest for the last 10 years, combining Focusing with periods of silence, immersion in the natural world and temporary community. He also works as a homeopathic teacher and supervisor and is editor of this newsletter. www.focusing.org.uk/Gordon-Adam gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk



Practitioner Profile – Clare Myatt



THE EVOLUTION OF PSYCHOTHERAPY Faculty

May 25-29, 2000

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I am embarrassed to say that I witnessed Gene Gendlin demonstrating Focusing at a conference in 2000. Embarrassed? Yes, because at the time it seemed about as exciting as watching paint dry.

Hard to admit, knowing what I know now. Yet it reflects where I was in my personal and professional life at the time. Having completed a Masters degree in Marriage and Family Therapy in 1991, I had been granted a California licence to practice in 1995, and was caught up in Murray Bowen's family systems approach. I engaged with my clients, guided and supported, held their agenda preciously in my hands and nudged them ever forward in their journey of development. We called it *separation and individuation* from the *undifferentiated family ego mass*. Yikes. I pause to let myself off that particular hook – I was doing the best I could, as I believe we practitioners all do, day to day.

In hindsight, reviewing more than two decades of experience as a psychotherapist, I can clearly see that my work with clients has evolved and deepened. I give credit to those practitioners I have worked with along the way, for surely the best therapy I offer reflects the best therapy I have received. It has certainly been a process, one of those 'journeys of self-discovery' we talk about.

When Jerry Conway read aloud *Shaky Being*¹ (see box below) at an introductory course, tears of relief and astonishment welled. Beyond intellect, something fell into place. Here was a felt sense, a resonant *aha* moment. In this significant realisation two things happened: all the somatic training of the previous twenty years took on new meaning; and I found the next place/community to call home. A critical part berated myself for how long it had taken to get there, yet there was something else too – a deep breath and a pause, allowing me to settle comfortably into that new home.

"Then I am just here, with my eyes, and there is this other being. If they happen to look into my eyes, they will see that I am just a shaky being. I have to tolerate that. They may not look. But if they do, they will see that. They will see the slightly shy, slightly withdrawing, insecure existence that I am, I have learnt that that is O.K. I do not need to be emotionally secure and firmly present. I just need to be present. There are no qualifications for the kind of person I must be." Eugene Gendlin

After levels one through five, Kay Hoffman appeared on my radar. I was attracted by her wholebody approach, which further made sense of my somatic training at Strozzi Institute (1996 onwards). Coalescence continued. I loved moving as I Focused – it opened up a profound sense of freedom for the child who was told to sit still and be quiet. Further levels of awareness unfolded, making sense of so much that I had been drawn to while living in California: holotropic breathwork; trance dance; art therapy; somatic experiencing; bodywork; craniosacral therapy; movement therapy; EFT; EMDR; aikido; model mugging – all undertaken in an effort to heal the childhood wounds which continued to influence me into adulthood.

Cambridge's international Focusing conference in 2016 brought enriching relationships with new people, two of whom are now my regular Focusing partners. My sense of being part of a community began to grow and it was easy to step in to the process of becoming a Focusing-oriented therapist. Ann Weiser Cornell became my official secondary mentor; Alan G. Tidmarsh became my unofficial ever-present mentor. Both offered their rich and diverse experience to my development, giving me the courage to come out of the shadows and reveal tender territory – my book *Love & Imperfection, a therapist's story* has been published recently. It is an autobiographical account of my work with a particular client, of how we changed one another's lives. It also acknowledges the essential role of love, or *agape*, in our mutual healing.

Which brings me full circle. Gene Gendlin's *Shaky Being* opened me up to love (although I did not know it at the time), paving the way for the vulnerability needed to reveal *agape*. I could not be more grateful.

References

¹ Gendlin, E.T. (1990). *The Primacy of Human Presence*, from *The small steps of the therapy process: How they come and how to help them come*.

Photo source <http://www.evolutionofpsychotherapy.com/download/evolution-syllabus-LITE.pdf>. See p.16 in this linked document for photo and listing of who's who in it.

Clare Myatt, LL.B., M.A., is an experienced clinician using the lens of somatics/embodiment to inform her integrative therapeutic-coaching. Clare has degrees in law and psychology, was licensed as a Marriage and Family Therapist in California (1991), certified as a Master Somatic Coach by Strozzi Institute (2001) and member of the BACP and Association for Coaching. She was certified as a Focusing Practitioner in 2018 and has just published her first book 'Love & Imperfection: a therapist's story', to positive and encouraging reviews. The book will be available from 1st April on <http://lumphananpress.co.uk/bookshop/>

Clare maintains a coaching practice in London and works with clients internationally via the web. www.claremyatt.co.uk clare@claremyatt.co.uk



Forthcoming Workshops & Events

March & April 2019

Introduction to Focusing (BFA skills certificate Level 2) 4-week online course with Fiona Parr Online. Tues 2-5pm. Starting 7th March. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Introduction to Focusing (BFA skills certificate days 1 & 2) two one-day workshops with Suzi Mackenzie Brighton. 9th & 10th March. www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training suzimac55@hotmail.com

Introduction to Focusing (BFA skills cert. Level 1) w/e workshop with John Threadgold & Russ Kendall West Sussex. 9th/10th March. www.newfocustherapy.co.uk john@newfocustherapy.co.uk

Listening to Yourself (BFA skills certificate Level 1) Weekend workshop with Liz Orrell Warwickshire (Kenilworth). 16th/17th March. www.lizorrell.com lizzie.orrell@gmail.com

The Art of Listening (BFA skills certificate Level 2) with Peter Afford London (Clapham). 23rd/24th March. www.focusing.co.uk peter@focusing.co.uk

Focusing Skills Course (BFA skills certificate) Weekly online course with Simon McKibben Online. Monday mornings. 25th March—11th November. info@mindfulnesswithcompassion.com

Reminders (BFA skills certificate Level 4) 4-week online course with Fiona Parr Online. Tues 2-5pm. 26th March—16th April. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Focusing for a New Relationship with Traumatised Parts residential course with Simon McKibben Galway, Ireland. Starts 28th March (year-long). info@mindfulnesswithcompassion.com

Dreaming and Intuition (BFA skills certificate days 7 & 8) weekend workshop with Suzi Mackenzie Brighton. 30th/31st March. www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training suzimac55@hotmail.com

The Gifts of the Body (Wholebody Focusing) Residential weekend retreat with Kay Hoffmann Warwickshire (Nuneaton). 5th—7th April. kay.hoffmann@homecall.co.uk

Being a Focusing Companion (BFA skills certificate Level 2) Weekend workshop with Fiona Parr Devon (Liverton). 6th/7th April. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Deep Listening Day Workshop with Peter Gill Gloucestershire (Stroud). 7th April. www.livingfocusing.co.uk livingfocusing@fastmail.com

Portals into Presence Webinar with Cecilia Clegg and Addie van der Kooy Online. 13th April. 1.30—6pm. ceceliaclegg44@gmail.com

Embodied Intelligence: Introducing Focusing Day Workshop with Peter Gill Worcestershire (Malvern). 28th April. www.livingfocusing.co.uk livingfocusing@fastmail.com

Focusing Skills Course (BFA skills certificate) Weekly online course with Simon McKibben Online. Thursday evenings. 11th April—16th January 2020. info@mindfulnesswithcompassion.com

May & June 2019

Focusing Partners (BFA skills certificate Level 2) 4-week online course with Fiona Parr Online. Thursdays. 2nd—30th May. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Companionship (BFA skills certificate Level 3) Weekend workshop with Fiona Parr Devon (Liverton). 11th/12th May. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Yes, You Can—Learn to Cope with Focusing Intro weekend residential workshop with Ursula Ohse Greece (Kalikatos). 24th-30th May. u.ohse@t-online.de

Creativity and Values into Action (BFA skills certificate days 9 & 10) with Suzi Mackenzie
Brighton. 25th/26th May. www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training suzimac55@hotmail.com

Focusing Skills Certificate Course Online with Peter Gill
Online. Tues eves. 24th May until Feb 2020. www.livingfocusing.co.uk livingfocusing@fastmail.com

Introduction to Focusing (BFA skills certificate day 1) One-day workshop with Suzi Mackenzie
Brighton. 8th June. www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training suzimac55@hotmail.com

Reminders (BFA skills certificate Level 4) Weekend workshop with Fiona Parr
Devon (Liverton). 15th/16th June. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

July & August 2019

Companionship (BFA skills certificate Level 3) 4-week online course with Fiona Parr
Online. Thursdays. 4th—25th July. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

A Companion on the Journey (BFA skills certificate Level 2) weekend workshop with Peter Gill
Bristol. 13th/14th July. www.livingfocusing.co.uk livingfocusing@fastmail.com

An Introduction to Thinking at the Edge Weekend workshop with Fiona Parr
Devon (Liverton). 13th/14th July. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Applied Focusing (BFA skills certificate Level 5) Weekend workshop with Fiona Parr
Devon (Liverton). 20th/21st July. fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

BFA Focusing Community Camp 4-day residential camp
Suffolk (Ringsfield Hall). 28th Aug—1st Sept. focusingcamp2019@gmail.com

Whole Body Focusing One week residential workshop with Alex Maunder
Findhorn, Scotland. 31st Aug—7th Sept. <https://wholebodyfocusing.org/> alex.maunder4@gmail.com

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>

Sheffield Focusing Group. Meets weekly at Sheffield Central Library on a Saturday morning/afternoon or Wednesday evening. www.solar-active.com/focusing group Contact: david@solar-active.com

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 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 2019.

The deadline for receiving contributions for this issue is **20th May 2019**.