



British Focusing Association NEWSLETTER

Issue 7: November 2016

Special Bumper Issue: International Focusing Conference 2016



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From the Editors

Gordon Adam



The production of this newsletter has been a bit of a journey, starting with a first Skype meeting of Pamela, Alex and myself in June this year. From the outset we decided that we wanted to change the look and 'feel' of the newsletter. I never anticipated that I would end up doing the design and layout of the newsletter myself, but things have turned out this way, and although very time-consuming, I have enjoyed doing my first bit of newsletter creation. Thanks to Steph More O'Ferrall for invaluable support in getting me going with MS Publisher.

I love writing and previously edited the newsletter (a simple email) for my meditation group for a number of years, and I also send out a local (Bristol area) Focusing newsletter. My motivation is to help people make connections with each other, and to share ideas, and events. I am a great believer in the power of community, and I have a strong interest in helping build Focusing community at different levels – historically through local Focusing groups and networks, and now, since the conference, this has extended to the global Focusing community.

Currently about 25% of the subscribed readership of this newsletter is from overseas. Because of the conference theme of this issue, we decided to send it to everyone who attended the Cambridge conference – some 270 delegates from all over the world – with an invitation to sign up to receive the newsletter regularly. My anticipation is that the circulation and readership of the newsletter will become even more international – this is exciting!

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Pamela Carr



Many thanks to everyone who has contributed to this bumper edition of our newsletter. I love Focusing and I love writing so it has been a delightful labour of love to co-edit this edition of the BFA Newsletter. Thanks again to the authors I have collaborated with: Joan (USA) whose workshop at the Conference so fired up my positivity; Karen (UK) whose Focusing in Nature group I missed and regretted missing; Lesley (SA) who is still inspiring us to Focus with Poems; Susan (UK) for sharing some of her royal reflections from the sofa. I'm especially enjoying all the inspiration and Focusing exercises included in these pieces.

Appreciation also comes for the heart-felt contributions I received from Bruce (USA), Cynthia (UK) and Harriet (UK) for my compilation piece, Magical Moments at Conference. Maybe it can represent just one tiny corner, and be symbolic, of the intricate and colourful tapestry of the whole conference.

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Alex Brew



An early decision by the team was to create a new look for the BFA Newsletter and it was Alex who initially researched and began work on a possible draft design. Although unable to attend the International Focusing Conference, she was inspired to connect virtually and to write her own piece from her 'armchair'. Alex also edited Ifat's article. Having been a co-editor, she chose to step down in October. Thanks Alex for your input into our planning meetings and for your contribution to this edition of the newsletter.

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Conference Photo Roundup



From Susan on the Sofa

By Susan Jordan

I've been a member of BFA since 2003 but had never been to an International Focusing Conference before. To be quite honest, I'd never particularly wanted to. The expense was an obstacle, for one thing, and the idea of a big conference, even a Focusing one, didn't greatly appeal. This year, as it was in Cambridge, which I love, and as I'm a sofa-person of BFA, I decided I couldn't very well duck out, though I was almost sure I wouldn't enjoy it. More than 250 people, all that noise, *talking about* Focusing rather than doing it, standing around with a social smile on my face and trying to think of things to say, having to listen to lectures and be intelligent about them afterwards...

Well, it wasn't like that. To start with, there weren't any lectures. People gathered *en masse* for the attunements and evening activities, but apart from that nearly everything was done in small groups. There were slots for Focusing with a partner – though as a helper I couldn't always use them – and the workshops I attended were as experiential and Focusing-oriented as anyone could wish. And there's always something very special about being among Focusing people. Whatever language you speak – and the conference was definitely multilingual, with large Chinese and Japanese contingents – there's the same commitment to sensing into what's there, the same openness, the same willingness to listen.

“Whatever language you speak – and the conference was definitely multilingual, with large Chinese and Japanese contingents – there's the same commitment to sensing into what's there, the same openness, the same willingness to listen.”

For me one of the most enjoyable parts of the conference was the interest group I joined: Focusing in Nature, led by Karen Liebenguth. It was a delight to be Focusing in the college garden in the blazing sunshine – we happened to be there in a heatwave – and connecting with nature added an important dimension. Anyone could offer to facilitate an interest group, and there was no shortage of variety. Focusing and Spirituality, Focusing and the Global Situation and the 'No-interest Interest Group' were some of the others on offer. The workshops were equally varied in the areas they explored, showing that virtually anything can be approached in a Focusing way – and enriched by it. I chose some of the more experiential options: Focusing and Tango, Improvisation, Storytelling, Conversation, and Mandala Drawing. This last workshop, led by Tine Swyngedou from Belgium, included writing poems based on people's responses to our drawings. I was honoured to receive comments in Japanese script and to have my English 'haiku' translated into Japanese.



Excellent and nourishing though the workshops were, the conference had other highlights too. Unfortunately I missed Rob Foxcroft's Focusing with Art at the Fitzwilliam Museum, but for me the dinner at King's College was something unforgettable. As we arrived, we were greeted by an angelic host singing under an archway (*photo*). Locana, one of the conference organisers and a highly accomplished singer, is part of a Cambridge chamber choir and had persuaded them to perform for us. The dinner itself, in King's magnificent hall, was accompanied by more singing. The choir's varied repertoire ranged

from Tudor motets to Gospel to a brilliant spoken fugue on the titles of Shakespeare's plays.

There was more Shakespeare too: actors from college productions performing scenes to us as we sat picnicking under the trees. In a lighter vein, we had a bear wandering among us and a town crier summoning us to the workshops. And of course the Focusing Follies, which included performances by many talented musicians and poets as well as Darth Vader arriving for a first Focusing session (brilliantly done by Manjudeva as heavy-breathing Darth and Kay Hoffmann as the ever-responsive companion) and – ahem – several appearances by the Queen, with an HMQ mask, a handbag, a pantomime horse (a spirited turn by Chiara Vincenti and Harriet Brown) and a highly non-traditional lady-in-waiting (Karunamati). I got quite used to being called 'Your Majesty' and someone even curtseyed to me afterwards!

So that was my conference. I could say much more, but the important thing to end with is an enormous thank-you to Peter Afford, who masterminded the whole thing, Maymay Knight, the conference administrator, and Kay Hoffmann, Locana and Manjudeva, the other members of the organising committee, who worked tirelessly to make sure everything ran smoothly and nothing was forgotten. Like a lot of people, I can honestly say it was the best conference I've ever been to!



***Susan Jordan** is a sofa-person of the BFA together with Rob Foxcroft. She has been a Focusing practitioner and teacher since 2003 and is also a Core Process (Buddhist-based) psychotherapist and supervisor. She runs workshops on Focusing for Psychotherapists and Focusing for Writers and is interested in the crossovers between Focusing and Buddhist meditation.*

Besides teaching Focusing and being a committed Focuser, she is a writer and poet; her first poetry collection will be published in 2017. She lives in Devon, close to Dartmoor, and loves the moor and the south Devon coast.

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Magical Moments at Conference

Memories and reflections of the 2016 International Focusing Conference. Compiled by Pamela Carr

Recalling Magical Moments

After having an amazing time at the Cambridge Conference I had so many ideas bubbling up on the way home that I decided to break my car journey a couple of times. I simply sat with a drink, relaxed and began to write. I realised there was more treasure to be found in all that had happened, in those curious challenges as well as the joyful meetings, openings and sharing. So I made plans to spend more time reflecting when I got home. Caught up in traffic and stopped in a queue on the motorway, I saw this painted on the car in front: *"If It doesn't make you smile, don't do it!"* It did make me smile and I even had time to take a photo on my phone.



Later I decided to turn the phrase into an affirmation:

"If it's making me smile, I'm saying 'yes,' and I'm doing it!"

Recalling my own magical moments inspired me to create this article. Some of you generously responded to my online request by writing about things that made/are making you smile and that inspired you to say "Yes, I'm sharing this with others." Thank you again for offering your beautiful threads for this weaving...

Tour of Clare College. Bruce Gibbs (USA)

Helen Evans, who was a participant at the conference and who went to school at Clare College, took me and Mary Elaine on a tour of Clare College after the dinner at King's College. It was around 10 o'clock and she told us stories about her time there and a bit about the history of the College.

The place was magical. The feel of a powerful history was everywhere. Images of students from hundreds of years of study filled my mind. It was worth the whole time there for that hour or so. I am still feeling the gratitude...

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Losing and Finding

At the end of a workshop I realised I'd misplaced my reading glasses and a quick search failed to bring them to light. Recalling the mention of a lost property box I went to search for it at the Helpdesk. Resting on top was my small brown glasses case. Gratitude flooded through me at the finding. I turned towards one of the helpers, Harriet, and asked if she would share a 'thank you' hug – symbolic of the gratitude I was feeling towards the unknown person who had, moments before, retrieved and handed in the case. As we both walked outside she asked if she could share something with me that had resonated with her during a workshop and that I might enjoy too. It was a Joy Practice...

How to Squeeze in Joy. Harriet Brown (UK)

My conference highlight was an exercise from Paula Nowick's workshop. She suggested we play around with 'wishful thinking', encouraging us to wish for something we actually have:

I wish I had... e.g. *The chance to share this wonderful thing I learnt at conference!*

O look, I do!

WOW, I am so lucky!

If we wanted to, we could trade 'lucky' for another word: grateful, blessed, pleased...

This exercise has been a great pick-me-up if I'm feeling a bit flat. It also helps me reframe tricky situations:

E.g. *I wish I knew I'm unlikely to stay in touch, so that I can say so and manage our expectations.
O look, I do know!
WOW, I am so lucky!*

I had carried a lot of shame from this: meeting people, enjoying time together, and then just not keeping in touch! Since I voiced those "I wish..." words, something has changed in me. I *have* got in touch with a couple of people and I'm less self-critical about the people I could have been in touch with and haven't. And, from this place of positivity, who knows, maybe I will be in touch!

Paula offered many other joy practices, but you'll have to read her book for those!

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Relaxing In Nature

Capturing one participant's magical moment – a photo taken by Pamela in Robinson College gardens.



'Focusing and Healing' touched me. Cynthia Morgan (UK)

A personal special moment (or moments!) came for me almost at the end of the conference. I'd injured my calf muscle (yes, dancing) and was hobbling out of the auditorium after a sleepless and very painful night. I honestly didn't know how I was going to manage the journey home. Then I was spotted by the X-ray eyes of Pamela Carr. She approached me and offered some hands-on healing, which she gave very caringly along with much other practical help, really needed at that time. So, a loud thank-you Pam for all you did that morning!

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Ram's Stone-sensing

My curiosity was aroused one evening when Ram Eisenberg brought dishes of sand and stones to our dinner table at Robinson College. He then introduced three of us to the Focusing game he calls Stone-sensing, which is inspired by the art of the Japanese stone garden. Several others came to stand behind us, eager to watch what was happening.

We slowly took turns to choose a stone and decide where to place it on the neatly brushed sand until we all knew that our shared miniature landscape was complete. Thanks Ram, this was a magical experience for me. It gave me a playful new way of tasting Focusing skills: pausing and sensing what is needed, pausing and placing, then pausing and checking, in interaction with others and with very few words.

www.focusing.org/events/international-conference-2016/ has more about Ram's workshop called Tasting, Dipping and Diving.



Pamela Carr is a Certified Focusing Practitioner and Teacher and loves to introduce new people to Focusing. She is also enthusiastic about how Focusing is crossing with some of her additional skills and is currently offering Mindfulness and Focusing Walks in Nature; Focusing and Relaxation; Focusing and Touch for Healing and Focusing and Creative Writing. Whatever benefits her own health, wellbeing and personal development is what she loves to share with others so they can benefit too.

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The International Focusing Conference 2016: A View from an Armchair!

By Alex Brew

This year, for the first time, Focusers who were not at the International Conference were able to access it via live streaming. Not only could we watch the happenings, we were even asked to participate. In Nina Joy and Pat Omidian's workshop "Listening Our Shared World Into Being" the group in Cambridge gathered around the laptop and microphone so those of us online could see everyone and be seen by everyone! We also enjoyed a pop up from off-campus on energy flow hosted by Christel Kraft, who lives in Canada.

In the workshops I attended there were participants accessing online from the USA, Canada, Costa Rica, Argentina, Luxembourg and London. In total 26 people registered on the portal and 20 attended presentations – all for free. Seven presentations were offered online, two co-ordinator check-in meetings and five conference gatherings.

As someone based in the UK who has spent a lot of time involved in activism and support work, I didn't have the funds to take part in the conference and knew I wouldn't be able to travel afar for the next one. It was a great relief to me to find out I would be able to access some of what was happening for free online! I had no idea that it would also give me the chance to get to know some of those in the international community – but it did!

This new way of accessing the International Conference came after Christel Kraft, who is 85 years old and a carer for her husband, expressed regret at not being able to attend. Nina Joy, Mary Klein, Pat Omidian and Christel discussed possibilities and came up with the idea of asking Focusers attending to take part in some Skype calls with Christel and others unable to attend either due to ill health, cost or concerns for the environmental impact of flying.

Olivier Gourmet, Certifying Focusing Coordinator from Belgium and based in Luxembourg, got word of technical difficulties involved in streaming from the conference raised by Peter Afford on the Focusing Coordinator's list. Olivier suggested using Zoom to broadcast presentations online and proposed a dynamic timetable of available presentations on the European Focusing portal www.focusingeurope.eu. The Community Wellness groups really took it up, live streaming most of their workshops from the Cambridge gathering. We were even able to get word from Gaza and the Palestinian Trauma Centre based there via the connection.

A group has now formed to look at ways of making the International Conference more accessible to all in future. More power to us!



Alex Brew has worked for the last decade as an activist and artist and she is a BFA-recognised Focusing Practitioner. She loves doing one-to-one sessions with people, helping them to go deeper with their own Focusing practice and uncovering the life moving in them. Alex is also using Focusing as a way of deepening and engaging with her own art and activism. More can be found about that work on <https://drawingonfocusing.wordpress.com/>

Alex is involved with the Women's Health Project London offering one-to-one sessions with women who've experienced prison and detention and she is interested in offering more workshops and one-to-one sessions to activists and artists for their own self-care but also for developing their work. alexandbrew@gmail.com

Focusing in Nature: *Can being in nature support, deepen and expand our Focusing experience?*

By Karen Liebenguth

As a life coach, I specialise in working in natural green space, offering coaching while walking in London's parks, tapping into the beneficial impact nature has on our overall wellbeing. What a delight it was therefore to be able to share my direct experience of working in nature with this interest group around the theme 'Focusing in Nature'.

This broad theme gave us space for curiosity and exploration. We examined how natural settings can support, inform and deepen our Focusing experience, either when walking by yourself or with a Focusing partner, sitting on the grass or under a tree...

We began each session by standing in a circle with our bare feet on the grass and sensing from the outside in: sensing the open sky above our heads, the earth beneath our feet, the texture of the grass, the air on our skin, the trees around us, the birdsong in our ears... and making contact with our bodies, sensing for all the possible different 'somethings' inside in that very moment.

Next we spent about 10 minutes on our own to continue more fully sensing inside for what wanted to come forward, wanted to be known or seen and how that might be reflected in the natural settings around us. For example, in the shape of a tree or the look of a leaf or in the sound of the small waterfall nearby - one of the participants felt that the shimmering softness of the dew drops on a cobweb mirrored the tenderness she was experiencing within.

After tuning in and spending a Focusing moment on our own we did some Focusing in pairs walking, standing or sitting in nature.

Expanding the Focusing field

We discovered that through connecting with nature using our senses with more awareness, we could more easily sense inside for what was in our bodily experience, to what wanted to be known, to be heard, to come forward.

We experienced that the boundaries between the outer and inner, between us and nature are fluid because we are part of nature. So opening our senses to our natural environment helped us to expand our Focusing field. Nature acted as a safe container - bigger than ourselves - to hold and make space for whatever needed to be there, to come forward and be held.

Focusing While Walking

We explored Focusing while walking and experimented with the Focuser having their eyes open and closed. Those who trialled Focusing with their eyes closed shared with us that it deepened their sense of trust, in the other person and also in themselves which in turn allowed them to go more deeply into their experience while being guided by their Focusing partner and held by the wider natural setting around them.

We were really surprised by how much being in nature offered our Focusing experience, the open sky and being surrounded by green space deepened and enhanced our experience, giving us a different way of sensing inside.



"Focusing in Nature: that sounded a very appealing title - it would be a welcome change from being inside - and it was. And it was much, much more... We met in the garden each morning, and Karen led us through seemingly simple exercises - with much more profound effects.

Spending time in the natural world and giving our time to Focus on our surroundings, and on natural objects that can be seen, heard or felt brings insights into areas of our lives - sometimes surprising insights. In Karen's words "where the contours between you and nature feel more fluid, where you can sense the inner and outer flow of everything being in process, in flow" - that flow brings new perspectives, new awareness.

Thank you Karen for those mornings of peaceful integration with the natural world and each other."
Carolann (UK)

Why not try Focusing in Nature for yourself or when working with a group in green space. Here are some practices we shared:

Coming Back to Your Senses or 4-3-2-1 Exercise

Begin by choosing whether you'd like to do this exercise sitting or walking. If you decide to walk, you might like to walk across the grass and if it's warm take off your shoes.

- Feel your feet on the ground and take a few deeper breaths...Take a moment and feel your breath in your body while sitting or walking...
- Next start by naming 4 things you can **see** from where you are sitting or walking...
- Then name 4 things you can **hear**. Listen to each sound, let it come to you, let it enter your ears, let it land and resonate...
- Then continue with 4 things you can **feel** - physical sensations - again, feel one feeling at a time.
- Then go on to name 3 things you can see, hear and feel, then 2 things you can see, hear and feel... and then 1 thing...

Try to identify different things for each of the 4 stages. This will heighten your experience in nature and help to ground you in the present moment which will in turn help you to contact your body and what's there for you.

The Inner and the Outer Exercise

- Take some time to wander around sensing inside for how your life is going right now, for what is alive or shy and/or sad or doesn't know...
- Then slowly open your senses to the nature around you and sense for something in your natural surroundings that reflects or symbolises something inside that perhaps feels fuzzy or vague.
- Let this help you be with that which wants to come forward... It may be the shape of a tree or a flower or the form of a cloud in the sky that reflects exactly something that wants to be known in this moment...

Karen Liebenguth is a BFA Focusing Practitioner, a qualified Coach and an accredited Mindfulness Teacher. She works with individuals and organisations to foster personal development. Karen specialises in working with clients outdoors in London's parks and green space because she believes that's where insight, change and creativity can happen most naturally. If you have a question or would like to talk more with Karen about her approach, feel free to contact her.

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Focusing as a Sacred Bridge to our Innate Sense of Wholeness

By Ifat Eckstein

The aim of this article is to bring a taste of the workshop I gave at the Cambridge International Focusing Conference 2016. Built around a case study of process, the workshop took us on a joint and personal journey into the nature of the Focusing process and some of the diverse dimensions held within.

Maya's Focusing process

I met Maya (a pseudonym) at a workshop I gave on working with the inner child through Focusing: a 37 year old mother, petite and very quiet. In the workshop we tried to reconnect to the organic child in each of us, to sense the pure essence of curiosity, laughter and happiness to discover life. When the participants went to do a Focusing process with partners, Maya called me for help. They didn't know how to take the process that was unfolding a step forward.

Maya: I feel a deep longing to sense natural flowing happiness, like children have. I don't have any memory of this kind of experience. I don't have it in my body... Most of the time I feel the heaviness of life and things don't work out as I expected.

I invited Maya to give room to this longing, the wish to feel pure, childlike happiness...

She was with it and after a while she continued: *I can't find a bit of happiness in my body... it's like there is no taste of it in my cells.*

And then she went on: *I can connect to myself as a baby, and feel that I started this life with anger.*

Long silence, and then she continued: *If I want to reconnect to a feeling of flowing happiness, I need to go way back before my conception.*

Following the unfolding process, I asked her if she can go there, try to reconnect to herself before coming here. And she did. After a while she said very slowly: *I have a connection with my spiritual being... the spiritual being I was before arriving here.*

When she said that, there was some relief and expansion in her body. She felt she could rest a little bit, but she added immediately: *There is no connection between the spiritual me and the baby.*

Both of us were in presence with the painful split...

Then she continued, her voice was low and quiet: *The baby felt abandoned, she didn't want to come 'here'. She felt abandoned and betrayed... the sensation is like, the baby was pushed down 'here' to Earth from 'there'. The baby didn't want to come to Earth.*

I asked her to be with the baby... to accompany her... to let the baby feel she is with her.

Silence. After a while she said: *All my life I have wanted to go back 'there'... to be in the spiritual realm... not 'here'. I was with her, feeling the division she made between 'here' and 'there'. Feeling with her the pain she felt for being abandoned.*

I hesitated where to go from there, sensing it will be good to reconnect to her spiritual part, maybe some healing will come from that place. I asked her if she can reconnect again to the spiritual Maya. She agreed, but mentioned again that there is no connection for her between the spiritual Maya and the baby. I said it is ok, just to feel her presence now.

We were all in One space: the spiritual Maya, the adult Maya, the new born baby and me. Quiet.

After a while, a deep insight arose within her: *Since the baby had not wanted to come and felt pushed to be here, the baby decided to show God that she is angry and not pleased.*

She was surprised at what was coming out from inside. When she said it aloud, there was a shift. We gave room for this insight, giving the body time to adjust to the new information. Long silence... so many things happened inside in a quiet way... no words... just deep breath. A little later, she continued: *A connection is beginning to emerge between the spiritual Maya and the baby.* Another shift. It was a sacred moment... to feel how things become connected, letting the threads unfold, and the body absorb new life movement.

Maya opened her eyes, looked at me and said: *Now I can feel this thread between my spiritual soul, me and the baby.* Slowly, she continued: *I feel so quiet inside, so quiet.* We let this moment be.

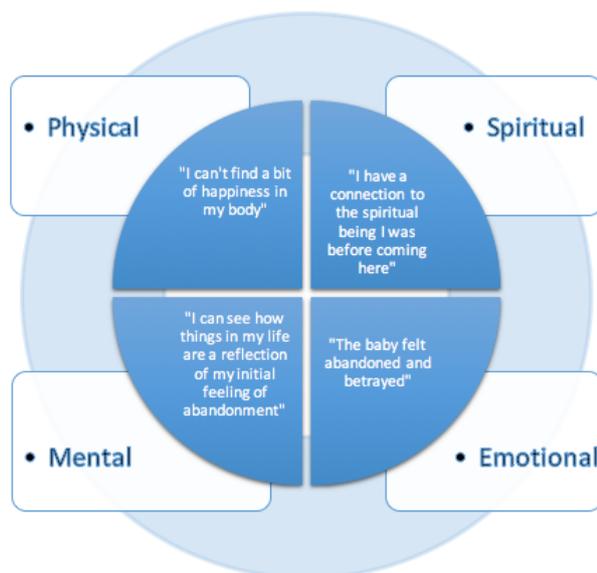
"Maya opened her eyes, looked at me and said: Now I can feel this thread between my spiritual soul, me and the baby. Slowly, she continued: I feel so quiet inside, so quiet. We let this moment be."

A week later in a conversation, Maya shared that many insights were coming to her. She could see how things in her life now were a reflection of her initial feeling of abandonment, and how she projected her anger and dissatisfaction in many relationships in her life. She realized that baby Maya had not felt connected to spiritual Maya because of all the anger she was holding. Realizing this brought more healing.

Maya's case represents one kind of split: a split of consciousness between the physical and the spiritual, between a hard life experienced 'here' on Earth and a longing for the spiritual realm experienced 'there'. This split did not enable her to feel a complete sense of belonging in this world.

As a therapist, working for many years with trauma, I have developed deep understandings and respect for split and fragmentation processes that usually take place for emotional survival. I have learned to work with these splits in a very gentle and organic way. The Focusing process enables integration between the spiritual, emotional, physical and mental, as One whole. Maya's process reflects a split and how through Focusing, threads of connection began to emerge, creating new life movement.

Integration as One Whole in the Process



To manifest ourselves, we need to be in our body where we can experience the integration of all the dimensions held there. Our body is the place where we can feel, sense, experience and connect to 'here' and 'there'. It holds the opportunity to feel more. Through our natural body, we have the capacity to expand ourselves and to shift consciousness. We can connect to the wisdom within and the wisdom beyond, to the large universe and feel our innate undivided connection to the whole.

In *A Process Model*, Gendlin explains to us the undivided life, and that our body is a continuation of the universe, not a separate entity. He does not use spiritual concepts. He brings the flow, the inner original coordination, undivided processes. He invites us to feel this unseen realm directly through our body,

to feel the many processes that are held in one focal moment and how all this influences the whole.

Why don't we naturally feel the connection to a broader existence, to a bigger whole? How can connecting to something broader bring a sense of belonging and grounding in life, enabling us to fulfill ourselves more fully? What are the barriers that prevent us from opening ourselves to our deep connection to the more?

Barriers to Sensing the Wholeness

We are in form and we see other forms but not the interconnection between them. The interconnection contains an infinite past, present and future as One whole. This is something we can sense.

Our left brain, often more dominant than the right brain, consistently searches for linearity, causality, sequences, rules and categories. From this perspective it is impossible to capture the whole picture.

Culture encourages development of individualism and acknowledges personal achievement, less emphasizing the interdependence we have on and in each other.

On a psychological level: disowning or repressing certain aspects of ourselves leads to fragmentation. This happens as part of a survival mechanism and leads us to feel lacking, incomplete, anxious, unprotected and lonely. As a result, we lack the sense of wholeness.

Fear of letting go and surrendering to the experience: fear of losing ourselves, losing control, and more.

Fear: states of fear contract us, making us feel small and unprotected.

Deep observation of these barriers reveals that each one holds the key to moving beyond, towards expansion. For example, we can practise using the right side of the brain thereby allowing ourselves to naturally sense wholeness; we can raise our social awareness and become more conscious of our mutual dependence and the connection between things. We can explore our spiritual being, developing inner tools and ways to move between contracted and expansive states.

Our sense of belonging to this world can grow when we open our awareness to the vast levels of consciousness that exist within us. These states of consciousness are deeply influenced by, and deeply influence us, in all our dimensions of being. There are moments in processes where the possibility exists to move through states of consciousness. In the work with Maya, several levels of consciousness were experienced as *one* process, opening for her the opportunity to feel a moment of wholeness within herself, and to release the experience of split held inside since conception.

In Focusing, we can learn to sense states of consciousness, and in a gentle way to bring invitations to explore and use them for our healing, expansion and grounding in this world. Focusing is a sacred bridge to our innate sense of wholeness.



Ifat Eckstein is a Focusing Coordinator living in Israel. She is a therapist and supervisor of Couple & Family Therapy. Ifat holds a master's in social work, is a trainer of therapists, FOT, lecturer and writer. In her practice, Ifat is interested in the interface between spiritual dimensions and FOT.

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Camouflage in Focusing – Look Again!

By Marcella Calabi

Going deeper

Shortly before the 2016 International Focusing Conference, a young woman expressed real distress to me over her impending move from one location to a new and distant one. She was afraid to lose the contentment she had experienced where she was, and she was afraid to miss out on the good she expected in her new city. Reflection (it was actually Focusing, but she didn't know that word) revealed what many of us might call the layers "underneath" – a belief that her happiness depended on making the right choice, and a feeling of vulnerability to the people she would encounter in either place. When she was caught up in deciding whether to go or stay, she was not consciously aware of these, but she was being ruled by them. Who among us has not had an experience like this?

Of course our circumstances affect our happiness. Yet recognizing our vulnerabilities allows us to look at them and measure them with new perspective. Furthermore it was a shock to this young woman to realize that she wasn't actually worrying about what town she lived in – she was worrying about being happy. Then she was able to say, "Oh, I get it: I want to be happy whichever place I'm in. And it's not just the other people who have a say in whether or not I'm happy, I have a lot to do with that myself!" The matter stopped being about "getting the decision right" and generated instead a fresh awareness that she could bring her full sense of agency and her own pursuit of happiness with her wherever she went. And who among us has not felt such relief from "going deeper"?

Hiding in plain sight

I want to suggest a change of vocabulary that might help us capitalize even more on what Focusing has to offer. Rather than saying that this young woman's fears and beliefs were underneath her indecision, let us say they were *hiding in plain sight*. They didn't have to be excavated; they were right there all along, only unperceived.

"Flounders are fish that lie on the sea floor and blend in so well they are almost invisible. I analogized the sea floor to our most deeply held values, and flounders to beliefs and assumptions that seem like our core values but actually aren't."

My presentation in Cambridge was about the idea of camouflage – the way animals and plants can be right there in front of us but we don't see them because they blend in with the environment so well. They are obscured by our expectations: we don't see them because we don't realize they're there, and we don't realize they're there because we don't see them. I offered the notion of camouflage simply to encourage a closer look.

I also proposed a particular idea about "flounders". Flounders are fish that lie on the sea floor and blend in so well they are almost invisible. I analogized the sea floor to our most deeply held values, and flounders to beliefs and assumptions that *seem like* our core values but actually aren't. In my experience, such beliefs and assumptions tend to be the most influential, right-in-front-of-us-and-yet-nearly-invisible factors in our troubles. By calling them "flounders," I want to encourage us look for and see them. It is vitally important in our lives to recognize the difference between our core "sea floor" values and the counterfeits that can so mislead us.

The statement "I want to be happy" comes from the essential life-forward impulse. "I have responsibility for and agency in my own happiness" is a profound truth. Both of these following statements seem, at their outset, to be of a piece with that truth:

- (A) "I have agency in how I react to others, in how I influence my relationships with others, and in leaving a situation if it turns out to be unsustainable" and
- (B) "I have agency in that it's up to me to make this choice. So I have to make it correctly, because if I go to a

place where people make me unhappy I will have done the wrong thing.”
I hope you can see that (A) belongs to the sea floor and (B) is a flounder.

A summary of my presentation can be seen on the conference website: look under ‘Papers’ on <http://www.focusingconference2016.uk> I’ve also tried to capture the whole presentation (retrospectively) in writing and you can write to me if you want to see that. This current article gives me a chance to add a few points that are more “meta.”

What is core... and what isn’t?

We know that, with Focusing, we can bring to awareness what is within us, and we might use Gendlin’s phrase “What comes is...” to express it. I want to underscore something in addition: if we choose, Focusing as a practice can also enhance our ability to sense, more quickly and accurately, *what*, of “what comes,” *is core*. You might call the “sea floor” Self in Presence, or Ground of Being, or any of the other terms that different schools of thought within Focusing use, with subtle and potentially important differences among them. Whichever concept we adopt, the more we understand what is true to our core being and what is not, the healthier we are.

We also know that Focusing helps us sense what we might otherwise ignore. (Just noticing feelings and sensations, though different from perceiving a felt sense, is in itself a radical experience for people who habitually block their awareness. Mindfulness and other practices help with this. Focusing begins here.) Nonetheless, we may be blind and deaf and insensate for years to important things that are hiding in plain sight.

“We may be blind and deaf and insensate for years to important things that are hiding in plain sight.”

There is more we can do actively, to see what is there, to achieve insights and to create the conditions for felt shifts. Namely, even if we don’t “feel” something in this moment, we can expect that unspoken assumptions and other hidden factors are at play, we can learn what their patterns might be, and we can invite them to show themselves.

I learned to look for such factors long before I encountered Focusing; I’m thrilled by what Focusing has added in the way of deeper perception; and I’m always delighted to learn more clues about what I might be missing. (Ann Weiser Cornell and Barbara McGavin’s ‘Treasure Maps’ work teaches a trove of such clues. TAE and Robert Lee’s ‘Domain’ protocols suggest questions that can point to the “more” that could be there, and Karen Whalen’s teaching of Relational Wholebody Focusing made me appreciate different dimensions.)

Inferring the presence of something we do not sense may trigger a worry about “being in your head,” or seem to challenge the basic notion that Focusing means attending only to what we feel in this moment. But honoring the felt sense does not mean we should miss out on the value of cognition, and our curiosity can surely encompass what might or might not turn out – when we look for it – to have been there all along.

Put it this way: if there is a critter camouflaged in your yard, you have a much better chance of glimpsing it, never mind coaxing it to eat from your hand, if you have a suspicion that it could be there in the first place. Let’s talk more about this. I invite your responses and questions.

Marcella Calabi helps people find their voice and live from it. She is an outside-the-box thinker, with training in music, negotiation/mediation, teaching/guiding, and is a Focusing professional. Marcella has been inspired by several meanings of the word voice: our physical voice and the self it expresses, our voice of personhood manifested in word and action, and our inner voices accessed with Focusing. Marcella lives in New York.

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Poetry and Focusing

By Lesley Miles

This is what I wrote to introduce the workshop I presented at the International Focusing Conference:

"sometimes I am alive because..." (ee cummings)

Poetry as richly layered language offers powerful ways of entry into the felt sense. Using different kinds of poetry — funny, inspirational, shocking — to evoke felt sense responses, we'll move from group experience into partner work. There will be space for written expression as arising from earlier felt-sensing. I am also interested in the application of this modality to Focusing-oriented Psychotherapy and hope there will be time for this discussion. Playfulness is the wellspring of this workshop.

Hmmmm... I had eight poems, short-ish, wonderful, and more or less complex. Eight poems that I planned to read three times each, and have people listen deeply with their bodies, find the felt sense responses, then share, and after that work in pairs with the poems. I had no idea who would turn up. At first just one came, then two, then three, then a few more.

Suddenly four Chinese people arrived. Two could not speak English, one could, and one was a translator for the ones who could not! What to do? I had nine participants, of whom two could not speak English! A couple of the English-speaking ones had German as their first language. Wow. Although I had noticed that there was a translator at the conference, well... I had not entertained the idea that I might get participants who could not speak English at all! Okay...translation???

In the end after some discussion, the translator and I agreed that I would read each poem once, she would translate and then I would read it two more times. It worked!

Then the Chinese Focusers read us a Chinese poem, which we listened to. It was beautiful. We English-speakers could not understand the words and they told us what it meant.

The responses and sharing of them in the group went well. After the paired work (and one group of three) they all returned in great excitement. The sharing was so rich! "What drugs did you put us on?" someone asked. In the very last ten minutes, they did some free-writing, and each produced mind-blowing short pieces of writing...like gifts from heaven. Moving and deep and spontaneously beautifully constructed. Each so different. I was breath-taken.

The colliding of the subjectivities and poetic expressions has an exponential effect on the stimulation of resonantly-layered responses. (In Focusing this is called "crossing"). There is the poem, the poet, the listening many times, the group. What a learning experience we had. We all felt that this could go much further. It was a taste. And the translator, when I bumped into her the next day, told me that they—the Chinese participants—had gleaned ideas from the workshop that they could use for themselves in their work. I was impressed by how sensitively the issue of language was dealt with at the conference and pleased that I had successfully brought inspiration about Focusing and Poetry to my own multi-lingual group.

If you are feeling inspired to have a go at Focusing with a poem, here is ee cummings' poem, or you might choose another one which already resonates with you. My sense is that one of the main criteria when choosing is that the poem is not very long (one page max) and that it is not TOO complex. Also some of the poems I choose are "Focusing-like" or related to Focusing ideas. There are those that are poignant, or painful to hear. They are not all light or easy.

sometimes I am alive because...

sometimes i am alive because with
me her alert treelike body sleeps
which i will feel slowly sharpening
becoming distinct with love slowly,
who in my shoulder sinks sweetly teeth
until we shall attain the Springsmelling
intense large togethercoloured instant
the moment pleasantly frightful
when, her mouth suddenly rising, wholly
begins with mine fiercely to fool
(and from my thighs which shrug and pant
a murdering rain leapingly reaches the
upward singular deepest flower which she
carries in a gesture of her hips).

ee cummings



Lesley Miles lives in Cape Town and is a clinical psychologist and Focusing-oriented therapist, working also from a self-and-relational perspective. She is one of a "small, passionate group of FOTs" in Cape Town. Lesley has an MA in English on the novels of Alice Walker, written within a feminist theoretical framework. She lives with her daughter, one dog, and one cat. For her, "bliss is swimming in the ocean and walking on the mountain". Lesley also writes poetry, and adores fringe theatre.

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Radical Acceptance of Everything:

What the **** does that REALLY mean?

By Barbara McGavin

Ann Weiser Cornell and I have been talking about the Radical Acceptance of Everything for years – and I know that phrase is open to radical misunderstanding. It can sound as if we are saying that you should accept everything about everything and everyone in a completely uncritical way. But what about what's happening in Syria? And what about when people hurt other people? What do you do when you feel angry and upset and sad about things that are happening in your own personal world or the wider one?

More important than what Ann or I say or think about this, I wanted the workshop in Cambridge to be an opportunity to sense into what this means for you. So here are the questions that I offered to those that joined me for that workshop. I'd like to invite you to take some time now to sense into any of these questions that resonate for you:

So, what does it mean to *radically accept*?

How can you radically accept
what is inside you?
inside others?

What kinds of lines between 'okay' and 'not okay' should you draw?

Should you draw lines?

How would you do that in a way that is radically accepting? Is it possible to do it in a way that is radically accepting?

What would it mean to 'radically accept' people that you are in adamant disagreement with?

Do you want to?

How would you do that?

What kind of impact would that have in your life? How would it show up?

Is this something that you would want in your life?

How could/can you live in a way that doesn't make living in a radically accepting way into another 'should' that you then beat yourself up with (the exact opposite of radical acceptance ;-)?

What is your felt sense/experience of Radical Acceptance of Everything now?

In our work, Ann and I spend a lot of time with highly critical parts. They can behave in a downright mean way and it can be very challenging to keep them company without either feeling like their target or feeling like they should be controlled or even eradicated. However, without exception, when we have been able to keep company and be curious about what has them behaving as they do, there has been an extraordinary shift in how they are. A moment comes which we call *rapprochement*. In that moment, the positive motivation and lifelong dedication to our survival behind the mean words of the part is revealed and its exhaustion and loneliness can be empathised with. Its fears for us are able to emerge and what just seemed like it being mean and nasty and cruel now makes sense in this larger context of its fears for our survival.

Just recently I read that the Dali Lama makes a differentiation between being angry about the action taken and being angry with the person who did the action. He can be compassionate towards the person even while he is angry about the action. This is so different from the labelling or name calling which is ubiquitous in our culture: He *is* a pig. She *is* a bitch. Labelling is a way of not acknowledging our own experience of upset, distress and anger. We fall into it and react from there. I can feel it at work daily as the Presidential election draws nearer. I can feel the tug to call Trump names. It is much more challenging to be with the emotions and sensations that are swirling around inside: nausea, fear, sadness, feeling powerless, a kind of sinking in my middle... And even more challenging to be curious about what is behind my kind neighbour saying that she is going to vote for him.

What kind of a world is created when I live in a radically accepting way? I'm not wanting an anodyne niceness. I want a richness and fullness of living that includes my anger and outrage and that leans into life and fully interacts with what is painful and difficult – with care and strength and courage and love. It is not easy. I fail – often. And part of the journey? challenge? is being radically accepting to myself and all my parts even as I fail and then sense for how it could be different next time.

Barbara McGavin has been practicing Focusing since 1983. She helped found The British Focusing Network (BFN) and The British Focusing Teachers' Association (BFTA). She is a Certifying Coordinator for the Focusing Institute as well as an Accrediting Mentor for the British Focusing Association.

Barbara has been developing Inner Relationship Focusing with Ann Weiser Cornell since 1991, and both have been exploring Focusing in some of the most difficult areas of life. *Untangling (Treasure Maps to the Soul)* has grown out of this and is the core of Barbara's own Focusing practice.

Barbara's other great interest is in how Focusing can be used in the creative arts and she has developed a process called *From Spark to Beacon* to help people develop and release their creative capacities. bathfocusing@me.com



Unconditional

Willing to experience aloneness,
I discover connection everywhere;
Turning to face my fear,
I meet the warrior who lives within;
Opening to my loss,
I gain the embrace of the universe;
Surrendering into emptiness,
I find fullness without end.

Each condition I flee from pursues me,
Each condition I welcome transforms me
And becomes itself transformed
Into its radiant jewel-like essence.
I bow to the one who has made it so,
Who has crafted this Master Game.
To play it is purest delight;
To honor its form – true devotion.

Jennifer Welwood

Changing Shape through Acceptance, Engagement & Connection at the Cambridge Conference

By Gordon Adam

Backdrop

Since childhood I have found gatherings of large numbers of people difficult – a typical response being to become very self-conscious, to lose my sense of identity, to feel vulnerable and unsafe, and to be completely unable to enjoy whatever I was there for. Parties can trigger these feelings, as can weddings, big music festivals... and conferences.

The last major Focusing gathering I attended before this year's Cambridge Conference was the second UK Focusing School in East Anglia in 2014. I was already depressed before I came to Belsey Bridge and I found it difficult to concentrate on any of the workshops, dreaded going into the dining hall at every meal as I felt unable to make conversation with anyone, was kept awake by anxiety at night, and found it virtually impossible to Focus. I kept telling myself things would get better... but they didn't, and I eventually left the school a day early, feeling like a complete failure, and that I'd made the wrong decision to come to the event.

Nearly two years later, I couldn't quite believe that not only had I signed up as a helper for the International Focusing Conference in Cambridge, but I'd also offered to lead daily pre-breakfast qigong sessions, a workshop on Focusing and Touch, and to organise and be DJ for a last night disco! After my experience at Belsey Bridge, surely this was a recipe for disaster, humiliation and extreme embarrassment? However, I've now realised that there was some wisdom at work. I think that sub-consciously I knew that a different survival strategy was necessary if I was to make the most of being at the Cambridge Conference – in short I decided to become a facilitator rather than a participant. This strategy paid off – in ways I could never have imagined before the conference.

At the Conference

From the very beginning I was thrown into the 'front line' of engagement as I was paired up with Karen to greet delegates as they arrived on the pavement in front of Robinson College. So, ice-breaking from the word go... and Karen provided a good model of welcoming as she went right up to the taxis as people arrived and virtually helped people out of the taxi on to the street! So before the conference even started I had met over a hundred delegates from countries all over the world as they arrived. A lovely spin-off was making friends with Karen, whom I'd never met before.

After my afternoon stint of welcome duty I decided to get my camera out and took my first shots of newly-arrived people gathered around in the courtyard watching the Morris Dancers. The camera came and went throughout the 5 days of the conference and provided me with another opportunity to connect with what was happening, in this case without directly interacting with other people.

I took several hundred photos throughout the conference, many of which have been uploaded to the conference website:

www.focusingconference2016.uk/gallery.html



For much of the time during the conference there was so much to be done that I didn't have time to think about 'me', quite unlike my experience at Belsey Bridge two years before where I had felt trapped in a sense

of isolation and flawed me-ness. I did attend some workshops at Cambridge, and some were very good, but the thing I loved most and found of real value being at this conference was in my day to day interactions with people, Focusing and otherwise.

Connection & Community

My various roles gave me extra opportunities to meet and connect with lovely people from around the world. Some of those connections were very brief, yet all contributed to a rich tapestry of meetings and connections and a real sense of 'inter-being'. It is interesting to reflect that nearly all of the follow-on connection & communication has arisen with people that I first met through my roles of helper, qigong teacher, workshop facilitator, or DJ (vs. as conference participant)!

I had a strong desire to somehow capture this new web of people whilst it still felt alive in me after the conference and within about 24 hours of its end I had made 30 or 40 new Facebook Focusing friends (FFFs!) across the planet. These were people that I'd enjoyed interacting with during the conference. Several of these connections have led to ongoing contact, communication and Focusing with lovely new friends in various places around the world.

Changing Shape

With hindsight I realise that my various roles made me more visible, and that that visibility somehow helped me to take on a new shape during the days of the conference – a bigger, more expansive, more open shape – and that this change of shape was my own authentic response to being within this field of Focusers. The feeling of a change of shape corresponds with a sense of my heart also changing shape and becoming bigger and more open – there was a lot of love generated in our coming together and sharing of ourselves and our experiences. A third correspondence with the 'change of shape' image has been in in my Focusing network changing shape from a UK network to a global network of people, and this definitely feels new and different and has taken a while to get used to!

My feeling right now is that this change of shape is irreversible. I have continued to act and feel in a different way since the conference. I feel more open, closer to my feelings, more forthright, more pro-active, and even more confrontational, where this has felt appropriate.

Radical Acceptance

One of my favourite workshops during the conference was one on 'Radical Acceptance' by Barbara McGavin [see related article by Barbara elsewhere in this newsletter]. During this workshop I had a powerful insight, or clarification, of something that I think I already knew – something like:

Whenever I'm not accepting things as they are, I'm fighting with reality, and thereby causing suffering to myself and to other people. The second part of the insight was: ***And this comes from a need to try and control 'things as they are'... which in turn comes from fear, or lack of trust in existence.***

This insight resonates with my experience of being at the conference – my 'modus operandi' was to allow myself to open and respond to 'the field' of the conference from somewhere inside – which involved a lot of trust (in Focusing, Focusers and myself) and letting go... and this paid off, big time!

I wholeheartedly recommend attending the next conference if you can. International Conferences happen every one or two years and recent locations have been USA, Switzerland, Argentina, Germany and Japan. It looks unlikely that there will be a conference in 2017... but details will be posted in this newsletter as soon as a venue and date are agreed.

Gordon Adam lives in Bristol, where, for the last 8 years he has been working to build a local community of Focusers, through running Focusing workshops, introducing friends and acquaintances to Focusing at any opportunity, facilitating an open monthly Focusing group, and compiling a regular local Focusing newsletter. He also runs 5-day Focusing retreats on Dartmoor and in the Southwest, combining Focusing with elements of Buddhist and other 'presence practices'. Gordon also works as a homeopath and is co-editor of this newsletter.

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A FOCUSING APPROACH TO POSITIVE PSYCHOLOGY

By Joan Klagsburn

Focusing on What You Love: Crossing Focusing and Positive Psychology in Everyday Life

Most of us reflexively dwell on our problems and concerns. However, there is convincing recent research (by Barbara Frederickson (2009) and others) that demonstrate the wisdom of placing attention on positive experiences and positive feelings. When we are able to experience positive feelings such as gratitude, contentment, or enjoyment, we can actually think more effectively and expansively.

Positive emotions affect both personal and interpersonal domains. They broaden our attention and our thinking so we enlarge the scope of our thoughts and our perspective: they lead to more creative thinking and actions, and they build cognitive and social resources in ways that help us to become more resilient. People who have a higher ratio of 'positivity' to 'negativity' also have more energy and better health.



Focusing is a wonderful way to discover and to savor the positive aspects of our lives. When you have a wonderful experience hiking on a gorgeous trail, or seeing a great concert, it is even more powerful to pause afterwards and ask, what about this hike or concert was so special for me? What spoke to me? What touched me? And then wait for your 'body' to talk back to you. The experience takes on a new dimension and often the happiness these experiences induced lasts longer by spending time articulating the essence of what was so pleasurable or so meaningful.

Focusing is intrinsically an optimistic method; it is based on the understanding that *the Body knows what is needed* and that *the Body has a built-in tropism toward health*. Focusing on the positive realm helps it to grow. By slowing down and listening for the 'more,' you get both insights about what made something so positive, and you help yourself to deepen the experience.

"Joy is the happiness that doesn't depend on what happens."
Brother David Stendl Rast

Positive Psychology

- Studies strengths and virtues that lead to flourishing in individuals, communities and countries.
- Aims to understand the components of well-being (optimism, courage, gratitude, resilience, hope, happiness, joy, contentment...).
- Sixteen year old movement in evidence-based research begun by Martin Seligman.

Focusing is Intrinsically a Positive Process

- It invites an embodied experience (it helps turn a positive event into a positive experience).
- It invites savoring.
- It encourages us to treat ourselves with compassion and friendliness.
- It invites a life-forward direction for every issue.

"You feel better because your body feels better - more free, released. The whole body is alive in a less constricted way. No matter how frightening or intractable a problem looks when it comes to light, at the next shift, it may be quite different. Nothing that feels bad is ever the last step."

"The experience of something brings energy and feels like a relief or coming alive. One of the chief new principles is that the change process feels good."

Gene Gendlin (1981)

Five Ways to Invite Positive Transformative Moments through Focusing

- 1) Take note when you are in touch with a positive life energy (new vitality, assertiveness, some resilience, more energy, some excitement...) and invite yourself to Focus on it so you explore more about this.
- 2) Invite a positive event (a happy memory, good conversation, beautiful day, good mood, good news...) to become a felt experience – such that you spend 30 seconds taking it in. You might ask yourself what about this is touching me or pleasing me.
- 3) Encourage yourself to savor the experience of the felt shift... and see what more comes. Many times a bodily sense of peace, relaxation, spaciousness and well-being can be experienced more deeply if you invite yourself to stay with it.
- 4) Consciously slow down and bring attention to anything for which you are grateful or feel appreciative, such as a relationship that is going well for you or the myriad of gifts that the universe provides. You might Focus on the essence of what makes you so grateful for this.
- 5) When things are not going well, invite in the life forward direction by asking yourself "What is needed here, what would ease this difficulty or suffering, what would bring aliveness, what would it be like if this were all OK?"

Harvest Your Experiences

"Camus said aptly that after one day in the world you could spend the rest of your life in solitary confinement and you would still have dimensions of that day's experience left to decipher. So much happens to us of which we are unaware, even within the simple circle of a day. To visit the temple of memory is not merely to journey back to the past; it is rather to awaken and integrate everything that happens to you. It is part of the process of reflection that gives depth to experience.

We all have experiences, but as T. S. Eliot said, we had the experience but missed the meaning. Every human heart seeks meaning; for it is in meaning that our deepest shelter lies. Meaning is the sister of experience, and to discern the meaning of what has happened to you is one of the essential ways of finding your own inner belonging and discovering the sheltering presence of your soul.

There is an amazing line in the Bible from the prophet Haggai: "You have sown so much but harvested so little." Everything that happens to you is an act of sowing a seed of experience. It is equally important to be able to harvest that experience."

John O'Donohue ('Anam Cara)

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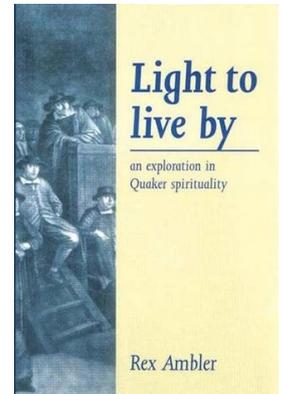
Joan Klagsbrun, Ph.D. is a psychologist who has been practicing for 35 years in the Boston area in Massachusetts, and has been teaching Focusing internationally for three decades. In her work at the interface of psychology and spirituality, she finds Focusing to be as effective for eliciting positive emotions as it is for working through difficulties.

Joan offered a popular and well received workshop at the 2016 International Focusing Conference and is delighted to have the opportunity to get this work out to a wider audience. She gave her permission for Pamela Carr to create this compilation from the workshop notes. joanklag@mac.com

Practitioner Profile – Fiona Owen

Greetings from Anglesey, North Wales. I have been invited to introduce myself, as a new member of BFA – my thanks to the editors for the opportunity to do so. I joined earlier this year, having completed my practitioner training with the very wonderful Kay Hoffmann. That I found my way to Kay still feels like a blessing, and Rob Foxcroft, too, as my secondary mentor. They were a perfect fit for me, as guides and mentors.

My first introduction to Focusing came via a slim volume by Quaker writer Rex Ambler called *Light to Live By*. Here, Rex shows how George Fox, founder of Quakerism, discovered that by looking within and ‘waiting in the Light’, beneficial inner change can come. In his *Journal* (1624-1691), Fox describes a process whereby allowing what is within us to gradually be revealed can bring us into greater relationship with Love, for ‘the measure is within, and the light is within and the pearl is within you’. Rex brings into his book Gendlin’s classic, *Focusing*, discussing Fox’s process in parallel with Gendlin’s in what has become a Quaker meditation called Experiment with Light, which I have been practising since 2008. From this, I was intrigued to know more about Focusing and, in 2012, found my way to Kay.



On reflection, I can also see that my relationship with a process similar to what happens in Focusing goes back decades – as a writer, a poet, with the page as my ‘partner’. Writing poetry – writing anything – is an act of attention, an inward ‘listening’ as well as an outward act of noticing what’s there and following words. In any genre of writing, we feel into what it is we are trying to say, what it is that might be trying to emerge, gain voice and move into utterance – sometimes despite our best laid plans! I am attracted to James Hillman’s notion of language as ‘angelology’ which reminds us that words can be ‘messengers’ bringing us ‘news’. The finding of form, the trying of words, testing which is the best ‘fit’, also has parallels in the Focusing process.

I had been using and teaching a technique called freewriting for years before I realised that Peter Elbow, who made it famous, was influenced by Gendlin and the Focusing process. The ‘permission’ to see, and know the body as intrinsic to the writing process was a liberating one, for its has tallied with my experience and broken away from the inherited orthodoxy that writing was solely an intellectual endeavour. Reading Peter Elbow’s *Writing with Power* and Sondra Perl’s *Felt Sense* further prompted me to find out more about Focusing.

Writing and Focusing are then, for me, profoundly connected, treasured aspects of my life, and I hope to bring them into ever greater relationship in my ongoing work and development as a Focusing practitioner.



*Fiona Owen has had five collections of poetry published, the latest being **The Green Gate** (2015). She teaches creative writing, literature and other arts/ humanities subjects for the Open University, runs events at Ucheldre Arts Centre, Holyhead, and writes and records songs with Gorwel Owen, the latest CD being **Releasing Birds**.*

Fiona is in training as a Poetry Therapy Practitioner and is hoping to develop sessions in Focusing and ‘writing for wellbeing’ around the theme of creative empowerment. She is pleased to put Wales on the map as a Focusing practitioner.

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Workshops, Events & Focusing Groups

Events in 2016

'Let Your Body Make Your Mind Up' (Focusing & decision making) with Peter Afford.
London. 25/26th November www.focusing.co.uk/workshops

'Listening to Your Inner Wisdom' (Introductory workshop) with Manjudeva.
North London, UK. 3/4th December 2016. <http://www.northlondonbuddhistcentre.com/?page=focusing>

'The Inner Compass: Focusing with Decisions' with Manjudeva
Bristol, UK. 10/11th December 2016. <http://www.livingfocusing.co.uk/follow-on.html>

'New Year Focusing Retreat' (5-day residential retreat) with Gordon Adam & Kay Hoffmann.
Herefordshire, UK. 28th December – 2nd January 2017.
<http://www.newportclinic.co.uk/classes-events/focusing-retreats/>

Events in 2017

'Focusing Skills Course' (Home study course) with Kay Hoffmann.
Starting January 2017. A combination of 16 Zoom seminars and one residential workshop.
kay.hoffmann@homecall.co.uk

'The Art of Focusing' (Introductory workshop) with Peter Afford.
London. 28/29th January 2017 www.focusing.co.uk/workshops

Focusing-Oriented Therapy Level 1 (BFA Skills Certificate) with John Threadgold.
SW London. 28/29th January 2017. <http://newfocustherapy.co.uk/about/focusing-training>

Focusing-Oriented Therapy Level 2 (BFA Skills Certificate) with John Threadgold.
SW London. 25/26th February 2017. <http://newfocustherapy.co.uk/about/focusing-training>

'Focusing in Helping Relationships' with Peter Afford.
London. 25/26th February 2017 www.focusing.co.uk/workshops

Focusing-Oriented Therapy Level 2 (BFA Skills Certificate) with John Threadgold.

Local Focusing Groups

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

Stroud Focusing Circle. Meets monthly in Stroud on the first Tuesday of the month from 7.30–9.45pm. Contact: Manjudeva manjudeva@gmail.com

Please send details of future events for inclusion in the next newsletter to Gordon, stating only Event title, Teacher, Venue, Date and Contact. No extra information sent will be included.

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 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 .

International Focusing Conference 2016 www.focusingconference2016.uk

As well as listing all of the workshops and presentations at the conference, the conference website also includes, amongst other things, a range of articles by workshop presenters, summaries of Focusing activity in different countries throughout the world, and a gallery with photos & videos from the conference.

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.

Newsletter Involvement & Contributions

Contributions to the newsletter are welcome and invited. This includes articles, poems (yours or someone else's), book reviews, photographs or pieces of art (photos of), news, event details, etc. Articles should generally be in the range of 500—1200 words. *As a guide, in this newsletter, Fiona Owen's profile was around 500 words, and Marcella Calabi's 'Camouflage' article was around 1200 words.*

Inclusion of articles will be at the discretion of the editors, and 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 are planning to publish the newsletter 3 or 4 times a year and would appreciate receiving your submissions as soon as possible for the next issue in March 2017. The deadline for receiving contributions for this issue is **the end of January 2017**.