



British Focusing Association NEWSLETTER

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From the Editors

Gordon Adam



One of the interesting 'silver linings' of the coronavirus lockdown has been the offering of many wonderful online Focusing-related courses and workshops. Two courses that I attended were 'An Introduction to Thinking at the Edge' with Fiona Parr, and 'On the Philosophical Roots of Focusing' with Donata Schoeller. Both of these were in-depth, intensive 4-week courses, and some flavour of each of them is conveyed in this newsletter in separate pieces.

My recent re-immersion in TAE and the fresh appreciation of its depth and value has led to the creation of a TAE theme in this newsletter. This includes an article by Beatrice Blake on the empowering aspect of TAE, and some personal accounts of individual TAE processes from Amona Buechner, Robert Copperwhite and me, which highlight this and other aspects of the process. My intention in offering this level of content/exposure to TAE is to hopefully get people interested in doing it. Both Fiona and Beatrice offer online TAE courses.

And there is a lot more in this newsletter, starting with Greg Thomas's review of the liberating effect of a first post-lockdown residential retreat with Kay Hoffmann, and ending with Suzi Mackenzie's overview of her Focusing journey in her practitioner profile. This issue also includes two brand new and lovely poems from our own 'Focusing poet laureate' Susan Jordan, a poignant reminder from Peter Gill that each and every one of us 'matters', and an intimate reflection by Harriet Brown on the power of 'loving the wound'. Finally, I would like to thank Helen Bryant for her help and support in conceiving and producing this newsletter. I hope that everyone reading it will find something of interest herein.

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Helen Bryant



Having been immersed in a Thinking at the Edge course with Beatrice Blake for the last 7 weeks, I was very happy that this issue of the newsletter turned out to have this TAE theme.

Writing the review of Donata Schoeller's TIFI Course on the Philosophical Roots of Focusing enabled me to understand more deeply the basis of Gendlin's Philosophy and ensuing practices. Certainly being a part of a community where the unfolding of individuals' unique processes were taking place through TAE has been a profound experience for me.

The other articles and poems also all have a very heartfelt air to them which I find both moving and hopeful. I hope you can discover some resonances in them, too. helenbryant483@gmail.com

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Coming Up For Air: A Personal Experience of Kay Hoffmann's September 2020 Retreat 'Embodiment in Focusing and Listening'

By Greg Thomas

When I had the opportunity to participate in a residential Focusing retreat between the first Covid-19 wave leaving and the second appearing on the horizon I knew I had to go.

Just like everyone else I'd been managing as well as possible with the restrictions imposed on society. I missed the freedom to visit friends, meet Focusing partners in person and initially struggled when my counselling course moved online.

The tensions that are running throughout society were also present at home, so when the news arrived that Kay Hoffmann was running a retreat titled 'Embodiment in Focusing and Listening' – aimed at exploring what happens when we invite movement and nature into our Focusing – I was packing my bags before her email had finished arriving in the inbox.

The retreat was held over a long weekend, at Purley Chase Centre in rural Warwickshire, beginning on Friday evening and concluding on Monday afternoon, and I think it was the first to be offered in person in the UK since lockdown began. It was organised very carefully to minimise risk. All group participants were expected to follow the many safety measures that the management of Purley Chase had put in place, and Kay made sure we knew what was expected of us. I can report that we did comply with everything. The staff were friendly and welcoming and everyone co-operated to create sociable social distancing. I used hand-sanitiser so often I'm sure micro-organisms were trembling as I approached!



Purley Chase Centre, Atherstone, Warwickshire



We were blessed with beautiful weather which meant that we could spend as much time as possible outdoors in the spacious grounds, being part of the group, sharing, talking, Focusing, listening and being free to move in whatever way felt right, or of course to be still if that was what felt right.

I always seem to need to give myself permission to move while Focusing. I guess that's hardly surprising as society teaches us to sit still even when we want to get up and move around.

Between Kay's facilitation of the group and the natural beauty and incredible feeling of space around us we wove a magical few days together when we could all enjoy being human again.

It wasn't just the Focusing and listening time that contributed to my enjoyment of the retreat. It was also so enriching to spend time with, and be welcomed by, such a diverse group of people from around the UK. Every morning before breakfast, Kay led a group of early-risers in gentle yoga movements and on the Saturday evening some of the group had lit a

fire (being very careful to check on the safety of the nearby resident hedgehog clan) and I joined them to open up and have a chat. It makes me think now of the concept of relational depth, an attempt to describe and explore those moments of real human connection that have the potential to heal, and also the supportive nature of community.

We deepened our explorations throughout Sunday and during the evening a fine Focusing friend (well I consider her a friend, although she might jump behind a bush and pretend to Focus alone the next time she sees me!) took the group through a series of nature-based mixed media drawing exercises and we enjoyed participating and creating freely without judging the result.

Two of Kay's Focusing Practitioner trainees received their certificates during the retreat and I'm sure we all shared in their pleasure and sense of accomplishment. I think we all gained so much from taking part. I certainly appreciated Kay's balanced facilitation which encouraged an environment of experiential discovery, and the residential nature of the retreat heightened my awareness of the value of being part of a supportive Focusing community at a time of almost universal tension. I felt like I was coming up for air.



Greg Thomas lives in South Wales (UK) and is a BFA Focusing Practitioner and person-centred student counsellor volunteering at Mind. He enjoys teaching and guiding Focusing one to one, online and in-person (when possible!) His hobbies include Qi Gong and walking his dogs in the countryside near his home. Greg's future goals include incorporating more Focusing into his counselling sessions when appropriate, possibly through FOT.

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The Philosophical Roots of Focusing: An Introduction with Donata Schoeller

A Review by Helen Bryant

This article focuses only on the first session of Donata Schoeller's recent four week online TIFI course as it didn't feel possible to try to give an overview of all four sessions when each was so rich a seam of different aspects of Gendlin's work. This is a personal reflection and may not reflect the understanding/response of other participants. All inserted quotes are from Donata.

Donata introduced some of the philosophy behind Focusing; how Gendlin was addressing what was, and still is, seen by many as a major crisis in the world today. This crisis can be described as a long-standing undermining of the ability of individual humans to make sense of their own experience. It is deemed to require changes at many levels of society from the metta/political level to the micro/ personal level, the latter in the sense of each of us realising we have the ability and creativity to investigate and transform our basic assumptions and values, our ways of thinking, our habits and actions.

The practices of both Focusing and Thinking at the Edge (TAE) can be seen as practical methods or pursuits that are the product of Gendlin's philosophy which is explained in his academic writings, especially 'Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning' and 'A Process Model'.

Hannah Arendt



Donata first introduced the work of Hannah Arendt, a German-born American political philosopher, writing in the 1950s and 60s, who also saw this crisis present in the world. Arendt saw ideologies, arising from all political perspectives, as either not recognising or disempowering the capacity of the individual to derive meaning and knowledge from personal experience:

*She (Arendt) demonstrates how ideologies, left and right, devalue individual experience as a source of meaning and relevant knowledge as a whole, substituting **the uncontrollable freshness of experience** (my emphasis) with a controllable system of thinking by which you know everything beforehand: truth, the direction to go, the direction of the future, the interpretation of the past etc. Not only do ideologies undermine the necessity of experience of oneself and the world as always new, they also create a reality in which the richness of experience is killed and has no chance to make sense anymore.*

[In making an investigation into the works of Hannah Arendt I was given a link which may be of interest concerning the present world situation. Certainly, it is something one might consider in a Focusing manner <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/arendt-matters-revisiting-origins-totalitarianism/>]

Again I quote Donata:

Gendlin's practices, Focusing and TAE are ways to learn this inner space, and how to maintain friendship with oneself in order to move in (the) uncertainty and insecurity of complex situations – with solidarity, openness and empathy for oneself while doing so, as condition(s) of independence, self-reliance and sound judgement (develop).

Although, in many respects, Hannah Arendt's pursuits were not the same as Gendlin's, a clear link can be seen between her study and that of Gendlin:

There must have been a basic similar intuition driving Eugene Gendlin and Hannah Arendt: that values and ethics, as important as they are, in some ways are too weak; that what needs cultivation is a process of relating to oneself and to experience; that this relating needs to be practised and maintained to

enable staying true to oneself rather than having to go with the massive drift of everyone else. This is as relevant and difficult today, in our so-called democratic life as it was then, (in the lifetime of Hannah Arendt).

The next part of this first session was centred on a further crisis, this one concerning the tacit philosophical assumptions of the sciences otherwise known as the unit model. This model has been functioning over a large part of humankind's history. It contains assumptions that do not account for our unique capacity for thought or our living as an interaction, through the body, to each other and the whole of Life. I find it extremely difficult to explain this with any clarity so encourage you to read Rob Parker's explanation: <http://www.lifeforward.org/id2.html>

Donata confirms that Gendlin's critique is a progression of the works of other thinkers:

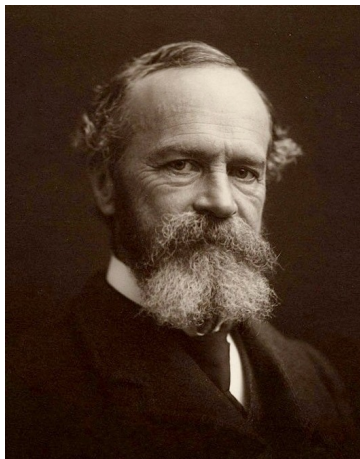
One can place Gendlin's work in the context of growing awareness of the "violence" or "dominance of the concept" and flaws in our basic epistemological concepts forwarded by feminist thinkers, pragmatist and phenomenological thinkers, and the founders of the critical theory, above all Adorno.

Gendlin's development of practices can be seen to be a fundamental addition to academic critique.

For me, the practical aspect of Gendlin's work, what Donata calls 'an approach that touches all content', is of paramount importance. I have struggled with understanding his Philosophy but the practices of Focusing and TAE are helping me look at his academic work with a little more comprehension. Maybe this is a sign that the practices genuinely do support the understanding of others' work as well as supporting the opening of one's unique implicit intricacy of process.

The "other" of the concept is that into-which the concepts occur: the experienced environment, the situation, the felt context. Whatever clarifying or further developing turn one makes in thinking or speaking, something responds and contributes to generating meaning. This responsiveness we experience is not just outside of us, it is not just intersubjective or interactional, it is intra-subjective and intra-actional.

William James



The work of William James was introduced by Donata as an important influence on Gendlin's own Philosophy. Indeed she describes it as 'the forerunner of implicit intricacy'.

James makes one realize what a grand simplification it is to speak about internal mental states, intentions or emotions as entities inside of us, as if they were some inner objects that need only to be represented by language. James' theory of the stream of thought, his concept of the stream of consciousness emphasizes the tacit dynamic, the complex shifting taking place every moment in experience, responding to everything that happens, and everything we do and think....

James suggests that each word or thought in an individual's mind is connected within a web specific to the individual and that there is a constant movement in this web in the desire to evoke meaning. This puts a question mark to the long-established concept that knowledge is a fixed sum of facts similar in every mind. James would argue that knowing something, a fact, means employing our unique network of relations whereby each of us travels differently and yet we can meet at certain stable points. How things come to be known and what things mean imply passages through these complex relationships that are different from mind to mind.

I imagine it might be true to say that James' work resonated with Gendlin. Donata uses the word 'absorbs' to describe how Gendlin moves onwards with this resonance to develop his own unique philosophy and practices:

(Gendlin) absorbs former thinkers that are important to his work in a very special way. He does not

build on their positions by explicitly quoting, criticizing or explicitly transforming. He kind of radically digests them and thus creates transformed starting points and ways to go on. Starting with "experiencing" is a huge shift. Because it does not allow any kind of objectification – making an object of experience with sub-objects like intentions and other mental entities, thus rendering experience as a conceptually graspable object we can quite neutrally analyse and describe without changing it and ourselves thereby. This has been the assumption for centuries in philosophy.

In practising Focusing and TAE, we too can 'digest' experiences of resonance; we can evolve or move/develop in a life-forward way by attending to our experiences in ways that Gendlin has introduced. Having found this course intellectually challenging at times but also very stimulating, I ended the first week very glad to have been present and looking forward to the rest of the course.

Donata Schoeller PhD is a Swiss professor of Philosophy. She met Gene Gendlin after completing her PhD, and was drawn to study with him, later translating 'A Process Model' into German and writing the introduction to the first edition. Donata is Academic Director of TECT (Training Embodied Critical Thinking) with the Universities of Iceland, Groningen, Jena, Ljubljana, Technion Haifa and ETH Zurich and has been Guest Professor at the Philosophy Department of the University of Iceland since 2018.

<https://www.donataschoeller.com/>



Helen Bryant is a Focusing Practitioner living on the Bere Peninsula in West Devon. She is fascinated with Focusing especially TAE and its potential for individuals and the planet. Having access to Dartmoor and water in all forms is vital for her well-being!

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Thinking at the Edge Empowers Us

By Beatrice Blake



Thinking at the Edge (TAE) empowers us because it shows us how to think and speak from what we know from living. Teaching TAE brings me joy and faith in the future of humanity. I love to see the smiles on my student's faces as they discover their own ability to generate ideas from their experience.

In this article, first I'll lay out the problems with the common concept of what thinking is, then I'll attempt to explain the new way of thinking that happens in Thinking at the Edge and give some examples. Next, I'll show how Gendlin's Philosophy of the Implicit ^[1] takes us beyond the helplessness and despair of Postmodern philosophical theories that deny that we can say what we mean. After that, I'll give an example of how Thinking at the Edge has empowered me. Finally, I'll give you a short guide on how to practice TAE for yourself.

What is usually meant by "thinking"?

Somehow, we *think* (feel, are accustomed to the idea, believe) that only very smart people or "experts" can *think* (formulate valid ideas, propose realistic solutions, understand what is going on). I have often felt that I was incapable of *thinking* (coming up with new ideas, understanding the big picture, knowing what would work).

In the above paragraph, I have offered many different meanings for the word "think". Post-modern Deconstructionist philosophers like Derrida have convinced society that words can no longer have meaning. Of course we can still look words up in the dictionary and find the meanings that are currently agreed upon. But we need new understandings. New words and phrases allow us to say new things. For instance, the meaning of "to think" has all the above meanings and many more, but the agreed-upon meanings do not contemplate the empowerment to think and speak that happens in Thinking at the Edge.

What do I want "thinking" to mean?

I'll attempt to define "thinking" in terms of Thinking at the Edge. First, you notice something you know but cannot yet put into words. There is a subtle *bodily felt sense* of this. You can learn to notice and describe the felt sense instead of skipping over moments when you struggle for words. You'll learn to welcome it with openness and receptivity. When you welcome the bodily felt sense of something that has no words, it responds to your interest. Words, phrases and images start to come. The felt sense will offer you examples of times when you have experienced the knowing you are trying to articulate.

At first, especially, it works best to have a listening partner who accompanies you in this space, writing down what you say. It doesn't take long: usually a 20- to 25-minute session is enough to make some steps in the process. Further sessions will enable you to speak about what was previously unclear.

Examples of felt sensing

Here are some examples that are similar to the felt sensing you use in Thinking at the Edge. You might recognize them:

- An artist senses what color is needed next in a painting.
- An actor immerses himself in a character. That feeling guides his portrayal.
- A mother senses something in her child's demeanor that tells her the child is becoming ill.
- A musician 'hears' the notes and chords that will convey a certain feeling.
- A coach senses that one of his players has a problem, even though nothing has been said.
- Authors "love their characters". From that love and receptivity comes an unfolding of what each character will do or say in a situation, and that in turn influences the course of the novel.
- A gardener senses that a plant needs something, but cannot put her finger on it at first.

Once we have a felt sense, it can dialog back and forth with our intellect. As that dialog happens we must make sure that the felt sense is not left out.

Deconstruction can now be seen as making way for something new

Post-modern ideas like Deconstructionism have lead to a kind of helplessness, stagnation and despair. They make it seem that true communication is not possible. But Eugene Gendlin's Philosophy of the Implicit, and its practice, Focusing, open up new realms that value and validate human experience in the creation of meaning.

Instead of trying in vain to agree on the lowest common denominator and impose definitions on experience, human experiencing can enrich meaning and make words more relevant to our situations. We can actually pay attention to our experience instead of wondering automatically "Is it just me?" Thinking at the Edge empowers us to open up relevant meaning instead of imposing outside, publicly agreed-upon definitions. When there is space to explore the experiencing behind words, real thinking and communication start to happen.

How Thinking at the Edge has empowered me

Teaching TAE has shown me that I can think from what I have lived. For example, if I am looking at the subject of "communication", I can:

- Notice and name my own experiences.
- Acknowledge gaps in my understanding and, instead of skipping over them, go into them, explore them.
- Recognize what blocks communication, separating us and diminishing us.
- Concentrate on communication that connects, validates and encourages us.

It reminds me of the Quakers, who stood up for the right to experience God in their own ways, by waiting in silence for the Light. They had no patience for "steeple-houses" (churches) and priests, the accepted ways of connecting to God.

It also reminds me of the recent revolution in music distribution. Now everyone can hear "their" music through Pandora, Spotify, etc. As a result, the record labels and radio stations no longer determine what we can listen to.

Thinking at the Edge empowers us to make our own thought connections, based on experience.

It's time for us to learn about our own capacity for generating new ideas

"...I am very aware of the deep political significance of all this. People, especially intellectuals, believe that they cannot think! They are trained to say what fits into a pre-existing public discourse. They remain numb about what could arise from themselves in response to the literature and the world. People live through a great deal which cannot be said in the common phrases. People are silenced! TAE can empower them to speak from what they are living through."

Eugene Gendlin, Introduction to Thinking at the Edge ^[2]

Right now, people are living through unprecedented situations. It becomes clear that economists and politicians, spiritual leaders, even scientists, don't know the answers. This is an opening for new ideas, new ways of doing things. This moment is offering transformation. We need to empower ourselves to think and communicate from a generative place in order to meet the opportunities that might not come again.

Empower yourself with Thinking at the Edge

Do you skip over moments where words are difficult to find?

Do you try to complete someone's sentence when they struggle to express themselves?

Try welcoming those moments. Here's how:

- First of all, take time to slow down right there and breathe.
- Don't strain your brain.
- In that moment of pausing and relaxing, notice if there is a place in your body where the thing you are trying to express "lives".
- Next, describe how it feels in your body. It could be a pressure or tightness, a vague cottony feeling, a slight discomfort, a subtle feeling of excitement, an image, or many other subtle sensations.
- Patiently go there and be with that place with interest and receptivity.
- You might feel it start to unfold into the words you were seeking.

References

1] <https://focusing.org/more/philosophy-implicit>

2] <https://focusing.org/felt-sense/introduction-thinking-edge>

This article is also available on Beatrice's website [here](#)



Beatrice Blake originally studied Focusing with Robert Lee, Joan Klagsbrun and Neil Friedman. She went on to study Thinking at the Edge and the Philosophy of the Implicit with its founder, Eugene Gendlin, and with Kye Nelson, Nada Lou and Evelyn Fendler Lee. She became a Focusing Trainer in 2000 and is a Certifying Coordinator with The International Focusing Institute.

Beatrice loves teaching TAE online to people all over the world. She also teaches Generating a Culture of Peace, combining Focusing and Nonviolent Communication. Her latest online Focusing Certification program starts in January 2021.

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Our Journey Through 'Thinking at the Edge' (TAE)

By Robert Copperwhite and
Amona Buechler



Robert Copperwhite and Amona Buechler, have been intensively diving into the process of Thinking at The Edge (TAE) throughout the summer of 2020. TAE is a 14-step process developed by Eugene Gendlin, which has the aim of supporting a person to "attend to what they implicitly knew (about some subject area/topic) but could not say and never considered trying to say".

*They started out with stage 1 (steps 1-9) through participating in an inspiring online-group led by Fiona Parr in May this year. Gene Gendlin refers to this stage as speaking from the felt sense and finding patterns from facets (instances), and he suggests that after step 9 you will have achieved the ability **"to articulate an implicit knowing and make it communicable"**.*

*While this first stage was an exciting process for them - Amona: "Basically, it was an ongoing navigation between finding ourselves at the edge of confusion, while now and again `stumbling over` surprising findings and insights, leaving us excited like little children." - they were curious to carry on until the very end, and so they continued to meet weekly after the workshop with Fiona was completed, making their way through steps 10-14, which Gendlin refers to as being focused on **"developing that implicit knowing into a formal, logical theory"**.*

Here follows their concluding conversation with each other, and their contemplations about the TAE process, its challenges as well as its beauties, values and beneficial outcomes:

A: Robert, to enter the process of Thinking at the Edge you were asked to choose something that wants to be said, something you know, but cannot yet say. Did this process in fact support you in expressing something that you were unable to articulate before?

R: Having recently completed the Focusing Practitioner training with Peter Gill, I decided to use the TAE process to explore how I wanted to bring Focusing to the world. I would characterise TAE as a process that asks you to build sentences and meaning related to your topic, and repeatedly turn what has emerged on its head to provoke a deeper reflection on the topic, moving beyond established thought patterns.



It felt like the process brought me on a journey through what Focusing meant for me, and what came to the surface particularly strongly was the interpersonal aspect of guiding or accompanying another individual. I came into deeper contact with some anxious parts, worried about how best to tend to people with deep trauma, with a particular worry about doing anything that might worsen a situation for them, instead of leaving them stronger. What was highlighted (and deeply felt by the end) was my need to fully trust other people to take ownership of their own Focusing process and experiences, while also being cognisant of holding safety around the process. In this regard, the TAE exploration really supported and accelerated self-discovery and growth.

R: What about you Amona, in what way did you find this process inspiring?

A: For me it went in waves, at times having an experience of inspiration and a great overview on the mountaintop only to find myself in the valley the very next moment, confused, almost as if back to point zero.

I had chosen to rethink how to describe and present my work on my website, including the offerings of Focusing workshops, and teaching Feldenkrais, and Awareness Through Movement.

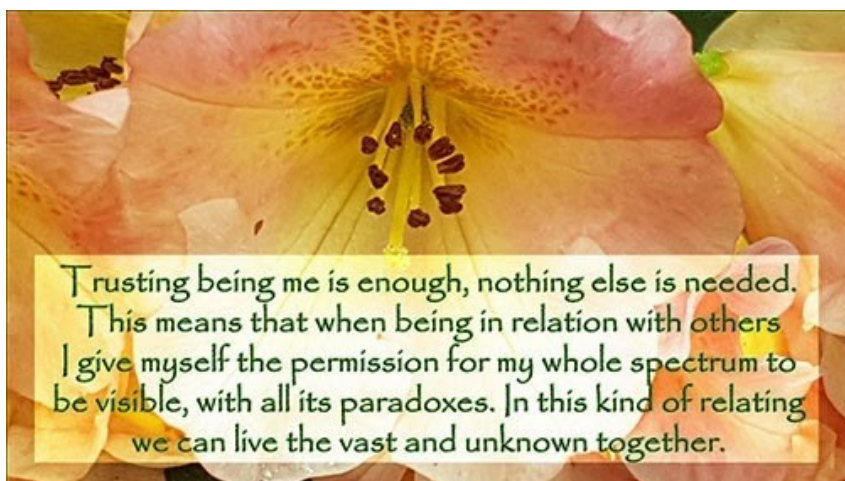
During the TAE process, words and phrases appeared that I had never before said in quite that way, which was exciting. But then, before I knew it, I kept finding myself being challenged as everything, which in one moment sounded so inspiring, and ready to go, was questioned and deconstructed with each following step of the process.

I suppose, our life's challenge (and beauty) of there always being more, never arriving at an end-point of "now I have it", is right before your eyes in this process.

R: And what was your experience of the two different stages of the process: 1-9 and 10-14? Do you feel each served a different purpose for you, and can each one stand by itself?

A: What I was surprised about throughout the first stage (steps 1-9), was how much it became a self-growth process during which all my fears of expressing myself honestly and authentically came to the foreground. It seemed like I had to first work my way through all of this before, in stage two (steps 10-14), arriving at my initial intent of refining my descriptions for presenting my work to the public. So yes, the two stages felt very different to me, but each quite brilliant in their own right.

When the first stage was finished, I found myself sharing one of the paragraphs that had evolved up to that point on my Facebook Page:



A: What about you, Robert, what was your sense of the different stages? Did anything stand out as particularly challenging for you in the process?

R: I felt the examples offered by Fiona Parr helped greatly to understand how to approach steps 1-9. These steps generated solid building blocks, sentences which, though related to one another, had not yet formed into something more cohesive. Steps 10-14 are concerned with generating a theory by using

some of these building blocks, based on some logical steps and tempered by the felt sense, always checking and adjusting things until they felt true.

The biggest challenge for me came at the end of Step 12 with the realisation that I had supposedly created a 'logical system' which should be able to generate new material and concepts to expand the theory, satisfactory to both logic and the felt sense.

Gendlin described this system as follows:

"When the system operates both logically and in accord with the felt sense then its further "formal" inferences can be powerful, surprising and significant."

The crisis point here had to do with an inner critical part, that said, "you barely understood a lot of the previous three steps, and you approached some things differently compared to Amona, what if your 'logical system' is faulty and just generating rubbish?"

Through this second stage, it was just us without the input of someone experienced. What emerged was often delightful and surprising, and yet, I also have the sense that being held through these stages by someone experienced could have alleviated some of the grappling to understand the instructions.

A: Yes, Step 12 was quite an interesting moment. Up to that point we had both approached each step in quite a similar way, but just at the point of the process when Gendlin stated: ***"Once a logical system exists, its inferences are "formal," which means the inference happens from the logical connections regardless of the content"***, we had each written in completely different ways. We were puzzled, kind of like: "What kind of logical system am I supposed to have now?"

Also, when, in Step 2 we were asked to find what does not make the usual logical sense and to write an illogical sentence, a paradox, I had to laugh (or cry?) about myself when the fear of doing it wrong kicked in. Doing what wrong? Something that does not make logical sense? How paradoxical!

A: How would you recommend approaching the TAE process, Robert?

Certainly, having a partner to accompany you in the process and take care of practical issues like capturing words, phrases, concepts that emerge from various steps is invaluable.

A: Yes, it is such a luxury to close one's eyes while letting words emerge, and to spontaneously speak while having a partner who is taking notes. I would really recommend that kind of setup, at least the first time through the process.

I think all in all we took about 24 hours to go through steps 1-14 together, and I now have the idea of going through the entire process quickly, spontaneously, within two hours maybe. I am curious to see what emerges when just flowing with whatever shows up first.

R: I also have a desire to go through the process again, perhaps with some guidance, as I'm still curious as to whether we got the full meaning of Gendlin's instructions for steps 10-14. As you said Amona, there is a sense that behind these written instructions there is a wealth of deep knowing and philosophical pondering, and there is a wanting to dive back in all over again, next time perhaps, not having to hold my breath for such extended periods of time!

Resources:

*Thinking at the Edge was developed by Eugene Gendlin

<https://www.eugenegendlin.com/>

*Introduction to TAE

http://previous.focusing.org/gendlin/docs/gol_2160.html

*Thinking at the Edge instructions

<https://focusing.org/sites/default/files/legacy/pdf/TAE-Steps-From-The-Folio-2000-2004-crp.R6.pdf>

*Fiona Parr's TAE courses

<https://fionaparr-focusing.co.uk/courses/workshops/#thinking>



Amona Buechler is a Certified Focusing Professional and Trainer in training, as well as a Certified Feldenkrais Practitioner^{CM} & Assistant Trainer. She has offered courses, workshops and sessions on- and offline since 1998, in German and English. Currently she is offering 5-Day Focusing Courses in Germany with the emphasis on finding ease & clarity within one's professional/work-life, as well as Focusing Skills Certificate Level 1-5 Online (and live) courses in Chinese for Taiwanese and Chinese students. Amona is also co-facilitating retreats with her sister, combining Focusing and Authentic Movement. She is mostly in Leipzig, Germany, since the onset of coronavirus and might be calling it her new home.

www.Move-with-Life.org (English)

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Robert Copperwhite is a newly (this year) Certified Focusing Practitioner, who has trained with Peter Gill (UK). He also holds a PhD in Physics and works in the technology sector in Dublin, Ireland. Robert is currently establishing a wide-ranging Focusing practice (mainly online at present), with a style based on Inner Relationship Focusing, and including aspects of Wholebody Focusing. He has experience of and a deep interest in working with people on the issues of shame, guilt, acceptance and belonging.

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Editor's Footnote

I thought I might complement Robert and Amona's piece, and my own piece to follow, by including this brief overview of what TAE is—written by Fiona Parr to promote her TAE workshops:

TAE helps you to articulate something that you have always found difficult to say, and yet you know something about this subject, because you have experienced it, and your body knows what it is. The starting place is to find something that is important to you; a passion, something you care about. This is an opportunity to explore something that you enjoy doing, studying or being involved with. It could be something you are following, exploring, or practising.

What do you know something about, that only you could say, because no one else has exactly that take on it? When you find what it is, and find ways to give expression to it, you give something to the world. You add something to the world that only you have, that no one else has. Eugene Gendlin said 'You need to stand again in your own experiencing ... in your own felt ongoingness, which is that intricate complexity inside of life ... to put into the world what hasn't been said yet that you are carrying from your particular experience.'

Mary Hendricks said, '**People's eyes sparkle when they try TAE:** "I discovered the process that really is my own thinking!" "I grew up believing I was stupid, so I kept quiet. Now I know I can say what I know. I am not so stupid."' 'TAE is important in three ways: first, TAE lets people know that they can think for themselves. Second, new forms of language break out of the constraints of old assumptions. Third, new concepts and kinds of concepts are made.'

The starting point is finding what it is that you know something about and that you are passionate about. What do you care deeply about? What insight, knowledge, wisdom and past experience informs you? How can you find ways to express *that*, that is uniquely your own.

Fiona Parr

'Allowing or Enabling Soulful Connection': Reflections On An Ongoing TAE Process

By Gordon Adam

Having recently taken part in the same online TAE course with Fiona Parr as Amona and Robert (see preceding article), I'd like to add some of my own reflections on my experiences of TAE.

Thinking at the Edge

'What if the world is holding its breath – waiting for you to take the place that only you can fill?'

David Whyte

This quote by poet David Whyte captures, for me, something of the essence of what TAE is about. The quote implies that we each have a unique and individual contribution to make to society/the world. This is a very powerful idea – if true it means that each and every one of us has a particular role to play. This gives my life meaning and it gives me a way to belong in the world. I find that embracing this idea, is very empowering and releases a lot of energy and excitement, both in myself and in the TAE groups that I've participated in.

From my own experience I would distinguish Focusing and TAE simplistically as follows:

Focusing is primarily about my **relationship with myself** and my experiences (although of course this can and does include relationships with others and my experiences of the world).

Thinking at the Edge is primarily about my **relationship with the world**, and more particularly about my **own unique creative response to being alive**.

In a way there is a logical developmental progression from Focusing to TAE – from me as individual/ self/ ego/etc, to me as an integral and responsive part of a greater whole. Gendlin advises that "You need Focusing to do TAE" – an understanding and capacity to form a felt sense is necessary to navigate the TAE process effectively.

I think that TAE is a wonderful way to identify and acknowledge our core creative energy, to get a sense of the direction it wants to move, and, in the whole TAE process, to harness and ground that energy into a creative project (or projects) or undertaking in the world.

April 2009, Cornwall

My first experience of TAE was in an in-person weekend workshop led by Fiona Parr in Cornwall in 2009. I have a vivid memory of that workshop as being 'different' from any Focusing workshop that I've ever done! Not only was I able to connect with my own 'core creative energy', but being in an environment where others were doing the same thing led to a powerful, almost 'nuclear' energy being released in the group. I think everyone experienced a sense of excitement at exploring uncharted, yet at the same time very innately personal territory.

In that first round of TAE my topic or theme started off as: **'How do I create the right conditions or environment for bringing people together?'** This theme arose from the observation that much of what I do involves bringing people together – within Focusing this includes offering a regular ongoing Focusing group, ongoing 5-day residential retreats, sending out a local Focusing newsletter, and generally being active in helping build local Focusing community.

In Step 1 of the process this 'distilled' to: **'People connecting with each other is the most important thing'** This was further refined to 'people connecting', and then most of the rest of the process involved

focus and exploration (with the help of a companion), through Steps 2–4 on what **'CONNECTING'** meant for me, as this word held the crux of meaning in my topic.

The exploration of my own meaning of this word unleashed a lot of energy! Other powerful and meaningful associated words that emerged in the process included: **RESONANCE; OPENNESS; TRUTH; INTER-CONNECTION; COMMUNICATION; NOURISHMENT; ENGAGEMENT; MEANING; BEING HUMAN.**

And some lovely personal **insights** were made or clarified during the process, for instance:

- 'My mission is to connect with people – the creativity lies in finding different ways to do it'
- 'How can I MEET this person? There is a wanting for the best connection possible'
- 'It's only through engaging with others that I get a true sense of who I am'
- 'I need meaning in my life. Meaning comes through connection. Meaning is subjective – I generate my own bodily felt meaning of any connection. Experiencing of meaning is a core need'

The statement that I started with, at the end had morphed to: **'Creating meaningful connection with people is the only thing that matters'** and with that came an acknowledgement of the existence of 'different levels of meaning'...

May 2020, Zoom

Fast forward 11 years to May this year and my curiosity to further explore TAE led to me taking part in Fiona's first online TAE course offering. I had originally invited Fiona to do a TAE weekend workshop in Bristol in March but this got cancelled due to the escalation of coronavirus, but thankfully Fiona carried the impetus forward and conducted the workshop online, which opened it up to more people.

I went into the process open-minded and didn't pre-plan what my topic might be. I started off with the question **'What really matters?'** trusting that this would lead me in. I guess it was no real surprise to find something very similar to my first TAE experience coming up for attention! The words that came up in 'brainstorm' response to this question included: **SHARING; POETRY; IDEAS; COMMUNICATION; LOVE; CONNECTION; RELATIONSHIP; COMMUNITY; PRESENCE; CHILDREN; PLAYFULNESS; RESONANCE**

The theme that took shape then in my first paired Focusing session ^[1] was:

'Allowing or facilitating soulful connection'

I realised from my Focusing session that everything that 'really mattered' to me involved a particular sort of interaction or communication or connection with other people – either as individuals or as a group. The two words that best described the quality of connection I aspire to were **'soulful'** or **'meaningful'**, and I realised that irrespective of the nature of the interaction – e.g. Focusing with a partner, interacting with a friend or family member, working with a homeopathy patient, doing voluntary reading with children – that something in me is wanting the most meaningful or soulful interaction that's possible.

My sense was that the same theme that emerged in 2009, was carrying forward in my life, but with a subtle but important development – 'connecting with people' had become 'meaningful or soulful connection with people', and much of the rest of this recent process was spent 'unpacking' what I want these words to mean. I also explored several instances or 'facets' where this sort of connection has arisen powerfully, and the sort of conditions that are needed to support or enable this sort of connection. At the end of Step 8, I arrived at a sentence that captured this:

'Meaningful connection has certain prerequisites: space and time, patience, willingness or curiosity, felt sensing ... something new happens... it's not a 'standard' experience. Each experience of connection is unique. In being willing, there is space for something new to happen.'

In a way, the above sentence could be a description of the TAE process itself! This sounds very similar to: **"The edge is where more than is already known or expressed emerges"** ^[2]

As in the first time I did the TAE process, many additional insights arose in the course of the sessions, here are some that took shape in Step 9:

- 'In this way of connecting I know myself more fully – some fundamental aspect of being human arises into felt consciousness.'
- 'Each instance of soulful connection is a sort of entering into a 'place that wasn't there before' (and maybe that will never be again) – like one facet of a trillion-faced gemstone... But each facet has the same gemstone inside – the same core...'
- 'Something about soulfulness is about the uniqueness of the experience of the present moment, but maybe it has something of 'time past' and 'time future' woven into it also.'

Conclusion

TAE has helped me evaluate and understand what I do and why I do it. It gives me a real sense that I have something unique and creative to offer the world, and that what I do in the world is important, and makes a difference. It helps bring meaning to my life and gives me a sense of belonging on the planet.

I experience TAE as an exciting, powerful, creative and empowering process, and one which is largely undiscovered and unpractised by the Focusing community, at least in the UK. Part of the motivation of writing this reflection (and in bringing the TAE theme into this newsletter as editor) is to give TAE more exposure in the hope that more people will try it.

I'll end with a favourite quote (of mine) of Gendlin's, which is a reminder that the whole creative process, both in TAE and in our lives, starts from an initial act of forming a felt sense about something:

'A felt sense is a promise of a new piece of world' ^[3]

Eugene Gendlin

Footnote and References

1] *We worked with the same partner throughout the process, and some of us continued the partnership beyond the 4 weeks of the course to further explore or extend the TAE process. My TAE exploration with my partner Tom Larkin has been very fruitful and is ongoing at time of writing this reflection.*

2] *From 'The Focusing Student's Manual and Workbook' by Ann Weiser Cornell and Barbara McGavin*

3] *From the DVD 'Thinking Freshly from Experiencing' (produced by Nada Lou)*

Gordon Adam lives in Bristol, UK. He is passionate about Focusing and the power of Focusing community. He leads introductory workshops in local communities, runs 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 11 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.

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Poems for Covid Times (II)

Daydream

One day people will touch and talk perhaps easily,
And loving be natural as breathing and warm as sunlight,
And people will untie themselves, as string is unknotted,
Unfold and yawn and stretch and spread their fingers,
Unfurl, uncurl like seaweed returned to the sea,
And work will be simple and swift as a seagull flying,
And play will be casual and quiet as a seagull settling,
And the clocks will stop, and no one will wonder or care or notice,
And people will smile without reason, even in winter, even in the rain.

A. S. J. Tessimond



You never noticed

how apple blossom on a branch
begins with a single flower

how duckweed in the pond
reveals dark brown coils
growing into water snails

how dicentra's bleeding hearts
hang from hair-thin stalks
how many shades of blue and pink

there are in a pulmonaria
how seeding dandelions
are like heads of permed grey hair

how bluebells soon pale as they wilt
grape hyacinths stay blue longer
how primroses push their way up
right through another plant

how many different birds
can sing at the same time

how loud a passing car is
how long its roar goes on

Susan Jordan

Words

sometimes they spread like cobwebs
over gardens grown lush with looking
imprisoning leaf and colour
in their sticky
net

sometimes
they land in pairs on the table
as you eat your breakfast
R-number hand sanitiser
excess deaths two metres

sometimes they go missing
just when you need them most
to stop
the world
slipping
away
or to say *I don't believe this*

sometimes you find them spinning
grey threads from your mouth
to a head and shoulders
flattened on a pixellated screen

sometimes you can remember
the different taste they had
before you had to
speak them
from
behind
a mask

Susan Jordan

The two poems by Susan Jordan have recently been published in a small anthology called 'Isolation Diaries' (Moor Poets). Copies are available directly from Susan susanjord@gmail.com

You Matter – the Implicit and Essential Message of Focusing

By Peter Gill

Late Fragment

And did you get what
you wanted from this life, even so?
I did.
And what did you want?
To call myself beloved, to feel my-
self
Beloved on the Earth.

Raymond Carver

It is a tragic truth that too many of us go through life feeling that our life does not matter, that what we deeply feel, value and believe does not matter, that even our existence does not matter. I meet many people that in some way had this message given to them as a child – that their feelings and inner life was not of value or worse, that how they were, was in some way not allowed or too much, flawed or damaged... Their sense of mattering in the world was broken or compromised. Imagine living in a world where you feel your life has no consequence? That your experience does not count in any way. Maybe your life, or aspects of it, was somewhat like that?

To feel we matter is an essential need. Even the word "matter" brings a lot. It speaks of substance and has its origins in Latin words for origin, source and mother. When we matter we feel substantial, we feel real, our existence in the world is noticed, is valued and cherished. It is an essential "message" to give to each other and an essential thing to feel.

We need to know that our being here makes a difference in some way. I don't mean this in a grand world saving way, or in an "I'm special" kind of way... We are not nothing, we are something... and something extraordinary as far as I can see. Our being alive and arriving here on this living planet is nothing short of a miracle, a deep mysterious, extraordinary thing. We belong and we matter.

For me, the practice and essence of Focusing fills up the space where I feel I don't matter, it heals that wound of not belonging or mattering. It says "you are real and you matter". It says what you feel deeply is important and essential to life. It says "you belong". It says "you are sacred".

And it's a powerful practice to take this attitude to others in our lives. Children especially need this as they are too often treated as objects or not human. There are many marginalised peoples and sections of society that also need this message. For too long we have lived with the trauma and unexpressed grief of people's lives not mattering. As one favourite fictional detective of mine says in his books "everybody counts, or nobody counts"

Finally, how would it be to extend this attitude to the more than human world. To those that can't speak back; the forests and sea creatures, the insects and birds. You matter too! Your miraculous life matters.

So maybe the next time we sit with a friend, a loved one, a Focusing partner, a tree or patch of soil, we could evoke these words "you matter" and see what comes.

Peter Gill became a Focusing teacher in 2005 and is fully qualified with the British Focusing Association (BFA) and the Focusing Institute in New York. He has trained with Ann Weiser Cornell in Inner Relationship Focusing in the USA and Peter Afford in the UK. Peter is a BFA mentor and Focusing Institute Coordinator offering practitioner and teacher training, and he is also qualified in Somatic Experiencing (SE). More recently he has been training in nature connection with Wildwise and is apprenticing in holding grief circles with Azul Valérie Thomé in Devon. Peter lives in Stroud, Gloucestershire.

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Learning to Love the Wound

By Harriet Brown

'There is both a poetic and an etymological connection between our word bless and the French bles-sure, meaning "wound". Our wounds confer blessings on us when we embrace them as part of who we are, when we accept that the brightness of our fire also casts shadows. The wounded healer is one who has dived deep into his own vulnerability and sickness, and returned with the gift of compassion as well as a knowledge that can heal others.'

Roger Housden [1]



Have you ever noticed that one sentence is enough to shift one's thinking or mood?

I've been receiving daily reflections [2] from the Center for Action and Contemplation (CAC) by email for a few weeks. I often find I get little out of the three or four paragraphs, however beautifully written. There is usually too much of interest, too much texture – like too rich a meal, so I don't receive the nourishment contained within.

Recently I forwarded one of these reflections to a friend. In the process, my email provider revealed a one sentence synopsis of the email text – it felt a bit like a secret message being uncovered! This sentence was just enough – in fact, plenty for me in that moment. As much as my parched spirit could take, just what I needed and beautifully simple. The sentence was:

'Healing is learning to love the wound because love draws us into relationship' [3]

This resonated with me on several levels. The first and most present, was around negative thoughts and dark moods I have lived with recently – more frequent, more sustained than usual and to the extent I felt 'not like me', and started to wonder about my mental health.

Can I love this wounded, hurting place within? Can I learn to love the part of me that feels simply quite bleak at times? Can I bear to be in relationship with it? Can I simply be in relationship with it?

Truth be told, in the depths of that darkness and bleakness, no I couldn't. For all my techniques and training and emotional toolkit, I just couldn't fathom what to do in that moment. Just then, 'helpful' suggestions from another didn't feel particularly helpful. Even that act of love provoked a reaction, "leave me alone! I need to journey with this myself! I need to get there my own way! I need you to hear me and be with me, not try to sort me out!"

But just engaging with this sentence helped me move towards an inner attitude of being a loving, gentle presence. Loving the hurt place, and loving the part of me that felt hurt. In my Focusing journey I had learned about the observer, the part of me watching what's going on. In that dark moment, I had lost all sense of there being an observer. I felt bleak, end of story. All of me felt bleak. On that day, there seemed to be no means of shifting into observing or containing presence.

And that's really ok! Some days just are that way. I'm human, so there are going to be difficult times.

'Loving my wound' reframes another personal journey I have been on in the last few years. During lockdown, shared childcare meant I had more space in my life – so more time for me and attending to my inner world. I started processing some embodied difficulties I was left with after our daughter's birth. I

have a caesarean section scar which, for many weeks after her birth, I couldn't look at and for many more couldn't bear to touch. A strong voice within kept crying, 'this isn't how it was meant to be! This isn't the birth I wanted her to have!'

Right now, today, I am beginning in my 'learning to love the wound.'

This wound is a mark on my body of her entrance to the world, of her joining our life. It is evidence of my being forever changed, not only carrying her growing body but by that moment of her body and spirit joining our family.

Love draws us into relationship. This sense of painful wound from her birth has allowed me to reach out to other emergency c-section mums; others shocked by their birthing experience. This yearning to heal and connect with others has borne in me the desire and gift to start a women's circle – still in the making – a group of mothers, sharing our truths of this new role we have stepped into. The most significant threshold, however it came about for each of us.

And I am learning to love my inner wound. Realising that sharing my shakiness and vulnerability might be a gift to others in that circle and beyond. That perhaps being in this shaky inner place just now might be a gift to others – bringing me deeper into solidarity and compassion. Roger Housden puts it, 'Love is an environment more than a set of principles. An environment that, simply by existing, draws out another into his or her own fullness.'^[1]

Thank you world, for bringing me that sentence. Thank you body-mind for catching on to it and spirit for deeply engaging with it. Thank you Life for bringing it to me on a day that I have time for contemplation and writing.

...and curiously, there was more... in a summary email that I saw later, I saw the full sentence was:

'Healing is learning to love the wound because love draws us into relationship with it instead of avoiding feeling the discomfort.' —Lama Rod Owens

Spirit, Life, had guided me to this 'more' just when I was ready, and only after I'd absorbed the first part. (Doesn't this reading and revelation feel a bit like a Focusing journey?)

I think I'd end, or explore, the sentence differently...

Love helps me to sit with my wound gently, attentively, kindly. This loving presence, loving relationship, helps me to feel the pain differently. Yes, pain and discomfort. But also something that is guiding me into greater depth and compassion with others that are feeling this discomfort. Loving this wound brings me into deeper, kinder relationship with myself and with those around me, if I can have the courage to share my experience.

Thank you Lama Rod for writing this; thank you Richard and co for sharing it; thank you Clare for introducing me to the CAC emails; thank you God for helping me spot that phrase.

References & Footnotes

1] Roger Housden, *Ten Poems to Open your Heart*, Harmony: 2003

2] Further info about the Center for Action and Contemplation and their daily meditation emails can be found at: <https://cac.org/category/daily-meditations/>
This phrase, and the theme of 'Wounded Healers', can be found in the archive, with a summary on 19/9/20 available here: <https://cac.org/wounded-healers-weekly-summary-2020-09-19/>

Richard Rohr, author, teacher and cofounder of the Center for Action and Contemplation, invites us to engage with the text in a meditative reading practice. We read slowly, seeing what words or phrases generate a response within the body, sitting with that word or phrase; seeing what personal action may come out of this. This reminds me of Focusing with Poetry, as shared by Gordon Adam at the BFA Summer Camp and on other retreats and events.

3] Excerpt from CAC daily meditation email, Thursday 17th September, 2020.

Lama Rod Owens, "Remembering Love: An Informal Contemplation of Healing," in *Radical Dharma: Talking Race, Love, and Liberation*, Rev. Angel Kyodo Williams, Lama Rod Owens with Jasmine Syedullah, PhD (North Atlantic Books: 2016), 64–65, 67–68, 74.

Lama Rod Owens is considered one of the emerging leaders of his generation of Buddhist teachers. An author, activist, and formally authorized Buddhist teacher in the Tibetan tradition of Buddhism, he is a co-author of 'Radical Dharma: Talking Race, Love, and Liberation' and a graduate of Harvard Divinity School. He can be reached at www.lamarod.com

Harriet Brown

I have been Focusing since 2014 and completed my practitioner training in 2018. I teach and use Focusing in one to one sessions and small groups, both online and in person in Bristol and North Somerset. My recent Focusing experience pointed me towards writing as a habit and tool that might resource me in this tricky parenting phase. I truly believe Life reveals what we need, as and when we're ready for it. I love sharing Focusing and helping others make sense of the strands of their lives and finding a way forward that feels right at a deeper level. I value the peace that can come from living life in an inner-directed way.

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Practitioner Profile:

Suzi Mackenzie



I read Gendlin's 'Focusing' in my twenties, when I was devouring psychology books, but I forgot about it until my Counsellor training - when it feels like the felt sense called for me. I was experiencing things in a way that didn't fit so easily with rational words - they felt like a constraint. Even the shared language of emotions and self-awareness on my training didn't always do justice to what was going on for me. Around this time I read something that reminded me of Focusing and I thought "Oh yes! That's what this is!"

I went on to do Peter Afford's Focusing Skills Certificate, which I found a great complement to my counsellor training. When I didn't know how to extend empathy and acceptance towards myself, Focusing gave me something I could *do*, that enabled this. I also found new aspects of my experiencing - I didn't have to be just a rational being - a brain with some limbs hanging off it! I could *be* in my body! My embodied experience was actually this valuable and fascinating source of information. Discovering the unpredictable and idiosyncratic things the felt sense had to offer was a joy. And whenever I felt I was doing it wrong, or felt self-critical, all I had to do was turn towards *that* bit of me too and try to be with it!

After Focusing alone and with partners for some years I got a growing sense of wanting to bring Focusing into my life more. I was also aware that I had some clients I wanted to be able to support in different ways. What I wasn't expecting through doing the Practitioner Programme was to find a wider Focusing Community and what loveliness was there! In attending BFA AGM Gatherings, a UK Focusing School and Summer Camps I found others who were also into this magical thing that I loved, as well as a doorway into things like poetry and Five Rhythms dancing that I might not have otherwise opened.

Similarly, I wasn't expecting becoming a Focusing Teacher to change my life so much. For a while I had felt drawn back to training, having enjoyed designing and delivering training when I'd been a Samaritan volunteer and when working in a University Library. I sensed a large part of me being receptive, taking in, both in my counselling work and in my personal life, and I felt a need to balance this by being more expressive, giving out. Under the mentorship of Kay Hoffmann I started designing and delivering my Focusing Skills Certificate course and it feels like being a Focusing Teacher has allowed another part of me to come to life. I have found an outlet for my creativity and I love regularly meeting new people who are drawn to Focusing - they are invariably lovely people.

As the pandemic started I began teaching even more. I am conscious of the importance of not just delivering a workshop but holding a supportive space for attendees during this difficult time. It has been a pleasure to provide a nurturing environment. Having realised in recent years that I was not going to be able to have children, I questioned "What now will bring meaning to my life?" It has begun to feel like this nurturing spirit in which I endeavour to hold my workshops is part of how I can channel that need in me and that thing that I can offer. Focusing is also like another way of inner parenting. Our second chance to give ourselves what we might have needed and not managed to get. If I can support people with that then I feel I will have done a worthwhile thing.

My growing edge is something about Focusing, relating and relationships: Wanting to utilize what Focusing has to offer in relationship difficulties and knowing it can deepen both personal and therapeutic rela-

tionships. There are some challenges here but I'm excited about the potential too. It's really hard for me to imagine my life without Focusing, as I feel it has literally brought me to life, both in terms of inhabiting my body and in terms of a deep way of connecting with people. I love both the sense of a constant unfolding of my experience, which gives me faith that I am growing *and* the solidity of an embodied touchstone I can refer back to which helps me know the right direction for me.

Sometimes when I am guiding someone through the Focusing process a metaphor will come for me about how delicate yet joyous it feels: Maybe like I'm dancing with them, or helping them paint a picture, or even like they're trying to unravel some wool in a bag, which I can't see inside, but I can really *be with them* sharing how it is for them to do the unravelling.

Noticing what comes about this thing called Focusing... fills me with a sense of alive excited energy, but also brings a humble feeling. I feel so lucky to have found Focusing – aren't we lucky?! It's like finding a secret gift. Except of course it's not so secret, because it's there in all of us waiting, just waiting until...

Suzi Mackenzie is a BACP Senior Accredited Person Centred Counsellor, Qualified Supervisor and BFA Certified Focusing Teacher working in Sussex and London. She has been working in the spirit of Person Centredness for over twenty years, having spent ten years as a Samaritan volunteer prior to training as a counsellor. She has worked in a Psychiatric setting and has a keen interest in mental health, diversity and inclusivity. Suzi enjoys supporting others to connect with their own inner knowing about what is right for them. She feels privileged to introduce people to the wonders of Focusing and share in their Focusing journeys.

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Photo by Suzi Mackenzie

Forthcoming Workshops & Events

Full details of workshops by BFA members can be viewed [here](#) on the BFA website

November and December 2020

Focusing with a Life Issue: Four week Personal Development Course with Suzi Mackenzie
Online. 5th–26th November. www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training suzimac55@hotmail.com

Focusing and Companioning (BFA Skills Level 3) with Paula Newman
Online. 11th November to 2nd December. paulanewman930@hotmail.com

Focusing with Stress and Overwhelm: Introduction to the Focusing process with Suzi Mackenzie
Online. November 13th www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training suzimac55@hotmail.com

Introduction to Focusing for Change Practitioners: Introductory session with Katherine Long
Online. 17th November mail@katherinelong.co.uk

Focusing with our Dreams with Suzi Mackenzie
Online. 21st November www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training suzimac55@hotmail.com

The Path to Wholeness (BFA Skills Workshop 5) with Peter Gill
Bristol (South West). 21st/22nd November. www.livingfocusing.co.uk livingfocusing@fastmail.com

How to Lose it less with your kids! : Focusing skills for more empathic parenting with Peter Gill
Online. 26th November www.livingfocusing.co.uk livingfocusing@fastmail.com

The Felt Sense of our Future A weekend workshop with Peter Afford
London (Clapham). 28th/29th November. www.focusing.co.uk peter@focusing.co.uk

Applied Focusing (BFA Skills Level 5) with Fiona Parr
Online. 2nd–23rd December 2–5pm fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Path of the Focusing Practitioner Retreat with Kay Hoffman
Warwickshire. 4th- 7th December. kayhoffmann1@gmail.com

Who dies? A focusing journey exploring the mystery of our death Day course with Peter Gill
Online. Sunday 6th December 10-5pm <https://www.livingfocusing.co.uk/grief.html>

Companionship (BFA Skills Level 3) with Fiona Parr
Online. 8th – 22nd December 2-5pm fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

New Year Focusing Retreat A 5-day residential retreat for Focusers with Gordon Adam
Dartmoor (South West). 29th December – 3rd January. [Click here for info](#) gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk

January and February 2021

Practitioner training 2021 A 1-2 year BFA practitioner training for new trainees with Peter Gill
Largely online. Beginning late January. www.livingfocusing.co.uk info@livingfocusing.co.uk

Focusing Skills Course with Kay Hoffman
Online/Residential. 21st January – 24th June kayhoffmann1@gmail.com

Listening, Language and the Body (Focusing Skills Certificate) with Suzi Mackenzie
Online. 23rd and 27th January www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training suzimac55@hotmail.com

Reminding Suggestions (BFA Skills Level 4) with Fiona Parr
Online. 2nd – 23rd February. 2-5pm fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Focusing Practitioner Training with Fiona Parr

Online. 3rd February – 6th July fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

March and April 2021

Dreaming and Intuition (BFA Focusing Skills Certificate) with Suzie Mackenzie

Online. 27th March and 24th April. 10am-5pm

www.suzimackenzie.com/focusingtraining suzimac55@hotmail.com

Applied Focusing (BFA Skills Level 5) with Fiona Parr

Online. 6th – 27th April. 2-5pm fionaparr-focusing.co.uk fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk

Local Focusing Groups

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

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

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

Manchester Focusing Practice Group. Meets in Manchester for a morning once a month from 10.30am to 1pm usually on a Sunday. Contact Wendy wendy.brocklehurst@btinternet.com

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 hughknopf@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 'Menu' on the home page, then 'Useful Resources' or click www.focusing.org.uk/useful-resources

You can sign up to receive this newsletter regularly and freely by using the link above, entering your name and email address, then hitting the 'Subscribe' button .

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—1500 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 March 2021.

The deadline for receiving contributions for this issue is **31st January 2021**.