



# British Focusing Association NEWSLETTER *Issue 20: March 2021*

## *Finding Light in Dark Places*



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# From the Editor

Gordon Adam



The wording of the titles of some of the pieces in this newsletter give some indication that we're collectively going through difficult times – e.g. 'death,' grief, 'difficult times', 'lockdown,' hopelessness', etc. However, without exception, the articles all bring some positive or creative response, a sense of liberation, or some bigger sense of presence to the difficulty or restriction that's being experienced, whether it's climate change, death or coronavirus lockdowns.

The very first article I received was Mareike Ringena's account of her sense of delight and liberation at being able to attend a real-person five-day retreat on Dartmoor at New Year. Mareike explores various elements of the retreat and the different ways in which she felt held, supported and nurtured by it. I have to thank Mareike also for writing the 'practitioner profile' for this issue.

As a continuation of the Thinking at the Edge (TAE) theme that was strong in the last (November 2020) newsletter, I'm very pleased to include Australian Focuser Merilyn Mayhew's lovely account of her own TAE process that helped her change her relationship with climate change from one of helplessness to hope! Another demonstration of the power and usefulness of the TAE process.

Mary Jennings from Dublin also has an interest in TAE, and told me in an email that she has been working on "making it less clunky". This sounds like a worthwhile project as I think the length and apparent complexity of the TAE process is one of the reasons it is less popular than it might be. Mary's contribution to this newsletter is however not about TAE, but about PAUSING! I'm pleased to be able to re-print this article from 10 years ago (from 'The Focusing Connection') as taking time to pause is so fundamental to Focusing, and this article also does a good job of flagging up opportunities for 'everyday pausing'.

My own contribution to this newsletter is the article 'Focusing with Poetry During Lockdown' in which I attempt to convey, by describing a very recent actual instance, of how bringing a poem into the Focusing space can be have a wonderful transporting and liberating effect!

Thanks also to Peter Gill and Fiona Parr for their contributions, each in their own way, with a theme of 'finding light in dark places'.

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*Cover photo: Detail of 'Angst' painting by Gordon Adam*

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# Inviting In and Welcoming Back the Collective Exiles of Death and Grief

By Peter Gill

I have always loved the invitation of "What wants attention?" to open a Focusing process. In my life as a Focusing teacher and in my personal practice as a Focuser, I used to think that this invitation was enough for whatever wanted attention to show up: that after I made that initial opening, the rest would happen by itself; that all I had to do was open the door and whatever wanted to be seen would wander through. Maybe it would take time to come, but eventually it would come and be heard and met. I had this image of opening a door and waiting...

But what if that **'something'** on the other side of the door has not only been kept out by protective forces in you but has been exiled by the larger collective. What if that 'something' has showed up at many doors over and over and been turned away, hundreds and thousands of times... and what if it had been doing this for generations. How would it feel to be that something? Imagine being such an exile. Would it be enough to see an open door for you to go in, would you trust it after all the rejections? I doubt it. I speak here of our collective exiles, (of which we have many.) Specifically I speak of the exiles of grief and death, but I am sure there are others in our collective life.

I am not sure how we ended up in a culture that hides the truth of death away, that fears it, that sees it as a failure. How come it is a taboo, or we fear appearing morbid for talking about it? How come we find it so hard to face this very essential truth – the truth that each and every living thing will die sooner or later? It seems all the stranger when you pause to reflect that our very existence is dependent in one way or another on the death of other organisms, both plant and animal (depending on what you eat). It seems strange when you reflect that a living forest needs the death and composting of a large proportion of its biomass to survive. Life needs death. All life ends in death, there is no exception. The cycle is interwoven. One does not happen without the other.

And how did grief become so hard for us to show? How come it too ends up in the shadowlands of our experience, allowed out for the occasional funeral at most, but no more. My nine year old son said last week that grown men shouldn't cry! Where did he even hear this or sense it as true? We too easily keep grief bottled up and shrouded in shame. It has been driven into the dusty corners and forgotten rooms of our individual and collective life.

Over the past few years, I have been creating spaces.... spaces where these unwelcome guests of grief and death are invited in, and there is one truth I have learnt – that these exiles and perhaps all collective exiles need to be invited in. They need to know we mean it. It comes down to this:

## **"It's waiting to be asked"**

These were the poignant words that one participant shared in an exploration around death, and it formed the seed of this article. Yes, some aspects of us need to be asked in order to make an appearance in our being. Maybe because they have been exiled for so long, or maybe because of some other more mysterious reason, they need to be asked. Like a spell that needs certain words, or a ceremony that needs a particular set of circumstances, like an incantation, like a particular name that needs to be spoken – our exiles need to be asked to come.

I have participated in many grief ceremonies and in most of them I have sensed a deep relief, even if not much grief flowed in me. It was just a relief that there was such a space where the truth could be met with some kind of open arms. I felt the same on my Somatic Experiencing training (Peter Levine's method for healing trauma). At last there is a space where the exiled is invited in (albeit in a very safe way in the instance of trauma). There is a great deal of tension required to keep away exiles... and I know

that there are essential and good reasons that keeping away happens and I want to acknowledge the relief and healing that welcoming brings.

I also heard the same relief from the people on my recent online workshop exploring death, or what our bodies 'know' about death. They spoke of how good and needed and even joyous it was to finally speak about this truth they live with every day. The truth of their losses and the truth of our inevitable journey towards that mystery we call death. Those words "it's waiting to be asked" speak of some deeper truth that I can only partially articulate here... But I hope I have planted a seed that will help some part or parts of you be welcomed back.

***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 offering workshops in nature connection and holding grief ceremony in community. Peter lives in Stroud, Gloucestershire.*

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*See the 'Events Listing' on p.23 for details of Peter's forthcoming online workshops exploring death and grief.*



## In Blackwater Woods

Look, the trees  
are turning  
their own bodies  
into pillars

of light,  
are giving off the rich  
fragrance of cinnamon  
and fulfilment,

the long tapers  
of cattails  
are bursting and floating away over  
the blue shoulders

of the ponds,  
and every pond,  
no matter what its  
name is, is

nameless now.  
Every year  
everything  
I have ever learned

in my lifetime  
leads back to this: the fires  
and the black river of loss  
whose other side

is salvation,  
whose meaning  
none of us will ever know.  
To live in this world

you must be able  
to do three things:  
to love what is mortal;  
to hold it

against your bones knowing  
your own life depends on it;  
and, when the time comes to let it go,  
to let it go.

*Mary Oliver*

# The Value of Focusing in Difficult Times

By Fiona Parr

Focusing in these difficult times has been giving me enormous support on a personal level. I am sure that everyone can benefit as much as I do, even though you may already have support systems in place, such as mindfulness, meditation, support of family and friends, and connection with nature.

## **Sometimes I don't know when it's helpful to pay attention to my difficult feelings – I don't want to 'indulge' in my feelings...**

Feelings of sadness, grief, and anger about the current situation we find ourselves in; and knowing when it's more helpful to resource myself through self-soothing activities, taking time out in nature, or doing other nourishing things that help relieve my sadness. My feelings can go round and round without any sense of relief or resolution. I also don't want to 'bypass' what I'm feeling and just go to the positive. If I did that, the feelings might feel left out and abandoned. They have effective ways of getting my attention, and sometimes it feels like they are screaming at me. If I continue to ignore them, I get physical symptoms such as tiredness, stress or overwhelm. Then I realise that I have forgotten what I know about this dilemma.

## **What is really important is to find or develop a capacity for strength and resilience**

It's not 'process-skipping' to find a sense of Presence first. Presence is the capacity to be with anything in my experience without getting overwhelmed by it.

## **Presence is the starting place**

Presence can be found in many ways, for instance, by paying attention to my physical body, and how I am being supported by the environment; as simply as noticing how I am sitting and how the chair or floor supports my weight. I can also pay attention to my breathing, and become aware of how the air supports my life. Taking a few moments to do this, I can pay attention to the settling feeling that happens as I quieten down. Doing this at the beginning of the Focusing session allows more capacity to invite a sense of how my life is right now, and I can begin to acknowledge my life situation and my feelings exactly as they are, without trying to change them in any way. When I do that, resolution and release of stuckness begins to happen.

## **An example from a recent Focusing session**

After grounding and becoming aware of my sense of Presence, I paid attention to how restricted and locked down I feel in the current situation. It started as a heavy grey cloud above me, pressing down. Then it became more like a press, pressing down. As I stayed with it, feeling it in my body, and allowing it to be there, it became clearer. It was like a cider press, with a heavy plate and a large screw that turned tighter, pressing the apples into pulp. I felt some apples are really being crushed, and I connected it to the many people who are really suffering right now because of the current situation. I also felt the impact on me, which I usually minimise, saying I am not suffering like some people are. This time, I was able to acknowledge the impact I was feeling in that moment, and it brought a relief, and also a release. Not a release from the sense of the press, but the release that came from recognising the process as it is, rather than wishing it away.

In the sharing afterwards with my Focusing partner, she reflected that maybe there was juice flowing from the apple press, which could be made into apple juice, cider or distilled further. Yes, that made sense to me. In the session I was aware of the juice flowing out, but I hadn't focused on it specifically. Something valuable is coming out of this difficult situation, although I don't yet know what that is, and I didn't recognise it in the session.

**So when you don't know when it's helpful to pay attention to your difficult feelings and when it's more helpful to resource yourself, you can return to what you already know from experience.**

From my experience as a Focusing teacher and practitioner, I know that the way through this conundrum is to hold both the positive sense of Presence, and the difficult or painful life situation in my awareness at the same time; neither preferring one over the other, nor wishing the difficult feelings would go away, but in holding both with equal positive regard.



***Fiona Parr** is based in Devon, and offers individual Focusing sessions online. She teaches the Focusing Skills Certificate course, and professional training to Practitioner and Teacher level, currently online. She is a BFA recognised Focusing Teacher and Mentor, and Certifying Coordinator. Fiona teaches Focusing on a Presence oriented therapy training at the Just Being Centre in India. Fiona is a member of BFA, and hosts a monthly Focusing practice group. She is an active member of the European Focusing Association (EFA), and she initiated a special interest group for Focusing teachers in Europe. Fiona also enjoys teaching the first seven steps of Thinking at the Edge (TAE).*

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# New Year 2021 Focusing Retreat: Reconnecting to my own natural flow

By Mareike Ringena



When I heard, in mid-December, that there was a free space on this retreat, I knew I had to go. Even though this decision created some big ruptures in my personal life, the message of my body's deeper wisdom was clear "This is exactly what I need right now." And I am so happy that I trusted and followed this inner knowing.

## **Being with real people**

It felt like a miracle, once we were all actually there at Bala Brook Retreat Centre in Dartmoor, a group of eight people. The covid restrictions kept changing, which brought uncertainty about whether the retreat could go ahead right up until the last minute. Some people might have thought this 'gathering' irresponsible and 'unsafe' (and in fact several people who had booked to come on the retreat pulled out because of covid safety concerns)...however, for me, to go on a retreat like this was the most healthy and needed response especially in these current times.

And yes, not on zoom but in real life, with real people and real human contact, and physical immersion in nature! A space to have a break from the news, the constant messages of 'stay safe', 'social distancing' and 'self-isolation', allowing the nervous system to rest from all the messages of fear and allowing the body to come back to a real inner sense of safety and belonging, in community and in nature.

## **Re-finding my own voice**

When I came to the retreat I had lost touch with my own inner voice. The perfect mix of 'ingredients' on the retreat supported a natural process of unravelling, opening, deepening and re-connecting. On this retreat I found my way back to the natural flow of my inner being. This process of re-finding my own voice is echoed in the following poem by Mary Oliver which arose as a powerful mirror during the retreat for one of the participants.

## The Journey

One day you finally knew  
what you had to do, and began,  
though the voices around you  
kept shouting  
their bad advice,  
though the whole house  
began to tremble  
and you felt the old tug  
at your ankles.  
'Mend my life!'  
each voice cried.  
But you didn't stop.  
You knew what you had to do,  
though the wind pried  
with it's stiff fingers  
at the very foundations,  
though their melancholy  
was terrible.

It was already late  
enough, and a wild night,  
and the road full of fallen  
branches and stones.  
But little by little,  
as you left their voices behind,  
the stars began to burn  
through the sheets of clouds,  
and there was a new voice  
which you slowly recognised as your  
own,  
that kept you company  
as you strode deeper and deeper  
into the world,  
determined to do  
the only thing you could do,  
determined to save  
the only life that you could save.

*Mary Oliver*



### **The Dartmoor landscape**

Being surrounded and held by the beautiful and powerful Dartmoor landscape was one of the most nourishing and supportive ingredients for me. Feeling the presence of the ancient trees, the wild flowing rivers, the hills and the wide open spaces of the moor was a very nurturing experience. I heard someone say that they feel the presence of the ancestors in this environment, which really resonated with me. I loved the daily silent group walks through this beautiful land, blessed with lots of sunshine, crispy white frost and, one day some gentle snowflakes falling from the sky. I felt my body gently opening, each day letting this landscape in more deeply.



### Community

Another so deeply nourishing ingredient was the sense of community that developed within the group and which gave me a feeling of belonging, safety, warmth and love.

I also felt very supported by the balance of having a holding structure as well as being encouraged to follow my own needs and 'what feels right' and not having to follow the given schedule if I sensed that something else needed to happen. This invitation gave me permission to listen more closely within and follow the flow of my inner being – something I had forgotten!

### Wildness

One of the themes we explored as a group was about the grief for having lost touch with wildness and we explored ways to reclaim our connection to wildness. For me jumping into the ice cold water of the brook, feeling the force of the stream and the power of nature around me was a way to connect with and feel my innate wildness. The best thing however was to share this with others – to witness, scream, shiver and be wild together.



### Silence

The most precious and powerful part of the retreat for me was the silence. It was so simple and yet deeply powerful. I discovered that being silent with others soothed something in me so deeply and allowed me to arrive in and experience each moment more fully. The silences gave me the opportunity to notice what I normally don't notice – the little, more subtle things, inside and outside of me.

***'Your beingness is precious, with or without words'***

*Gordon Adam*

In the shared silence I could feel myself touching my own essence. My most favourite silent times were in the morning when we had breakfast. I loved sitting in the kitchen, watching the robins in the garden, while feeling the warmth of my own presence and the presences of other people around me. Those simple moments of being in silence with others nourished something in me so deeply. As if 'the more' of my being was able to come through here. It is in those kinds of silences that something inside finally gets the chance to come forward, have the space to be 'heard', felt and known.

### Focusing Partnerships – a mirror to my soul

The twice daily Focusing sessions were also deeply precious and nourishing, and also getting the chance to Focus with almost everyone on the retreat. For me, listening to others Focusing was particularly rich.

Often I felt a deep resonance with my partners' processes and it was as if their processes were a mirror through which I could reach and connect to unacknowledged parts of myself.

### **Group Focusing - Meeting in the Unknown**

Another highlight for me on this retreat was the 'Group Focusing' process which we did one morning, in which we were invited to sense into the 'We Space' of the whole group and speak from the felt sense of that when we felt moved to do so. It felt exciting, risky, deep... a sense of moving into the unknown together, discovering and re-shaping. I felt particularly excited by the invitation to pay attention to how each person's expressions resonated inside of me and then to use that inner sensorium to respond and share how something in me had been re-shaped by another's expression. I think what I liked so much about this process was that feeling of meeting and relating with each other on a deeper and more subtle level.

***Mareike Ringena** has been Focusing for 10 years and is a qualified Focusing practitioner as well as Dance Movement Psychotherapist. Mareike is originally from Germany and has been living in Bristol for four years. She is passionate about exploring Focusing combined with creative and non-verbal expression such as movement and art. Mareike is currently working as a Dance Movement Psychotherapist with children and young people, as well as adults with learning difficulties, combining Focusing with creative expression and embodiment. She has also run workshops on Focusing with Art.*

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*Photos by Gordon Adam and Tom Crews*

## Silence...

There is a stillness  
On the top of the hills.  
In the tree tops  
You feel  
Hardly a breath of air.  
The small birds fall silent in the trees.  
Simply wait: soon  
You too will be silent.  
*Goethe*

"Perhaps the most important thing we bring to another person is the silence in us, not the sort of silence that is filled with unspoken criticism or hard withdrawal. The sort of silence that is a place of refuge, of rest, of acceptance of someone as they are. We are all hungry for this other silence. It is hard to find. In its presence we can remember something beyond the moment, a strength on which to build a life. Silence is a place of great power and healing".

*Rachel Naomi Remen*

# Pause for Thought: Get people to practise pausing and they are on their way to learning Focusing

## By Mary Jennings

“When we slow down, pause, new possibilities have the potential to emerge. We can begin to sense for the more of what is there in any situation. We can allow a felt sense of ‘all that’ to begin to form. We can begin to live not from the surface of the situation, but from our own depths. Pausing is revolutionary!”

The word ‘pausing’ stands out. I’m reading the short evaluations written by the eight participants in the Level One Focusing course that was offered to professionals working in services for residential/ foster care child services in Ireland. In answering the question, *what was the key learning for you in this course*, again and again, phrases such as “the benefits of pausing and the simple, subtle ways this can be done” are repeated. My fellow trainers and I are surprised and a little intrigued at this outcome. We are not that sure that our course material was so skilfully designed to achieve this result! We were very much feeling our way, trying new ideas gleaned from different sources while ensuring that, at the end of the course, everyone would have a good foundation in the basic Focusing practices.

### **Mutual benefit in the experiment**

Our proposition to the participants was clear: by participating in this free programme they would learn skills in the basics of Focusing. They could begin to use these in their work with children (generally those in the care of the State) and for their own self care as people in the frontline of often overstretched and under fire services. In return, as Focusing trainers we would get to try out different ways of teaching Focusing ; ways that involved the Community Wellness Focusing principles and practices of ‘learn a little, practice a little, pass it on a little, learn more’. We would also get to incorporate what we, concurrently participants in a new Children Focusing training programme, were learning as we went along. A big, but exciting agenda for an experimental course delivered over four half days. Pause. Yes, that feeling of excitement is there, bubbling away.

### **The Revolutionary Pause**

And the concept of pausing, as presented and developed in this introductory course, seemed to have been what helped them quickly get a sense of this hard-to-describe Focusing process. When we slow down, pause, new possibilities have the potential to emerge. We can begin to sense for the more of what is there in any situation. We can allow a felt sense of ‘all that’ to begin to form. We can begin to live not from the surface of the situation, but from our own depths. Pausing is revolutionary! To be able to pause – to bring us down to earth for a moment – we need to practice it. It doesn’t come that naturally to everyone. Our working environments tend not to encourage it; sometimes we just have to manufacture it for ourselves.

### **Ways to pause**

Having touched on some of these ideas, we invited our Level One participants to come up with ‘ways to pause’ in the course of the working day. To kick-start the conversation, Mary shared an idea she had come across that buildings have pauses built into them. Think about it. Porches, lobbies, corridors, so called ‘landing strips’ in shopping malls are all designed to encourage you to pause as you transition from one place to the other; often from the outside to the inside.... It resonated. People began to see the possibilities in their own place of work.

John confessed to being known as a ‘corridor stalker’; he deliberately uses the long corridors in the old building he works in just to pause and check in; to gather how he is inside as he prepares to meet the next person he is working with. Others might just pick up the phone, but the walk allows him the pause. Philipa, a smoker, banished with other smokers to a designated space outside, immediately saw new

possibilities opening up in what is already a pausing space (even trying to convince us that this was a very good reason to smoke!). Jackie said, 'take the breaks, go to the canteen rather than take a cup of coffee at your desk'. Anne recalled a phrase she had learned at a stress reduction class: ABBA – take A Break Between Activities. She felt she could do that now with a renewed purpose. We were on a roll.

### Guerrilla tactics

Other ideas, which we began to call 'guerrilla tactics for pausing' came tumbling out and include:

- Count to ten before reacting (old wisdom, now with a new understanding)
- Put a curfew on the cell phone during breaks/lunch/evening times
- When on the phone, say to the other person: "I am just writing down what you said so I get what you are saying" (but really you are giving yourself time to pause)
- Become more comfortable with saying to people "Can you leave that with me" or "I am not sure about that just now" (if even for a few moments) or putting back a question to the person – "What do you think" – all with the underlying intention of taking a pause for yourself.

In one way, these are all obvious, clichés even, but when they are done for the purpose of, as Andrew said, "leaving space for what is not immediately obvious", then they take on a whole new dimension. Pausing-without-pausing now seemed possible within a busy environment that did not generally value or even allow it.

### Practising brings benefits

We invited the participants to take 'practising pausing' as their homework for the week, including trying out some of the ideas generated on our first day together. Here's what transpired for people who, at this stage had completed three hours of a Focusing course:

*"I turned off the radio and cleared away the breakfast things and sat for a minute before I left for work – I just had a whole sense of the day that way".*

*"Travelling with a child (a client) in the car, I just asked her 'how are you'... and waited. Normally I would be chatting and trying to create a distraction and it seemed to give her just a little time to check for herself. It was amazing what a small pause like that could do".*

*"I became much more comfortable with the silence between the young person and myself. He didn't want to talk, so I created a pause deliberately. It was good. And I know there was stuff happening in that pause but without a strain".*

*"I notice now that there is a pause built into the building, and just as you go in the door, you can connect to yourself for that moment".*

### Pause for thought

As our course continued over the next three weeks, we covered many different aspects of Focusing – allowing the felt sense to form, listening compassionately, how the language we use can help create the right relationship inside, how to work with boundaries and safe spaces. There was something about spending the time right at the beginning working on pausing, why it's important, what it can bring and how to do that in the hurly burly of a working day resonated. It really helped people to be more receptive to what Focusing could bring to them and to their work with children. Pause for thought indeed.

**Mary Jennings** is a Coordinator in Training with TIFI and she lives and works in Dublin. In 2011 Mary introduced Children Focusing training into Ireland and she is once again actively working on developing this form of Focusing for a wide audience. She has a particular interest in integrating Focusing practice with Thinking at the Edge (TAE), making core elements of TAE part of the way we teach and practice Focusing in everyday living.  
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**Editor's note:** this article originally appeared in the May 2011 issue of 'The Focusing Connection'. This slightly amended version appears here with the permission of the author.

# Focusing with Poetry During Lockdown: A Welcome Taste of Freedom

By Gordon Adam

I was privileged to be invited recently to an online sharing of poems in celebration of Fiona Parr's 70<sup>th</sup> birthday. This was Fiona's idea and the invitation was for each of us to share two or three poems that were "humorous, joyful, uplifting, or heart-warming" and many of those present were themselves poets. Towards the end of the evening, after a number of people had left the meeting, I started a second round of sharing by reading the poem 'Halleluiah' by Mary Oliver, this is a sort of celebration of age, and ends with the lines:

Halleluiah, I'm sixty now, and even a little more,  
and some days I feel I have wings.

This inspired Susan Jordan (who had organised the meeting on Fiona's behalf) to read 'Angel', from her own recently published collection of poems <sup>[1]</sup>:

## Angel

The other day an angel  
wrapped soft grey wings around me,  
feather-tips touching my heart.

I hadn't expected it to visit. It said  
it had come to stay, and smiled  
the way I hoped an angel would smile.

I leaned back against it, cushioned  
from the shock of being human.  
My naked skin felt its own feathers.  
I remembered I could fly.

*Susan Jordan*

When I heard this poem I knew that I liked it – it gave me a sort of warm buoyant feeling inside. On the strength of that poem I ordered the book from Susan and it didn't take me long to bring 'Angel' into a Focusing session. Here is an account of that session:

### Focusing Session on 'Angel'

I start my Focusing session in the usual way by taking time to pay attention to my immediate environment and then my physical body and noticing what is there already. I have already decided to Focus on the poem and I notice a slightly tremulous feeling of anticipation and excitement in my stomach and chest in relation to this. When I've settled in my body I open the book and read the poem aloud, taking my time, and as I read I'm noticing how each line, how each word 'lands' inside of me.

The word *Angel* immediately brings a sense of 'other than human', and I'm already feeling some excitement at the prospect of such an encounter.

*"wrapped soft grey wings around me, feather-tips touching my heart"* brings me a wonderful sense of being held and embraced and nurtured and cared for – a bit like a small child might be swaddled and embraced by a mother. I pause here and savour this feeling of being held, enclosed, nurtured.

*"feather-tips touching my heart"* feels very intimate – like my heart is being deeply but tenderly touched. I have a sense of being deeply 'met' and honoured as a human being – in a way that I never actually re-

member being 'met' by my mother (or anyone else for that matter). It's as if this angel, this more-than-human being, somehow has the capacity to 'see me' in my fullness, and not only to see me, but to hold me and embrace me and love me for who I am.

*"I hadn't expected it to visit"* brings me a sense of surprise – a very pleasant surprise – like that of being given an unexpected delightful gift – like a young boy being given a puppy, and *"it had come to stay"* is like being told that I'm allowed to keep the puppy! Something that I've only previously dreamed of has come true and I can't quite believe it! *"smiled the way I hoped an angel would smile"* translates to the puppy being equally pleased that it now belongs to me. I didn't actually think about a puppy during the session, but this metaphor best conveys the experience I was having as I entered into the poem.

*"I leaned back against it, cushioned from the shock of being human."* Now something bigger opens up in me – *"the shock of being human"* reminds me that I haven't always been human, and that I won't always be human. This brings tears and a sense of relief. Of course, how could I have forgotten where I came from! I vaguely remember a whole 'other dimension' that I once inhabited – not in detail or in pictures, but in the sense of freedom – like a spirit completely free of the human constraints of physicality, pain, thinking, emotions, etc.

*"My naked skin felt its own feathers. I remembered I could fly."* This enhances the 'memory' of having a different existence in some 'other than human' dimension. It could be literally that I was a bird or an angel, or perhaps I was a completely different sort of being in a reality that my human imagination is unable to fully comprehend.

Still in the session, I now have an expanded sense of 'beyond human' perspective. I can see the beauty and wonder and poignancy and giftedness of being human – and I can also see the pain, and suffering and selfishness and cruelty and limitation that is also inherent in being human. As if what is being acted out on planet Earth is a wonderful, inspiring, healing drama – and also a terrible tragedy – both happening at the same time! And more – that this is how it will always be on this planet... I found myself saying "humans have a great capacity to love" and then "humans are so stupid"

This Focusing session, perhaps more than any other that I can remember, opened up a wondrous sense of being a part of something much bigger. I ended the session with a sense of elation and 'beyond human' expansion that has stayed with me in the background of consciousness.

### Focusing with Poems

I've written in detail of my experience because I wanted to convey how a poem, combined with Focusing, can act as a powerful portal into different aspects of being human, or/and help us connect with other than human dimensions. This includes everything in the 'natural world', but also 'extra-terrestrial' dimensions, as demonstrated in my Focusing with this poem. I find that different territories open up with different poems (and different companions) – sometimes deeply and intimately personal, and sometimes definitely trans-personal – like 'the bigger picture', collective conscious or unconscious, archetypes, deities, the universe – it feels like there are no limits to where I could go.

I love having the freedom of being a traveller in these different territories that Focusing with poems enables. This diversity of territory and experience is captured in this quote:

**"Poems show us that we are both more and less than human, that we're part of the cosmos and part of the chaos, and that everything is a part of everything else." Julia Casterton**

I've been bringing poems into my Focusing sessions for nearly as long as I've known how to Focus. Sometimes I bring a poem with me that I want to Focus on, or sometimes this arises spontaneously during the session – I get a sense of a poem that is resonating with an issue that comes up for me in the session, and I find it and read it in the session. Invariably I find that bringing a poem into the Focusing space 'opens it up' and I become aware of a deeper, and often emotional resonance, relevance and meaning of the poem. I've found that a poem can be like a mirror that shows me something of myself that I may be unaware of or only partly aware of.

The same poem may bring up different things for different people. This could be the 'mirror effect' or perhaps some poems have different levels or aspects of meaning. I would suggest that any sense of

'meaning' that comes from Focusing on a poem is a 'personal meaning' rather than an 'absolute meaning'. A poem may also connect me with some 'human truth' or aspect of being human, or with some 'bigger truth', and that this might resonate on a broader than purely personal level. Personal or spiritual insight can arise through Focusing on a poem.

What comes from Focusing on a poem may vary from one session to another – I might access different aspects of meaning of the poem in different sessions, or I may be more or less moved or impacted by the poem at different times.

As well as poems, other forms of art could be brought into Focusing – this includes visual art, music, song, dance, movement, etc. One Focuser has named this Focusing with 'a fifth element.'

### **Focusing with Poetry Workshops<sup>[2]</sup>**

I ran some initial workshops exploring Focusing with poems on a couple of the BFA Focusing Camps (2017-19) and I also wrote about some earlier experiences of Focusing with a couple of different poems a few years ago in my article 'Focusing, Poetry and Radical Acceptance'<sup>[3]</sup>

In this challenging time of coronavirus lockdowns, nature, beauty and the arts (including poetry) feel more important than ever to help keep us connected to our humanity, and also to bring us a sense of 'flight' or freedom, through our human capacity for embodied imagination. Maybe we can't travel outwards, but inner journeying is possible! With this in mind, I decided in November last year to offer a 'Focusing with Poetry' workshop on Zoom. The intention was to support and encourage Focusers to bring poems into their Focusing, as an extension of the usual partner practice. The workshop attracted 20 participants and was a great success. Since then I've run three further 'Focusing with Poetry' workshops which have been well received. Here are some things that people have said about their experiences of Focusing with poems:

- *"I really enjoyed the Focusing with poetry yesterday. The poem I chose and Focused on opened up a depth in me that I really didn't expect to happen. It was a really moving and opening experience."*
- *"For the first time I slowed down while reading a poem and managed to see what reactions came up for me with each word and each line. It was really enjoyable and surprising, a totally new experience."*
- *"Feeling energized and inspired by what we explored in today's workshop. Thank you! I appreciate the new territories I can access by Focusing on poems; and how poetry can be a path to my centre, and to more universal truths."*
- *"I thought it was a great workshop. It really expands the Focusing practice and supports the journey outwards too."*

I'll let the last words of this article go to Pablo Neruda, whose poetic description of the delights of writing poetry also resonates well with my sense of the experience of Focusing with poetry. *Not wishing to split this lovely poem onto two pages, it follows on the next page after the references and bio.*

### **References**

1] 'I never think dark will come' by Susan Jordan. Published by Overstep Books. Available directly from Susan Jordan [susanjord@gmail.com](mailto:susanjord@gmail.com)

2] Future workshops are planned for 14th March and 9th May. See events listing on p.23 & p.24.

3] 'Focusing, Poetry and Radical Acceptance' by Gordon Adam. BFA Newsletter (July 2018). Viewable or downloadable on <https://www.focusing.org.uk/useful-resources>

**Gordon Adam** lives in Bristol, UK. He is passionate about Focusing and the power of Focusing community. He runs an open monthly 'changes' type Focusing group (currently fortnightly on Zoom), 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 12 years, combining Focusing with periods of silence, immersion in the natural world and temporary community. He also works as a homeopathic teacher and supervisor and is editor of this newsletter.

[www.focusing.org.uk/Gordon-Adam](http://www.focusing.org.uk/Gordon-Adam) [gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk)



## Poetry

And it was at that age...Poetry arrived  
in search of me. I don't know, I don't know  
where  
it came from, from winter or a river.  
I don't know how or when,  
no, they were not voices, they were not  
words, nor silence,  
but from a street I was summoned,  
from the branches of night,  
abruptly from the others,  
among violent fires  
or returning alone,  
there I was without a face  
and it touched me.

I did not know what to say, my mouth  
had no way  
with names,  
my eyes were blind,  
and something started in my soul,  
fever or forgotten wings,  
and I made my own way,  
deciphering  
that fire,  
and I wrote the first line,  
faint, without substance, pure  
nonsense,  
pure wisdom  
of someone who knows nothing,  
and suddenly I saw  
the heavens  
unfastened  
and open,  
planets,  
palpitating plantations,  
shadow perforated,  
riddled  
with arrows, fire and flowers,  
the winding night, the universe.

And I, infinitesimal being,  
drunk with the great starry  
void,  
likeness, image of  
mystery,  
felt myself a pure part  
of the abyss,  
I wheeled with the stars,  
my heart broke loose on the wind.

*Pablo Neruda*  
*Translated by Alastair Reed*

# From Helplessness to Hope and Clarity

## A TAE Process by Merilyn Mayhew

Thinking at the Edge (TAE) has helped me move from feeling powerless in the light of the inaction of politicians to address climate change, to a place of hope and clarity, with clear steps ahead for me.

I'm so pleased I used this as my issue for TAE, because it developed into how to position myself before any storm on the horizon, not just climate change. At the start of the coronavirus pandemic, I felt like I was ready to go straight into action, without the weeping and wailing. (Action, in the instance of coronavirus, means being alert to the needs of those around me, finding the older single people in my street so I can keep in touch with them as the crisis worsens, speaking calm into the panicky conversations, keeping in contact with people in my church so that no-one falls through the cracks.)

### Heavily burdened

I came early last year to Beatrice Blake's online TAE class heavily burdened by my own helplessness in the face of imminent climate change crisis. Here in Australia we were in the middle of an extreme fire season. We're used to fire, but usually it's out in the country, away from us, and for a few weeks at a time. I worked on bushfires when I worked for the National Parks and Wildlife Service, but I had to travel hours to reach the fire grounds.

Sydney was ringed by fires. When I went walking, I'd see flakes of ash swirling in the air in front of me. The sky was reddish grey for weeks from the smoke and ash of surrounding fires. My throat was raw as the fire season went on month after month with no end in sight. We were regularly experiencing 40<sup>o</sup> C days, in the middle of a dreadful drought that had us all on water restrictions. I could physically feel the suffering of my garden in my body. But around the country it was far worse. People were dying in the fires; thousands of people were losing their homes. No-one knows how many of our precious native animals died—huge amounts of habitat were destroyed.



*Dense smoke haze in Sydney during the fires*

I knew the consequences of this fire season were going to impact us for years to come. I read up on the science, I had Scientific American articles at hand and could quote information about changing weather patterns. I posted on Facebook. I could see that the weather patterns and forces that led to this fire season didn't come out of nowhere. This extreme fire season was completely predictable, and future extreme fire seasons would continue to be completely predictable unless something changed—unless laws were enacted to limit mankind's contributions to the problem.

I amassed solid information on climate change and wrote to my politician. I asked everyone to write to their politicians to ask them to enact climate change action plans. But I knew our politicians were tied to the fossil fuel lobby, and by and large had little leeway to follow their consciences and act in integrity for the good of our country. I felt the need to act on behalf of my children and grandchildren, but I felt powerless to take any useful action. I was aware of many groups and conversations around climate change, but I was not ready to engage with them.

### TAE week 1: Sensing and saying the crux of the matter

I paused and sensed the way my body was carrying "all of that": the fires, the hopelessness, the lack of reaction to my letters to my politician, the fact that fires will come again unless laws are changed.... Then I wrote the crux of it all:

*"I feel so helpless in the light of politicians who won't take adequate action on climate change."*

Between classes in Thinking at the Edge, we Focus on our issue with a partner. I sensed how my body was feeling about the whole thing and expressed it to my partner. When I first Focused on my issue, my body was physically affected – I could smell the smoke in the air, I was coughing and my throat was sore from weeks of ash. A felt sense formed of a scythe from nose to throat, and a strong sense of impending danger. The question arose:

*How can I live, how can I be in the world, with this impending disaster?*

### **TAE week 2: Sensing and saying what you know about 'all this' from your lived experience**

I let the felt sense show me “instances”—life experiences that had to do with my felt sense. I described the experiences in detail, then looked for a particular insight [“pattern”] from each instance. Memories came –

- of being powerless in the face of authority
- of situations where I had a voice and where I didn't
- where my voice was powerful
- where my voice was hurtful and not ultimately helpful
- run-ins with my father
- times when I could negotiate an outcome, and times when I couldn't

I came to realize that most people around the world are similarly powerless to impact their politicians. They are mostly at the mercy of corrupt self-serving governments—this is the human condition. My crux sentence was developing:

*How then do I live, given the reality of feeling and actually being powerless?*

Focusing on that brought the sure knowledge that in every situation I have ever encountered, I have always been solidly held, no matter how dire the situation. I remembered some of the strong images that had come to me over the years – a baby bird in a nest, securely held by strong hands; a woman holding a baby, herself securely held by her husband; the sense of a strong solid foundation under me. And the sure realization that though I may be powerless, I am not without hope. Hope and peace were there. And the first forming of the way ahead: though I live a small life, to live it well, being kind and welcoming to those I encounter.

My next Focusing session brought an image of the impending crisis: a small figure bowed down to the earth in a wide dry land, and on the horizon, a huge roiling orange dust storm. The figure is scrabbling in the dust, desperately looking for a step to take, a solution, fearing she won't have taken action in time.

That same image of the approaching storm returned next time I Focused, stronger and more clearly than ever. I was particularly frustrated by the useless letter I'd received back from my politician. In my Focusing, I saw the little person bowed down in the huge open desert, the huge orange dust storm filling the horizon and coming closer, getting bigger. The small figure was agitated, looking for what to do, knowing she is all that stands between the approaching storm and all her children and grandchildren.

But also came the realization that all along the line are many others also standing and facing the storm, protecting their own children and grandchildren and communities—and the hope that we are all standing against the storm, all doing our best to live well, and trusting that something somewhere will work. The insight came: I am not alone; I am not the only one tackling this. The message therefore was:

*Don't give up! Live with kindness and compassion in the face of the storm.*

A few days later, I came across Psalm 46:1, “*God is our refuge and strength, an ever-present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear, though the earth gives way and the mountains fall into the heart of the sea.*” This added to my sense of being securely held, standing on a firm and solid foundation, in the face of the approaching storm.

A conversation with a visiting American crystallized my growing sense: I asked him, “How do you, as an American, live when Trump is in power?” He said, “I try to be kind.” I understood exactly. He has no power to change who is President of his country, but he exercises the power he does have, to be a kind, compassionate person to all those he meets.

### TAE week 3: Exploring the interplay of felt senses in order to deepen what you know

I held the felt sense of “I am not alone” with the felt sense of “I have always been held.” This crossing of two felt senses produced a new insight – this is all relational, it’s about the connections between people, the working together. So my feeling became, “**We** are not alone” and “**We** are securely and firmly held”. My hope comes from standing with others on a safe, solid foundation. My crux sentence is now:

*In the light of the coming climate change crisis, how then do I live?*

### TAE week 4: Saying what you really mean

First, we were asked to identify a key word in our crux sentences, then we worked with dictionary definitions of this word and alternative words.

My key word is LIVE. As I looked at definitions and followed up with new words, the word LIVE took on the sense of dwelling, abiding, of having an ongoing connection with Jesus which directs and guides, comforts and strengthens me. The adjective form, LIVE, pointed to burning, glowing, giving out a steady light, attracting, shining. My crux sentence expands:

*In the light of the coming storm, how then do I live/dwell/abide/glow?*

That points me to a way of life that is about choosing to be kind, gentle, compassionate, generous, joyful, peaceful and patient in all the small encounters of life. And a bigger picture—understanding that if there is a more specific action step to be taken, it will become apparent at the right time. This brings more peacefulness about the whole issue.

### TAE week 5: Drawing your vision; extracting the essence of your new understanding

When I next Focused, again there is the coming dust storm, but the little person is no longer bowed down and distraught. Now she is standing up, living, interacting, moving around, being kind, generous, patient—in effect creating a garden of good all around her. There is a sense of calm peacefulness. The Great Gardener is with her, showing her how to tend her garden. She is sharing the flowers and produce with others, and there are other people working in the garden with her. As they focus on working in the garden together, the storm recedes into the distance. It is there on the horizon, but it has become background.

I remember our actress Noni Hazelhurst talking about waking up in the garden: “*And I guess we have to hope that we construct our lives in such a way that with the getting of wisdom in midlife, when we reap what we have sown, the harvest is going to be a rich one. Otherwise the harvest may be barren or diseased. Be careful what you plant, and how you tend your garden. Because you’ll wake up in it one day, and it will be blooming or overgrown or barren, depending on what you’ve planted and how you’ve tended it.*”

My understanding grows. We are always gardening in the face of some coming storm – whether it’s climate change, or coronavirus, or rampant populist politicians, or something else. There is always some kind of threat on the horizon. So, my issue becomes:

*In a world where there is always some storm or threat beyond my control, how do I create around me a safe, secure, solid place of kindness?*

Beatrice Blake described her friend Heazel’s Focusing workshops as places of safety, community, healing, peace and self-care for people who really need it. And those words resonated strongly with me, communicating what I want my gardening metaphor to mean.

My crux sentence becomes:

*In light of the coming storm, I want to grow a garden.*

When I draw a picture of my felt sense, the terror of the approaching storm diminishes as I concentrate on working in my garden with others. The garden is lush and green



and full of colour and fruit. We engage with each other with kindness and good intentions. The place is safe and secure, as shown by the protective dome shape of the trees, but it is not locked away or insulated from the coming storm.

My crux sentence develops:

*We consider the storm on the horizon from a place of safety, beauty, community and peace, and together work out how to confront it.*

Or even: *Together, we face the coming storm.*

### **TAE week 6: Bringing it all together**

Getting to this point in the process of Thinking at the Edge has allowed me to step out and engage with the climate change conversation out there. I attended a talk, and that led to two action steps:

- In the context of climate change, what does our calling to love our neighbor look like? Given that the poor and the vulnerable are the first and most affected by climate change, I sense the need to join a group supporting them. This is the next step from my image—how to extend the community of care out from my comfortable life to the poor and vulnerable;
- Given that trees and plants decrease the amount of CO<sub>2</sub> in the atmosphere, there is much I can do as a gardener to increase greenery. I can plant more trees, I can fill in the gaps left in the gardens I care for by this hot dry summer, I can pick up my online plant sales, focusing on propagating frangipani trees and selling them cheaply.

### **TAE class 7: Exploring action steps that fit you**



A week later, I found heart to get back into the gardens I care for and start the work of restoring them. I took cuttings of frangipani trees and begun to propagate them. I joined a group particularly focused on care for those most vulnerable to climate change impacts.

Then coronavirus lockdown hit, and so much of my busy life was cancelled. Every day I was free to work in my garden, free to work it comprehensively from one end to the other, potting up my frangipani cuttings, but also culling, clearing, moving, replanting across the whole yard, until it opened up into a beautiful clean garden space that looked loved and cared for.

We contacted our neighbours, making sure everyone had a network around them, becoming aware of who would most need support. We encouraged everyone to connect with the neighbours each side of them, so no-one fell through the cracks. Letterboxing our street to offer help has led to connections that continue today.

Australia has not experienced the pandemic as the raging storm it is in so many other places around the world, but it's not over yet, and none of us know how the ongoing story of vaccines and mutant strains and more vaccines and more strains will end. I am so thankful for this process which gives me a place to stand, whatever is coming.

Together, we face the coming storm.

**Merilyn Mayhew** lives in Sydney, Australia. As well as her Focusing, which has been hard won through books and courses and retreats and mentors and many partnerships, Merilyn is a passionate gardener, knitter, listener and story-teller. She co-leads the Sydney Changes Group.

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Photos and drawing by Merilyn Mayhew

A version of this article also appeared in the Dec 2020 TIFI newsletter



# Practitioner Profile:

## Mareike Ringena

I discovered Focusing in 2012 on a Focusing and Meditation Retreat led by Manjudeva (Peter Gill) and Jutika (Siobhan Healy), at Dhana-kosa, a Buddhist retreat centre in Scotland.

That retreat was a turning point in my life. I still remember the deep resonance I felt inside when the teacher was introducing this practice called Focusing – it felt like a ‘homecoming’. It was so familiar and yet it was something completely new. Focusing has shown me how to open the door to the ‘ME’ inside – learning how to Focus was the beginning of my journey of deep healing and self discovery.

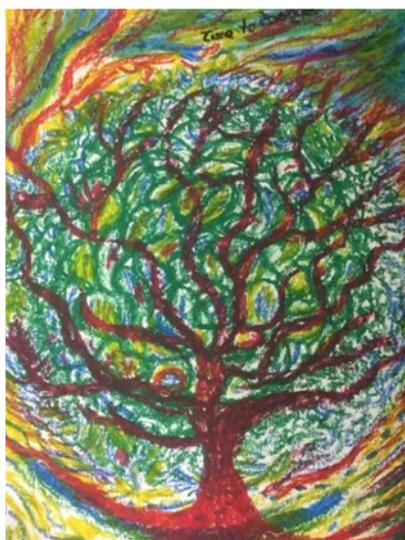


*I have lived on the edge of insanity.  
Wanting to know reasons.  
Knocking on a door.  
It opens.  
I've been knocking from the inside.*

*Rumi*

I still remember that simple yet profound discovery – that I could turn towards my feelings with interested curiosity, no matter how uncomfortable and scary it seemed. Since then a whole new world has opened up to me. I finally found some solid ground to stand on. I had discovered a reliable resource that I carried inside myself and that was always available. It felt strong and powerful, yet delicate, simple and natural. Learning Focusing felt like a precious gift and I immediately knew I wanted to take it forward in my life. Since then it has become my path – my way of living – the doorway to myself.

I have explored Focusing through various avenues. On my own, through writing in my journal, through art, in my dance and movement practice, as well as more formally through Focusing partnerships. I started travelling throughout the UK as well as Germany and the Netherlands to attend Focusing workshops and retreats.



My aliveness and passion lies in Focusing through non-verbal creative expression such as movement, art and embodied play. Even though I deeply resonate with ‘Inner Relationship Focusing’ and the original work of Gendlin, I have often found it difficult to communicate my inner experiences with words, especially in the presence of another person. Using creative forms of expression has allowed me to let the felt sense speak directly in its natural form without having to squeeze it into words and more rational linear thinking. Some of my deepest Focusing sessions have been on the dance floor, informally, when I have used dance and movement as a way to engage with and symbolically express my inner self.

When I learned Children Focusing with Rene Veugelers in the Netherlands, I immediately felt ‘at home’ there. This creative, non-verbal and more dynamic approach offered a space for younger, non-verbal parts of myself to reveal and express themselves in a way that wasn't possible in the more verbal and structured forms of Focusing. Using drawings, colours, images, objects, as well as play and movement felt like a more natural and safe way for me (my inner child) to express how I felt on the inside.

Children Focusing has been a way for me to work through developmental trauma. It has enabled me to 'pick up my inner children', who got stuck in their development due to early childhood trauma and give them a space to continue their growth by expressing themselves in their own unique way.

I found this poem on the first Children Focusing training, hanging on a wall and I immediately found myself in it.

### The Secret Place

There's a place I go inside myself  
Where nobody else can be,  
And none of my friends can tell it's there  
Nobody knows but me.

It's hard to explain the way it feels,  
Or even where I go.  
It isn't a place in time or space,  
But once I'm there, I know.

It's tiny, it's shiny, it can't be seen,  
But it's big as the sky at night...  
I try hard to explain and it hurts my brain,  
But once I'm there, it's night.

There's a place I know, inside myself,  
And it's neither big nor small,  
And whenever I go, it feels as though  
I never left at all.

*Dennis Lee*

Out of this journey I felt a deep desire to facilitate healing processes for others, and to learn a therapeutic approach that integrates Focusing with creative expression. As a natural response to this desire, I trained to be a Focusing Practitioner as well as doing a MA in Dance Movement Psychotherapy.

Soon after gaining my qualifications in 2019, new doors opened and some exciting and rich opportunities have arisen to work with various client groups and to practise and develop my skills and confidence. I got the opportunity to work in a special needs school for children with autism, in a mental health charity for children and teenagers, as well as working in a supportive living service for adults with learning difficulties. Last year, in February 2020 I also offered my first workshop in 'Focusing through Art', inspired by the work of Laury Rappaport.

***Mareike Ringena*** is a qualified ADMP accredited Dance Movement Psychotherapist and BFA certified Focusing Practitioner. She is originally from Germany and has been living in Bristol for the last 4 years. Mareike is currently working as a Dance Movement Psychotherapist for a leading mental health charity for children and young people in Bristol as well working in a supported living service with adults with learning difficulties. Mareike offers 1:1 Focusing sessions (using verbal as well as non-verbal/creative ways of communication) for all ages. [mareikeringena@gmail.com](mailto:mareikeringena@gmail.com)

*Tree drawing by Mareike*

# Forthcoming Workshops & Events

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

## March & April 2021

**Focusing Skills Course** (BFA Focusing Skills Certificate: Levels 1-5) with Amona Buechler  
Online. 1st March—30th August. Mondays 3—6pm (UK time). [amona@move-with-life.org](mailto:amona@move-with-life.org)

**The Landscapes of Grief** Exploring grief with Peter Gill  
Online. From 2nd Mar (6wk). Tues 10—12.15pm. [www.livingfocusing.co.uk](http://www.livingfocusing.co.uk) [livingfocusing@fastmail.com](mailto:livingfocusing@fastmail.com)

**Untangling the Knots: Deep Dive Focusing Course** with Peter Gill  
Online. From 2nd March (12wk). Tues 7—9.15pm. [www.livingfocusing.co.uk](http://www.livingfocusing.co.uk) [livingfocusing@fastmail.com](mailto:livingfocusing@fastmail.com)

**The Path of the Companion** (BFA Focusing Skills Certificate: Module 2) with Peter Gill  
Online. From 10th March (5wk). Weds 10—12.15. [www.livingfocusing.co.uk](http://www.livingfocusing.co.uk) [livingfocusing@fastmail.com](mailto:livingfocusing@fastmail.com)

**Focusing Skills Course** (BFA Focusing Skills Certificate: Levels 1-5) with Fiona Parr  
Online. 11th March—2nd Dec. Thurs 2—5pm. [fionaparr-focusing.co.uk](http://fionaparr-focusing.co.uk) [fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk](mailto:fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk)

**How to Lose it Less with your Kids** Focusing skills for more empathic parenting with Peter Gill  
Online (free). 11th March. 11am—12 noon. [www.livingfocusing.co.uk](http://www.livingfocusing.co.uk) [livingfocusing@fastmail.com](mailto:livingfocusing@fastmail.com)

**Introduction to Focusing** Day or weekend workshop with Suzi Mackenzie  
Online. 13th/14th Mar. 10am—5pm [www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training](http://www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training) [suzimac55@hotmail.com](mailto:suzimac55@hotmail.com)

**Focusing with Poetry** Workshop for anyone who knows Focusing with Gordon Adam  
Online. 14th March. 10am—1.30pm. [gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk)

**The Deep Mystery: A Focusing Journey Exploring the Mystery of Death** Workshop with Peter Gill  
Online. Sunday 21st March. 10am—1pm <https://www.livingfocusing.co.uk/mystery.html>

**Focusing in Client Work** Workshop with Suzi Mackenzie  
Online. 26th March. 12.30—2.30pm. <http://www.suzimackenzie.com/> [suzimac55@hotmail.com](mailto:suzimac55@hotmail.com)

**Dreaming and Intuition** (BFA Focusing Skills Certificate) with Suzie Mackenzie  
Online. 27<sup>th</sup> March and 24<sup>th</sup> April. 10am-5pm [www.suzimackenzie.com/focusingtraining](http://www.suzimackenzie.com/focusingtraining)

**Applied Focusing** (BFA Skills Certificate Level 5) with Fiona Parr  
Online. 6<sup>th</sup> - 27<sup>th</sup> April. 2-5pm [fionaparr-focusing.co.uk](http://fionaparr-focusing.co.uk) [fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk](mailto:fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk)

**Companioning** (BFA Skills Certificate Level 2) with Fiona Parr  
Online. 15th April—6th May. Thursdays 2—5pm [fionaparr-focusing.co.uk](http://fionaparr-focusing.co.uk) [fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk](mailto:fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk)

**How to Lose it less with your kids** Day workshop with Peter Gill and Kirsty Pakes  
Online. 22nd April. [www.livingfocusing.co.uk](http://www.livingfocusing.co.uk) [livingfocusing@fastmail.com](mailto:livingfocusing@fastmail.com)

**The Art of Guiding** (BFA Focusing Skills Certificate: Module 3) with Peter Gill  
Online. From 28th April (5wk). Weds 10am—12.15 [www.livingfocusing.co.uk](http://www.livingfocusing.co.uk) [livingfocusing@fastmail.com](mailto:livingfocusing@fastmail.com)

**Focusing with Stress and Overwhelm:** Introductory workshop with Suzi Mackenzie  
Online. 30th April. 12.30—2.30pm. [www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training](http://www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training) [suzimac55@hotmail.com](mailto:suzimac55@hotmail.com)

## May & June 2021

**Focusing with Poetry** Workshop for anyone who knows Focusing with Gordon Adam  
Online. 9th May. 10am—1.30pm. [gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:gordonadam@blueyonder.co.uk)

**Creativity and Values into Action** Day workshops. (Part of Focusing Skills Course) with Suzie Mackenzie  
Online. 22nd May & 26th June. 10am—5pm. [www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training](http://www.suzimackenzie.com/focusing-training)

**Companionship** (BFA Skills Certificate Level 3) with Fiona Parr  
Online. 3rd—24th June. Thursdays 2-5pm. [fionaparr-focusing.co.uk](http://fionaparr-focusing.co.uk) [fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk](mailto:fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk)

**Radical Acceptance** (BFA Focusing Skills Certificate: Module 4) with Peter Gill  
Online. From 16th June (5wk). Weds 10am—12.15pm. <https://www.livingfocusing.co.uk/courses.html>

## 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](mailto: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](mailto: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](mailto: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](http://www.solar-active.com/focusing_group) Contact: [david@solar-active.com](mailto:david@solar-active.com)

**South Yorkshire Focusing Group.** Open group which meets monthly.  
Contact: Hugh [hughknopf@rocketmail.com](mailto: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](mailto:livingfocusing@fastmail.com)

# Resources & Further Information

## **British Focusing Association (BFA)** [www.focusing.org.uk](http://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](http://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/](https://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](http://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](http://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 July 2021.

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