

THE FOCUSING  
STUDENT'S AND  
COMPANION'S  
MANUAL  
PART ONE

ANN WEISER CORNELL  
& BARBARA MCGAVIN

# THE FOCUSING STUDENT'S AND COMPANION'S MANUAL

## PART ONE

ANN WEISER CORNELL  
& BARBARA MCGAVIN

CALLUNA PRESS

*For Joe and Sara*

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First edition May 2002

Second printing February 2003

Third printing May 2006

Fourth printing February 2008

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CALLUNA PRESS

2336 Bonar Street

Berkeley, CA 94702

USA

510-666-9948

Cover image: comstock.com

Design and layout: Barbara McGavin

Illustrations: Mary Ferris

ISBN 0-9720158-0-8 (Part One)

ISBN 0-9720158-2-4 (2 part set)

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Focusing is a simple matter of holding a kind of open, non-judging attention to something which is directly experienced but is not yet in words. Out of this simplicity, many things come.

People use Focusing for many purposes: problem-solving in all sorts of situations, becoming clear on what they feel and want, decision-making, creativity (writing, painting, etc.), developing new ideas and theories in every conceivable field, psychotherapy, working with children and babies, environmental management... the list is endless. The use of Focusing that we are concentrating on in this manual is what is usually called personal growth: understanding one's self, moving past old emotional pain, and accessing one's larger potential.

Although Focusing at one level is a simple matter, at another level it is complex. Focusing is full of paradox. It is both direct and indirect, subtle and concrete, active and receptive. As a process, it frees you to follow a precise inner path – and to change its exact steps if that feels better. It gives us access to the meaning carried in our bodies and yet we don't need to know or understand what the meaning is for profound change to happen.

Since Focusing itself is so intricate, naturally the teaching of it is also. No two Focusing teachers will teach alike, and each person's journey with Focusing is uniquely their own. This manual is the work of two Focusing teachers whose combined experience with Focusing is nearly fifty years. Still, we have not reached the last word on Focusing teaching and indeed never will. We can only offer guidance based on our own experience.

## TWO GENERAL ITEMS BEFORE GOING FURTHER

*First:* We are convinced that success in learning Focusing is rare without learning to exchange Focusing partnership sessions. Certainly we can't guarantee that any person can learn Focusing without also learning Focusing partnership. Therefore this manual, as well as our courses, emphasizes and supports Focusing partnership as a central practice for someone wanting to learn Focusing.

*Second:* The principle underlying all of the applications of Focusing is that your inner sense of rightness, accessible through bodily knowing, is a reliable guide to moving forward. Focusing means learning how to develop that inner sense. However, the learning of Focusing is also guided by your inner sensing. Everything we say needs to be checked inwardly for whether it fits for you. Thus your learning of Focusing is Focusing-based at its very core.

## A BRIEF HISTORY OF INNER RELATIONSHIP FOCUSING

Focusing, also called Experiential Focusing, was developed by pioneering psychologist and philosopher Eugene Gendlin out of his research into what makes psychotherapy successful and his philosophy of the implicit. (See the Appendix for how to learn more about Gendlin's writings and workshops.) The first published papers about Focusing appeared in the early 1960s. Ann Weiser Cornell learned Focusing from Gendlin in 1972, in Chicago. In 1978, Gendlin's book *Focusing* was published, listing six steps still widely used in Focusing teaching (see the Appendix, p. X for a comparison of Gendlin's six steps with the teachings of this manual).

Ann was one of the people invited by Gendlin (in 1980) to assist him when he began offering Focusing workshops in Chicago after the publication of his book. In 1983 Ann moved to California and began teaching Focusing on her own. In that same year, Barbara McGavin learned Focusing in England from a student of Gendlin's. She began doing her own Focusing teaching in 1984. Although they had never met, Ann invited Barbara to be on the Editorial Board of her new newsletter, *The Focusing Connection*.

In 1989, Ann began writing a Focusing manual that offered a way of teaching Focusing in 'five steps and four skills.' *The Focusing Student's Manual* has gone through three editions and many printings, and is used by Focusing teachers all over the world.

In 1991, Ann and Barbara met and began their collaboration, a rich interweaving of experience and theory that led to a style of Focusing teaching which emphasizes the Focuser's relationship with the felt experience. They call it *Inner Relationship Focusing*.

## HOW THIS MANUAL CAME TO BE

In 1999 we began collaborating on a revision of Ann's Focusing Student's Manual, which had fallen behind the changes in our teaching. An extensive revision was called for, and it had to include both of us, since by that time (and even more today), our teaching of Focusing had become so intertwined that neither of us could do justice to it separately.

What was intended to be a short project has become a three-year trek, including much more than we originally envisioned, and the result is a manual so extensive that we had to divide it into two parts. *The Focusing Student's and Companion's Manual, Part One*, which you hold in your hands, is the first half. If you compare it to the original manual we think you'll agree that it's not so much a revision as a whole new work, approaching the teaching of Focusing freshly, with all that the two of us now know about making this subtle process accessible to anyone who wants to learn it.

Like its predecessor, it's meant to accompany Levels One and Two Focusing courses.

Its companion, *The Focusing Student's and Companion's Manual, Part Two*, contains materials to support Levels Three and Four Focusing courses. If you are wondering if this second manual corresponds to Ann's original *Focusing Guide's Manual*, the answer is: partly. We are also planning an *Advanced Focuser's Manual* and a *Focusing Practitioner's Manual*, both of which will include post Level Four material and support for working with people new to Focusing.

Together, both parts of *The Focusing Student's and Companion's Manual* are meant to support someone in the whole process of learning Focusing as a lifelong skill of awareness. This means becoming a more and more skilled and subtle companion to a Focusing process, both in another person and in one's self.

## HOW TO USE THIS MANUAL

If you've received this manual as part of a Focusing course or workshop, your Focusing teacher will suggest how to use it. Typically, you'll be directed to look at some pages in class and assigned to read others. The rest will be for you to read on your own as background and reference material. You may find that some parts will make sense to you immediately, and other parts will be illuminated after some practice – so do go back and re-read.

If you are reading this manual outside of a Focusing course or workshop, we urge you to find at least one other person to read and practice it with you. There is a power in working with another person that cannot be explained, and even if both of you are new to the process, you can get further learning together, we predict, than you ever could separately. We would also urge you to have at least one guided session in Focusing with an experienced teacher, so you can experience the process and have confidence that you know what it feels like. Both of us offer phone sessions (our contact information is in Appendix B), and there are many other excellent Focusing practitioners who could help you with a guided session.

If you are a Focusing teacher, we welcome you to use this manual in your courses. We offer quantity discounts if you'd like to buy manuals in bulk. We also offer a *Teacher's Guide* which gives our suggestions for how to use this material in courses and workshops. We trust that you will be able to adapt it to your courses.

We welcome feedback from anyone about your experience using this manual. If you have questions, we are happy to respond, especially if they reach us by email.



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

There are too many people who have contributed richly to our understanding and practice of Focusing for us to be able to thank them all. However, there are a few who must be acknowledged:

Bebe Simon, whose understanding that the felt sense needs to be treated as if it itself has a life, led the way into the Inner Relationship work. We thank her for “Say hello to it” as well as many other important phrases.

Greg Madison, who suggested the term ‘reminding’ instead of ‘guiding’ and whose sensitive presence has supported many a Focusing session.

Erna de Bruijn and Christine Langeveld, who suggested the term ‘Companion’ to replace ‘listener’ or ‘guide,’ and whose Center in Den Haag has been a laboratory for testing out Inner Relationship Focusing since 1993.

Mary Ferris, whose whimsical and deeply intuitive drawings delighted the readers of the earlier manuals, and who has graciously created even more for this incarnation.

Our colleagues, creative warm-hearted Focusing teachers of all sorts and varieties, who have contributed to our work immeasurably, and who are out there changing the world one Focusing workshop at a time.

Our many dear dedicated students, without whose patience and enthusiasm these materials could not have been hammered out in practice.

And of course, Gene Gendlin, beloved teacher, without whom none of this would have happened. In gratitude.

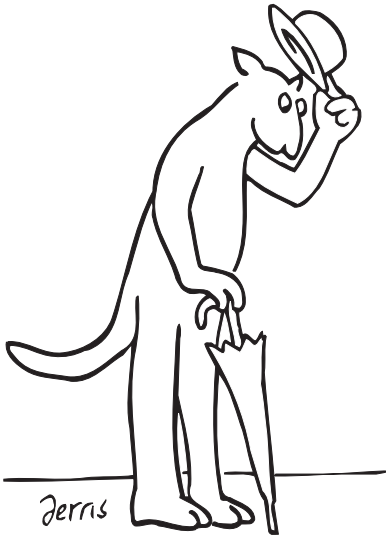
Ann Weiser Cornell

Barbara McGavin

April 2002

# SECTION ONE

## THE DOOR OPENS



Welcome.

In this section, **THE DOOR OPENS**, you will begin exploring the Focusing process and what it is to be a Focuser.

Focusing is essentially a process of being present with something that needs attention in one's own experiencing. To begin learning it, we need to experience the safety to explore our inner world. We will explore the qualities of what we call Presence, the inner state of being able to keep company with whatever needs our attention.

Then we will show you a simplified form of the Focusing process which has four stages: **COMING IN**, **MAKING CONTACT**, **DEEPENING CONTACT**, and **COMING OUT**. You begin to learn Focusing by compassionately observing the Focusing process and then beginning to practice it yourself.

In later sections, you will learn more about what this process is, why it works, and many of the variations on how to do it. But before any of that, let us begin...

## ❖ WHAT IS FOCUSING?

*The core of Focusing is a natural human process of sensing within and resonating the symbols that emerge with your inner felt experience.*

When was the last time you sat down and let yourself become quiet, and then brought a listening, getting-to-know-what's-there type of awareness to your own inner self? If you're like most people in modern developed countries, such moments are rare. It seems our lives are moving faster and faster, with less and less time to listen to the whispers within.

Focusing is a radical departure from the usual ways we operate in our culture. When you learn Focusing, you learn to *be with* your own sensations and feelings, and you discover that they have communications for you. You learn to turn toward what you are feeling with interested curiosity, rather than being caught up in feelings and acting out of them. You find out how to include and accept all sorts of inner experiences, with no need to take sides in an inner war that labels some parts of you as 'bad.'

At first, it will be easier to practice Focusing by setting aside a special time to do it, ideally with a friend as we will show you. But after you learn Focusing you will be able to do it sitting, standing, walking, driving... You will be able to live your life from a Focusing place, in a Focusing way. You will be able to know, from moment to moment, whether what you are doing is coming out of your truest sense of yourself, and how that feels.

Focusing is used in many areas: with personal problems, combined with art, writing, movement, health care, psychotherapy, with children, stress management, in relationships, education, developing new ideas in philosophy, art, architecture... The list goes on and on. Focusing can be everywhere in your life, at work, as you do your shopping, talk with your children or partner, read a book, go for a walk in the woods, write a poem.

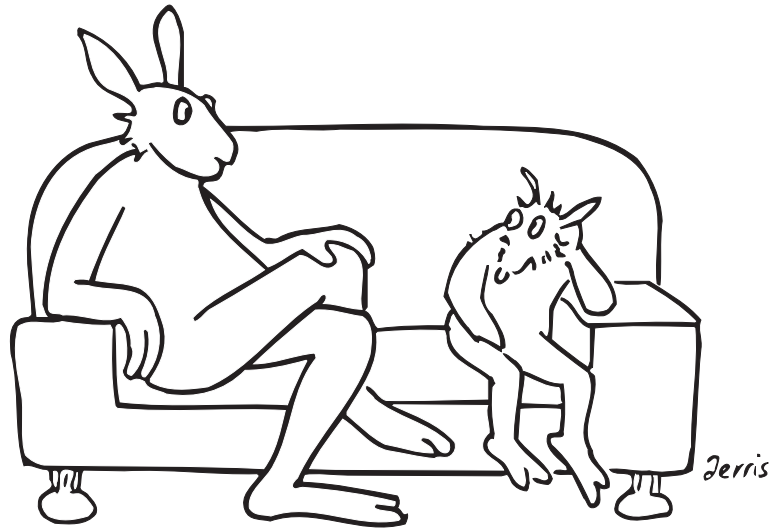
In our culture we are used to associating intelligence with the brain. Learning and practicing Focusing will bring you in touch with a larger intelligence inside you, an intelligence that is body-based and that can sense what needs your attention – that you can trust and follow.

In these pages we will show you what we consider a 'simple' form of Focusing. Even so, it has many stages and may seem rather complex. We invite you to remember that Focusing itself is simple – far simpler than the words that can be said about it. The stages we teach are like training wheels; they are there to help you until you don't need them anymore. As you practice Focusing, more and more you will find yourself setting down the book, setting down the cards, and just following your body's sense with interested attention. That's Focusing.

Focusing is essentially a process of being present with something in our own experiencing. We are keeping ourselves company – or rather, keeping company with something within us in a special way.

Take some time now to remember a time when you felt really heard, when you felt you had space and safety to explore your inner world. You might take some time to sense what qualities in the other person helped you to do that. Now remember when you were really there for someone else, how did that feel inside you? Take some time to feel that now and find some words that capture that quality.

When we are able to give this kind of attention to ourselves, we call this being in a state of *Presence*.



Write in here the words that feel most like the qualities of Presence to you (we've given you a few to start):

patient
interested

allowing

non-judgmental

spacious

We have found that taking time at the beginning to practice how to move into Presence will help your Focusing enormously later, especially when something more difficult or challenging wants to come and be known. So we will show you the most basic ways of moving into *Presence* right now.

### THE POWER OF ACKNOWLEDGING

Acknowledging is the simplest thing you can do to help you come into Presence with something. Although it might not seem like much to simply notice something and acknowledge that it is there, it is a surprisingly powerful thing to do. It positively validates your inner experience without evaluating it. It brings you into relationship with it.

Here we have written three sentences that can give you an experience of moving into Presence. You might even take some time right now to say each of these groups of three sentences. Close your eyes, say them slowly, and take time after saying each one to notice how it feels in your body:

1. *I feel so frustrated by what she did.*
2. *Something in me feels so frustrated by what she did.*
3. *I'm sensing something in me that feels so frustrated by what she did.*

Here's another group:

1. *There's a knot in my stomach.*
2. *There's something in my stomach that feels like a knot.*
3. *I'm sensing something in my stomach that feels like a knot.*

Could you sense how there was an increasing sense of space and ease within as you said each sentence in the group? We've broken the process into two steps to make it easy to see what's going on. These first two steps into Presence are simple (but not always easy):

#### STEP ONE

The first step is noticing that something is present. When you sense something, say:

- I am sensing... or*
- I am noticing... or*
- I am aware... or*
- I am acknowledging...*

and then describe what you are aware of.

#### SOMETHING IN ME

#### STEP TWO

The next step is to say *something in me...*

When you notice that you are saying *I am...* or *I feel...* try changing that to:

- Something in me is... or*
- Something in me feels [like]...*

Another way of saying this is *Part of me...*

#### PUTTING THE FIRST TWO STEPS TOGETHER:

- I am sensing (aware/noticing/acknowledging) that something in me is (feeling)...*

## SOME EXAMPLES FOR YOU TO TRY FOR YOURSELF:

1. *I feel bitter and disappointed.*
- 2.
- 3.
1. *There's tension in my shoulders.*
- 2.
- 3.
1. *I'm scared to go deeper.*
- 2.
- 3.
- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

MAKE ONE UP FOR YOURSELF

## WHEN YOU MIGHT WANT TO MOVE INTO PRESENCE:

- At the beginning of a session when you first sense something  
*I am sensing something in me that feels like...*
- Whenever something new comes into your awareness in a session  
*I am noticing something else here now*
- When you are aware of physical pain or discomfort  
*I am sensing something that is hurting there*
- When you are feeling strong emotions  
*I'm sensing something in me is feeling really sad*
- When you are aware of anything at all!  
*I'm aware of something there*

## KEEPING IT SAFE

When you move into Presence with something inside, you are helping to keep your own inner space safe. We also need to look at what helps keep the space safe when you are exchanging Focusing turns, either in a class, a partnership or a Changes group.

We have a rule: anything said by a Focuser during a Focusing session is strictly confidential. It is *theirs*. It is *never* OK to discuss a Focuser's process or the content of their session without their consent either in their presence or their absence. (For more about this, see pp. 30-31.) What comes in a session can be very delicate and vulnerable and needs our respect and protection at all times.

Even something as innocent as asking someone the following week how that problem they worked on is going now, can feel like an intrusion to the Focuser. It's best to have a very short memory about what people worked on.

*We ask the Focuser's permission before we discuss the process of their session in a workshop.*

*We strongly discourage referring to content at any time unless the Focuser does so themselves.*

## ❖ DOING SOME FOCUSING

*You can do Focusing with a Companion or alone. Most people find it easier with a Companion, especially at first. If you're practicing outside of class, be sure to give yourself a special time and space where you won't be interrupted or distracted. Unplug your phone... put a sign on your door...*

### SAFETY AGREEMENTS

*We suggest that people practicing Focusing together – either in a workshop or outside one – make two agreements to ensure their safety.*

*The Agreement of Privacy: you always have the right to keep to yourself whatever comes up in your Focusing – it doesn't have to be shared.*

*The Agreement of No Comment: whatever the Focuser does share is not to be commented on by anyone without the express permission of the Focuser. This refers especially to the content of the process – what it is about.*

### BEFORE YOU BEGIN – SOME PRACTICAL HINTS

This time is for you to explore your inner world in the way that meets your needs.

- Make yourself comfortable, warm enough, and so on.
- You might want to loosen clothing, ties, belts, etc.
- Sit comfortably in a supported position.
- You don't have to sit still, this is not sitting meditation.
- See if it feels OK to close your eyes. Most people find that having their eyes closed tends to be helpful for paying attention to the inner world. Feel free to experiment: open? closed? Which works best for you?
- Keeping eye contact with your Companion can make it more difficult to turn your attention inward. (And, of course, if what feels right for you is to have eye contact, then feel free to open your eyes.)

### FOUR STAGES OF FOCUSING

For our first look at the Focusing process, we are going to keep things as simple as possible. The simplest way of describing the process is with four stages. They are:

#### COMING IN – BRINGING AWARENESS INTO YOUR BODY

Taking time to bring awareness into your body helps the rest of your Focusing go well. This stage builds a base for you to move forward from.

#### MAKING CONTACT – WITH SOMETHING INSIDE

In this key stage you establish an inner relationship with something in your awareness so that the next stage of getting to know it becomes possible.

#### DEEPENING CONTACT – KEEPING SOMETHING COMPANY

This is the heart of the session. In this stage you spend time with something which is wanting your attention, giving it an opportunity to be known, sensing for the symbols that match it exactly. This stage is usually the longest. It can last from just a couple of minutes to several hours (with breaks).

#### COMING OUT – BRINGING THE SESSION TO A CLOSE

Taking enough time with this last stage allows you to build a long-term relationship with your inner places, which lets your Focusing deepen and develop over time. This stage is a bridge between your inner Focusing process and the rest of your life.

COMING IN is a very important stage. Taking time with this stage builds a foundation for the entire Focusing process. If it is not easy for you to sense in your body, take plenty of time to practice this. Just do as much as feels comfortable at any time. There are several ways of bringing your awareness into your body. Here is a simple short form to start with (see the Appendix for other ways). This is a process that can help you settle your awareness deeply into your body and help all the rest of your Focusing go well.

- Bringing your awareness into your body
- Sensing or inviting what wants your awareness now
- Waiting until something comes

#### BRINGING YOUR AWARENESS INTO YOUR BODY

*I'm taking time to bring my awareness into my body.  
First the outer area of my body, my arms and hands  
... my feet and legs...  
I'm sensing the contact of my body on what I'm  
sitting on...  
I'm bringing awareness into the middle area of my  
body...  
Sensing my throat... and my chest...  
my stomach... and belly...*

*Going slowly at this point is usually very helpful in having a satisfying Focusing session – we call it going slowly to go quickly. There isn't anything in particular you're looking for, or that's supposed to happen. It's just a matter of sensing, like "Yes, I can sense my feet...ah, yes, and my legs...."*

*You are not trying to become relaxed while you are doing this. You want to be able to feel your body just as it is right now.*

#### SENSING OR INVITING WHAT WANTS YOUR AWARENESS NOW

*As I let my awareness rest here, in this whole middle area, I'm taking some time to notice what is wanting my awareness now.  
Maybe there was something I noticed as I brought my awareness into my body.  
Maybe something needs to be invited to come.  
I'm wondering what is wanting my awareness right now.*

*What is wanting your awareness might come in any part of the body. It might be something that was already there, or something that forms after your awareness is there. It might appear to be a body sensation, an emotion, a thought, an image...*

*Wherever something is, and however it comes, say "Yes, I'm noticing that."*

#### WAITING UNTIL SOMETHING COMES

*I'm just waiting until something comes into my awareness.*

*What is this 'something'? Anything. Anything that comes, and how that feels in your body right now. (Worried about work? Notice how that feels in your body. Does an area of your body tighten as you think about work? That's it. Stay with that.)*

*It's not a matter of making something happen. It's more of an expectancy that something will come if it wants you to know about it right now, and an openness to noticing whatever is there.*



## ❖ MAKING CONTACT

- *Beginning to describe something*
- *Acknowledging it*
- *Finding the kind of contact it would like*

MAKING CONTACT is the stage in which we start to sense what is wanting our attention and begin to develop a relationship with it.

What comes in the Focusing process may be subtle, elusive, or hard to describe – especially at first. Taking time with this stage will let it be ‘enough there’ so that the next stage can go well.

What comes may be shy or it may be uncomfortable in some way – scary or intense or even painful. Then this stage is important because it helps you establish the kind of relationship with the ‘something’ in which you can be with it just the way it is without feeling overwhelmed by it.

Beginning to describe something, acknowledging it and finding the kind of contact it would like *can* happen in this stage (and the next stage, DEEPENING CONTACT), but not all of them happen every time.

### BEGINNING TO DESCRIBE SOMETHING

*Now I’m sensing something is here. I can sense it somewhere. I’m taking some time now to notice just where it is in my body. I’m noticing if it would feel right to begin to describe it. I’m open to using words, images, gestures, metaphors... whatever fits, captures, expresses somehow the quality of this whole thing. When I’ve described it a bit, I’m taking some time to notice how my body responds to that. I’m checking the description with the body feeling, saying, “Does this fit you well?”*

*If it feels too delicate to say anything about yet, simply rest your awareness there. Take time until you sense that it wouldn’t vanish if you spoke.*

*Describing it is like how you would tell another person what you are aware of. It could be as simple as “it feels tight” or it could be more elaborate.*

*When you’re checking the description with the body sense, there will be a feeling like “Yes, exactly,” or, “Not quite, but close...”, or, “Partly, but there’s more...”, or just, “No.” No reaction at all is the body’s way of saying, “No.”*

### ACKNOWLEDGING IT

*I’m acknowledging it – “Yes, I’m noticing that’s there.”  
I’m taking time to notice how it feels in my body after I’ve acknowledged it.*

*We can go around all day feeling something and not acknowledging it. It’s remarkable what a difference it can make to just say, “Yes, that’s there.”*

### FINDING THE KIND OF CONTACT IT WOULD LIKE (SAYING HELLO)

*I’m sensing how it would like me to be with it. I’m sensing if it would be right to greet it directly by saying hello to it, or “Yes, I know you’re there,” or “I can sense you there.” I’m sensing if it wants me to just keep it company silently. I’m noticing how it feels in my body after I connect with it.*

*Beyond acknowledging is connecting with it directly, from ‘I’ to ‘you.’*

*Saying hello to something that feels uncomfortably strong or intense can bring a surprising easing, as if it relaxes when it knows it has your attention. But something that is vague or faint might need a quieter kind of presence. Take some time to sense what would be right for it.*

DEEPENING CONTACT is the most complex part of the Focusing process, and later we'll say a lot more about it. Each Focusing session is unique – and this is the stage with the widest variety of things that can happen. These are just general guidelines to help you get your bearings and start to feel comfortable in this terrain. In the previous stage, MAKING CONTACT, you met something, said hello to it, and got to know it a little.

Now you settle down with it for, so to say, the rest of the conversation. This is a conversation in which *it* speaks and *you* listen. Or, if it doesn't feel able or willing to speak, you simply sense how it's feeling, the same way you might sense the mood of a friend who doesn't feel like talking. When it does communicate with you, you let it know you hear it.

During this part of a session we spend a lot of time sensing in the body: sensing for symbols that match our experiencing and resonating those symbols with the body. In *Beginning to describe something*, we outlined this process a little. The symbols that emerge when we are closely in touch with something in us come from a very deep place and are highly significant. The most important part of this process is what you do after a symbol emerges. You sense *in your body* whether that symbol matches what you are sensing. This conscious cycle of sensing in the body, symbols emerging, and resonating those symbols is the core of Focusing.

- Settling down with It
- Keeping It company
- Sensing in the body
- Symbols emerging
- Resonating and adjusting
- Sensing Its point of view
- Letting It know you hear It

#### SETTLING DOWN WITH IT

*I'm imagining settling down with It, like I'd settle down with a friend.*

*When you consciously shift from an attitude of 'working on' something to 'being with' something, everything changes. Imagining sitting with it – settling down – helps this shift to happen.*

#### KEEPING IT COMPANY

*I'm keeping It company, spending time with It just as it is.*

*I'm keeping my awareness with It.*

*When you are spending some time sensing inwardly and keeping company from Presence with what you find, a big, peaceful space begins to open inside. You are interested and curious, wanting to get to know it better at its own pace. If it changes, that's fine, if it doesn't, that's fine too.*

#### SENSING IN THE BODY

*I'm sensing how It feels in my body.*

*I'm sensing where It is in my body.*

*I'm noticing Its location, quality, texture, intensity.*

*Throughout the whole session you are sensing in the body. As you stay in contact with it, it may change. It may shift in location, quality, intensity.*

*You may sense its emotion, its mood, its meaning. There may be a sense of more than you've put into words yet.*

## ❖ DEEPENING CONTACT

### SYMBOLS EMERGING

*As I am sensing It in my body, I am noticing any symbols emerging that capture Its quality, match It. I'm noticing whatever comes.*

*During this deeper stage of the process, the symbols seem to need to be more closely matched with the body experience than at the beginning. Being open and patient and accepting of what comes into your awareness, however illogical it seems, helps the process to move forward.*

*Symbols come in many forms: words and phrases, images, sounds, gestures. Besides saying words that can fit, you might want to move or make a gesture, draw something or just make a sound.*

### RESONATING AND ADJUSTING

*I'm sensing how my body responds to the symbol(s) that have emerged.  
I'm sensing for what would fit even more exactly.*

*As a symbol emerges, sense again, as you did earlier in Beginning to describe something, for how your body responds to that symbol. When the body sense changes, describe how it is now – sensing for a new symbol that matches the new body sense.*

### SENSING ITS POINT OF VIEW

*I'm taking some time to sense how It's feeling from Its point of view.  
I'm sensing for Its mood, Its emotion, how It itself feels.*

*The shift from your point of view to Its point of view is a powerful one. For example, as you sense It you might experience discomfort, but if you sense for how It feels you might find that It's feeling scared or sad or lonely or angry or something else.*

*You might also experience a shift from observing it objectively to sensing it subjectively. It might appear like a rock or a door or a slug that you can describe. When you begin to sense from Its point of view, you may begin to sense its emotions and often it changes dramatically at this point.*

### LETTING IT KNOW YOU HEAR IT

*When I sense something from It, like how It feels emotionally, or what It's wanting me to know, I'm letting it know I sense it... or hear it... or see it. I am Its companion. There is absolutely nothing more I need to do, other than let It know I understand.  
I'm noticing if It feels understood... and if there is more.*

*When it does communicate with you, that communication needs to be received. We call this 'letting It know you hear It,' but what you actually say to it may be: "I sense how it is for you," "I hear how you're feeling," or "I see what you're showing me." It needs to know that you know – and for that to happen you need to tell It. Remember, Presence doesn't fix, solve, negotiate, argue...*

COMING OUT is the stage in which you notice when it feels right to end the session, and then respectfully end it. This relationship with your inner self is not a one-time thing but a long-term relationship. So, in the ending, we honor that.

You might have received a time signal from your partner, or you might simply feel it is time to stop. This is the time to begin COMING OUT.

- Sensing for a stopping place
- Receiving and experiencing what has changed
- Letting It know you're willing to come back
- Thanking
- Bringing your awareness out

#### SENSING FOR A STOPPING PLACE

*I'm taking some time to sense inside if it is OK to end in a few minutes or if there is something more that needs to be known first. If something more comes, I'm taking some time to acknowledge that.*

*All along we've been checking with the inside place, how it feels, what it needs to feel safe. Now we check again – is it OK with It if we end here, or does something more need to happen first?*

#### RECEIVING AND EXPERIENCING WHAT HAS CHANGED

*I'm taking some time to sense any changes that have happened in my body, especially anything that feels more open or released. I'm remembering what was important during the session.*

*All through this process we have stayed with the body, tracking changes as they happen. Now is another important time to sense directly in the body what has changed (if anything) and receive that at a bodily level.*

#### LETTING IT KNOW YOU'RE WILLING TO COME BACK

*I'm checking if I want to say to It, "I'm willing to come back if you need me." I'm letting It know I'm willing to come back if it wants me.*

*One session is often part of a larger process. You can feel that there's more even though you are stopping now. You can honor this by letting the place you've been with know you're willing to come back.*

#### THANKING

*I'm noticing if it feels right to thank what has come, and to appreciate my body's process.*

*Thanking is a respectful way to end a Focusing session. You might thank different parts that have come, your body, insights, or you might have a general feeling of gratitude.*

#### BRINGING YOUR AWARENESS OUT

*I'm taking some time to bring my awareness slowly outward again, feeling my hands and feet, being aware of the room and letting my eyes come naturally open.*

*Sometimes it feels like you've been a long way in and it can take time to re-enter the outer world. You might just open your eyes for a moment and close them again. Acknowledging that it has been a long journey can help. Taking time now can help with feeling grounded when you open your eyes fully.*

## ❖ A SHORT SUMMARY OF THE FOCUSING PROCESS

### COMING IN

- *Bringing your awareness into your body*
- *Sensing or inviting what wants your awareness now*
- *Waiting until something comes*

### MAKING CONTACT

- *Beginning to describe something*
- *Acknowledging it*
- *Finding the kind of contact it would like (Saying “Hello”)*

### DEEPENING CONTACT

- *Settling down with It*
- *Keeping It company*
- *Sensing in the body*
- *Symbols emerging*
- *Resonating and adjusting*
- *Sensing Its point of view*
- *Letting It know you hear it*

### COMING OUT

- *Sensing for a stopping place*
- *Receiving and experiencing what has changed*
- *Letting It know you're willing to come back*
- *Thanking*
- *Bringing your awareness out*

## SECTION TWO

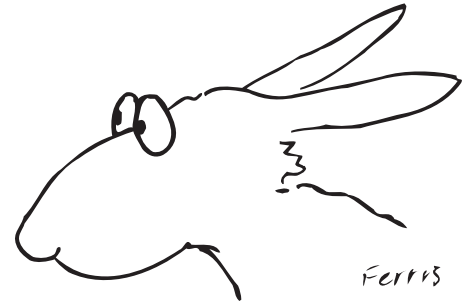
# FINDING COMPANIONS

For most people, most of the time, Focusing takes place most easily with a Companion keeping them company. One of the things that is central to the teaching and practice of Focusing is enabling people to be Companions for each other.

In this section we explore what it is to be a Companion for a person who is Focusing. We describe a few of the most important ways the Companion can help the Focuser to stay in Presence with their experiencing. We describe some of the basic principles of listening and reflecting for a Focuser. We highlight some of the most important aspects of the Focuser's experience to reflect back to them.

It is also important to know how to be a Focuser with a Companion. You remain responsible for your session and you need to know how to help your Companion learn how to help you. Basic guidelines for the Focuser are given to help you to get the most out of your Companion's presence and reflections. We show you how to teach your Companion what to do and say to help your process.

We also describe what the Focuser and the Companion each does in a typical Focusing session.



## ❖ KEEPING SOMEONE COMPANY WHILE THEY'RE FOCUSING

### THE PRESENCE OF THE PARTNER

Gene Gendlin, speaking to hundreds of psychotherapists at an international congress, said:

*“I want to start with the most important thing I have to say: The essence of working with another person is to be present as a living being. And that is lucky, because if we had to be smart, or good, or mature, or wise, then we would probably be in trouble. But, what matters is not that. What matters is to be a human being with another human being...” (1990, p. 205)*

Why did all these therapists need to hear this simple truth? Because most of us have forgotten that we do not need to help another person in order to be helpful, we do not need to make something happen for things to happen, we do not need to be healers or experts for healing to take place. Hardest to remember about being a Companion to a Focusing process is that your *presence* is the most important thing. And the more proficient you become in listening techniques, the more difficult and challenging it becomes to remember this basic truth.

The greatest gift you give as a Companion to someone Focusing is your presence: simply being there as a human being with this other human being.

*The same qualities of Presence you give to yourself when you are Focusing are the qualities you give to your partner when you are the Companion.*

### WHAT IT IS TO BE A COMPANION

Let's go back (p. 3) to where we were looking at those qualities that described the kind of listener who helped you to feel safe and be in touch with yourself. We have been calling these the qualities of Presence. Take some time to sense those qualities again. Notice how they feel in your body.

Notice that these qualities can be embodied in silence. You do not have to speak in order to be patient, respectful, accepting, allowing, interested... 95% of what you give to the Focuser can be expressed without speaking.

The more you can embody these qualities as you are keeping someone company, the more helpful your listening will be.

## BEING IN PRESENCE AS YOU KEEP COMPANY

We know that when we are listening really well for another person we embody the qualities of Presence. Presence is experienced in the body. So when we are listening for someone, it helps to move consciously into being in Presence.

## HERE'S A WAY TO DO THAT:

- *Take time at the beginning of the session to bring awareness into your own body while the Focuser is bringing their awareness into their body.*  
*Notice what feels good, open, flowing, spacious, patient, available... Notice any of the qualities of being in Presence and where you can feel them in your body.*
- *You aren't sensing for what wants to come and be known in YOURSELF at this point; however, you may find there are some feelings that aren't so comfortable in there.*  
*Take a moment to acknowledge them and let them know you will come back to them later if they need you.*
- *If what comes is quite strong, it sometimes helps to imagine that you are sitting close to it, perhaps even with your arm around it.*
- *Often a feeling of calm readiness comes once you have done that. Usually you will find it possible then for your awareness to move to the Focuser.*
- *Staying in touch with how your body is feeling, bring your attention out toward the Focuser, and wait for them to speak. Look at them. Begin to sense for how they are right now.*

## HERE'S ANOTHER WAY:

Margot Silk Forrest writes about how she uses a technique from the Buddhist tradition to help herself prepare to listen. She closes her eyes, breathes deeply, and says to herself, "My intention for this Focusing session is to be open, present, and attentive." As she says "open," she pulls back her shoulders and opens through the chest. As she says "present," she senses herself seated in the chair, her body connected to the earth. As she says "attentive," she opens her eyes and looks at the Focuser with a soft gaze.

Feel free to find your own way of attuning to the energy of the Focuser while silently acknowledging any of your own feelings and reactions. Become sensitive to that in you which feels the desire for the Focuser to have company on their journey, and knows that it is the Focuser's inner sense of rightness which is the journey's guide – so you can relax.

## HOW TO COME INTO PRESENCE AS THE COMPANION

*You will be the best Companion if you let yourself feel an empathic connection with the Focuser, and with yourself! Nervousness? Excitement? Just acknowledge what's there gently, and say hello to it silently. "Yes, I can sense something in me is feeling nervous. I'm acknowledging it."*



### SOME BASIC PRINCIPLES

There are a few basic principles we have found helpful when keeping someone company.

- *You are not the expert*
- *You are a person – not a parrot*
- *Statements, NOT questions*
- *Staying in the present moment with the Focuser*
- *When the Focuser says “No” – being corrected*

*Good listening means following the other person wherever they go, keeping them company on their journey.*

### YOU ARE NOT THE EXPERT!

As a Companion to another person’s Focusing process, the hardest thing to remember – and the most important – is that you are not the expert. You are not the healer or the fixer of this person’s life. You don’t have to figure anything out or pull anything together. You don’t have to know where this is heading or help them get there. You don’t have to analyze or summarize for them. All those things can actually get in the way of being present for someone.

*Listening means empathically reflecting back the Focuser’s words.*

### YOU ARE A PERSON – NOT A PARROT

Listening means reflecting back some of what the Focuser is saying. You say the words and feelings your partner needs to hear, repeating back the essence of what they are saying. Sometimes, when what they say is short, this means saying their words back exactly. But this is not a mindless process of repetition. Let the Focuser’s words come inside you, and give yourself a moment – about one breath – to take in their meaning. Then, when you reflect, it comes with heart and understanding.

The idea is to be present for the Focuser, open to understanding how the world looks through their eyes, through the eyes of the parts of them that are wanting to be heard, and then reflecting back so that they feel heard.

### STATEMENTS, NOT QUESTIONS

Listening to a Focuser is very simple. You won’t be giving instructions or making suggestions or asking questions. Linguistically, you are simply making statements, that’s all. This helps you to follow the Focuser rather than subtly leading.

Questions – even a questioning tone – can tend to bring the Focuser out of contact with what is inside them and into interaction with you. A falling voice tells the Focuser that you’re there, but they don’t need to respond to you.

To hear the difference between a rising voice and a falling voice, say the following sentence twice.

*You’re sensing a tightness in your stomach.*

The first time let your voice fall at the end of the sentence. The

second time let your voice rise at the end. Notice how the second one, even though linguistically a statement, sounds like a question. So let your voice fall, not rise, at the end of your sentences.

#### STAY IN THE PRESENT MOMENT WITH THE FOCUSER

Listening is very much a present-time process. If you remember to stay in the present with the Focuser you'll probably find that listening is relaxing. If you get tired or tense you are probably working too hard.

Don't worry about the past. It isn't your job to tie together the different parts of what the Focuser said, or to bring them back to something they said earlier. In fact, doing that will probably interfere with the process.

Don't worry about the future. It isn't your job to anticipate where the Focuser is going, and certainly not to nudge them in that direction.

Pay attention to what is here now, what they are saying, or to their silence, how they look, how your body is responding to what they have just said.

#### WHEN THE FOCUSER SAYS "NO" – BEING CORRECTED

The art of gracefully letting yourself be corrected is a key part of being a successful Companion. Even when you listen perfectly, you will be corrected sometimes. There are several reasons this might happen – all of them wonderful.

- *because what the Focuser is sensing inside has already changed*
- *because what they are sensing is vague and subtle and the right words are hard to find*
- *because even when they first said it, it didn't match their inner sense, but they may have needed to say it in order to sense what is right*
- *and sometimes you won't get it quite right, but the wonderful thing about this is that the process of the Focuser clarifying it to you will help it become clearer for them*

So there's nothing to be ashamed of in being corrected – it doesn't mean you're a bad Companion. It's actually a very important and central part of the process. Hang in there even if they correct you more than once. Keep saying it back as best you can until they say, "Yes, that's right."

Even if you inaccurately reflect what you've heard, sensing for what wants to be known and understood within them and saying back as sensitively as you can will be sensed and appreciated.

QUALITIES OF REFLECTIVE LISTENING

In Focusing, the kind of listening we do for another person is simple. It is so simple that watching it, you might think that the Companion is not really doing anything special at all – just saying back what the Focuser has said. In its simplest form, it involves changing nothing except *I* into *you*.

- *Focuser:* I'm sensing sadness.
- *Companion:* You're sensing sadness.

We also call this kind of listening 'reflecting.'

Here are some of the qualities of this kind of listening:

- *The Companion follows the Focuser, letting them set the direction and pace of the session.*
- *The Companion stays in the present moment with the Focuser.*
- *The Companion speaks softly and clearly.*
- *The Companion's tone of voice goes down at the end of a sentence so that what they say doesn't sound like a question.*
- *The Companion waits a brief time, about as long as a breath, before saying back – but not much longer.*
- *As Companion, don't express your opinions about what the Focuser is saying or doing, not even in your tone of voice.*

Sounds too simple to be helpful? You'll be amazed.

*To reflect is a rare and powerful way to let Focusers enter into their own experience. It is a way of being as close as possible to someone without imposing anything on them.*

WHY REFLECT?

- *It helps the Focuser to hear their own words, to compare them with the bodily felt process and sense if they 'resonate.' This alone is enormously important.*
- *It helps the Focuser to stay with what's there.*
- *It helps the Focuser to know we are there with them. Their eyes are closed, and they may be wondering what we're thinking of them – in some cases even fearing that we're being judgmental. To hear our voice murmuring what they just said, in a friendly non-judgmental tone, helps to dispel these worries.*
- *It helps the Companion to stay present with the Focuser.*

So the first three reasons we reflect are because it helps the Focuser. Paradoxically, though, we help most when we don't *try* to help. The Focuser is deeply in contact with their inner world, or at least trying to be. Their primary attention is with what's going on inside them, not with their Companion. When people say to us afterwards, "I didn't really notice you," we know we've done our best listening. What we've said has supported them in being in close contact with what was needing their attention.

Most people find that listening feels wonderful. Once you've realized how easy it is, you can relax – and then you can be present for some of the most fascinating dramas and the most touching reunions and the most satisfying journeys you'll see anywhere.

We want to support the Focuser in staying in Presence with their experiencing. No matter how experienced you become as a Companion, the form of response we're showing you here will continue to be one of the most helpful ways you can reflect something back for the Focuser.

This form of response helps people stay in relationship with what's inside, helping them to stay in Presence. (This should be familiar to you from the first section where we looked at what the Focuser does to stay in Presence, pp. 4-5.)

**"YOU'RE SENSING..."**

Begin your reflections with the words *You're sensing...* Then say what the Focuser is sensing right now. You could also begin with

*You're noticing...*, or  
*You're aware of...*

But most of the time *You're sensing...* will be best.

For example:

- *Focuser:*        *There's a heavy feeling in my chest.*
- Companion:*   *You're sensing a heavy feeling in your chest.*

**"SOMETHING IN YOU FEELS..."**

When the Focuser says *I am...* or *I feel...*, say back *Something (in you) feels...*

- *Focuser:*        *I feel crazy when there are a million things going on at once.*
- Companion:*   *Something in you feels crazy when there are a million things going on at once.*

**PUTTING THEM TOGETHER**

- *Focuser:*        *I feel like there is no way out.*
- Companion:*   *You're sensing something in you that feels like there is no way out.*

It is almost always better to say a short sentence than just a few words. This is especially true for strong emotional words and unpleasant physical sensations. Saying back just single words or phrases can intensify people's experience, which can become overwhelming and frightening. Even people who aren't in danger of becoming overwhelmed can use support in staying in Presence.

**TRY THESE:**

1. *There's a sort of knotted-up feeling in my face.*
2. *I'm feeling sad and disappointed.*

*Remember, being in Presence for the Focuser will always be more important than technique.*

*Having said that, let's say a few things about technique.*

*When you are first practicing this kind of reflecting, begin all of your statements with these words. Later on you can vary how you start, but until it feels like second nature, we would strongly suggest that you begin this way each time.*

*What is this 'something'? It is something which, when attended to, has qualities and attributes. It may already have emotions and it is somehow about something (even if what that is isn't known), and it is unclear in some way at the moment.*

*Having said all that, the most important thing is just to notice what's there.*

## ❖ WHAT TO REFLECT BACK – A COUPLE OF SPECIFICS

### REFLECT BODY SENSATIONS AND EMOTIONS

*Listening for and reflecting back body sensations and emotions helps the Focuser to be more in touch with their immediate experiencing, with the edge where change and growth happens.*

### REFLECT WHAT'S VAGUE AND FUZZY

*Later you can follow your instincts to let some things go by without reflecting. You can say “Uh huh” as well. This can keep someone company without intruding.*

### BODY SENSATIONS AND EMOTIONS

These are probably the most important things to reflect back. Body sensations are described with words like ‘tight,’ ‘heavy,’ or ‘jumpy,’ and emotions are described with words like ‘scared,’ ‘mad,’ or ‘joyful.’

The Focuser is likely to find it harder to stay in Presence with emotions than body sensations. And it is important to support them being in relationship with both. The easiest way to do this is to reflect by using sentences that support Presence, as we showed you on the previous page.

*Focuser: I can sense a hot tight knot in my stomach.*

*Companion: You're aware of a hot tight knot there.*

*Focuser: I'm scared because I don't know whether I'm going to be able to finish this project, and there's a lot riding on it.*

*Companion: You're sensing something in you is feeling scared about finishing this project.*

### THE VAGUE AND FUZZY

It can be helpful to the Focuser if you reflect those vague stirrings that don't yet have clear form or make sense. This is the other most important thing to be on the watch for and reflect back. There is a word that is powerful and yet simple that can do just this – the word ‘something.’ We don't know how we could get through a Focusing session without it.

Use *something* whenever the person says there's something that they don't know, don't understand, doesn't make sense, can't feel clearly. Listen for and say what *is* there.

*Focuser: I don't know what to call this feeling in my throat.*

*Companion: You're sensing something in your throat.*

*Focuser: I feel scared – I've no idea why.*

*Companion: You're sensing something in you feels scared about something.*

### A PAUSE – WHEN TO REFLECT

When you are beginning to practice, it's best to give a reflection of some kind each time the person who is Focusing comes to a full pause in their speaking.

Your voice will probably be quieter than your normal speaking voice, but do speak in a clear, audible tone – not a whisper. (The Focuser shouldn't have to strain to hear you.)

There are great benefits when you're Focusing and you have a Companion. Some of the things that are easier are: concentrating, staying with something, checking your descriptions back with your body, being gentle with yourself, and staying in Presence.

As the Focuser, you have the key role in making your session go well. Here are a few things to remember when you're Focusing with a Companion:

- *As the Focuser, you are in charge of the direction (content) and pace of the session.*
- *You can be as private or as open as you want to be about the content of what comes. In fact, you are responsible for keeping private anything that doesn't want to be shared.*

It does help if you let your Companion know if something has come. You might say something like "I'm aware of something in my stomach," or "I know what this is about." Sometimes the things that come may need time just to be known by you before being shared. Sometimes they need to be kept private forever. In Focusing this is fine. It is not necessary for your Companion to know the personal details of what you are Focusing on.

- *You remain responsible for your session. It is YOUR session. Your Companion is there to support you with their presence, and sometimes with their words. But the Companion cannot make anything happen for you. They are not the expert, nor are they expected to be. YOU are the one who is Focusing.*
- *You need to remain aware of the effect the process is having on you and keep yourself safe in the situation. Of course, you can ask for help from your Companion or the teacher.*
- *You can end the session where and when you want to.*

WHEN YOUR COMPANION IS REFLECTING YOUR WORDS:

- *You can ask them to be quiet at any time – even interrupting them. You might just put up your hand to indicate that you want them to stop speaking.*
- *You can ask them to say something back again – and again if that is what feels helpful to your process.*
- *You can interrupt them at any point if you need to speak and they are speaking. The Focuser always has the 'right of way.'*

ALSO LET THEM KNOW IF:

- *They say something that doesn't fit or doesn't make sense. Ask them to say it another way. You can even tell them what to say.*
- *You want more from them, or less from them, or something different altogether.*

BASIC GUIDELINES FOR  
THE FOCUSER

*You can ask for the kind of support you need at any point during a session.*

## ❖ THE FOCUSER LISTENS TO THE LISTENER

*You can even get your Companion to 'play back' gestures. You open your eyes, and the Companion repeats your gesture while you watch. Your job is to notice how the place that made the gesture, the place it 'came from,' responds to seeing it.*

Your Companion can help you get closer and closer to what your inner places are wanting you to know. Hearing your own words back in the Companion's voice can be very powerful in helping you get closer to what is really true for this part of you.

If you feel tightness in your throat, and your Companion says back, "You're sensing tightness in your throat," don't just be polite and say, "Yes, that's what I said." *Let your throat confirm* if that really fits it. Sense how *it* responds to what your Companion says back to you.

There are a number of things that can happen when your body hears those words:

- *There is a kind of satisfying rightness and something releases. Take time to feel exactly how that rightness feels in the body.*
- *There is a kind of satisfying rightness – and something gets stronger. This means you are getting closer to the center of something and there is more that needs to be known. At that point it might turn into something more specific. Keep sensing how It is right now.*
- *There is a kind of 'sort of,' 'almost right,' 'close' kind of feeling. The word 'tightness' is not quite right. Take time to sense into It again and let It tell you. Maybe it's really 'squeezing,' or 'constricted,' or 'desperate.'*  
*When and if it feels right, say those words to your Companion.*
- *There is a sense of not fitting. Something says "No" to those words. This can be very helpful. because the feeling in the body usually gets stronger and clearer.*  
*Sense what you are aware of now and say that.*
- *There is no response from that place inside you. The feeling stays the same. Let the word(s) go and just sense that place again, sensing for how It is right now.*

*Remember that if your Companion's voice is getting in the way of being able to stay with something, you can ask them to be silent for as long as you want.*

Gene Gendlin likes to say, "Listening makes a space into which something new can come." Your Companion can help you make that space when they say back your words. When you hear your words said back, it can feel like someone has gently taken them from you and now there is a space where new words can come.

## THE FOCUSER TEACHES THEIR COMPANION

Focusing is idiosyncratic, individual. Each Focuser has their own preferences. You will find out over time that you like a particular kind of listening, particular kinds of responses. As you get to know yourself better and better, you will have a clearer, more refined sense of what you like from a Companion, and you will be better able to ask for it.

No matter how experienced the Companion is, it makes their job much easier when you let them know what kind of support you would like. You can tell them what you want at the beginning of a session.

For example:

- *I'd like you to say something back each time I come to a complete stop, but if I'm still talking just let me go on, and don't try to remember it all.*
- *I need a lot of space, so most of the time just say 'M-hm' and reflect back only what seems really important.*
- *What I want above all is for you to feel relaxed.*
- *Today I feel I need to slow down, so maybe you could reflect back in a calm, slow voice.*

Here you can write in a sentence you might say to a Companion before the session starts:

## WHAT I WOULD LIKE FROM MY COMPANION

However, at *any time* when you would like something from your Companion that you're not getting, you can let them know.

For example:

- *Would you speak up a little more loudly.*
- *Would you give me just a little more of a pause before you say back.*
- *I'd like it if you'd say back whatever you remember of that last part.*

*Notice how it's more helpful to say what you do want your Companion to do rather than what you don't want them to do.*

When you feel comfortable in your Companion's presence and feel free to correct them and ask for what you want, often there builds a profound and powerful sense of partnership. Together the two of you are keeping something in you company, reaching out toward *It*, wanting to sense *It*, just as *It* is. This sense of safety, freedom and contact is difficult to put into words, but once experienced, it is unmistakable.



## ❖ WHO DOES WHAT IN A FOCUSING SESSION WITH A COMPANION

### THE COMPANION STARTS:

- Ask if this is the right distance and position between you and the Focuser.
- Ask how many minutes signal the Focuser would like before the end.
- Ask what kind of support the Focuser would like from you – this is where the Focuser can say what kind of listening (or, later on, reminding) they would like.

*No questions, no advice, no interpretations.*

- As the Focuser is bringing their awareness into their body, bring your awareness into your body as well. Take some time to notice where it feels good in your body, open, spacious, available, so that you can be with the Focuser from Presence as much as possible. Acknowledge anything that doesn't feel like Presence.

*The silence belongs to the Focuser. So when they are silent, you wait.*

- Listen with your whole self, not just your mind. As you are listening to the Focuser, sense their words in your body, letting them resonate there. Take enough time to do that, at least the time it takes to take a full breath, after the Focuser stops speaking. But don't wait so long that they've already moved on.

### THE FOCUSER

- Tell your Companion the amount of time you need to end your session fully. Examples: "Three minutes," "Two minutes," "Five and then two, please."

*There are many ways to start your Focusing session (See Other Ways of Coming In, Section Seven, p. 83.)*

- Start the session by taking some time to sense whether this session is about a particular issue, or whether you're going to start by simply sensing what wants your awareness now in your body. You might tell the Companion which you chose (or, perhaps more accurately, which chose you), but it's OK not to.
- Then close your eyes (usually, though it's OK to keep them open) and begin bringing your awareness into your body. Again, it's OK to say this part out loud or silently, whichever helps you the most.
- When you sense something, let your Companion know you are aware of something. Don't worry about filling in the details for the Companion or taking care of the Companion in any way.
- Be silent as long as you need to, to give all your attention to what's going on inside. Speak for your own sake, when there's something you feel like saying or hearing back. After you speak, your Companion will say back what you said.
- If you don't want your Companion to reflect something back, just lift your hand in a 'stop' signal.

# WHO DOES WHAT IN A FOCUSING SESSION WITH A COMPANION ❖

## THE COMPANION:

- Each time the Focuser stops speaking, say back the essence of what the Focuser says, beginning with the phrase:  
*You're sensing/aware of/noticing something in you...*
- After you've finished speaking, wait until the Focuser speaks again. There's no need to say anything more. The silence belongs to the Focuser. They will tell you if they need something more.

*It's OK to say back the Focuser's exact words. No matter how experienced you are, it will always be helpful at times to say back the exact words, especially when what they say is very short, when they are sensing into something new for them, or when there is a lot of emotion in what they are saying.*

- When you let the Focuser know how much time they have left, say something simple and clear like: "There are about two minutes" when there is a silent space. If the time to tell them comes while they are speaking, it is generally better to reflect what they have said first, pause, and then let them know.

Give the time signal they asked for even if you lost track of time; if they asked for three minutes, but there is only one minute left, say "There's three minutes."

If they go over the time, DON'T say "Time's up" or anything like that. If they go quite a long way over, you might say something like "You might see if there is a stopping place soon." Most people can find a stopping place within about five minutes even when sensing the strongest emotion.

It will help your partner to come to a stop if you stop reflecting after the time is up.

## THE FOCUSER:

- Notice how your body responds to hearing your Companion's words. If they fit/feel right, notice how that feels. If they don't, sense for what words would fit. Speak again when you are ready.

*It can be helpful to your Companion if you nod or say "yes" if their words fit. You may find yourself doing this naturally anyway.*

- When your Companion tells you that you have a few minutes left, start the process of ending:
  - Sensing for a stopping place,
  - Noticing the changes that have come during the session,
  - Letting whatever still needs attention know you are willing to come back and spend more time with It if It needs you,
  - And thanking what's come.

*If the amount of time you asked for at the end wasn't enough, remember to ask for more next time.*

- Take your time to bring your awareness back into the room slowly.

FOR THE COMPANION:

- *The most important thing is your Presence*
- *Bring your awareness into your body at the beginning*
- *Acknowledge any of your own feelings that are present*
- *Stay in touch with how your body responds during the session*

BASIC PRINCIPLES

- *You are not the expert*
- *You are a person – not a parrot*
- *Statements NOT questions*
- *Stay in the present moment with the Focuser*
- *Allow yourself to be corrected by the Focuser*

REFLECTING

- *Follow the Focuser*
- *Speak softly and clearly*
- *Bring the tone of your voice down at the end of a sentence*
- *Pause before reflecting*
- *Keep your opinions to yourself – even in your tone of voice*

REFLECTING TO SUPPORT PRESENCE

- *You're sensing something in you [that] feels [like]...*

WHAT TO REFLECT

- *Body sensations and emotions*
- *What's vague and fuzzy*

FOR THE FOCUSER:

- *You are in charge of the direction and content of the session*
- *You can be as private or open as you want*
- *You are the expert and are responsible for your session*
- *You need to keep yourself safe in the situation*
- *You can end the session when you want to*

WHEN THE COMPANION IS REFLECTING BACK YOUR WORDS

- *You can ask your Companion to remain quiet*
- *You can ask them to repeat something*
- *You can interrupt them at any point – the Focuser has the 'right of way'*

AND LET THEM KNOW

- *If they say something that doesn't fit or doesn't make sense*
- *If you want something different from them*

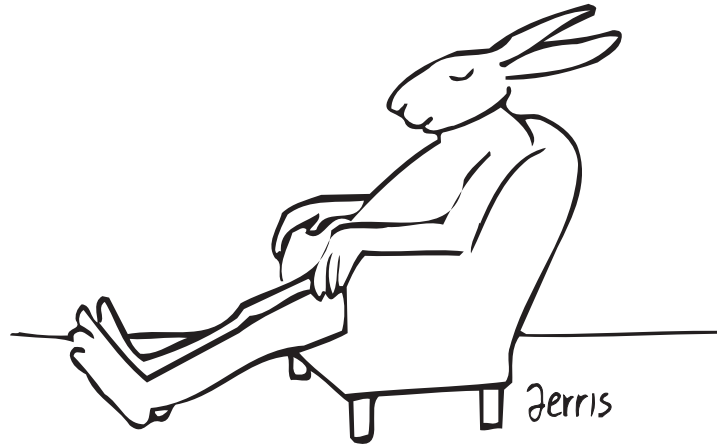
## MAKING FOCUSING YOUR OWN

In order to make Focusing your own, you need to take the time to do it. We want to make it as easy as possible to bring Focusing into your life. Here are three ways you can explore to find what would support your Focusing best.

*Partnerships* are a wonderful way to deepen and extend your Focusing. There is something very special that happens when you are in a relationship where both of you share and receive equally. In this section we take a look at partnerships – from basic principles to practical issues.

We also look at *Changes groups*, free peer-practice groups. There is advice on how to set one up and how to keep it running.

And finally, there is a section on *Solo Focusing*. Most people find Focusing alone more difficult than Focusing with a partner. We've gathered together a lot of tips our students have shared with us as well as what we have learned from our own Focusing practice.



## ❖ GUIDELINES FOR FOCUSERS AND COMPANIONS

### AS THE FOCUSER

#### YOU MAY:

- *Be physically comfortable*
- *Move around if it feels right*
- *Have your eyes open or shut*
- *Be silent whenever you want for as long as you want*
- *Have your Companion remain silent*
- *Interrupt your Companion at any time*
- *Ignore what your Companion says*
- *Use your time in whatever way you want, including doing things that are not Focusing*
- *End the session before the time is up if you want to*

#### YOU NEED TO:

- *Notice how your body responds to what your Companion reflects*
- *Tell your Companion how you'd like them to be with you*
- *Ask for what you need during the session (reflections, suggestions, help, clarification)*
- *Be willing to say, "No, that's not quite right" when something doesn't fit*
- *Keep private anything that doesn't feel right to say aloud*
- *Take responsibility for ending the session in a timely fashion after the time signal*

### AS THE COMPANION

#### YOU MAY:

- *Be physically comfortable*
- *Let the Focuser know you didn't hear what they said*
- *Pause or end the session if you are unable to continue listening*

#### YOU NEED TO:

- *Bring your awareness into your own body*
- *Acknowledge any of your own feelings silently*
- *Remember that your BEING is more important than your DOING*
- *Remember that the Focuser's felt sense guides the session*
- *Take responsibility for giving the time signal*
- *Keep confidential anything that is said during the session*

To make Focusing an integral part of your life, we highly recommend that you form a Focusing Partnership. Many people have found their Focusing Partnerships to be among the most special and rewarding relationships of their lives. However, like all important relationships, partnerships need care and attention. Here are some guidelines to help make your Focusing Partnership work well for you and your partner.

## BASIC PRINCIPLES

The most important principle is to sense for what works for you and your partner. Here are some others.

### IT'S THE FOCUSER'S SESSION

It is the Focuser's time and they can use it in whatever way they want to. This includes talking about the problem, asking for advice, having a cup of coffee. If they want to use it to brainstorm or set goals or meditate, that's their business.

When you are the Companion, you're there to listen, hold the space, be present. That's all. All you have to do is ask how they would like you to be with them. Then you don't have to worry about your role.

### MUTUAL RESPECT AND EQUALITY

A Focusing partnership is a peer relationship; mutuality rules. Even if one of you is much more experienced in Focusing and Listening than the other, the underlying basis of the partnership needs to be one of equality. All Focusers are equal, in that all Focusers have an inner knowing which can be trusted.

- *Focuser:* It is always fine to tell your Companion what you would like from them, even if they are the most experienced Focusing Companion in the world.
- *Companion:* Let the Focuser tell you what they need from you, and follow their lead. And relax: the more experienced a Focuser is, the more effectively they can use the listening of a novice Companion. It is always your role to respect the Focuser's requests, even if they are different from what you've learned is 'good technique.'

### PRIVACY

It is important that the Focuser feels that they have the right to be as private or as open as they want to be. They are in charge of revealing or keeping private the content of their Focusing. Sometimes the things that come may need time to be known by just the Focuser before being shared. Sometimes they need to be kept private forever. It is not necessary for the Companion to know what the Focuser is Focusing on.

### THE BASICS:

- *The Focuser is the Expert*
- *The Focuser follows their felt sense and the Companion follows the Focuser*
- *The Focuser can break the rules – the Companion keeps them*

- *Focuser*: Respect your own inner sense of “this isn’t ready to be spoken yet.” You can inwardly acknowledge and keep company with the places that aren’t ready to be shared with others. You can say to your Companion, “I can sense what this is connected to,” or “I can sense what this is about,” without revealing the details of how it is connected to your life.
- *Companion*: Never ask ‘questions for clarification.’ Never let your curiosity about the content interfere with your ability to hold the space for the process. Acknowledge the part of you that is curious and bring your attention to what *is* being said.

### GUARDING A SAFE SPACE

We have thousands of times more practice being social in non-Focusing settings than in Focusing ones. And just after a session has ended is a particularly vulnerable time. We are not fully back in the social world, and we are not quite Focusing either. This time needs to be treated with the same sensitivity as the Focusing time.

*Any* kind of comment on content from a Focusing partner can seriously compromise the safety of your partnership. Even a seemingly innocent comment, like “I don’t know how you put up with someone like that,” or “I hope your back is feeling better,” can violate the safety the Focuser feels to explore what they need to explore.

Even worse is advice of any kind. Giving unsolicited advice can be experienced as judgment and a lack of trust in the Focuser and their Focusing process. It’s a different matter when advice is asked for. That’s a clear invitation for you to give your opinion.

You don’t want to inadvertently lose your partner because you’ve crossed the border between being social and Focusing. Focusing partners are not that easy to find!

- *Companion*: After each person’s session is over, while you’re still in this transition zone between Focusing and social, be especially careful not to comment on the content in any way. Respectful process comments like “I was really touched by that,” or “You went deep today,” are probably OK, but still check with your partner that they are open to receiving comments from you before saying anything.

Even after your Focusing time has ended and you are back in the ‘social space,’ you need to be just as vigilant about not giving advice or commenting on someone’s Focusing.

- *Focuser*: If your partner does start referring to the content of your session and you feel uncomfortable, if you catch it at

the moment it happens, you might say something like, “I’d like to leave some space around that,” or “I’d like to leave that whole topic alone now.”

If you don’t realize until later that you felt uncomfortable, you might say, “Do you remember last time when we were chatting after the session, and you said, ‘I would never put up with the kind of things you put up with from X’? I realized later that I felt uncomfortable when you said that, and I’d like to ask that we not comment on the content of each other’s session unless the Focuser brings it up. OK?”

There are two key points here:

- *One is to remember that your partner was well-intentioned, so you are not judging their behavior as wrong, but just letting them know you would like something different in the future.*
- *Two is to quote, to the best of your ability, exactly what your partner said, as opposed to something like: “Do you remember last time when we were chatting after the session, and you criticized my relationship?”*

(These principles are gratefully based on Marshall Rosenberg’s Non-Violent Communication, even though we’re not following his system exactly. See the Appendix for how to find out more on Non-Violent Communication.)

TWO KEY POINTS

#### CONFIDENTIALITY

- *Unless you have specific permission, never share ANYTHING from your partner’s Focusing session with another person. NO EXCEPTIONS.*

The two of you need to agree what you can and cannot share outside the Focusing session and with whom. For example, some people may not want anyone else to know you are Focusing partners. Whatever you agree needs to be respected so that your partnership is a safe one.

A RULE OF THUMB



### PRACTICAL ISSUES

#### PHONE FOCUSING

*If you don't have someone living nearby, you can still have a Focusing partnership with someone on the phone. We have a partnership even though we live in California and England. There are lots of phone companies that have very cheap rates for long-distance phone calls.*

#### FINDING THE RIGHT STRUCTURE FOR YOU

Focusing partnerships have many different structures, from a short session once a day to a longer one every week or so. Most partnerships meet weekly or biweekly, at a regular time, for a set length. Some are on the phone. Set up your partnership to suit your needs.

#### DIVIDING THE TIME EQUALLY

Equal turns can be equal in time, or simply equal in opportunity. For example, if two people make an agreement that they will each Focus as long as they want to, that's equal, even if one session is forty minutes and the other ten. Also, the turns don't have to be at the same time: some partnerships have an agreement that one week is one person's turn, and the next week is the other person's turn. That's OK. It's even OK if one of you always wants to go first and the other one always wants to go second.

The only thing that's not OK is *not* taking your turn, because that alters the balance in the partnership and can mark one person as 'needier' and the other as 'the giver.' Perhaps even more important is the difference not taking your turn makes in your relationship with yourself. This is a time when you are committed to showing up and being available for whatever wants your attention inside. It is part of developing a trustworthy *inner* relationship. So, even if you feel you have nothing to Focus on this time, take your turn anyway. You don't have to Focus, but we strongly suggest that you take at least a few minutes to go inside, sensing how you want to use your time this week. Remember, you still have the option to use your time for chatting, or talking something over with your partner, if your inner places really don't want your company today.

You may want to take five or ten minutes as a break between turns, to let the Focuser make the transition from Focusing to being the next Companion. On the phone, this can be a time of hanging up, stretching, and the other person calling back.

#### LETTING YOUR COMPANION KNOW WHAT YOU WANT

After your partnership has been going for a while, as the Companion you may assume that you know what the Focuser wants, and as the Focuser you may assume that your Companion knows what you want. At this point it can be good to remind yourself that every session may be different, and the Focuser still needs to sense for what they need in this session and ask for it.

- *The Focuser:* You can always ask your Companion for what you need from them this time, even if it's different from what you usually want from them. For example: You usually want a listening response each time you pause, but today you want lots of space and silence from your partner, and only a few responses.
- *The Companion:* You might ask before the session starts (maybe not every session, but when it feels right): “What would you like from me as your Companion in this session?”

#### RESPONSIBILITY FOR ENDING THE SESSION

It isn't good for the partnership for someone to keep going over the agreed-on time. Having said that, of course we are not machines and it should always be possible to renegotiate time agreements if needed. If I give a two-minute signal and my partner says, “It feels like this needs five more minutes, is that OK?” I feel much better about being asked, like that, than if my partner goes overtime without asking. I also feel better if such a thing is asked for only rarely, as a special request, rather than regularly. You may feel differently. The key is to respect your partner's needs as well as your own.

If you find that this is happening regularly, you might look at whether the length of your sessions is right for you – perhaps you need to make them longer.

- *The Companion:* is responsible for giving the Focuser the requested time signal.
- *The Focuser:* has the responsibility for stopping the session after receiving the time signal.

As the Focuser, you need to learn how much time it takes you to stop easily. If you find that you are not able to do this in one or two minutes, you might ask for a five-minute warning next time – or even longer. There is nothing wrong with needing a longer time to end the session gracefully, and you need to take responsibility for discovering how long you need. (See page 11 for self-reminding that helps with stopping.)

## GENERAL ISSUES

### PARTNERSHIP AND FRIENDSHIP

Sometimes people ask us if it's a good idea to be a Focusing partner with a friend. We answer, well, whether or not it's a good idea – if you're not friends now, you soon will be!

Seriously, though, we have no rules about whether or not you can socialize with Focusing partners. We are Focusing partners and besides Focusing regularly together, we are close friends (have even

been known to go to the movies and share a hot tub) as well as being working partners. And some partners only have contact with each other when they are Focusing. It helps in a partnership if you have similar aims and expectations about your relationship.

We do think it's important to keep the Focusing space separate from the friendship space. There are two reasons for this.

The first is that it protects the Focuser's space from being encroached upon by the kinds of things that friends do, for example: discussing problems, sharing ideas, giving each other advice. (And the Focuser can chat for the whole of their time or ask for advice, if that's what they want. But it needs to be *their* choice.)

A suggestion:

- *If you like to chat and catch up on your week, do it (for example) before the session starts. Once you begin Focusing, let that space be inviolate. People working on the phone can make a similar boundary: "OK, let's start now."*

### PARTNERSHIP AND INTIMATE PARTNERS

Focusing can profoundly enhance your intimate relationship. It can also be painful and bewildering. It can intensify any areas between you that are troublesome. (See "Couples Focusing Together: A Goldmine – or a Minefield," Mary Armstrong, *TFC*, Nov. 1995.)

### KEEPING IT ALIVE

It's good to have a periodic 'Partnership Review,' when you each Focus in turn on your sense of the partnership. Speaking from the felt sense of your partnership can be very powerful in developing the contact between you. This can also be a time to address any troubles or disconnections before they get large enough to break up the partnership.

If you are having a difficult time with your partner, you might want to look at interpersonal Focusing. (See the Appendix, p. 26.)

### ENDING A PARTNERSHIP

Not everyone can work well together. It's probably not anyone's fault; you may be incompatible in style or you may have outgrown the arrangement. It is helpful to end a partnership cleanly and amicably if possible. Sometimes this may mean bringing in a third person to help you to hear each other if things have gotten difficult. Sometimes it may just mean having a special session to honor and thank each other for what you did have. Not recommended: Just letting it drift away to nothing. That could make each of you less open to new partnerships or to renewing your partnership later.

## CHANGES GROUPS

A Changes group is a free-of-charge, peer-led group that meets so people can exchange Focusing and listening turns in an atmosphere of safety and mutual respect.

A successful Changes group embodies the principles of Focusing in its structure and management. In addition to the same principles of Focusing and partnership, there is shared responsibility for the management of the group.

## HISTORY

In the early 1970s, in the aftermath of the killing of four anti-war protesters at Kent State University, a group of psychology graduate students at the University of Chicago felt moved to do something positive to contribute to healing the atmosphere of divisiveness in the country. This group included Kristin Glaser (often credited as the originator of Changes), Kathleen McGuire, and Linda Olsen (Webber). In the course of discussions, their plan evolved into starting and running a crisis hotline out of a community church. The hotline was called Changes, taken from the expression “Goin’ through changes.” They asked their professor, Gene Gendlin, to lead training meetings for the hotline volunteers. He agreed, and taught Focusing and listening there. These training meetings, held on Sunday evenings in the University Church in Hyde Park, became a magnet for people interested in personal growth in a peer community. When Ann began attending in 1972, sometimes 100 people would attend in a single evening.

## THE RULES OF THE ORIGINAL CHANGES GROUP

Gene Gendlin often repeated these at the start of each meeting.

- *If you’re here, you belong here.*  
All were welcome. There was no requirement to be part of the university or involved in the hotline.
- *It’s OK to say no, and it’s OK to ask for what you need.*  
Gene felt it was important to emphasize first that it’s OK to say no if someone asks for something, e.g. a Focusing session, a hug, etc. Once that was understood, it could be OK to ask for what you needed, because you knew the other person could say no.
- *Everyone came here to help and to be helped.*  
No matter whether you were originally a psych grad student hotline volunteer, or a person in crisis calling the hotline, if you came to the Changes group it was assumed that you could be a listener for another person, and that you also needed listening.

- *We all have as many needs as anyone else, it's just that some of us have more needs not being met.*

This was to counter the tendency to call some people needy. Although there were people coming to meetings who were homeless, they were to be treated as peers.

- *Business happens at another time, and is done by people who want to do it.*

We recognized that some organizational decisions needed to be made, but that if group time were taken for decision-making, there might be no time left for Focusing. So a separate time was set for decision-making, and the people who attended those meetings (again, anyone was welcome) were empowered to make the decisions.

#### EVOLUTION

That original Changes group was a brief, exciting period in the development of Focusing and Focusing community. Many Changes groups have been founded based on the original model. Although none has been so large as the first, all follow similar principles of equality, mutual respect, and peer support.

#### PRACTICAL MATTERS

##### FORMAT

The format varies from group to group, but in most cases there is a time of introduction or check-in, followed by dividing into groups of two or three for Focusing/listening exchange, and finally a whole group time of sharing.

The check-in is a time for going around and saying briefly how we each are, including news from our lives. At the end of their turn, people usually say what they want to have this time: Focusing and listening, just listening today, a pair, a triad. Usually there is a time limit for the check-in, e.g. three minutes each.

After the check-in, people choose their partners. If there needs to be a triad because there's an odd number, that forms first. We go to the group with the attitude that we are willing to Focus with whoever turns up. Different people will bring out different parts.

Then there is Focusing time, after which the group reassembles. Someone might ring a bell to let people know that the Focusing time has ended. Some people might keep on Focusing. Don't wait for them. Work on the principle that whoever is there is who wants to be there.

This last 'check-out' gives people time to share anything they want with the group. Of course they would not comment on the content of their partners' Focusing sessions.

## SIZE

Groups vary in size from only a couple of people, to fifteen or twenty. As a group, you need to sense what is the right size for you. Some groups have an upper size limit and keep a waiting list when the numbers of their regular members goes above the limit. After you've been operating for a while you will have a sense about what size group feels right for you.

## LOCATION

Changes groups may meet in a person's home or office, or in a public meeting place, such as a church or community center. Some Changes groups rotate to different locations periodically or have an alternate second location to use when the regular one is unavailable.

## TIME

Changes groups usually meet for two or two and a half hours on a regular basis, such as every Thursday morning, or every other Tuesday evening, or the first Sunday afternoon each month.

## PREREQUISITES

Some groups require that a person know Focusing and listening before joining the group. Some groups may allow a person to visit as a guest and observe before having learned Focusing, but only once or twice. Other groups are open to anyone interested in Focusing.

Although the requirement that people know Focusing and listening in order to attend may seem at odds with the original intention that "all are welcome," it may be necessary so that some group members don't become stuck in the role of teacher to the others.

## COMMITMENT

Open Changes groups welcome new members and welcome people to come by once or twice. There is no commitment required. Some Changes groups are closed, in that they aren't open to new members at that time. However, a sort of informal commitment may develop, and is not a bad thing, as you realize that your group is small and your co-participants depend on you being there to make the group go well – and miss you when you're not there.

Groups which charge money (except to cover expenses) or which require a commitment would not be considered Changes groups.

### STARTING A CHANGES GROUP

You can start your own Changes group. Focusing teacher Bebe Simon has remarked, “Any two or more people meeting to exchange Focusing at a place and time which is open to others, is a Changes group.”

In practical terms, the smaller your group, the more you need at least two people who are absolutely regular and committed to attending. These two people also need to not get discouraged if they are the only ones who attend most of the time. In this sense, outlying areas where not too much is going on may have the advantage. In a place like New York or the San Francisco Bay Area where there are many delicious alternatives calling on people’s time, the pool of possible participants needs to be rather large if a Changes group is to be successful.

### ROLES IN OPERATING A CHANGES GROUP

As a peer group, a Changes group may benefit if the various roles involved are distributed among several people and perhaps rotated around. These include:

- *The person who provides the space*  
This could be your house, large apartment, or office. It needs to be a place where people can have quiet and privacy, with enough room so that at least each three people in the group can have a separate space to meet. If you live with others who need to walk through your meeting space(s), that’s a problem.
- *The person who takes calls from people interested in joining*  
This person determines if the caller is eligible, tells them the location and the next meeting time. This person would probably also be the one to keep the waiting list (if there is one) and contact people when a place becomes available for them.
- *The person people call if they’re not coming*
- *If your group likes to have refreshments, the person who is responsible for replenishing the supplies for those (and collecting money for them)*
- *If your group needs to send out notices of upcoming meetings, handling this could be a separate role*

A big advantage of meeting at a set time and a regular place is not having to send notices.

There are Changes groups in many parts of the world, often open to visitors. For information about where many Changes groups meet and how to contact them, see the Connections page in *The Focusing Connection* newsletter. (See Appendix, p. 23.)

For most people, Solo Focusing is more difficult than Focusing with a partner. However, Solo Focusing can be learned, and can be very rewarding, because when you are able to Focus alone you truly have Focusing with you as a lifelong companion for every moment of your life.

## OBSTACLES AND DIFFICULTIES TO SOLO FOCUSING

### FINDING THE TIME

The first obstacle to Focusing alone is taking the time to do it. You may find yourself saying something like:

- *I haven't got time today, I'll do it tomorrow...*  
Set aside only a short period of time – say just 5 or 10 minutes – for Focusing at first. Even a few minutes of bringing your awareness inside on a regular basis will deepen your Focusing experiences and increase your Focusing skills.
- *I feel too tired or too stressed at the end of the day*  
Take just a few minutes to sense the quality of being tired or stressed. Just acknowledge it and keep it company for a short time. You might also look at when you might be able to take a few minutes when you aren't so tired. Perhaps in the shower in the morning.
- *My family/partner etc. doesn't allow any space for that sort of thing*  
You might do your Focusing in the bath (seriously) or you might need to take some time Focusing on the whole issue around your family not wanting you to do this, and your response to it.
- *I keep jumping up to do chores that I just remembered*  
Keep paper and a pen by you to jot down anything that needs to be done, and only get up to do it if it is really urgent.

And some general suggestions:

- *Focus (with a partner if necessary) on a part of you that doesn't want to sit down to Focus.*  
You may be surprised at what comes: what you assumed was a lack of time or too little space may really be something that's afraid or reluctant to go in, perhaps not wanting to go deep without the safety and structure of a partnership. Or it could be something else. Whatever it is, acknowledging it as it is will be a powerful step toward change.
- *Keeping a Focusing journal helps in making a commitment to Focusing regularly.*



### CREATING A SAFE ENVIRONMENT

The second major obstacle to Focusing alone is the need for a sense of safety and structure, or as we call it, ‘the quality of containment.’

- *I don’t feel that my Focusing is very deep when I’m on my own.*

Some suggestions:

- *Take some time at the beginning of the session to make sure that you are in Presence. Sense for where it feels good in your body, open, flowing, spacious.*
- *You have already learned how the presence of a Companion gives your session the quality of containment. You might want to take some time to let your body remember what that feels like, to have a partner helping to hold the space for you. Then invite that feeling to stay with you, as you Focus alone.*
- *You might have a special chair where you do your Focusing. It’s best if it’s not the chair where you usually work or meditate; or if it is, arrange it in a different way.*
- *You can use objects to define the space, for example a candle or a scarf to create a circle of containment.*
- *Set aside your Focusing space with intention. You might say, “This is my Focusing time and for the next \_\_\_ minutes I am making a space for being with what wants my attention.”*
- *You could use a beloved stuffed friend, like a teddy bear, to sit in your Companion’s place to help you remember to give yourself acceptance and safe containment. You could visualize your favorite Focusing Companion sitting across from you. You could even place their photograph there.*



*Teddy bears make great listeners.*

### STAYING ON TRACK

The third obstacle to Focusing alone has to do with remembering where you are in the Focusing process, keeping on track.

- *My mind keeps wandering as soon as I sit down.*

Some suggestions:

- *Try being a deliberate inner Companion to your own process, and make real responses to yourself.*
- *Remind yourself to stay in Presence throughout the session.*
- *Set a timer or at least have an intention to Focus for a certain length of time.*
- *Speak out loud whether or not there’s a person there to hear. Even just whispering helps.*
- *Knowing where you are in the process can help you know what to do next. Using a crib card can help keep you on track.*
- *You can speak into a tape recorder and play back parts of it, as if they were listening responses or to help find your place again if you drift.*

- *While you are writing your journal on the computer or in a book, you can stop and reread what you've written and take time to sense that in your body. You might use different colors for the 'Focusing parts' and the rest of your journal.*
- *If you can touch type, you might sit at your computer and type as you Focus. Then if you lose your place you can look up and read back what you've just typed in.*
- *Having a pen and paper with you can be helpful. Write down the words you would ordinarily say to a partner, like "nervous tightness." Don't bother to make them complete sentences. Then, if needed, you can look down at the paper and use the words like a partner's reflection, to remember where you are and to sense your body's response to them.*
- *Gestures can be very helpful in keeping you in touch with what's inside. For example, if you sense something like a knot in your stomach, you might move your hand into a shape that feels like it matches that knotlike feeling and hold it near your stomach. Take your time to get the shape and movement to match what's inside.*
- *Draw or paint as you Focus. (For more on this, see below.)*
- *Another use of gesture is to gently touch or place a hand on the place in your body where you're feeling something. This can help you keep company with what's there.*

## BRINGING FOCUSING INTO YOUR LIFE

### FOCUSING WHILE DOING SOMETHING ELSE

It may sound strange, but one of the most helpful ways to Focus alone is while doing something else. Routine tasks are great for this. Walking, ironing, doing dishes, stamping envelopes...

### 'MINI-FOCUSING'

'Mini-focusing' is a way of making Focusing a natural part of your everyday life. It validates even the tiniest moments of Focusing awareness. These moments of Focusing attention will build into an ability to recognize when you could turn your attention inward in a Focusing way. Or perhaps you will recognize you are already turning your attention inward at these times, and can sense a little deeper because you're aware of it.

- *when you are upset*
- *when you have a decision to make*
- *when you're waiting for something to happen*
- *when you're feeling particularly good*
- *when you find yourself procrastinating*
- *when you remember to do so...*

*You can use these processes when Focusing alone or with a Companion. We've put them here because they can be so useful while Focusing alone.*

### DRAWING OR PAINTING WHILE FOCUSING

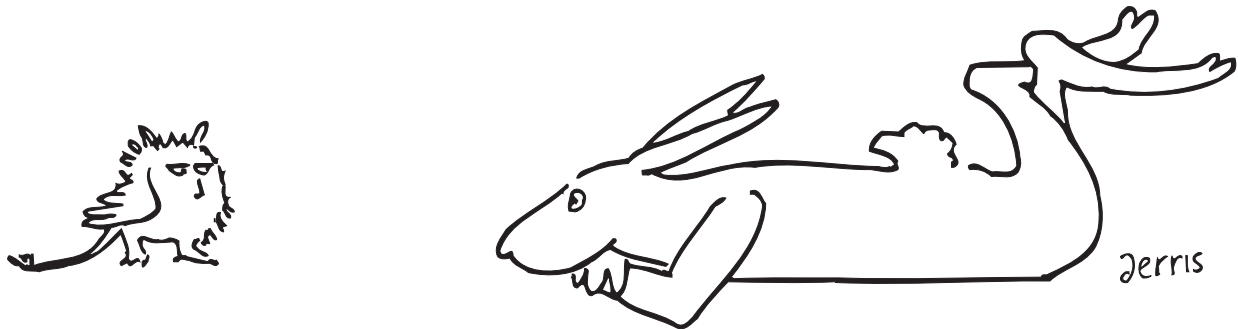
Some people find that drawing or painting (or even sculpting) can be facilitative while they are Focusing. Others find it too distracting. You may want to experiment with this. We are aware of five ways to use visual processes while Focusing to support the process.

- *You can draw or paint the felt sense, how it feels in your body, and use the drawing as a way of describing the felt sense and then sensing in the body to see if that feels right.*
- *You can sketch the progress of your session as a series of little pictures, for example: a person under a spotlight, a person on stage, a person with shaky legs in front of an audience, a person being applauded or booed... (See "Focusing Alone – with Signs and Maps," Sue Dougherty, TFC, Nov. 1999.)*
- *You can draw a mind-map, with the place you start in a circle at the center of the paper, and other things that come and connect with it in radiating circles.*
- *You can map the whole territory and all the parts within it, connecting them through their relationships with each other.*
- *You can map what came by drawing your body and what you felt there.*

In each case, be sure that the drawing is secondary to your Focusing process. First, you are Focusing. The drawing is like a partner, a way to confirm or deepen or resonate with or hold the space for your Focusing.

## SECTION FOUR

# DWELLING AT THE EDGE



You have already begun experiencing the four stages of **COMING IN**, **MAKING CONTACT**, **DEEPENING CONTACT**, and **COMING OUT**, and Focusing with a companion.

In this section, **DWELLING AT THE EDGE**, you will begin to get a holistic feel for what is essential about Focusing. So this is Focusing as a whole, not in linear stages but all at once.

You learn that the Focusing process operates from a radical new paradigm – we do not need to do anything *to* ourselves in order for change to occur. You begin to understand how it is possible for change to happen without making it happen.

We talk about the value of ‘fuzzy’: the importance of being directly in contact with an inner experience too complex and subtle to be easily expressed. We define an ‘edge’: the place where you are directly sensing more than you can express right now. We describe a ‘living forward energy’ that *itself* already knows which way to go.

We take a look at the essence of the Focusing process – the interactive interplay of sensing and symbolizing that brings a release in the living forward energy and steps of change. And we detail some of the various forms that symbols can take.

We give Six Recommendations for helping to create the kind of conditions that allow this *living forward energy* to stir, shift, move, carry us forward.

In the first section, **THE DOOR OPENS**, we emphasized how to do Focusing. This section should begin to give you an understanding of how Focusing does what it does – and what you can do to help it.

## ❖ GOING TO THE EDGE TO FIND MORE

*“What that edge needs to produce the steps, is only some kind of unintrusive contact or company. If you will go there with your awareness and stay there or return there, that is all it needs; it will do all the rest for you.”*

*Eugene Gendlin*

*“I can feel it right here...  
uh... how would I say this?...  
it's not quite anger...  
it's not exactly disappointment...”*

### A NEW PARADIGM — IT SOLVES ITSELF

In our culture we are taught many ways of solving problems. Almost none of them include trusting that within the problem lies its own solution. (“Sleep on it” or “put it on the back burner” is as close as it gets.) It can be difficult to believe that within this stuck place, this ‘self-sabotaging’ behavior, this painful feeling, lies a positive energy that knows how to live forward.

It is hard for us to believe that we do not need to do anything to ourselves in order for change to occur. Part of us simply cannot believe we do not need to push and pull and encourage and scare ourselves into changing. The irony is that all the things we try to do to ourselves, all the things which feel like more than just ‘being with,’ and which therefore seem like they ought to be more effective, are actually counterproductive. Telling the scared place that there’s nothing to be scared of, labeling it as an ‘old pattern’ or a ‘phobia’ or a ‘belief,’ reciting positive affirmations, breathing light into the place, criticizing and judging ourselves for ‘still’ being scared... all impede the process of change.

### THE VALUE OF ‘FUZZY’

In the research that led to the development of Focusing, the clients who sometimes sounded like the quote on the left were the ones whose therapy was most likely to be successful. They sounded inarticulate, unsure, like they were groping for words to express a simple feeling. Actually they were directly in contact with something they were sensing that was too complex and subtle to be expressed in words easily.

Their bodies were responding to a situation in their lives that was problematic in some way, and they were sensing that bodily felt response. Implicit in the body’s response was *everything* connected with that situation: past experiences that felt similar somehow, self-concepts, beliefs, values, hopes for the future, desires, fears... impossibly confusing to think of separately, but completely possible to sense as a whole in the body.

We call this whole difficult-to-describe experience the ‘*edge*.’ The edge is the place where you are directly sensing more than you can express right now. It is the edge of what is:

- *already known and not yet known*
- *clear and unclear*
- *already expressed and not yet expressed*
- *past and present ... and future*

The edge is where more than what is already known or expressed emerges.

You might take some time to sense what the qualities of the feeling of the ‘edge’ are like, and add them to ours:

corner of the eye	tip of the tongue
subtle	

### THE LIVING FORWARD ENERGY BEGINS TO STIR

In the research, it was found that as people started to describe the fuzzy, difficult-to-describe something that they were sensing, it would shift and change *without them doing anything to it*. When people stayed with it for a while, continuing to sense it directly in the body and describing it, often it would start to feel lighter, more flowing, like fresh air stirring in a stuffy room.

As ‘steps’ would come, little changes in how a situation was perceived, a new way of being or acting in the world would emerge, and how this whole thing felt in the body would be different now. These steps, although exactly what they would be could not be predicted, were always life-enhancing, in the direction of living more fully.

‘Living forward energy’ is Gendlin’s term for this tendency for the process to move in the direction of fuller life. It is possible to sense for the living forward energy in any felt sense, any stuck situation. When it comes, it is almost always surprising.

### THE ESSENCE OF THE FOCUSING PROCESS

Let’s look a little more closely at what is happening during this seemingly mysterious process of change. We could say that the essence of the Focusing process is:

- *sensing something*
- *sensing for symbols that match it*
- *and sensing in the body to confirm whether those symbols do, in fact, match that something or not*

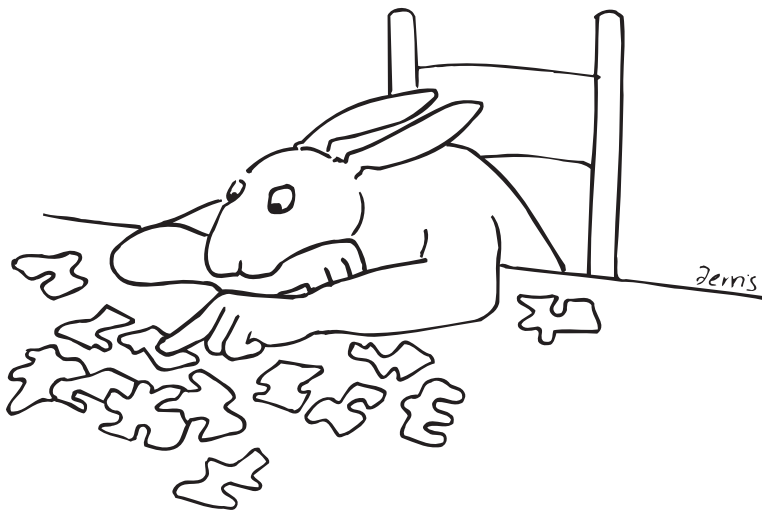
This conscious checking in the body for confirmation of whether symbols of our inner experiencing match that experience is the heart of the process. Something happens in this symbolizing and resonating process that releases our living forward energy. In this cycle of sensing, symbolizing (Gendlin calls this *Finding a Handle*), confirming (he calls this *Resonating*) and sensing again, what has been stuck begins to loosen and move again.



*Every part of us has a living-forward direction and only It knows what that direction is.*

*The more you do Focusing, the more you learn to cherish the feeling of having ‘something’ there that you can’t yet put into words. You learn that this not-yet-in-symbols ‘something’ is a rich place of transformational potential; the place where living forward stirs, shifts, flows, and begins to move and carry us forward.*

SLOWLY IT EMERGES



BODY SENSE AND FELT SENSE

*A body sense is one aspect of a felt sense. It is the body sensations that one can describe in terms of location, intensity, quality.*

*A felt sense has multiple aspects which can be felt into and symbolized: body sense, emotions, connections with something in your life, memories and associations, hopes and fears about the future, thoughts and images – in short, a holistic bodily response to something. (This ‘something’ can be a situation in your life, a place, a work of art, something you are writing or working on. The list is endless.)*

*All of these aspects together create what we experience as meaning.*

Symbols reveal the meaning of what you are keeping company. What is revealed might just be an aspect of the meaning, or it might be the central core of it. Symbols can also help you to come back to this place at another time.

It can be difficult at first to simply wait for symbols to emerge. Part of us can get very busy searching for something to fit what we are sensing, trying first this symbol and then that symbol, kind of like a person trying to push pieces into a jigsaw puzzle.

To connect with the quality of waiting for something to emerge, sometimes it helps to imagine walking through a foggy wood. As you walk along, trees and bushes simply emerge out of the fog. You don’t do anything directly to make that happen. Another metaphor is watching a photograph being developed. At first the image is faint, you are unable to make out what is there. And gradually, as you wait and watch, the picture emerges.

Neither of these metaphors is quite right, for as something emerges and becomes clear inside, it changes. Paradoxically, this is one way you can know the symbol fits. When the body sense changes, you then need to go through the same process of waiting until a symbol emerges that matches this new ‘felt sense.’ The metaphors also don’t describe well the dynamic, interactive process of resonating the symbol with the felt sense.

DON’T GET HUNG UP ON THE PERFECT SYMBOL

A pitfall to be aware of is getting stuck on trying to find just the perfect match for a particular felt sense. Sometimes all you need is something that’s pretty close. The earlier in the session you are, the less precise you are likely to need to be. Using qualifiers like ‘sort of’ and ‘kind of’ can be helpful. Your early descriptions help you come closer and closer to matching something accurately.

- *I’m sensing there’s a kind of pressure in my chest and belly.*

It can even be helpful to say symbols that you know aren’t right. It can help them get out of the way so that something else can come.

- *I know this isn’t right. Betrayed... .. No, it’s more like teased, by being promised something and then being let down.*

And sometimes you need to wait until just the right symbol emerges that captures the essence of what’s there. This may take many minutes of patiently and carefully sensing and resonating different symbols as they emerge.

## HOW THE BODY RESPONDS TO SYMBOLS

The place you are describing will respond to the words (or gestures, images, sounds) in one of six ways. All of them give valuable feedback on whether the symbols that have come match what you are keeping company.

1. *It disappears but there is no sense of relief or release.*

Either it becomes fainter, foggy, or it becomes blank and you can't feel it any more at all. Usually this means that the way you have approached it doesn't feel safe to it and it has withdrawn from your awareness. You will probably need to check whether you are still in Presence or whether part of you that doesn't like this something (or wants to hurry the process) has taken over your awareness.

2. *Nothing responds. It feels the same.*

Go back to just sensing that *something* and waiting for another symbol to arise. Sometimes it helps to just begin to describe it in a simple way: "I'm sensing it feels kind of empty and flat in my chest."

3. *Something says "No" to that symbol.*

This can be very helpful. Usually the body sensations become clearer and stronger in response to what doesn't fit.

4. *Something responds but there isn't a release.*

Usually it feels more intense, a sharpening of the feeling in the body. This usually means that you are getting closer to the crux, the heart of this something.

5. *There is a 'sort of,' 'almost' kind of feeling.*

Often the body sense will change a little at this point, becoming more defined and specific, and other symbols will emerge that fit even more closely. Sometimes there is a little release and then it becomes even stronger.

6. *Something says "yes," and something releases inside.*

Something that was tight loosens. You might sigh or be able to breathe more easily. There is a sense of satisfying rightness. This might be just a little movement, a little step on the way. Or it might be a bigger release that comes when a symbol emerges for something that is central to a whole issue or way of being. The whole body sense changes.

However the felt sense responds becomes your new starting point for the next round of sensing, symbolizing, and resonating.



### FORMS SYMBOLS OFTEN TAKE IN FOCUSING

- *a word or phrase*
- *an image*
- *a situation in your life (past, present or future)*
- *a gesture*
- *a sound*
- *a thought*

### WORDS OR PHRASES

can be descriptive of how it feels in the body:

- *lump in my throat*
- *squeezy in my stomach*

or they can be metaphorically descriptive:

- *like a steel band around my head*
- *like a dark cloud in my chest*

or capture an overall quality of what you are aware of:

- *like an avalanche*
- *simmering*
- *glowing openness*

And, of course, we can use words to describe images or situations, thoughts or emotions. Words are probably the most common form of symbolization we use.

### IMAGES

can be metaphoric:

- *I'm seeing a lilac-colored room that's peaceful but closed up.*
- *There's a little boy standing on his own.*

You might not understand the image at all at first. It might seem peculiar or even bizarre.

- *I'm seeing a yellow and black tunnel that's leading downward.*

or the image can be 'kinesthetic':

- *I'm sensing something like a shiny heavy ball in my stomach.*
- *I'm sensing a sharp ivory-colored bone in my throat.*
- *I'm sensing a flapping, twisting fish in my middle.*

### SITUATIONS

You may get memories, fantasies, images of situations, suggesting or showing how this something is connected to either a specific situation in your life or how this whole thing is like a certain kind of situation. This can be in the past, present or even the future.

- *I'm seeing myself at work with one of my employees. He's looking up at me expectantly.*
- *I'm remembering a specific time with a girlfriend of mine.*

# HOW DO WE HELP THE LIVING FORWARD TO MAKE STEPS? ❖

## GESTURES

Gestures can be very powerful in helping the felt sense to develop. A gesture has time and movement, and these can be important aspects of the meaning in the felt sense. A gesture can be just a hand movement, a body posture, or a whole body movement. You need to be careful to stay in touch with your inner experience when you are moving. It can be easy to overwhelm the felt sense by moving too quickly or vigorously. Or you might start to just express the emotion of the body sense rather than finding a symbolic movement that matches it. There is nothing wrong with expressing the body sense in movement – after all, that is the essence of dance. But there is a difference between expressing something and the subtle interactive flow of sensing in the body and finding symbols that match it. *Expression* is not the same as *symbolization*.

## SOUNDS

Sometimes when a word or other symbol doesn't come, a sound might capture the quality of the body sense. Perhaps even more than gesture, a sound can become solely expressive rather than symbolic. As you make the sound, make sure you notice how it resonates with that place the sound comes from. If it feels close, but not quite right, experiment with making it a little louder or softer or slightly different in some way until it matches.

## THOUGHTS

As you are paying attention to something, you might notice a thought popping into your head. Don't just throw it away! What you are calling a thought may be exactly the way your body process is communicating with you. Take time to sense how your body sense responds to it – how it feels in your body.

*Expression is one-dimensional: if you go deeper into the expression, you tend to get more of the same. If you are expressing anger, you will get angrier and angrier. If you are expressing grief, you will cry more and more deeply. The emotion might switch to another emotion, you might even have a sense of relief, but there is unlikely to be an opening out into its complexities and subtleties.*

*Symbolizing is multidimensional: it opens the body sense out into a multidimensional complexity that you can go further and further into. The body sense will change, shift, release, open, reveal unexpected aspects of itself during this process.*

## HOW DO WE HELP THE LIVING FORWARD TO MAKE STEPS?

How does all this translate into practical terms while we're Focusing? We have six recommendations that will help you create the kind of conditions that support the process of sensing inwardly and resonating symbols of your experience. The living forward emerges organistically as you do this.

They are:

- *Being in Presence*
- *Going slowly*
- *Sensing in the body*
- *Staying in contact with the unclear edge*
- *Holding a space for something new to emerge*
- *Welcoming what feels like 'fresh air,' whatever it looks like*

## SIX RECOMMENDATIONS

## ❖ SIX RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1 – BEING IN PRESENCE

#### “I’M SENSING SOMETHING IN ME THAT FEELS...”

It’s much easier for something to receive company, and make steps, and change, when ‘it’ isn’t ‘you.’ When you say, “I am angry,” it’s hard for the ‘angry’ to be accompanied. There’s no one there to keep it company, because *you* are angry. When you say instead, “Something in me is feeling angry,” a different dynamic occurs. Now you are available to be with something in you that is feeling angry. This is the gentle unintrusive contact Gendlin speaks of in the quote at the beginning of this section.

Presence is the state of being with whatever is in your awareness, and knowing that what you are with is *part* of you, not all of who you are. Whenever you catch yourself saying, “I am...” or “I feel...,” notice how it would feel to say, “I’m sensing that something in me feels...”

Presence is powerful. From here, you can be with *anything*. You are not overwhelmed; you are not denying. You are present to the truth of how this is right now. You are aware of your inner experiences, you can acknowledge them. You can sense how each of these inner experiences is part of you and that you are more, larger than any single part. You are even larger than all your parts put together.

Presence is able to keep company with all of what is within you. In this state you are able to be compassionate and keep company with whatever needs compassion.

#### OUR RECOMMENDATION TO HELP YOU STAY IN PRESENCE:

- Use Presence language consistently throughout your sessions – even when you feel you are already in Presence. (See pp. 4-5)

### 2 – GOING SLOWLY

#### SPEAKING OUT LOUD

*In general, speaking out loud can help you to go slowly, keep on track, stay with what comes and resonate any symbols with it. But you don’t have to speak out loud. If it interrupts your connection with your inner experience, don’t do it. While either Focusing alone or with a Companion, speak out loud only if it helps you.*

#### “I’M TAKING TIME TO...”

Living forward needs time and space to be able to emerge and unfold. Keeping the edge company gives it that time and space. When you take your time to really do, and feel in your body (as much as is possible for you right now), each stage of the Focusing process, you are allowing the process to happen at the bodily level. It is in the body that ‘more’ lives.

For different people, ‘slowly’ means different things. You need to go slowly enough for each stage to really happen. If you feel you’re not going very deeply, try going slower. Notice exactly what is happening right here, right now.

Sometimes when you are with something that is tangled, it can feel like you are facing a big wall. Our natural inclination is to bring in the bulldozers or the battering rams. Here’s another suggestion for you: pitch your tent by the wall. Make a campfire and

brew yourself a hot drink. Get to know *this* wall. We like using the phrase ‘dwelling with something’ to point to this way of slowing down. When we slow down to what feels like a complete stop and keep something company in this way, it often miraculously shifts.

What happens when you go slowly is that you go deeply into your experiencing. But it is a ‘deep’ which is centered and grounded rather than being pulled into feelings or overwhelmed by them.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS IN ORDER TO GO SLOWLY ARE:

- *Take plenty of time to really feel in your body each stage of the process.*
- *Say to yourself, “I’m taking some time to...”*
- *When you feel stuck, you might imagine sitting down with what’s stuck or setting up camp nearby. Get to know it.*
- *Acknowledge any part of you that is feeling impatient, wanting to go more quickly, wanting to have something happen. Perhaps you might need to take time with this part itself.*

3 – SENSING IN THE BODY

“I’M NOTICING HOW THAT FEELS IN MY BODY NOW”

The body brings the gift of present time. We can feel only what is here now. The body gives us the gift of the fundamental truth of how we are right now. The body cannot lie. We might ignore what can be felt in the body, but if it is there, it is real.

The body also brings wholeness and complexity. It brings the totalling of a whole situation, all our past, all our future relating to this situation – this problem, this stuckness, this feeling in our bodies – together in this single felt moment.

We experience Presence in the body – open, flowing, spacious, peaceful aliveness.

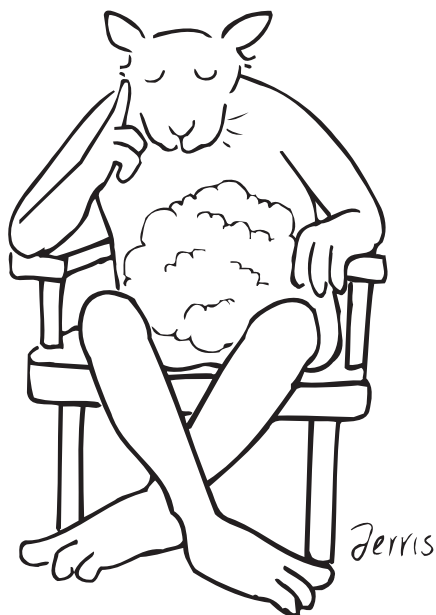
Many things happen in a Focusing session. You may think, feel, have images, make gestures, move around, talk, laugh, cry... You keep it grounded as a Focusing process by sensing how the body is responding to each thing you do. (This also helps you slow down.)

As you keep company with something, each time you do something – acknowledge, describe, say hello – or something happens – an image or word or thought comes into your awareness – take time to sense how that feels in your body *now*. If It’s changed from how it was, describe the new way it feels.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS TO HELP YOU SENSE IN THE BODY:

- *Say to yourself, “I’m taking time to sense how it feels right now in my body.”*
- *Each time you do something or something comes, notice how it feels in the body now.*

4 – STAYING IN CONTACT WITH THE UNCLEAR EDGE



*Our cultural bias towards clarity can lead to feeling uncomfortable with something unclear. However, it is exactly in this fuzzy, vague, hard-to-describe ‘something’ that wisdom and the next steps that need to happen will emerge. Learning Focusing is learning to value and even cherish the slow, subtle and vague.*

“I’M SENSING FOR WHAT IS UNCLEAR HERE”

We know what we know; we can’t stop knowing it. And we know a lot about our problems. However, if what we already knew was enough, our problems would be solved. In Focusing, we can be with our experiencing in a way that is open to what we don’t yet know – to what is unclear – to ‘more.’

When I’m sensing a place in my heart that’s feeling sad, I know what I already know about it. It’s natural for that ‘already known’ aspect to be there first. (I might think, for example, “I know what this is about, I miss her.”) What’s already known can be put into words fairly easily. The words may even be there already. But when I say those words, nothing really changes.

To help the ‘more’ to open, you need to go to the edge of this whole thing, to the places where you don’t know what’s there. It is important to notice and value what is fuzzy, vague, puzzling, unclear, hard to put into words... This is where the ‘more’ is to be found. It helps to be curious about what might be there.

Whenever you are contacting ‘something’ (taking your time, feeling it in the body, from Presence...), you can sense for the ‘edge,’ a sense of something not-quite-in-words-yet, almost-known, ‘fuzzy.’ This is where the life forward energy is enfolded.

We are dynamic, living organisms existing interactionally within a complex web of ongoing familial, social, professional, cultural, technological and environmental relationships. We can sense that web from within, through this remarkable nexus called ‘the body.’ When we sense the web of the problem in our bodies, everything that is involved in that ‘problem’ is there in that bodily felt experience. By staying in contact with this experience, and sensing for the symbols that fit it, we create the conditions that allow the ‘edge’ to produce its ‘steps.’

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STAYING WITH THE EDGE:

- *Sense for the feeling of ‘edge’ – fuzzy, unclear, nonverbal, confusing.*
- *Realize you don’t know everything that needs to be known about this (or it would already be solved).*
- *Be curious about what you don’t already know or can’t yet put into words about this whole thing.*
- *Remember that what you don’t know will always be greater than what you do know.*

“I’M LETTING IT KNOW IT CAN BE THE WAY IT IS FOR AS LONG AS IT NEEDS TO BE”

As we take time to keep company with something, sensing in our bodies the unclear edge, knowing that we don’t know what needs to be known or what the right next step is, we are creating a space for something new to emerge. At this point we can do nothing but keep company with what’s there and wait.

It can be very difficult to just stay with something, keeping it company, when it feels like nothing is happening. The more we can trust that within this whole thing is a knowing of what it needs for its healing, the easier this whole process will be. The more we can trust that it knows in what direction it should grow to be fulfilled, the easier this whole process will be. The more we can trust that it will shift when the timing is right, the easier it will be. From Presence, we can patiently wait with something until it is time for it to shift. When something shifts, it is an experience that can be described as grace – beyond our control.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR HOLDING A SPACE FOR SOMETHING NEW TO COME IN:

- *Remember we cannot make anything come.*
- *Slow down, sense into the ‘more’, wait...*
- *Trust that It has the knowing and wisdom about what it needs for its own healing/living forward.*
- *Trust that It knows when the timing is right.*

“I’M SAYING ‘YES’ TO WHAT’S COME”

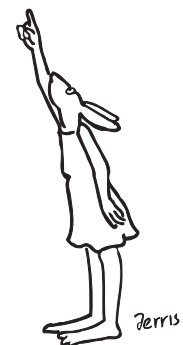
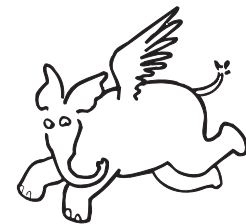
If we already knew what the growth direction looked like, we wouldn’t need to do Focusing to find it. So when it comes, it may surprise us. In fact, it probably won’t be what we expected at all. Whenever we sense some kind of movement, shift, relief, opening, flowing in our bodies when we’ve been with something, we are experiencing a step.

However, it often comes in a form that doesn’t make sense at first. As often as not, what comes won’t seem connected with the situation or problem, but still something shifts in the body. It might just be a word or phrase that doesn’t seem connected with anything but fits how this feels in the body. It might be a single word, or an image that seems strange or even bizarre. It might be an insight: “Oh, now I see. Part of me is feeling really intimidated by her.” Or it might feel like this place that we are in touch with is speaking to us.

It might even be an impulse to take an action that seems impossible or would bring up all kinds of objections if we actually con-

5 – HOLDING A SPACE FOR SOMETHING NEW TO COME

6 – WHATEVER FEELS LIKE ‘FRESH AIR’ IS A STEP, NO MATTER WHAT IT LOOKS LIKE



*For more about action steps, see Section Five, p. 60.*

*For more about parts of you that propose actions and other parts that object, see Section Ten, p. 171.*

sidered doing it, for example: “I want to leave that job today!” It’s important to say here that what we mean by saying “yes” to something like this is not agreeing (or disagreeing) to do the action, but taking time to sense in the body the feeling that comes with it, and what comes next.

This impulse to take an action is not an ‘action step’ but a ‘process step.’ In order for the process to ‘carry forward,’ we need to suspend judgment about what should happen, what action should be taken, where this will lead. So it’s safe to say “yes” to whatever comes because you are not (yet) taking action. You are still sensing what’s here now and waiting to see where it will lead.

Remember, a ‘step’ is a shift, however small, in how the situation is perceived and carried in the body. However it comes, if you sense more flow in your body, if it feels good, this is a step that needs to be welcomed.

However, part of us may not like what’s come – it may find it scary or threatening. Like an older child with a new sibling, it might want to get rid of this new arrival. From Presence, we need to keep the older one company while protecting the new life that has just arrived. So, a non-judgmental, accepting welcome needs to be extended to each new step that comes (and any parts that want to get rid of it as well) – so that it in turn can find its next step. This will allow the living forward direction to emerge in its own time and its own way.

#### OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR WELCOMING ‘STEPS’:

- *No matter how insignificant or puzzling this new something is, if it feels good in the body it needs to have a “yes” said to it.*
- *Protect what comes, like protecting a new baby from an older sibling (and remember that the objecting one needs to be acknowledged and perhaps have some time of its own as well).*
- *Take time to notice and feel any changes in the body – no matter how slight.*
- *When something feels good in the body – take all the time it needs to be felt fully.*
- *Remember that steps can come even after you have finished your session.*

#### AN UNFOLDING PROCESS

Symbols unfold one after the other, they lead to each other, each one is only a step in a whole process of living forward.

It is important to remember that the symbol is not the experience itself. The direct experience in your body will always be more than you can capture in a symbol, no matter how well it fits.

# THE POWER OF PRESENCE

Although this is the smallest section in this manual, it is possibly the most important. In *THE DOOR OPENS*, we began to look at how you can create the climate of safety and trust within yourself that makes Focusing possible. In this section, *THE POWER OF PRESENCE*, we will look more deeply at the state of being we call Presence: the ability to be present to anything in your experience with interest and compassion.

We will show you how to develop your capacity to be a trustworthy companion for your own inner process and for the aspects of yourself you find within it.

What is Presence? How can we open a space for this extraordinary and liberating experience? We will look at how we can cultivate Presence through noticing its qualities and being aware of the language we use while Focusing. We also look at some of the properties of Presence: what it doesn't do, when it appears like a part, what kinds of emotions can come when we are in a state of Presence, and when and how it can act.





Imagine you are out walking one day near a wood. A slight movement catches your eye, and you realize that there is an animal in there, looking out at you. You can tell it's not a dangerous animal. It's curious but it's shy, not sure that it can trust you. Notice how you feel when you see this animal. Is this a special moment you don't want to spoil by scaring the animal away? What can you do? How can you *be* so this shy creature will stay and perhaps even come closer?

Focusing on personal issues is like listening to something inside you that wants to communicate with you. And yet, like a shy animal, this 'something' may first need to discover that you are trustworthy and safe before it can come closer and reveal itself to you.

Especially if you are spending time with a personal issue that has been difficult for a long time, your inner places need to feel safe and secure so they can open and change. The stronger your foundation, the more safe and secure you are. The more firmly grounded in Presence you are, the more difficult the issue can be without your becoming overwhelmed, getting lost or having to shut down. In this state of Presence there is room for inner knots and tangles to relax and untwine, for the flow of life energy to resume.

Sometimes people ask us: Is Presence a part? *Presence is a state of being.* In it, we can hold and contain all that we can be aware of. Being in Presence allows us to be able to keep company with anything and everything. The most frightened, wounded places. The most vicious, ugly monsters. The most critical critics. Even parts of us that feel to us like they don't belong to us at all.

In a state of Presence, we can be in relationship with all that comes into our awareness, without favoring any one part over another. All can be heard. And this capacity for keeping all our experiences company is something that takes time to develop.

#### THREE STATES OF BEING

Presence is one of three states of being that we distinguish. The other two are 'merged' ('identified') and 'exiling' ('dissociated').

We often merge with aspects of our experience. We say: "I am angry," or "I don't like it." Merging with a part is identifying with partial experience; I feel that that partial experience is 'me.' Its point of view becomes my point of view.

When we exile a part of ourselves, it becomes disowned, denied: "I am not angry." We don't feel it in our bodies. We aren't aware of it – or if we are aware of it, it doesn't feel like us. It feels foreign, alien. When we are exiling something in us, we are merged with the part that is doing the exiling.

(For more about merging and exiling, see Section Ten.)

## AWARENESS AND PRESENCE

A lot of people ask if Presence is just another name for awareness. Our answer is no. You might be aware of something, but not be in Presence in relation to it. You might be merged with the narrow viewpoint of a part of you and be relating to something else from that perspective.

For instance, you might be aware of a tight squeezing feeling in your middle. If you were merged with something that was in opposition to that squeezing place, you would have opinions about it: “I don’t like it. It’s sabotaging me.” Or you would want to do something to it: “I want to get rid of it.” In a state of Presence you would be able to simply acknowledge it was there and be able to bring friendly, interested attention to it.

## CULTIVATING PRESENCE

Cultivating Presence allows you to *be with* your feelings, not merged with them or exiling them. You can then be a compassionate Companion to what needs your attention. We have found that developing a relationship with your own inner experience is one of the most helpful things you can do in cultivating Presence. It allows you to be in Presence with whatever is there. It makes it possible to be close to something intense without being overwhelmed by it. It helps you to stay in touch with something so faint it is almost not there. You can be with what is there, not in it, not denying it or doubting it.

In Inner Relationship Focusing, you develop your capacity for Presence so that whatever needs your attention can have company. Whenever you relate to something you experience, and the quality of that relating is interested, curious, non-judging, you are developing your capacity for Presence. For example, when you acknowledge something, or when you say hello to something, you are developing your capacity for Presence with it. When you sit with something, and when you take time to sense how it feels from its point of view, you are deepening Presence.

## SENSING WHAT FEELS ALIVE

When you are Focusing, the first thing you can do to cultivate Presence is take time to sense where it feels spacious, flowing, alive in your body right now. As you bring your awareness into your body, you can sense what feels open, easy, flowing, alive. These are the physical manifestations of Presence, and we can tap into those bodily experiences to help strengthen and expand Presence.

Any time you are aware of fresh air, peace, compassion, equanimity, connected-with-and-yet-separate-from, you can welcome these feelings and notice how this lives in your body. All of this can

## ❖ SOME PHRASES THAT HELP CULTIVATE PRESENCE

build strong resources of Presence that you can draw on when you are Focusing (or in your life).

### QUALITIES OF COMPANIONSHIP

Remember what it is like being a Companion to your Focusing partner. You can bring the qualities of being a Companion to what's inside as well. You might imagine sitting next to what needs your attention as you would sit next to your Focusing partner. Bring the same kind of interested curiosity, patient not-knowing, gentle unobtrusive company to it as you would to another person.

### LANGUAGE THAT SUPPORTS THE INNER RELATIONSHIP

Something else that helps cultivate Presence is diligently practicing what we have already shown you in Section One: Presence Language. Presence Language is language that supports the inner relationship. Some people might feel that this kind of language is fine when you are just learning Focusing but is something you don't need when you've been doing it awhile. To the contrary. Both of us have been Focusing for many years and we still use this basic language all the time when we are Focusing. It helps support us staying in relationship with all the conflicting parts that are enfolded in deep and challenging issues.

- *I'm sensing*
- *I'm noticing*
- *I'm aware of*
- *I'm realizing*
- *I'm recognizing*
- *I'm seeing/hearing*
- *I'm acknowledging*
- *I'm sensing for what wants my awareness now*
- *I'm saying hello*
- *I'm taking some time to describe this a little*
- *I'm sensing if It confirms what came*
- *I'm settling down with It*
- *I'm keeping It company*
- *I'm sensing how It feels from IT's point of view*
- *I'm letting It know I've heard it*
- *I'm taking time to take that in/receive that*
- *I'm letting It know I'm willing to come back and spend more time with it if it wants more attention*
- *I'm thanking what's come*

The language is meant to support your inner relationship, being with what's there from Presence. Although the language is important, even more important is sensing that you are in relationship with what's there, and sensing the quality of that relationship.

## FURTHER PROPERTIES OF PRESENCE

When we are in a state of Presence, energy flows out from us toward what needs attention. There is a natural process of sensing what is there, what is emerging in our awareness, with non-judgmental open attentiveness.

### WHEN PRESENCE APPEARS LIKE A PART

Sometimes Presence in us takes a form. In that form (often appearing like a mother/nurse/angel), it is available to give help, comfort, protection... to other parts of ourselves (or other people) if they request it. *It doesn't act on or do to. It is able to act for.* This distinction is very important. It senses for what is needed and then is able to give that – if that's what's right to do.

If you aren't sure whether something is Presence or a part, check whether it needs anything for itself. If it does, it's not Presence.

When Presence takes a form, there is a sense that *it is already OK and needs nothing for itself.*

### WHEN PRESENCE HAS FEELINGS

When we are in a state of Presence, we are not just neutral observers. Presence can and does have feelings. These are feelings of compassion, love, desire to alleviate pain and suffering, even the desire to take the pain on itself.

When Presence weeps, it weeps for others, not itself. It often weeps for the pain that parts of us experience. This is not self-pity, where we are identified with a part of us and sunk in its pain, but real compassion for the suffering that parts of us have gone through during our lives.

Presence can even be angry – but it doesn't punish something in us or someone else. It doesn't take revenge. It is angry on behalf of something in us or someone else that's hurting or being harmed. It says "No!" It is a call to attention, a knowing that something is wrong, something has been harmed and needs attention.

### WHAT PRESENCE DOESN'T DO

The state of Presence is not a state in which we judge or choose sides. We don't judge whether some part of us is right or wrong, good or bad, helpful or unhelpful. Presence turns interested attention to whatever is there.

Warring parts may look to Presence for a choice, and it may feel to something in you that Presence has to choose between them or between their recommendations. But that just leads to taking sides, which is a form of merging with one side and exiling the other. It helps to remember that Presence doesn't choose between sides. When you are in Presence, you are able to simply listen to all sides with equanimity.

## WHEN YOU NEED TO MAKE A CHOICE

In saying that Presence doesn't choose sides, we are not saying that it's always wrong to choose. Of course there are times when we need to make choices about actions to take in our lives. Making a choice about action from a state of Presence is the best kind of choosing we can do. In Presence we are at our most centered, our most open and flexible, our most sensitive and perceptive.

Often there are several parts of us that have conflicting feelings about a particular course of action, but we don't always have time to listen fully to every part of us involved in a particular situation. The more parts of us have been deeply heard before we make a choice, the more those choices of action will come from Presence.

If we are able to sense from a state of Presence the various options for action that offer themselves, we can sense from Presence what feels the most life-enhancing. If we are in Presence, then we won't be reacting to those choices from fear.

## PRESENCE AND ACTION

We are often asked if Presence can take action.

We are *most* capable of right action when we are in a state of Presence. This is action which is responsive to our present situation, flexible, open to a whole range of possibilities. It is action which flows freely, a manifestation of qualities of Presence.

Most of our actions are *reactions* from parts of us which are still trying to resolve some situation from the past. Actions taken in a state of Presence are grounded in the present, owned, done with responsibility, without ego, in flow.

## THE ESSENCE OF PRESENCE

Words will never completely capture the essence of Presence. Here are a few words to point in its direction:

*Becoming as sun and wind and rain and soil.*

*Open and spacious. Vast as the universe.*

*Trusting and knowing.*

*Patient... things grow at their own pace.*

*Deep in peace.*

*Accepting of all things as they are.*

*Knowing nothing... the place of the pregnant void.*

*Rigorous and gentle.*

*Loving and compassionate.*

*Everywhere – Here.*

*All time – Now.*

*Presence.*

## SECTION SIX

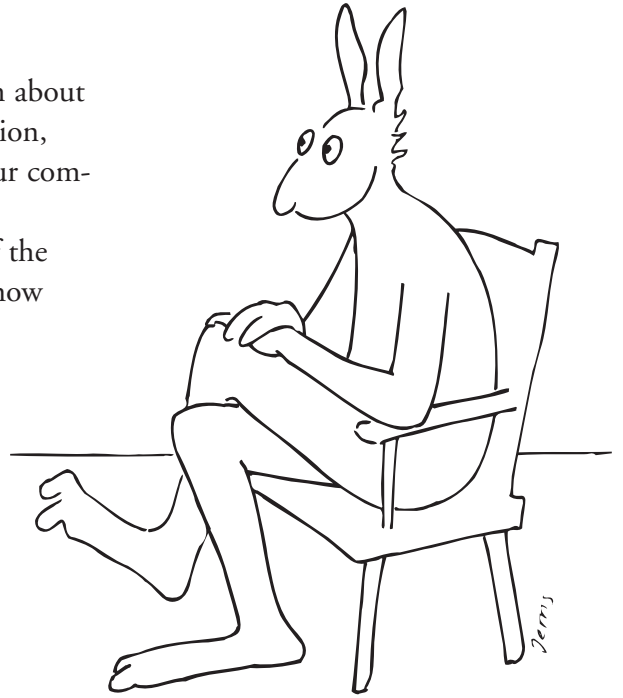
# BECOMING COMPANIONS

In *FINDING COMPANIONS*, you have already begun to learn about being a Companion to a person who is Focusing. In this section, *BECOMING COMPANIONS*, you will deepen and expand your companioning skills.

First we are going to be looking in more depth at some of the specifics of Presence listening. We'll give more details about how and when to use Presence language, and we'll show how Presence listening changes as you get further into a session.

Then we'll show you other specific ways the Companion can support the Focuser's process through listening: making choices about what to say back, using the word *something* to hold or point to something unknown, and reflecting so that what is sensed can change easily. We'll offer ways the Companion can respond helpfully when the Focuser doubts what they're experiencing, and when the Focuser feels nothing.

Finally, we show you how you can help your Focusing partner bring their awareness into their body at the beginning of the session, if they would like that.



## ❖ DEEPENING PRESENCE LISTENING

### DEEPENING PRESENCE

As we have already said, the key to being an excellent Companion to any Focusing process (including your own) is your own qualities of Presence. Almost everything a Companion gives to a Focuser can be given in silence. What you give is *you being there*, one human being with another.

Another phrase that describes the Companion's role is 'holding the space.' The Companion really does nothing to make anything happen. Yet in that space created by the Companion's presence, more can happen. The Companion helps the Focuser to create a non-judging, allowing, welcoming space for whatever needs company and attention.

### PRESENCE AND SILENCE

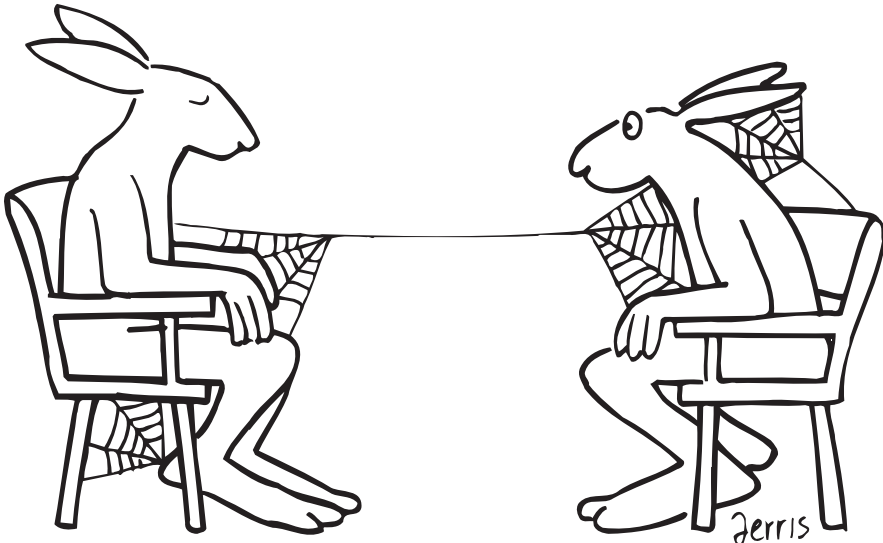
A lot of Focusing takes place in complete silence. In fact, most of the process takes place in the silences during a session. So it is important that you, as the Companion, give the Focuser the best attention you are capable of during the silences.

You may think it makes no difference whether or not you have your attention fully with the Focuser when they are silent. But the Companion's attention does have an impact on the Focuser. It is amazing how often Focusers have reported that their attention has drifted just after the Companion's attention has wandered. And it is also true that when the Companion can hold their attention with the Focuser in the silence, the Focuser's

process seems to 'know' it, and the Focuser is able to stay in better contact with what is inside.

Your job as a Companion doesn't just start when the Focuser finishes speaking; you are holding the space for the whole process. Remember *Presence*. *Presence* doesn't stop or start; it is always there.

- *A suggestion:* silently empathize with what the Focuser might be experiencing in the silence.



*As the Focuser, you can stay silent for as long as you want in your session. As the Companion, it's your job to keep the Focuser company.*

## PRESENCE LISTENING

After your silent Presence, we feel the most important gift you can offer the Focuser is ‘Presence listening’ – reflective listening that supports the Focuser’s ability to be in Presence with their inner experience. Presence listening, simply put, is saying, “You’re sensing...” and “something in you...”

Just using these two responses of Presence listening in your reflecting can make a remarkable difference to the Focuser in supporting them in staying in Presence. We’ve talked briefly about these responses before (see p. 19), and here we’ll take a deeper look at how they can be used.

## “YOU’RE SENSING...”

The ‘you’ in this phrase refers to Presence in the Focuser: the compassionate companion to whatever is there. Every time you say “You’re sensing...” (or “You’re noticing...,” or “You’re aware of...” and so on), you speak to Presence. You reinforce that awareness within the Focuser that is able to be present to anything in their inner experience.

Here are some other verbs that can be used instead of *sensing*:

- *realizing*
- *recognizing*
- *understanding*
- *seeing/hearing*
- *remembering*
- *enjoying*

Each of these verbs describes more specifically what the Focuser is doing *in relationship* to their inner experiencing. “You’re sensing...” usually fits best in the majority of cases. Use the others when they fit more precisely.

- *Focuser:*        *It’s saying “I’m sick of working so hard!”*  
    *Companion:*    *You’re HEARING it say “I’m sick of working so hard.”*
- *Focuser:*        *Oh, I see! It isn’t what I’m doing, it’s how I’m doing it!*  
    *Companion:*    *You’re REALIZING that it isn’t what you’re doing, it’s how you’re doing it.*

In each case, the Focuser didn’t say they were hearing or realizing, but it is clearly what they are *doing*, so the Companion can include it in their reflection.

*Have you been starting nearly every listening response with “You’re sensing...”? If not, you’ve been missing one of the most important and powerful reflecting responses.*



“SOMETHING IN YOU THAT IS/FEELS...”

How do we support the Focuser in dwelling at the unclear edge of their experiencing? By using the word ‘something’ to point to it. When we say *something in you* we point to both the Focuser (*in you*) and what they are aware of (*something*). Beginning your reflection with *something in you* will help the Focuser move into disidentification. When we also say “You’re sensing,” that includes the Focuser’s relationship with the ‘something.’ It points to Presence. The most powerful is when you use both of them together.

- Focuser: *There’s a lot of tightness in my stomach.*
- OK Companion: *SOMETHING in your stomach FEELS LIKE it’s really tight.*
- OK Companion: *YOU’RE SENSING a lot of tightness in your stomach.*
- RECOMMENDED Companion: *YOU’RE SENSING SOMETHING in your stomach THAT FEELS LIKE a lot of tightness.*  
*(or) YOU’RE SENSING SOMETHING in your stomach THAT FEELS LIKE it’s really tight.*

Even when the Focuser is saying “I am...” or “I feel...”, the Companion can use Presence language.

- Focuser: *I’m just extremely upset about the whole thing.*
- Companion: *YOU’RE SENSING SOMETHING IN YOU that’s extremely upset about the whole thing.*

OOOPS! IT DOESN’T WORK THE OTHER WAY AROUND

Never say “Something in you is sensing...” Can you sense why? We want to support the Focuser in being in Presence with what is here. If we say it this way around, Presence, which is larger than all the parts put together, is being reflected back as just a part. The one who is sensing is the Focuser’s Presence and so needs to be said first – the ‘you’ in the reflection. What is being sensed is the ‘something’ – and comes second. Practice will make this second nature.

AFTER ‘SOMETHING IN YOU,’ WHAT?

Of course, after our first acquaintance with ‘something in you,’ we no longer keep calling it ‘something.’ That would be as odd as this sentence: “Barbara held Barbara’s head in Barbara’s hands, while Barbara read.” Unless there are four Barbaras, we say, “Barbara held her head in her hands while she read.” Just as the sentence with the four Barbaras implies that there is more than one Barbara there, continuing to say ‘something in you’ each time you reflect back implies that there is a new something, something else, that has come into the Focuser’s awareness, rather than the same something. Pronouns take the place of nouns. The pronoun for ‘something’ is ‘that’ or ‘that place’ or, famously, ‘It.’ You can even use ‘him’ or ‘her’ if the something has a gender.

“YOU are sensing SOMETHING in you that...”

- *Focuser:* Now that I've been with it a while, it's starting to soften.
- *Companion:* You're sensing something in you that's starting to soften. NOT RECOMMENDED
- *Companion:* You're sensing that IT'S starting to soften. RECOMMENDED
- (OR) *Companion:* You're sensing THAT PLACE is starting to soften.

LATER IN THE SESSION, "YOU'RE SENSING..." BECOMES "IT'S LETTING YOU KNOW..."

Presence Language also changes as the session continues. Whenever It communicates something to the Focuser about how It's feeling or what It's wanting, you can begin your sentence with "It's letting you know..." It's not wrong to start with "You're sensing" in such cases. However, "It's letting you know" directly affirms that the 'something' is expressing itself.

- *Focuser:* It wants me to stay with it.
- *Companion:* IT'S LETTING YOU KNOW it wants you to stay with it.
  
- *Focuser:* It needs to have a lot of space.
- *Companion:* IT'S LETTING YOU KNOW it needs to have a lot of space.
  
- *Focuser:* It doesn't have any more to say.
- *Companion:* \_\_\_\_\_

There are a couple of other ways of saying this:

- *You're hearing it say...*
- *It's showing you...*

WHEN TO GO BACK TO REPEATING EXACTLY

No matter what you do in your listening, it's still the job of the Focuser to compare your words with their own inner sense, and sense if the words fit it well or not. If you're getting too far astray, you'll notice that the Focuser needs to bring you back a number of times. This is a signal to come back closer to their words. And if the Focuser ever *repeats* their own words, that is your signal to say *those words back exactly*.

This is good to remember, because it means you can allow yourself to take a few risks. Listening in a new way can feel risky! You can let yourself take risks as long as you listen for the signals that tell you you have gone too far from where the Focuser needs you to be. When you get those signals, come back to very close listening.

*Use the Focuser's feedback to teach you how to listen for them. When the reflection fits, most Focusers nod or say yes; when it doesn't they often frown or look puzzled or say, "No, it's more like this..." While some of the most valuable reflections may not quite fit, it is nice to feel that your Companion is with you most of the time.*

### WHY IT IS IMPORTANT TO SAY MORE THAN JUST A WORD OR TWO

Once we were watching a Focusing session between two beginners and we noticed the Focuser was getting more and more overwhelmed. It wasn't obvious why that was happening until we realized that the Companion was saying back only a few words from the Focuser's sentences.

You might feel that it is less intrusive to say back just a few words that seem the most important rather than to say back a whole sentence. However, saying back just a few words can have the effect of narrowing the Focuser's experience. When we use Presence language, we include the Focuser in the reflection, which expands their experience.

Say the following responses to the Focuser's sentence and notice how each of them feels in your body:

- *Focuser: It feels so dark and sad.*

*Companion:*

1. *Dark and sad.*
2. *It feels so dark and sad.*
3. *Part of you is feeling so dark and sad.*
4. *Something in you is feeling so dark and sad.*
5. *You're sensing part of you that is feeling so dark and sad.*
6. *You're sensing something in you is feeling so dark and sad.*

The first response is narrower than the Focuser's experience. This is the kind of response that is most likely to contribute to the Focuser feeling overwhelmed.

The second response parallels the Focuser's experience, no narrower, but no wider. If they are already disidentified from their experience, then this is a neutral response. If they are identified, then it won't help them to move into Presence.

The next two responses help the Focuser to stay disidentified from their experience.

The last two responses include the Focuser in the reflection and will be most helpful in deepening and broadening their experience of being in Presence. This helps people to not slip into identification with the part of them that has those emotions. It can be extremely difficult to stay in Presence when something in us is feeling under attack, or sad or angry or depressed, or when we are experiencing unpleasant body sensations. With the last two responses, the Focuser becomes aware, not only of what they are experiencing, but also of their own awareness which can keep company with it. It gives them a place to stand, to be with whatever needs their awareness.

*Remember that there are no hard and fast rules in being a Companion – except one: follow what the Focuser wants from you. If they ask you to say just a few words back, then that's what you would do. Each of the six examples here feels best to different people at different times.*

Another example:

- **Focuser:** *It feels like a heavy weight pressing on my chest – really uncomfortable.*

**Companion:** *Heavy weight pressing on your chest.*

NOT RECOMMENDED

**Focuser:** *I'm finding it harder to breathe. I want to get it off.*

Can you see how the Focuser has become identified with the part of them that is feeling pressed down on by the weight and has taken sides against the weight? This makes the sensations even stronger.

**Companion:** *You're sensing something that feels like a heavy weight on your chest.*

RECOMMENDED

**Focuser:** *Yeah... I'm acknowledging it, letting it know I know it's there. (sigh) It's getting a little lighter. It's like a grey, flat stone... and I'm sensing for how it's feeling.*

Here the Focuser stays in Presence with what's there and is actually *more* able to sense into that place than in the previous example.

At first it can feel awkward and artificial to begin almost every sentence with “You're sensing...” and so on. Remember, this is not a conversation, it is an artificial situation and this kind of language helps to keep it out of the realm of conversation.

#### WHEN TO USE “PART OF YOU”... AND WHEN NOT TO

Specific listening responses can aid the Focuser with staying in Presence or coming into Presence with their inner experiencing. They can help the Focuser to come into an inner relationship with what needs company and attention. When the Focuser says, “I am sad,” “I am angry,” “I am scared,” they are identified with something that is feeling those feelings. They are *merged* with what is feeling that way and that means they are unable to keep it company.

When a person says, “I am sad,” they are experiencing themselves as *being* sad. The truth is that part of them is sad and they are more than just that part. Remember, Presence is larger than all our parts put together. Sometimes saying *part of you* can help with being in Presence and sometimes it can get in the way.

1. When the Focuser uses the phrase *part of you* in what they say, then it's always OK to say it back that way.

- **Focuser:** *PART OF ME is feeling really angry about how she just dismissed what I was saying.*

**Companion:** *You're sensing PART OF YOU is feeling really angry about that.*

**Focuser:** *Mmmm... I can feel it in my arms and chest. Kind of like a restless tightness that wants to hit out.*

2. Another place where “part of you” usually helps is when the Focuser is getting in touch with the emotional quality of something that has a particular location in the body. It already feels like part of them, so it doesn’t jar their felt experience when it is said back in that way.

- *Focuser:* I’m feeling a tight band around my middle.  
*Companion:* You’re sensing SOMETHING that feels like a tight band around the middle.  
*Focuser:* I’m sensing it feels scared.  
*Companion:* You’re sensing this PART OF YOU feels scared.  
*Focuser:* Yeah, I’m letting it know I can sense that.

3. However, we have found that there are many people who don’t like it when you reflect back ‘part of you’ when they are merged with an emotional part of them. The problem here may be that saying ‘part of you’ can sound belittling and critical, and what’s inside us likes to be respected and taken seriously. Most of the time, saying ‘something in you’ in that situation is easier for Focusers to accept.

- *Focuser:* I am feeling really angry about how she just dismissed what I was saying.  
*Companion:* You’re sensing PART OF YOU is feeling really angry about that.  
*Focuser:* No, I’m feeling really angry. It’s not a part of me.

NOT RECOMMENDED

Instead:

RECOMMENDED

- *Companion:* You’re sensing SOMETHING IN YOU that’s feeling really angry about that.  
*Focuser:* Mmmm... I can sense it in my arms and chest. Kind of a restless tightness that wants to hit out.

- *So the rule of thumb is:* when a person is merged with something that is feeling emotional, you don’t use ‘part of you’ in your reflection, but try ‘something in you’ instead.

If even that is rejected, then you follow the Focuser and reflect it back using identified language – but still put in ‘you’re sensing’ at the beginning.

- *Focuser:* I am feeling really angry about how she just dismissed what I was saying.  
*Companion:* YOU’RE SENSING you’re feeling really angry about that.  
*Focuser:* Yes, I’m sensing how angry this place is.

## DEEPENING AND EXPANDING YOUR LISTENING SKILLS

As we've said, Presence and Presence language are the most important in keeping somebody company. And if you want to develop your Listening skills even more, here are some guidelines that will help in many situations.

- *Using the word 'SOMETHING' to take the place of an unknown*
- *Responding to what the Focuser is experiencing now*
- *Reflecting so that IT can change easily*
- *Responding when the Focuser doubts their experience*
- *Responding when the Focuser reports experiencing nothing*

### USING THE WORD 'SOMETHING' IN PLACE OF AN UNKNOWN

We've already talked about using the word 'something' to reflect what's vague and fuzzy. We want to say a few more words about this, because it is such a useful response when the Focuser is aware of something but doesn't know how to describe it or what they are sensing about it.

- *Focuser: I don't know what I'm feeling in my throat.*  
*Companion: You don't know what you're feeling in your throat.*
- *Companion: You're feeling SOMETHING in your throat.*

NOT RECOMMENDED

RECOMMENDED

Notice how much easier it probably will be for this Focuser to feel into what is there, when the emphasis is on *something* rather than on *I don't know*. 'Something' helps to point the Focuser to what is there, rather than what isn't.

You can use the word *something* whenever the person says there's something they don't know, or can't do. A slight stress or emphasis on the word *something* helps to bring it to the foreground. (You might try practicing these sentences both with and without the stress on *something*, and notice how they feel different to you.)

- *Focuser: I don't know what it wants to say to me.*  
*Companion: You're aware it wants to say SOMETHING to you.*
- *Focuser: I don't know what it's scared of.*  
*Companion: You're sensing it's scared of SOMETHING.*

In a slight variation, "I don't know why" become *some reason* rather than *something*.

- *Focuser: That brings a tightness, but I don't know why.*  
*Companion: You're sensing there's SOME REASON that brings a tightness.*

Try this yourself:

- *Focuser: I don't know how I'd describe this thing I'm feeling in my stomach.*  
*Companion:*

## ❖ DEEPENING AND EXPANDING YOUR LISTENING SKILLS

### AND SOMETHING MORE...

Another good place to use the word ‘something’ is to fill in a word that the Focuser doesn’t say. If the Focuser doesn’t finish a sentence, you would first wait to see if they’re going to. But if they don’t, you might reflect adding the words *and something more* at the end.

However, you need to be sensitive about when and even whether you reflect anything back at this point. When the Focuser starts a sentence and leaves it hanging, usually it indicates that they are sensing inwardly for more, and it can be intrusive to reflect something back at that point. Check for signs that the Focuser is concentrating inwardly – furrowed brow, head downward, an aura of intensity – or whether they are ‘just waiting’ for something to come. It’s hard to describe the difference, but if you know there is one you can watch for the signs and learn to recognize them.

- *Focuser:* *It’s dark, it’s heavy, and it’s...*

NOT RECOMMENDED

*Companion:* *It’s dark, it’s heavy, and it’s...*

This has the effect of putting pressure on the Focuser to finish the sentence – it’s like asking a question. Instead you can add “and it’s something more” to the end of the sentence. Remember to say the sentence with a falling inflection at the end.

RECOMMENDED

*Companion:* *You’re sensing it’s dark, it’s heavy, and it’s  
SOMETHING MORE.*

As we know, the Focuser’s sense of ‘more’ is a rich place to focus, and this reflection helps them to sense into that place. (Be sure to say something *more*, and not something *else*.)

*Try this yourself:*

- *Focuser:* *It’s a little shaky, and it’s also...*

*Companion:*

## RESPONDING TO WHAT THE FOCUSER IS EXPERIENCING NOW

### REFLECTING THE PRESENT FEELING

Often the Focuser will say more than you can remember to reflect back. Usually this is when they are reporting something about their life. In most cases, the story is the least important part to reflect back of what the Focuser says. You might just reflect a summary, the essence of the story, the parts with a ‘charge’ to them.

- *A rule of thumb:* Say back the part of what the Focuser said that is about their present emotions or bodily experience. The presently felt experience contains the ‘edge,’ the place where the Focuser’s awareness needs to be for the steps of change to happen. By saying it back, you support the Focuser in dwelling at the edge. (Of course, you don’t say back the feeling word alone, but embedded in Presence language.)
- *Focuser:* *I really miss her, although at the time I thought this was OK, just spending four days together and maybe she’d visit me later.*

*Companion:* *You’re sensing something in you that is really missing her.*

Try these yourself:

- *Focuser:* *They’ve been giving me the runaround for weeks. The whole thing is up in the air. I’m tired of it all.*

*Companion:* *You’re sensing something in you that’s*

- *Focuser:* *There’s been so much turmoil lately. I’m feeling a sense of calmness now.*

*Companion:*

### REFLECTING THEIR PRESENT EXPERIENCE LAST

Sometimes the Focuser refers to something that happened in the past in the same turn as they describe their present experience. Whatever you say last supports the Focuser to stay with and sense into that experience. This helps the Focuser stay in the present – which is where change can occur. Notice how the Companion refers to the past experience first and then reflects their present experience.

- *Focuser:* *It’s like that area in my throat is opening up more space, and it’s a lot like what happened for me yesterday.*

*Companion:* *You’re noticing how this is a lot like what happened to you yesterday – and right now you’re sensing how that area is opening up more space.*



## ❖ DEEPENING AND EXPANDING YOUR LISTENING SKILLS

Try this yourself:

- *Focuser:* *It's kind of sad, here in my chest. And it's the same place where earlier there was all that anger, rage even, about never getting what I need.*

*Companion:*

### REFLECTING SO IT CAN CHANGE EASILY

During the course of a Focusing session, the 'something' the Focuser is being with usually changes in some way. This is natural and expected. However, the language the Focuser and Companion use can either enhance or inhibit this process.

As a Companion, the main thing you need to do is follow the Focuser. When the Focuser stops using a description, you stop using it also. You match the Focuser's words. Some Companions think they are helping by remembering what the Focuser was talking about and filling it in when they say back the sentence. Almost always, they aren't.

- *Focuser:* *I'm feeling this place in my chest that's tight and scared.*

*Companion:* *You're sensing something in your chest that feels tight and scared.*

*Focuser:* *Now it's moving up into my throat.*

*Companion:* *The tight, scared place is moving up into your throat now.*

NOT RECOMMENDED

*Companion:* *You're sensing it moving up into your throat now.*

RECOMMENDED

Try these yourself:

- *Focuser:* *This place is sad.*

*Companion:* *You're sensing something there that's feeling sad.*

*Focuser:* *Now it feels heavy.*

*Companion:* *You're sensing*

- *Focuser:* *It's like there's a despairing little boy inside me.*

*Companion:* *You're sensing something inside you that's like a despairing little boy.*

*Focuser:* *He's just sitting there.*

*Companion:*

## RESPONDING WHEN THE FOCUSER DOUBTS THEIR EXPERIENCE

Sometimes the Focuser will report doubts about what they are experiencing. They are not sure if they are feeling anything or if they are just making it up. They may doubt that what they are aware of is meaningful or important. It generally doesn't help to reflect back their doubt.

Reflect back what cannot be doubted. If they report anything they do feel, just repeat that and leave out the doubt. The only way they are going to find out if something is really there or is meaningful is by staying with it. Reflecting the doubt will leave the person wondering in their head. Reflecting what is felt will help them keep their awareness in their body.

Sense the difference between the two responses in this example:

- *Focuser:* I don't know if this is anything, but there seems to be a slight tightness in my stomach.

*Companion:* You feel a slight tightness in your stomach but you're not sure if it is anything.

NOT RECOMMENDED

*Companion:* You're sensing a slight tightness, there in your stomach.

RECOMMENDED

Another example:

- *Focuser:* I don't know where this is coming from, but I'm getting the sense that this part of me needs support.

*Companion:* You're getting the sense that this part of you needs support.

Try these yourself:

- *Focuser:* It could just be the way I'm sitting, but I've got this band of tension across my chest.

*Companion:*

- *Focuser:* I'm not sure if this means anything, but I have this image that won't go away.

*Companion:*

In the rare cases when the Focuser needs to have the uncertainty said back, they'll let you know either by asking you to repeat it or simply by saying it again themselves.

*Sense for what is undoubtable and reflect that.*

## ❖ DEEPENING AND EXPANDING YOUR LISTENING SKILLS

### RESPONDING WHEN THE FOCUSER REPORTS EXPERIENCING NOTHING

It is easy to wonder how to respond when the Focuser says that they are feeling nothing. No one ever literally feels nothing. Usually they are discounting what they are experiencing as unimportant or meaningless. As a Companion it can be helpful if you respond to the ‘nothing’ as if it is something by positively reflecting it back. In Focusing even nothing is something and when we are able to start from exactly where we are, saying “yes” to whatever is there, then more comes. Often what is there, when it feels like ‘nothing,’ is very subtle and delicate or very shy, like something hiding behind a door or under a rock or blanket.

- *Focuser:*            *It just feels like nothing in here.*  
   *Companion:*        *You’re sensing something feels like nothing in there.*
- *Focuser:*            *All I’m getting is a kind of grey blank.*  
   *Companion:*        *You’re sensing a kind of grey blank.*

Try these yourself:

- *Focuser:*            *It’s empty. There’s nothing here.*  
   *Companion:*        *You’re sensing*
  
- *Focuser:*            *I don’t feel anything but a kind of confused,*  
                              *swirling sort of feeling.*  
   *Companion:*

### LEADING IN

At this stage of your practice, the Focuser may enjoy receiving support from the Companion at the **COMING IN** stage of the session. Helping someone to bring awareness into their body is called ‘Leading in.’ To the other questions the Companion asks the Focuser before the session starts, you can now add a fourth: “Would you like me to lead you in?”

We have three ‘Leading in’ forms: short, medium, and long. They found in the Appendix on page 7, and two of them are also on a crib card. Of course, the Focuser can ask for the wording to be changed to suit them.

A hint for staying present and connected with someone while reading to them from a card: Look down, gather up a phrase or short sentence with your eyes, then look at the Focuser and say it to them. If you do what you are suggesting to the Focuser, your timing will probably be closer to the Focuser’s than if you just read out the words. It also will help you to be more present for them.

*One way to remind the Focuser that they are in charge right from the beginning: ask them to let you know if you’re going too fast or too slow.*

This is the place where we've put an array of miscellaneous treats for you, our readers. You will probably turn to these pages when directed by your teacher, or by a reference in the main text of this manual. And there are some things in here you may enjoy exploring on your own.

First, we've given you a page for taking Field Notes when you are being a Compassionate Scientist, watching a Focusing session. This is the best way to answer the question "What is Focusing?" Accompanying this is a page of words pointing to the qualities of Presence.

Next we have a page called 'For the Focuser.' This is a quick reminder of what you might want to remember during your Focusing session. It is the same text as the 'crib card' in the envelope in the back of the manual.

There's a page for you as the Compassionate Scientist to take Field Notes while watching a Focusing companionship session. And it's followed by two pages 'For the Companion,' again a duplicate of what on the 'crib cards.'

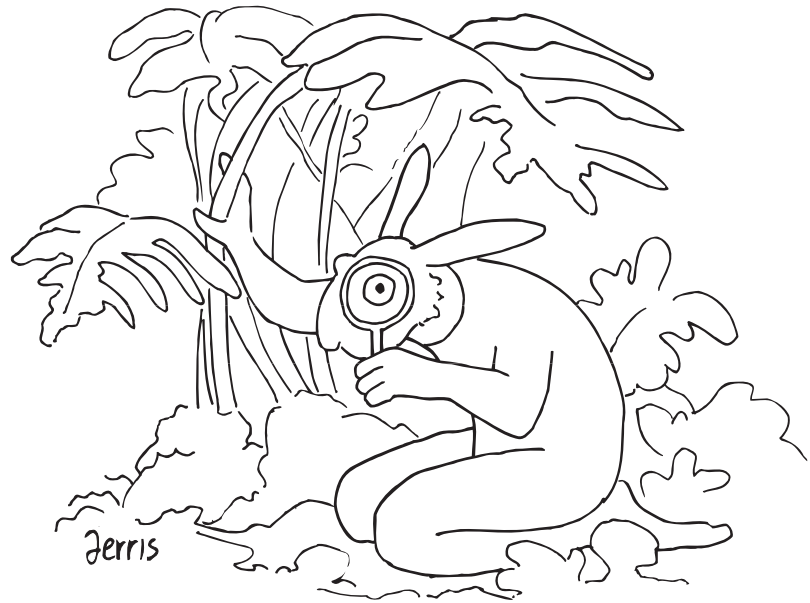
We've given you a transcript of a sample Focusing/listening partnership between two partners who have different Focusing styles, so you can see how this would go. We've also given you a place for noting your partnership appointments. Your Focusing partner is a very special person; treat him or her with care!

You'll find in this section our 'answers' to the fill-in-the-blank exercises found in the manual. Please don't assume yours are wrong if they are different from ours; you may have come at things from a different angle, or you may have seen something we didn't.

We've offered you a glossary of familiar Focusing terms as used by Eugene Gendlin, with our equivalents and our reasons for teaching differently in some cases. And we've given you a list of 'Moody words' that our students have found useful over the years. If you've ever wondered if your vocabulary has enough words for your experiences, feast here.

And finally we offer you some resources for your further contact with Focusing: ways to contact the Focusing Institute as well as both of us, and a recommended reading list which includes books and articles mentioned in this manual.

Thanks for sharing this journey with us; it's been a pleasure...



- A-2 *Field Notes: The Door Opens*
- A-3 *Qualities of Presence*
- A-4 *For the Focuser*
- A-5 *Field Notes: Becoming Companions*
- A-6 *For the Companion: Levels 1 & 2*
- A-7 *Leading In*
- A-8 *Partnership transcript*
- A-12 *Partnership appointments*
- A-13 *Our responses*
- A-15 *Gendlin's Focusing terms*
- A-19 *Moody words*
- A-22 *References and recommended reading*
- A-23 *Recommended tapes and newsletters*
- A-24 *Resources*
- A-27 *Other recommended methods*

### WHAT IS FOCUSING?

Perhaps the best way to start to understand this process is to watch someone Focusing. As you watch, be a ‘compassionate scientist.’ A compassionate scientist is more than just an objective observer. Listen empathically, sensitively observe this living process that is before you. Like a naturalist who has come upon a new creature in the wild, you need to use all your senses to discover what is unique and special about Focusing. Listen carefully. Notice the words that are used and how they are used. Watch for what this person is doing and saying. Notice details. Sense the big picture.

What is Focusing? Use this page to take Field Notes on the session you watch. Feel free to follow our suggestions for what you might pay attention to, or just be open to whatever comes. You could write down anything you observe that interests you and any questions you may have.

#### FIELD NOTES

*General observations:*

*What overall qualities did you observe in this session?*

*How did the person focusing treat their inner experience?*

*What happened first? Next? How did it end?*

*Questions that came to you:*

Of course, the qualities of Presence are beyond words, but here are a few to help you sense into the experience itself. These are in no particular order.

open	being
compassionate	powerful
courageous	supporting
empathic	balanced
stable	relaxed
persistent	whole
available	undivided
responsive	free
clear	truthful
alert	aligned
encouraging	humorous
sensitive	flexible
flowing	mindful
spacious	friendly
patient	peaceful
warm	in the moment
intuitive	full
no agenda	empty
accepting	timeless
quiet	joyous
giving space	respectful
imperturbable	clear
welcoming	trustworthy
loving	creative
attuned	appreciative
receptive	listening
holding	containing
sturdy	alive...
attentive	
trusting	
playful	
separate but connected	
non-judgmental	
interested	
perceptive	
gentle	
focused	
aware	

### WHEN YOU'RE FOCUSING

- Be physically comfortable
- Move around if it feels right
- Have your eyes open or shut
- Choose whether to bring your awareness inside and just see what's there or work on an issue

### WITH A COMPANION:

- Tell your Companion where you want them to sit
- Tell your Companion how many minutes signal you want before the end
- Tell your Companion how you would like them to be with you
- Ask for what you need during the session
- Use your Companion's words to sense more closely what is there for you
- When something your Companion says doesn't fit, sense for what does fit and say that
- Be silent whenever you want to for as long as you want
- End the session before the time is up if you want to

### FOR THE FOCUSER – SHORT FORM

#### COMING IN

- I'm bringing my awareness into my body
  - I'm sensing for what wants my attention now; OR
  - I'm noticing what I become aware of as I think of this issue
  - I'm waiting until something comes into my awareness
- 

#### MAKING CONTACT

- I'm taking some time to feel it in my body
  - I'm starting to describe what's here
  - I'm acknowledging what's here just as it is
  - I'm sensing how it would like me to be with it
- 

#### DEEPENING CONTACT

- I'm settling down with It
  - I'm keeping It company with interested curiosity
  - I'm sensing how It feels from its point of view
  - I'm letting It know I hear it
- 

#### COMING OUT

- I'm sensing if there's something more that wants to come and be known before I stop
- I'm taking some time to sense any changes
- I'm letting It know I'm willing to come back
- I'm thanking my body and all that came

## WHAT IS BEING A COMPANION?

As you begin to practice Focusing, we recommend partnering with someone. The presence of another person tends to make Focusing much easier. Furthermore, by being both the Focuser and the Companion, you will build the skills you will need to be able to Focus alone as well. We call the person who is Focusing the Focuser, and the other person the Companion, the Partner, or the Listener.

It can be helpful to watch someone keeping company with a Focuser. Bring your ‘compassionate scientist’ to watching the Companion. Pay attention to their tone of voice and timing, as well as to what they say. Here are some more suggestions for what you might watch for.

## FIELD NOTES

*General observations of the Companion:*

*What overall qualities did you observe in this session?*

*What words and phrases did the Companion use?*

*Questions that come to you:*



LEVEL ONE

1. Where would you like me to sit?
2. How many minutes signal would you like?
3. What would you like from me as your Companion?
  - Bring your awareness into your *own* body
  - Say hello silently to any of your *own* feelings
  - Wait until the Focuser speaks
  - Take a breath before reflecting back in a gentle but audible voice
  - Reflect and wait for the Focuser to speak again
  - *You're sensing... noticing... aware of...*
  - *something in you (that) feels (like)...*
  - Say back body sensations and emotions
  - If there's a lot, reflect just the last whole thing
  - DON'T ask questions or give suggestions
  - DON'T interpret, analyze or give advice
  - DON'T take responsibility for the process
  - DON'T think you have to do something if the Focuser is silent or doesn't know what to do
  - Be there – you're holding a space of Presence

LEVEL TWO

1. Where would you like me to sit?
2. How many minutes signal would you like?
3. What would you like from me as your Companion?
4. Would you like me to lead you in?
  - Bring your awareness into your *own* body
  - Say hello silently to any of your *own* feelings
  - Wait until the Focuser speaks (after leading in)
  - Take a breath before reflecting back
  - Reflect and wait for the Focuser to speak again
  - *You're sensing... noticing... aware of...*
  - *something in you (that) feels (like)...*
  - Say back what the Focuser is aware of now
  - Say back body sensations and emotions
  - Say 'something' for whatever's unknown
  - Say back all the parts that are there

## LEADING IN

At the Focuser's request, the Companion can help the Focuser bring their awareness into their body at the start of the session, using a process we call 'Leading in.'

## A SHORT FORM OF LEADING IN:

Let your awareness come to your body... your arms and hands... your legs and feet... and the contact of your body on what you're sitting on... and let your awareness come inward, into the inner area of your body, throat, chest, stomach, belly... And take your time, to invite or sense what wants your awareness now.

## A MEDIUM FORM OF LEADING IN:

Take your time to let your awareness come to your body. Maybe first being aware of the outer area of your body, like your arms, and your hands... Being aware also of your legs, and your feet... Being aware of your body's contact on what you're sitting on... And noticing the support that's there... resting into that support... And letting your awareness come inward, into the whole inner area of your body, the area that includes your throat... your chest... your stomach and belly area...

And give yourself a gentle invitation in there, like you're saying: "What wants my awareness now?" Or: "What wants to come and be known?" And wait.

(And when you're aware of *something*, you might let me know.)

## A LONG FORM OF LEADING IN:

Take some time to bring your awareness into your body...

You might want to start with your feet, sensing them on the ground...

Now bringing your awareness up your legs, noticing how your calves feel... and your thighs...

Now sensing your hips and buttocks, sensing how they are being supported...

Bringing your awareness up your back...

Now sensing your hands... and arms...

Noticing how your shoulders are feeling...

And your neck... and your head... and face...

Now bringing your awareness down into the whole inner area of your body. Sensing your throat...

and your upper chest... your lower chest...

your stomach...

and your belly...

Let your awareness rest in that whole area...

and gently invite whatever wants your awareness now... and wait...

(And when you're aware of *something*, you might let me know.)

*As you become familiar with your own Focusing process, you will undoubtedly have a favorite way to begin. Feel free to develop your own 'Leading in' script to have your Companion take you through.*

*We have offered three different options for 'Leading in' to get you started.*

## ❖ TRANSCRIPT OF A SAMPLE LISTENING/PARTNERSHIP SESSION

*Kris and Pat are doing a regular partnership phone session. They are also friends, and before the transcript starts they've already chatted about their lives for about 10 minutes.*

*This is not a transcript of an actual session, and of course Kris and Pat are not real people. But they could be.*

Kris: So, shall we get started?  
Pat: OK. Who wants to be first?  
Kris: I could go, but I don't have to, if you want to.  
Pat: Why don't you go first. I need some time to settle.  
Kris: Sure. Are we doing half an hour each?  
Pat: You know, we've chatted so long, and I have an appointment after this, I feel like we'd better take 20 minutes each today.  
Kris: That's fine.  
Pat: How much time do you want at the end?  
Kris: Three minutes is good.  
Pat: And what do you want from me as your Companion?  
Kris: Just your usual good listening. There might be a lot of silence today. I feel like I need a lot of space. So you don't need to repeat a lot.  
Pat: OK.  
Kris: OK, I'm starting. (silence) I'm just taking time to sense the different areas in my body.  
Pat: M-hm.  
Kris: (silence) There's something in my throat, a little tight. ...  
And there's also something in my belly. ...  
I'm acknowledging both of them. ...  
The thing in my belly feels like the big one, but the something in the throat needs to be first.  
Pat: M-hm.  
Kris: Yeah, so I'm acknowledging that. ...  
And I need to say hello to this in my throat. It feel tight and...  
kind of sad.  
Pat: You're sensing it feels tight and kind of sad.  
Kris: Bereft. That's the word that comes.  
Pat: You're sensing that it feels bereft.  
Kris: Yes. ... I'm letting it know I can hear that. ...  
It's easing. ...  
Yeah, that's what it wanted me to know. ...  
I'm taking a little time to receive that. Sensing how that feels now...  
I'm sensing if it's OK to move my attention down to my belly...  
Yes. ...  
Something in my belly feels dark. Oh. It's not sure it wants anybody close.  
Pat: You're sensing that place feels dark and it's not sure it wants anybody close.  
Kris: I'm letting it know I hear that. I'm letting it know that I won't come any closer unless it says it's OK.  
Pat: Yes.

## TRANSCRIPT OF A SAMPLE LISTENING/PARTNERSHIP SESSION ❖

- Kris: (silence) I'm just sensing how it would like me to be with it.  
(silence) It feels like it's giving me permission to be as close as I am now.
- Pat: It's letting you know it's OK to be as close as you are now.
- Kris: I'm letting it know I hear that. ...  
I'm getting an image of a child wearing rags. She has empty hands. Something's been taken away.
- Pat: There's a child wearing rags, with empty hands.
- Kris: She used to have an old ragged doll. That's what was taken.
- Pat: Ah! That's what was taken – her doll.
- Kris: I'm sensing how she's feeling about that. She's... she's not even sad. It's too big for sad. She's numb.
- Pat: You're sensing she feels numb about it.
- Kris: Yes. Like she could just sit here and die. The last thing was taken.
- Pat: She's letting you know the *last* thing was taken and you're sensing that she could just sit here and die.
- Kris: I'm letting her know I really really hear that. I sense how that is for her. ...  
I know what this is about, but it doesn't feel ready to say.
- Pat: OK.
- Kris: I'm just sitting with her, letting her know I hear how bad that feels, it feels so bad she could just sit here and die.
- Pat: M-hm.
- Kris: She's so cold. (silence) There's a flicker of something. Like inside the cold, there's a little flame. ...  
Oh, it's that she's also angry. Way down inside, where it can't get stamped out, there's this little flame, that she's angry.
- Pat: You're aware of that little flame way down inside where it can't get stamped out, that she's angry.
- Kris: Yes. I'm letting her know I hear that too.
- Pat: We have about three more minutes.
- Kris: OK. Yes, this is a good place to stop. I'm just going to take some time to sense if there's more. ...  
It's something about, the flame is safe if the cold is big enough.
- Pat: You're hearing something about, the flame is safe if the cold is big enough.
- Kris: (sighs) That feels right. And I'm letting her know I'm willing to come back, if she needs me back. ...  
And I'm thanking... And thank *you!*
- Pat: My pleasure. (pause)
- Kris: OK, I'm ready to listen.
- Pat: Three minutes is OK for me too.
- Kris: And what would you like from me today, as your companion?

## ❖ TRANSCRIPT OF A SAMPLE LISTENING/PARTNERSHIP SESSION

- Pat: I feel kind of scattered. There's a lot going on. If you could help me... I don't know, maybe help me stay in my body. Help me stay with something.
- Kris: I'll try.
- Pat: I want to start by talking a little about this issue that's coming up in my life.
- Kris: M-hm.
- Pat: There's this report that I'm supposed to do for the committee. It's due Friday, and I'm finding all kinds of excuses. I just don't want to do it.
- Kris: Something in you just doesn't want to do it.
- Pat: It's not that big a deal, I don't see why it's a problem. Nobody's making me do it. It's something I volunteered for myself.
- Kris: Something in you feels it's not a big deal.
- Pat: But when I sit down to do it, I make all kinds of excuses. There's always something else to do instead.
- Kris: You're remembering that when you sit down to do it, something in you makes all kinds of excuses.
- Pat: I guess... You know, most of the time, when I sit down to do the report, I find myself thinking about Jason. I'm really worried about him.
- Kris: You're sensing that something in you is really worried about Jason.
- Pat: Mmm. Yes. I can feel that... it's in my upper chest.
- Kris: You're sensing something right there, in your upper chest about that.
- Pat: It's like a heavy kind of pulled-back feeling.
- Kris: You're sensing it's heavy, kind of pulled-back.
- Pat: I'm sitting with it. ...  
Yes, something in me is worried... Not exactly worried. Doubtful.
- Kris: You're sensing –
- Pat: Wait. (silence) No, it's not doubtful either. ... Oh, it's scared! That's it.
- Kris: You're sensing something in you is scared.
- Pat: Yes... It's feels like it's scared that... scared that he'll be disappointed.
- Kris: You can sense it's not wanting him to be disappointed.
- Pat: I guess I feel pretty sure he will be disappointed!
- Kris: Something in you is feeling pretty sure he will be disappointed.
- Pat: Kids that age are asking for a lot.
- Kris: Something in you says, "Kids that age are asking for a lot."
- Pat: Yeah... I'm sensing my chest. It's still heavy. ...  
Something that's hard to put into words. ...  
Something about, I don't want to go through all that again.

## TRANSCRIPT OF A SAMPLE LISTENING/PARTNERSHIP SESSION ❖

- Kris: Something in you is saying, “I don’t want to go through all that again.”
- Pat: Yeah, so it’s kind of pulling back, holding back. I can sense it kind of holding back from Jason. That’s true, I have been feeling distant from him. ...
- Kris: You can sense it there, kind of holding back from Jason, staying distant.
- Pat: It’s like it doesn’t want to be hurt again. ...  
Yeah, that’s it. It’s feeling guarded. ...  
Oh! And under that, it’s feeling so sad. (tears)
- Kris: You’re sensing how it doesn’t want to be hurt again and under that you can sense how sad it is. Tears come there, as you sense how sad it is.
- Pat: (silence with tears) I’m just letting it know I hear it.
- Kris: (gently) Yeah.
- Pat: That feels better. It feels lighter.
- Kris: You’re sensing it feels lighter now.
- Pat: I give him so much.
- Kris: Something in you is saying that you give him so much.
- Pat: I guess it needs that to be acknowledged. I’m acknowledging that. (big breath) Yes, that feels much better.
- Pat: And we have about three more minutes.
- Kris: So I’m just going to sense if there’s something more this part wants to say to me.  
No, that feels very complete.  
So I’m letting all the parts know I’m willing to come back to anything that still needs attention.  
Oh, it feels like I need to check in again with the issue about the report. Just to acknowledge that something in me really wants to deal with that – and something in me doesn’t! But it’s OK, I feel like I did something important today, with my Focusing time.  
Thank you.
- Pat: Thank you too, that was a pleasure.
- Kris: So are we set for next week at the same time?
- Pat: Fine with me. I’ll call you.

## ❖ PARTNERSHIP APPOINTMENTS

*It's a good idea to make a partnership appointment before you leave the group. Here is a page that will help you keep a record of your partnership appointments.*

### RESPECT FOR APPOINTMENTS

When you make a partnership appointment, keep it. Be there, be on time. If you need to change the time, make the effort to reschedule; keep calling till you connect. It's sad how many partnerships drift apart because people didn't make the effort to find the time. This could be one of the most important relationships of your life; treat it as you would an appointment with the person you would most like to meet. That person is you.

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THE DOOR OPENS

p 5

- I feel bitter and disappointed  
*Something in me feels bitter and disappointed*  
*I'm sensing something in me that feels bitter and disappointed*
- There's tension in my shoulders.  
*Something in my shoulders feels like tension.*  
OR *Something in my shoulders feels tense.*  
*I'm aware of something in me that feels like tension in my shoulders.*
- I'm scared to go deeper.  
*Something in me is scared to go deeper.*  
*I'm noticing something in me that feels scared to go deeper.*

*These are just suggested responses, not gospel. You might find simpler and more elegant responses. If your responses differ from ours, take some time to think about what made you choose different words. If they feel like they fit better, how do they feel like they fit better? If they don't, sense what it is in ours that feels more fitting.*

FINDING COMPANIONS

p 19

- There's a sort of knotted-up feeling in my face.  
*You're sensing something in your face that feels (like it's) knotted up.*
- I'm feeling sad and disappointed.  
*You're sensing something in you that feels sad and disappointed.*

BECOMING COMPANIONS

p 65

- Focuser: It doesn't have any more to say.  
Companion: *It's letting you know it doesn't have any more to say.*

p 69

- Focuser: I don't know how I'd describe this thing I'm feeling in my stomach.  
Companion: *You're sensing SOMETHING in your stomach.*

p 70

- Focuser: It's a little shaky, and it's also... ..  
Companion: *You're sensing it feels a little shaky, and (it's) something more...*

p 71

- Focuser: They've been giving me the runaround for weeks. The whole thing is up in the air. I'm tired of it all.  
Companion: *You're sensing something in you that's tired of it all.*
- Focuser: There's been so much turmoil lately. I'm feeling a sense of calmness now.  
Companion: *You're sensing calmness here now.*



p 72

- Focuser: It's kind of sad, here in my chest. And it's the same place where earlier there was all that anger, rage even, about never getting what I need.  
Companion: *You're sensing that place where there was rage earlier about never getting what you need. Now you're aware that it feels kind of sad.*
- Focuser: This place is sad.  
Companion: You're sensing something there that's feeling sad.  
Focuser: Now it feels heavy.  
Companion: *You're sensing it feels heavy now.*
- Focuser: It's like there's a despairing little boy inside me.  
Companion: You're sensing something inside you that's like a despairing little boy.  
Focuser: He's just sitting there.  
Companion: *You're sensing he's just sitting there.*

p 73

- Focuser: It could just be the way I'm sitting, but I've got this band of tension across my chest.  
Companion: *You're noticing a band of tension across your chest.*
- Focuser: I'm not sure if this means anything, but I have this image that won't go away.  
Companion: *You're aware of an image there.*

p 74

- Focuser: It's empty. There's nothing here.  
Companion: *You're sensing something that feels empty.*
- Focuser: I don't feel anything but a kind of confused, swirling sort of feeling.  
Companion: *You're aware of something that feels kind of confused and swirling.*

## GENDLIN'S FOCUSING TERMS – DEFINITIONS AND COMPARISONS

This glossary provides definitions of the most common Focusing terms used by Eugene Gendlin, and comparisons between his terms and ours.

### FOCUSING

Our favorite definition of Focusing is the one Gendlin once gave to a group of Focusing teachers: “Spending time with something in your experiencing that’s not yet clear.” Of course this definition would not do for a non-Focusing audience, because he means a special, particular kind of ‘spending time,’ and the word ‘experiencing’ also has a special meaning. But it points to something with which we agree: that Focusing is not the sometimes elaborate systems that can develop around teaching it. Focusing is something that can happen in a moment, can happen naturally: a kind of open inner attentiveness to something holistically felt.

### FELT SENSE

This is perhaps *the* central term for Focusing. It was created by Eugene Gendlin to refer to something experienced which is: (1) bodily, (2) at first unclear, and (3) about something. “A felt sense is the holistic, implicit bodily sense of a complex situation” (*Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapy*, p. 58).

In this manual we have used the term *felt sense* as little as possible because of our observation that people who are learning Focusing tend to get caught up in a self-conscious questioning of whether what they are doing it right. We have not found it helpful to encourage people to wonder whether something they are experiencing is a felt sense or not. Instead, we have tended to refer to ‘something,’ or ‘it.’ In Section Four (p. 46) we use the term ‘body sense’ and discuss its relation to Gendlin’s *felt sense*.

### FELT SHIFT

Gendlin’s term *felt shift* refers to an experience of opening, relief, ‘fresh air’ that occurs when something directly meaningful emerges in the Focusing process. We have chosen not to emphasize the experience of felt shift in our teaching, because it can become a goal, and having goals tends to prevent the very process that allows a felt shift to happen. We do, however, teach how to welcome a felt shift when it comes, and to take time with how that feels in the body.

### LIFE-FORWARD OR LIVING FORWARD

For Gendlin, the movement of the inner process is in the direction of life. He calls this inwardly arising movement toward what is life-enhancing and energy-giving *life-forward* movement.

We use this term identically to Gendlin, and we are extremely grateful for this illuminating concept, without which it would be difficult to conceive of how a process with an unpredictable outcome can actually be trusted.

### SIX STEPS

In his book *Focusing*, Gendlin subdivides the Focusing process into “six main subacts or movements.” He makes it clear that this subdivision is for the purpose of teaching, and urges readers to remember that Focusing itself is a whole process, not a set of separate steps. He also recommends that people adapt the instructions to their own use, by adding to them, clarifying them, etc.

The six steps are:

- 1 *Clearing a Space*
- 2 *Allowing a Felt Sense to Form*
- 3 *Finding a Handle*
- 4 *Resonating*
- 5 *Asking*
- 6 *Receiving*

Many Focusing teachers have changed and adapted these original steps, understanding that Focusing is not the specific steps with which we teach it. Focusing is something essential, which can be approached in many ways. This proliferation into alternative teaching modes is appreciated and blessed by Gendlin and his Focusing Institute; see their website at [www.focusing.org](http://www.focusing.org), where our stages appear as one of the alternatives to the ‘six steps.’

### CLEARING A SPACE

In Gendlin’s teaching, *Clearing a Space* is the first step of Focusing. It is a process of noting and finding right distance (or right relationship) with each concern (issue, problem) without going into any of them. One asks an inner question such as, “What’s between me and feeling fine?” Each concern that comes is greeted and then put aside, set down, or set out.

Our standard way of beginning the Focusing process is with a scan of the body for what feels open and alive, and what needs acknowledging. We prefer not to teach Clearing a Space as a standard part of the Focusing process. We offer it as an option for those who may be feeling overloaded by many issues. Even then, we suggest that greeting (acknowledging) each issue is sufficient; no setting out is needed. It has been our experience that ‘setting out’

or 'setting aside' is too often used by a merged part to push away an exiled part. (See Section Five, p. 56, for our terms *merged* and *exiled*.)

For more on the comparison of Finding Distance techniques to Inner Relationship techniques, see "Relationship = Distance + Connection" by Ann Weiser Cornell.

#### HANDLE

For Gendlin, the *handle* is the word, phrase, or image that exactly fits the quality of the unclear felt sense, and he has Finding a Handle as the third step of Focusing. We call this 'symbolizing' and we have found that, although words and images are the most common symbols, there can also be situations, gestures, sounds, or thoughts.

#### RESONATING

For Gendlin, *Resonating* is the fourth step of Focusing, and it is intimately connected with his third step, *Finding a Handle*. We call them 'symbolizing' and 'confirming whether that symbol fits/adjusting the symbol.' We feel that, together, they are the essence of the Focusing process.

#### ASKING

In Gendlin's teaching, *Asking* is the fifth step of Focusing. After finding a handle for the felt sense, one can ask an open-ended question such as "What makes this whole problem so \_\_\_[handle]\_\_\_?" In developing our teaching, we found that people would often do 'asking' too soon. Their process would be blocked – nothing would happen – because they did not have enough of a relationship with something inside them before asking it questions. Questions can feel intrusive and even critical, so delicate places would close up rather than open.

We created a series of stages to take the place of 'Asking,' to ensure that the inner relationship would be solidly there. Our stages include:

*Settling down with it.* This is a time for consciously shifting from an attitude of 'working on' something to 'being with' something. If we were to remain identified with a part of us that wants to "get to the bottom of this" or "get this done and move on," it is unlikely there would be any movement.

*Keeping It company.* This keeping company is done from Presence, and ideally is experienced as interested curiosity with a spacious quality of wanting to get to know It better at Its own pace.

*Sensing Its point of view.* After relational contact has been established, this move allows a shift to empathizing with the internal

frame of reference of the felt sense itself. Once this shift has happened, any number of questions (we prefer to call them invitations) can be offered successfully, because the Focuser is in contact with the point of view (usually with an emotional tone) of the sensed place itself.

### RECEIVING

Gendlin's sixth step of Focusing, called *Receiving*, is related to the felt shift. Rather than occurring only at the end of the process, it is something to do any time there is a release or relief or easing of any kind: stay with it, sensing how it feels in the body without doing anything with it.

We have preferred to teach specific ending steps, for the stage we call Coming Out, all of which are implicit in Gendlin's 'Receiving.' They include:

- *Sensing for a stopping place*
- *Receiving and experiencing what has changed*
- *Letting it know you're willing to come back*
- *Thanking*
- *Bringing your awareness out*

Emotions can be easy to name: anger, terror, grief and joy. But often the feelings that need our attention in Focusing are very subtle, and are more than just emotions. This list of words may help you recognize some of the wide range of experiences you might have, including some of the more delicate nuances of your experience.

FEAR/ANXIETY	wary	impatient	blue
frightened	careful	frustrated	down
horrified	timid	disgusted	disappointed
panicky	defensive	pissed-off	heavy
terrified	uncomfortable	aggravated	despondent
dreading	doubtful	outraged	depressed
petrified	distrustful	exasperated	doleful
hysterical	GUILT/SHAME	destructive	gloomy
scared	humiliated	indignant	glum
desperate	embarrassed	mad	heavy-hearted
intimidated	exposed	piqued	mournful
threatened	ashamed	riled	pensive
apprehensive	guilty	huffy	somber
concerned	regretful	irascible	unhappy
pressured	small	grumpy	tearful
uptight	remorseful	cross	dispirited
nervous	sinful	insulted	cheerless
edgy	disgraced	offended	miserable
worried	rueful	sulky	wretched
trembling	sheepish	defiant	disconsolate
hesitant	contrite	rebellious	forlorn
tense	sorry	recalcitrant	troubled
shy	ANGRY	SAD	LONELY
agitated	enraged	discouraged	abandoned
freaked-out	furious	melancholy	isolated
precarious	infuriated	grief	disconnected
contracted	hateful	anguish	alone
jealous	bitter	despair	adrift
distraught	hostile	dejected	cut off
hunted	resentful	hopeless	deserted
frightened	disgusted	bleak	estranged
vulnerable	annoyed	distressed	ostracized
suspicious	crotchety	miserable	removed
naked	seething	upset	left out
defenceless	perturbed	wistful	aloof
alarmed	dismayed	sorrow	bored
guarded	irked	fearful	distant
watchful	irritated	horrible	ignored

## ❖ MOODY WORDS

lonesome	euphoric	trust	resigned
alienated	pleased	concern	puny
forsaken	warm	friendly	discouraged
withdrawn	delighted	in contact	powerless
<b>HURT</b>	happy	devoted	helpless
betrayed	cheerful	in touch	empty
unappreciated	free	accepted	disoriented
humiliated	glad	united	listless
agony	eager	supported	weak
bruised	good	consoled	despondent
deprived	gratified	nourished	intimidated
misunderstood	fine	appreciated	mousy
wounded	wonderful	gratitude	tired
persecuted	confident	kindness	lifeless
abused	relaxed	compassion	diminished
insulted	serene	together	impotent
discarded	quiet	<b>POWERFUL</b>	overwhelmed
crushed	peaceful	assertive	dominated
forsaken	heavenly	capable	quashed
pain	light-hearted	strong	ineffectual
devastated	tranquil	forceful	confined
excluded	jubilant	driven	meek
depreciated	secure	courageous	inferior
anguished	relaxed	unconcerned	disheartened
distraught	centered	confident	imprisoned
used	playful	firm	exhausted
devalued	balanced	virile	muzzled
neglected	alive	fecund	depleted
rejected	relieved	robust	fatigued
minimized	fulfilled	inspired	exposed
<b>CONTENTED/HAPPY</b>	satisfied	bold	defeated
cheerful	<b>CONNECTED</b>	immortal	worn-out
lively	tender	emphatic	dead
merry	loving	independent	insignificant
enthusiastic	affection	decisive	cowardly
ecstatic	intimate	energetic	obliterated
blissful	devotion	optimistic	lethargic
thrilled	cherish	lively	degraded
enthralled	caring	clear	burdened
amused	respect	adamant	futile
elated	closeness	competent	dependent
excited	warmth	<b>POWERLESS</b>	exposed
open	like	meek	despairing
genial	encouraged	demoralized	castrated

WANTING	vicious	cunning	warm
longing	heartless	frantic	frozen
craving	murderous	impulsive	knotted
desirous	belligerent	wonder	delicate
grasping	nasty	aloof	heavy
yearning	caustic	flustered	light
lecherous	harsh	controlled	dull
wishing	sadistic	delicate	bubbly
obsessed	competitive	confused	achy
tempted	deceitful	erotic	contorted
insatiable	undermining	surprised	sticky
lusting	castrating	beautiful	ragged
searching	spiteful	inspired	tingly
homesick	abusive	chaotic	sick
rapacious	antagonistic	prim	nauseous
greedy	MISCELLANEOUS	stimulated	full
pining	puzzled	cynical	empty
dreaming of	perplexed	eternal	floaty
hopeful	envious	innocent	squashed
HURTFUL/COMBATIVE	fascinated	odd	electrified
punitive	calm	apathetic	squeezed
cruel	jealous	philosophical	contracted
critical	dutiful	lustful	strangled
hostile	compromised	indifferent	throbbing
arrogant	foolish	condemned	paralyzed
contemptuous	obese	moody	fuzzy
biting	giddy	ambivalent	compressed
cold-blooded	restless	stubborn	velvety
sneering	curious	SENSORY FEELING	jagged
dismissive	sexy	WORDS	smooth
quarrelsome	astonished	shaky	bumpy
obnoxious	evil	jumpy	hollow
contentious	languid	jittery	sharp
hateful	hysterical	constricted	bloated
insensitive	disorganized	tense	rough
disputatious	naughty	pressure	pricking
coercive	bland	cramped	sparkly
mean	loyal	hard	explosive
despising	masculine	cold	pulsing
insincere	feminine	hot	raw

This list of words was based on the list of *Words that convey feelings* at the back of *Being Intimate* by John Amodeo and Kris Wentworth. It has been expanded by Barbara McGavin. The categories in some cases overlap and are not always clear-cut. It is by no means exhaustive.



## ❖ REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READING

*The books by Eugene Gendlin, Ann Weiser Cornell, and Elfie Hinterkopf are available from The Focusing Institute, (see A-24) as well as from good bookshops across the United States and on the Internet.*

*Articles from The Focusing Connection are available from Focusing Resources or online at [www.focusingresources.com](http://www.focusingresources.com).*

*There is an extensive online library of Gendlin's work at [www.focusing.org/gendlin](http://www.focusing.org/gendlin).*

### REFERENCES AND RECOMMENDED READING

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OTHER RESOURCES

FROM ANN WEISER CORNELL AT FOCUSING RESOURCES

CDs

**“Learning Focusing”**

A two-CD set teaching the basics of Focusing, including how to deal with common difficulties. Includes five guided exercises.

DVDs

**“Demonstrations of Inner Relationship Focusing: Working with a Story-Telling Client”**

In this 55-minute session, Ann Weiser Cornell demonstrates reflecting (listening) and reminding (guiding) with a man needing support in moving from story to felt sensing. Followed by 25 minutes of commentary.

**“The Power of Listening”**

In this presentation taped at the 2001 Focusing International Conference in Ireland, Ann Weiser Cornell grounds Listening in its historical background and its purpose in relation to Focusing, and then offers her special linguistic perspective with an array of techniques for making Listening even more helpful.

All above available from *Focusing Resources* (see A-25)

NEWSLETTERS

*THE FOCUSING CONNECTION*

6 times a year since 1984

Available in electronic and print versions, from \$15/year.

From *Focusing Resources* (see A-25)

*STAYING IN FOCUS*

Available with membership in *The Focusing Institute*, see A-24

## RESOURCES

The Focusing process, discovered and developed by Eugene Gendlin, is taught in many parts of the world. For more information and to find a Focusing teacher near you, contact the Focusing Institute (see below).

The style of Focusing teaching developed by Ann Weiser Cornell and Barbara McGavin, called Inner Relationship Focusing, is also taught in many parts of the world. For more information, and to find a Focusing teacher near you who has been trained in Inner Relationship Focusing, contact Ann or Barbara (see below). (For a comparison of some of the differences between Gendlin's teaching of Focusing, and Inner Relationship Focusing, see Appendix, pp. 15-18.)

### THE FOCUSING INSTITUTE

34 East Lane

Spring Valley NY 10929

845-362-5222

[www.focusing.org](http://www.focusing.org)

### THE FOCUSING INSTITUTE

The primary resource for Focusers all over the world is The Focusing Institute, the nonprofit organization founded by Eugene Gendlin. The Institute is a supportive matrix whose purpose is to help the human community integrate Focusing into its many ways of living and working, and to see to the continued thriving and evolution of Focusing and Focusing teaching.

From their website, [www.focusing.org](http://www.focusing.org):

*We organize what has already been done so that people have access to it, and we make links between people who need to know about each other. We support a thriving philosophical community centered around the Philosophy of the Implicit. We generate continued Focusing research.*

Joining as a member is a way to support their work, which includes reaching out on many levels: publicity; archiving resources; and bringing Focusing into schools, medicine, churches, businesses and other areas. Members receive a quarterly newsletter, *Staying in Focus*, as well as the scholarly journal of Focusing, *The Focusing Folio* (published occasionally).

The Focusing Institute is the best source of information about the work of Eugene Gendlin and access to his writings. His rare workshops are offered through The Focusing Institute. Professional Members, Trainers-in-Training, Trainers, and Coordinators are all listed in the annual directory. The Focusing Institute is a non-profit organization, and all contributions are tax-deductible.

## FOCUSING RESOURCES

Focusing Resources is an organization created by Ann Weiser Cornell to offer training in Focusing at all levels, including certification as Focusing trainer, and to support the learning and practice of Focusing through offering books, CDs, DVDs, and individual guided sessions in person as well as on the phone.

Focusing Resources offers a Focusing Training Program consisting of four courses (Levels) and partnership practice between the courses. All four courses are offered by phone seminar and may be taken from anywhere in the world. Although the content of these courses may not be the same as those of other Focusing teachers (because of differences in background and style), training with other teachers may be recognized.

Following completion of the Focusing Training Program, there is an option to apply for the certification program for Focusing Trainer, which involves about another year of training and can also be done largely on the phone.

## THE BATH FOCUSING CENTRE

The Bath Focusing Centre was founded by Barbara McGavin in 1996 to support individuals in learning Focusing and training as Focusing professionals.

Barbara brings her wide-ranging interests to her work, combining the latest work in Strengths Psychology and other resources with her ongoing explorations into Focusing practice. She now concentrates her work in the following areas:

*For individuals:*

- Barbara specialises in Treasure Maps Focusing, working with people who feel overwhelmed by their emotions and who struggle with self-criticism, anxiety, decision making, procrastination and a sense of unfulfillment.
- Specialized workshops on Focusing and self-criticism (*Dragon Taming*) and creativity (*From Spark to Beacon*).

*For people training as Focusing practitioners and teachers:*

- Barbara's approach is to help each individual find exactly the right fit for their abilities and interests within the world of being a Focusing professional and creating an individualised programme that will enable them to manifest their dreams.

*For professionals:*

- Focusing-oriented consultative support for Focusing teachers and others who wish to bring Focusing into their work.

## FOCUSING RESOURCES

2336 Bonar Street

Berkeley CA 94702

510-666-9948

[info@focusingresources.com](mailto:info@focusingresources.com)

[www.focusingresources.com](http://www.focusingresources.com)

## THE BATH FOCUSING CENTRE

46 Chilton Rd

Bath, BAI 6DR

England

+44 (0)1225 311062

[bathfocusing@btinternet.com](mailto:bathfocusing@btinternet.com)

### TREASURE MAPS TO THE SOUL

Treasure Maps to the Soul is a powerful way of transforming any inner struggle, any place where your life energy is bound up in fear, shame, confusion, self-criticism, hopelessness, despair. Treasure Maps to the Soul embodies a philosophy of the radical importance of every part of you: how even the most critical ‘critics’ and most rebellious ‘rebels’ hold vitally important aspects of your essence.

Many of the insights developed as part of Treasure Maps to the Soul have now found their way into Ann and Barbara’s regular Focusing teaching, and are part of this manual, including: the concept of Presence, inviting the not-wanting and wanting of a part, merging and exile, and ways of working with more than one part.

Barbara and Ann began collaborating on the Treasure Maps to the Soul body of work in 1994, and have been continually refining it ever since. They offer three or four retreat-length workshops every year in different parts of the world. For more information about Treasure Maps to the Soul workshops (which require previous Focusing experience) contact Ann or Barbara, or go to [www.focusingresources.com/irf/treasure\\_maps\\_to\\_the\\_soul.htm](http://www.focusingresources.com/irf/treasure_maps_to_the_soul.htm)

### INTERPERSONAL FOCUSING METHODS

INTERACTIVE FOCUSING, developed by Janet Klein with the help of Mary McGuire, is a process for using Focusing to enhance relationship. In it, two people take turns. The first person speaks in a Focusing way about something relational. The second person reflects back, then gives an “empathic moment,” often a metaphor that captures the whole of what the first person was saying. Next the two switch roles. The Focuser addresses the question: “What was touched in me by what you said?” The first person becomes the listener, first reflecting back and then giving an empathic moment. The roles are exchanged in this way for as long as desired.

To find out more about Interactive Focusing, you can contact Janet at: [drjanetklein@yahoo.com](mailto:drjanetklein@yahoo.com) or go to [www.interactivefocusing.com](http://www.interactivefocusing.com)

INTEGRAL COMMUNICATION, developed by Linda Olsen Webber and Leon Webber, is a structured form of conversation to help people who are finding it difficult to communicate. The process is a series of structured interactions which support the exploration of personal meaning in relationship. It can be used with couples, families, groups, and organizations. To find out more about Integral Communication go to [www.speakeasygame.com](http://www.speakeasygame.com)

## OTHER RECOMMENDED METHODS AND PROCESSES

Many methods combine well with Focusing. Here are two we recommend to anyone interested in enhancing their ability to do Focusing. These two methods will complement your Focusing practice and add dimensions that might otherwise be lacking. The originators of both these methods are aware of Focusing and recommend it to their trainees as well.

## MARSHALL ROSENBERG: NON-VIOLENT COMMUNICATION (NVC)

In creating Focusing partnerships that are enriching and deep, we need to be able to tell the other person what we want and need. Communications such as these can be fraught with danger; if you hear me as demanding or criticizing you when I ask you for something, our friendship may be in bigger trouble than before.

Marshall Rosenberg's Non-Violent Communication (NVC) has been the most helpful method we have found for speaking and listening in a way that respects the needs and goodwill of the other. Marshall's book is called *Non-Violent Communication: A Language of Compassion*.

To visit Marshall's website where you can find his workshop schedule and a list of people trained to teach his method, go to [www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org). Or call (505) 244-4041.

NON-VIOLENT  
COMMUNICATION  
[www.cnvc.org](http://www.cnvc.org)  
(505) 244-4041

## LEE GLICKSTEIN: SPEAKING CIRCLES

Focusing can be such a quiet, inward process; it helps to have a way to bring some of that energy out into the world. One of our favorite ways is the work of Lee Glickstein. He has created a simple and powerful method which enables people to empower themselves and each other to bring their true selves into the world in safety and joy. He calls it Transformational Speaking Circles.

Speaking Circles are not actually about speaking – they're about receiving. You learn to stand in front of a group and receive 100% positive energy coming toward you. Silence and receiving are more important than speaking. Although this work will help you be a better speaker (more comfortable, more inspiring, more effective...), it's about much more than that.

Both Ann and Barbara have experienced Speaking Circles for themselves and it has transformed the way that they speak in groups. Lee's book is *Be Heard Now: Tap into Your Inner Speaker and Communicate with Ease*.

To visit Lee's site and find out about his workshop schedule, his audiotapes from Sounds True, and Speaking Circle Facilitator training, go to [www.speakingcircles.com](http://www.speakingcircles.com). There are now Speaking Circle facilitators across the U.S., Canada and in several countries in Europe and Asia.

SPEAKING CIRCLES  
[www.speakingcircles.com](http://www.speakingcircles.com)  
(415) 488-4460



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BARBARA MCGAVIN loves to step off the beaten path into the wild woods. She loves to hear birdsong echoing through the trees and smell the leaves under her feet. She loves the joy of crafting words so that the wild inner woods can be shared and explored. Barbara also loves Focusing and has been exploring that path since 1983.

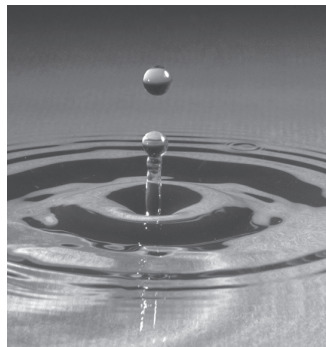
Barbara specialises in using Focusing with emotional overwhelm, self-criticism and creativity and in exploring the frontiers of the Focusing process.

She helped found The British Focusing Network and The British Focusing Teachers' Association. She is a Certifying Coordinator for the Focusing Institute as well as Accrediting Mentor for the British Focusing Teachers' Association. She also runs The Bath Focusing Centre, which offers courses at all levels.



ANN WEISER CORNELL always wanted to be a writer, and has been publishing books since she was six years old. She learned Focusing in 1972 from Eugene Gendlin, while she was getting a PhD in Linguistics as a Woodrow Wilson Fellow at the University of Chicago.

Today she is internationally recognized as one of the leading innovators and theoreticians of Focusing. She has taught Focusing in fifteen states and eighteen countries. Her book, *The Power of Focusing: A Practical Guide to Emotional Self-Healing* (New Harbinger, 1996), has been translated into German, Dutch, Japanese, Spanish, and Hebrew. Ann is authorized by the Focusing Institute in New York to offer the Institute's certification as Focusing Trainer. She is a Past President of the Association for Humanistic Psychology.



# THE FOCUSING STUDENT'S AND COMPANION'S MANUAL PART ONE

Focusing is a simple matter of holding a kind of open, non-judging attention to something which is directly experienced but is not yet in words. Out of this simplicity, many things come.

People use Focusing for many purposes: problem-solving in all sorts of situations, becoming clear on what they feel and want, decision-making, creativity (writing, painting, etc.), developing new ideas and theories in every conceivable field, psychotherapy, working with children and babies, environmental management... the list is endless. The use of Focusing that we are concentrating on in this manual is what is usually called personal growth: understanding one's self, moving past old emotional pain, and accessing one's larger potential.

Since Focusing itself is so intricate, naturally the teaching of it is also. No two Focusing teachers will teach alike, and each person's journey with Focusing is uniquely their own.

This manual is the work of two Focusing teachers whose combined experience with Focusing is nearly fifty years. What was intended to be a short project has become a three-year trek, including much more than we originally envisioned, and the result is a manual so extensive that it had to be divided into two parts: *The Focusing Student's and Companion's Manual, Parts One and Two*.

*from the Introduction*

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PART 1  
ISBN 0-9721058-0-8



TWO PART SET  
ISBN 0-9721058-2-4

