

# How I Spent My Summer School

By Barbara J. Dickinson

Did you ever have to write an essay in school about how you spent your summer vacation? Here's one I'm happy to write! Last summer, I attended the Focusing Institute Summer School for the first time and had a wonderful adventure. First of all, I really like the format of one class that meets every morning, consistently, throughout the week. I took Ann's class on getting unstuck. Then every afternoon, I took a different workshop with one of the other teachers.

Thinking at the Edge with Nada Lou helped me look at what might lie ahead for me in my career path. Kevin's workshop on whole body Focusing brought me into contact with a playground experience that was visceral and transformative all at once. The most essential body lesson I learned about Focusing is that in Focusing, my body, somewhat disabled in the real world, can do anything it wants! Atsmaout's workshop of Focusing with pain transformed my experience of living with chronic pain from one of fear to one of resolution. Biospirituality with Nada Lou was an amazing experience of grave to resurrection and connection to divine spirit. Lucy took us back to our 2nd grade selves for an "elevator ride" experience of Focusing as a child. Reading us a story of a black cat brought back a blend of sorrow and joy at the black cat in my life, which manifested in a child's book I wrote "in class." Akira's gentleness and artistry were everywhere present during the week.

The wealth of cultures represented by the international student body was gleefully arrayed in a cultural exchange one evening. Garrison has one of the best retreat houses I've visited. The grounds and surrounds are truly spectacular the entire Hudson River Valley sweeps out the front door; the accommodations are most adequate; it's the food that's amazing, prepared with such love, and



care for the people and the environment. The large hall of Garrison is an architectural as well as an acoustical delight, something we experienced in full at the Focusing Follies.

On Wednesday, we had the delightful experience of a trip to Boscobel to tour the grounds and mansion, and then attend the performance of "As You Like It." Our own Focusing Follies were hilarious and transcendent all at once. The talent was second only to the learning! For me, what I experienced of the power of Focusing and music transformed my relationship to the songs I brought along for fun. I met musical partners and together we shared sound that filled our hearts as well as the hall. What wonders!

People are the centerpiece of the Summer School. The Teachers are marvelous, giving so generously of their time and talents. I met Focusing partners familiar as well as new, and made friends and had experiences I never would have imagined. I spent time with people from all over the world, exchanging ideas and experiences of how Focusing touches our lives. One of the things about Focusing that is most important to me is its universal application. I am a "focuser on the go," letting

my body direct me whether commuting, typing, talking, singing, analyzing, or praying. At the Summer School, I found a community interested in applying Focusing in business, and I have been consciously doing so ever since, applying Focusing to my management responsibilities in a governmental organization.

I cannot close without a word or two! about the opportunity to share the space with Dr. Gendlin on Thursday morning and listen to his wisdom and humor on all subjects Focusing, implicit, and much, much more. We were so privileged! His willingness to answer whatever we needed to ask, and the demonstration of Focusing with a member of the group, were highlights of the week.

And then, there are a few other things before I close. First of all, The Focusing Institute does a most excellent job of organizing this whole thing. From the registration process pretty slick to the welcome, the arrangements, the on site "book store," to the program it's all something of a miracle of logistics. And I ought to know, because I broke my foot two days before the start of the Summer School and had to come on crutches and have a handicapped room, and needed more TLC than the average student. I checked for a felt sense and a voice came saying, "What do you think? Spend the week making your family wait on you, prepare your meals, step and fetch, and listen to you kvetch?" Or... Spend a week in a beautiful setting, surrounded by a caring community, complete with fully prepared meals, comfortable seating, plenty of naps, and a way to bring the body's wisdom and healing powers directly to bear on the injured part? Let me think!

I chose the Focusing Institute Summer School. You might too!

## Focusing Institute Summer School

August 21-27, 2008

Garrison Institute  
Garrison, New York

For more information:  
[www.focusing.org/FISS](http://www.focusing.org/FISS)  
1-845-362-5222

Spend a week in a beautiful and peaceful setting overlooking the Hudson River Valley with seven master Focusing teachers. Appropriate for anyone, at all levels of Focusing, from beginners to Focusing teachers, for both personal and professional development. Summer School is an opportunity for going in depth with Focusing and many of its special applications: to health and healing, to thinking, to dreams, to psychotherapy, to spirituality, and much more!

## FEATURED TEACHERS:

Lucy Bowers  
Ann Weiser Cornell  
Akira Ikemi  
Joan Klagsbrun  
Nada Lou  
Kevin McEvenue  
Atsmaout Perlstein