

## **Taking Focusing to the Street: Two Exercises/Practices**

By Jan Bronson

For several years on my 10 block walk from home to office, I have explored a curiosity about how a Focusing Presence on the street can interact with people, the NYC environment and my-self. I designed two exercises that have become regular practices in which I use Focusing to connect with a felt sense Presence; I bring this Presence to the street. One exercise I call Presence with "Other", the other I call Sensory Focusing. The first engages me non-verbally with strangers who are walking toward me on the street. The second enables me to clear a space using my five senses to interact with the street environment and my kinesthetic movement as I begin the walk to my office. Both exercises take place while I am walking, not stopping, no verbal interacting except in specific polite responses to "other", i.e., "Thank You".

### **Presence with "other"**

I always have felt safe with people in NYC. Perhaps this is due in part to having grown up in a small rural town, Sweet Valley, PA, where people considered each other to be reliable and important parts of community. Also, I continue to carry the hope that humanity can evolve beyond its practice of violence. Focusing in my view has a great contribution to make toward that trend and reality. So several years ago I brought this curiosity to the street to experience a particular form of interaction with strangers. Obviously I was and am attentive to the persons with whom I choose to engage. I never have felt or been threatened. Perhaps that is because of my age being older, or that my intention as presented is clear and safe, not intrusive, meant for a moment in passing only.

As I walk, I Focus inward to connect with a Felt Presence that to me is a particular Self experience of the person I like to be. The Self Presence I tune into is Being safe, gentle and respecting. I tend to be aware of having a slight smile and my face is relaxed. As a person walks toward me, I engage their eyes for a moment, only a moment. And I engage them from this inner felt Presence. There may be a stern face approaching, a slightly angry face, a pleasant face or a neutral face. This momentary connection is between us, and is a random and spontaneous interaction as we pass each other. At least 80%, maybe 90% of the time the momentary interaction brings in the facial expression of "other" a shift, often a smile, a relaxing of an angry face – even, occasionally someone says in passing, "Have a good day." Or "How ya' doing". And we pass without a pause.

In this Focusing practice, I find with kind Presence one can generate in others a moment of reciprocal kind connecting that often seems to shift the emotional environment for a moment. These momentary interactions give me confidence that we humans, as all beings, have goodness of intention even though sometimes it is hard to find.

### **Sensory Focusing**

Sensory Focusing is an exercise in which I engage my senses as I walk to the office. I begin with eyes –what catches my sight, I notice and take it in, no judging, just connect with the visual felt sense of the object. Then I focus on hearing with the same focusing process. I continue on to notice smell, then taste, then skin – what of my skin catches my attention "right now". Then I bring awareness to my whole body felt sense moving in the environment on the street, my walking, my pace, the feel of

the concrete, the feel of the air. The finale of this exercise is one full cleansing breath. This exercise almost always clears a calm space for me, no matter the stresses present earlier.

Jan Bronson has lived in N.Y.C. since attending Teachers College, Columbia University in 1962. After graduating with an M.A. in Counseling, she directed an Intercultural Studies Program and was International Student Counselor at Columbia University until 1974. She became a certified psychotherapist in 1976 after graduating from the Alfred Adler Institute in N.Y.C., and has had a fulltime psychotherapy practice in N.Y.C. for 37 years. She was certified as a Focusing Trainer in 1996, and was a member of Group 1 whose teacher was Mary Hendricks. Since then she has developed a method in psychotherapy which integrates Focusing and a Consensus Building process.