

Summary Minutes from The Focusing Institute Board Meeting 27 January, 2011

The Focusing Institute Board met via a telephone conference call on 27 January 2011 from 9:00 to 11:00 AM Eastern Standard Time (USA). Those present were: Reva Bernstein, Melinda Darer, Elena Frezza, Mary Hendricks, Akira Ikemi, Joan Klagsbrun, Harbert Rice, Astrid Schillings, and Rosa Zubizarreta. This was the first meeting of the Board in 2011. After a round of checking-in, we worked through the following agenda items.

1. Honorary Membership for Shoji Murayama. The Board wholeheartedly approved and is delighted that Dr. Murayama will accept an honorary membership from TFI. We deeply appreciate his contributions to Focusing in Japan, accept his retirement as an active Coordinator, and extend a warm welcome to him as an Honorary Member.

2. Functional Sub-committee on Membership. The Board approved formation of a committee that includes Akira Ikemi, Astrid Schillings, and Melinda Darer to look at possible new membership structures that would include various kinds of membership. Reva Bernstein, Elena Frezza, and Joan Klagsbrun also are interested in this work. An initial partial list of issues include:

- Creating a system that is not only geared to training.
- Having some way that Coordinators can remain part of TFI even when retired, noting that some would like to be listed as Coordinator Emeritus.
- Including a Practitioner level of membership

3. Transparency in TFI's Finances. The Board agreed to post financial reports that include pie chart depictions of income and expenses for ease in understanding our finances. We want to emphasize that membership fees are a small portion of TFI's income. Also, since salaries represent a large portion of TFI expenses, we want to put a "human face" on this expense by listing the persons on salary at TFI.

4. Increasing the Board's Overall Transparency. The Board agreed with Reva's proposal to send an email out to all the membership whenever minutes are posted with a link to the minutes. This proposal came in response to request from some members saying that the minutes are too hard to find on the webpage as it is currently configured.

5. Strategic Planning. The Board agreed with Harbert Rice's proposal for moving forward to draft a strategic plan for TFI with Barbara Dickinson, a business consultant, coordinating the planning process. We also clarified that both TFI's vision and diversity statements will be integral to this process. We expressed our deep gratitude to Barbara Dickinson for her offer to facilitate and support this work. Melinda will coordinate schedules with Board members for interviews with Barbara.

6. Coordinator Issues. The Board unanimously reaffirmed the relevance of our Diversity Principle, not just to how we teach Focusing, but also to various forms that Coordinator training may take. There is no "one standard" for training to be a Coordinator; rather we have multiple standards, as each Coordinator creates her or his own in conversation with TFI. We also reaffirmed the principle of not limiting how many Coordinators there can be in any one country. We acknowledge that these policies can result in some practical challenges, and

invite the Coordinators to explore ways of creatively addressing these challenges while maintaining diversity.

We also discussed the possibility of including in guidelines some explicit sentences along the lines of, “If you are in the process of training to be a Coordinator, and are feeling the need to change your mentoring Coordinator in mid-stream, we expect that you will have a conversation with your original mentoring Coordinator about this. To maintain harmonious relationships within the larger Focusing community, we invite you to utilize the resources of our Conflict Resolution pool to address any difficulties resulting from this transition, whenever both parties are willing to do so.”

7. Further Discussions. Following our action items (above), some Board members continued a discussion with concerns, perspectives, and suggestions that need to inform our on-going working process.

Among the items discussed was a proposal to change our name from “The Focusing Institute” to “The International Focusing Institute”. This would be a two-step process: a) reaching Board agreement on the intention to do so, and b) the legal process of actually implementing this change. On the plus side of this proposal, it would be a good way to signal and affirm our overall direction and intention.

As we engage in a more formal planning process, we need to review our corporate by-laws. This is part of our overall task of “cleaning house” in order to move ahead with applying for and receiving grant funding.

Allied with this larger shift that is taking place of our doing many things in a more formal way, we have a concern that such a shift no longer affords us a “free place” with little oversight that allowed for greater flexibility in the past. As we get entangled with “proper procedures” we need to be aware that this is really different. We are evolving toward a more structured organization and this might limit our flexibility. The question was offered, “What can organizing mean from a Focusing-Oriented perspective?” It’s clear that we DO need legal procedures in order to operate in the world, yet how can we operate with these legal procedures in a Focusing spirit?

We gave ourselves a reminder that we can use Focusing with any method in a Focusing-Oriented way, so too we can use Focusing with “routine situations.” We can remember to intentionally use the “Revolutionary Pause” to keep having our inner listening, even as we are interacting with any kind of routine situation. This is something we need to add to whatever brochure is created about TFI: that we are doing something different, on a daily basis, in the way that we do things.

The “something different” that we do, that we are attempting to create in our interactions, is both precious and subtle. As we move toward more formal processes, we can get drawn in to a different mindset without even noticing it. And so it is important to keep having these conversations, where we listen deeply to one another, share our concerns freely, and find creative ways forward.

8. Sabbatical for Pat Omidian. Prior to our February Meeting, Pat Omidian requested and the Board approved granting a sabbatical from the Board for Pat until August while she makes her way through an overloaded work schedule.

9. Agenda Items Carried Over to Our February Meeting. Most of the following items were on the agenda for January. Given time constraints, we were not able to attend to them, and are therefore placing them on the draft agenda for our next meeting. There are also new items for February that were proposed during the January meeting.

A. Financial Report. We will begin with a financial report from Melinda Darer. (There is a request that after check-ins, we formally begin each meeting's agenda with this step.)

B. Report-Backs:

--Crossing Support Group.

--Tec-Web Group.

--Compensation Policy Report.

C. Planning for TFI's presence at the International and the Coordinator's Meeting.

D. Next Steps regarding the Partnership Pool.

E. Name Change Proposal. Change TFI's name to "The International Focusing Institute".

F. Updating By-Laws.

10. Next Board Meeting. We agreed to hold our Board Meetings on the fourth Thursday of each month. The next Board meeting will be via phone at 9:00 am Eastern Standard Time (EST) on 24 February 2011.

Respectfully,

Harbert Rice