

## **Summary Minutes from The Focusing Institute Board Meeting Retreat 28-29 May 2011**

The Focusing Institute Board met in a retreat on 28-29 May 2011 at Stony Point, New York, (USA). Those present were: Melinda Darer, Barbara Dickinson, Elena Frezza, Gene Gendlin, Mary Hendricks, Akira Ikemi, Joan Klagsbrun, Pat Omidian, Harbert Rice, Astrid Schillings, and Rosa Zubizarreta.

**1. Agenda for Retreat.** The Board met in its annual retreat at Stony Point, New York. During the first day and the morning of the second day Barbara Dickinson joined the retreat to discuss and answer questions about her report, "Initiating a Strategic Planning Process," which she had prepared at the Board's request. Interwoven with discussions about the report, the Board discussed several transition issues, including: (1) a review of the functional committees (functional wholes) initiated at last year's board retreat; (2) creating a new mentored management position for Kye Nelson and a management support team for Melinda Darer; (3) further transition issues associated with updating the Institute's by-laws; (4) reports from Elena Frezza on organizing Focusing in Argentina and from Akira Ikemi on organizing in Japan; and (5) details on preparing reports for the Coordinator's meeting and the TFI hour at the upcoming International Meeting at Asilomar in California (USA).

**2. A Strategic Planning Process.** The major areas covered in Barbara Dickinson's report are:

- a) Organization and Process
- b) Financial Management and Fundraising
- c) Projects
- d) Communication (including PR, writers, website writers, tech support, and teambuilding)
- e) Planning

The Board discussed that the Focusing community and the world need to know how Focusing work will carry forward, whether the founders are here or not. TFI does not equal Focusing. TFI deserves to be able to operate in an effective manner. When we operate in ways that make it hard to do business, we need to look at that. Money and Focusing need relationship help. We need to PAUSE when it's about funds, so that we can become more effective both with regard to process, and to outcome.

**Next Steps.** The Board agreed that the next step in initiating a planning process is for Barbara to repeat the same listening process (which she used with Board members) with Coordinators and others at the International Meeting in Asilomar. Barbara will be introduced at the Coordinator's meeting and during the TFI hour so that persons present at the Meeting can arrange to speak with Barbara either in small groups, or one-on-one.

**3. Functional Committees (Wholes).** The Board discussed what we have accomplished in the last year and paid attention to the experience with the three new Functional Wholes that the Board created at the last Board retreat. These are the International Functional Whole, the Technical-Website Committee (Whole), and the Coordinator's Care Group. Partly these groups reflected setting out and making explicit the working of Functional Wholes as a

primary means of furthering the work of the Institute. The Board recognized the experience and work of other groups like the Crossing Support Group (for the Summer School), the Partnership Proficiency Group, and the International Support Team for Ways of Fluid Conflict Resolving, as well as other longstanding groups like the Folio Group and the Summer School.

In talking about these types of groups, the Board emphasized the importance of voicing what the Coordinators can do by organizing around a felt need. Our basic ethos as expressed by Gene Gendlin is "not to tie each other up." Besides the felt need around which a group organizes, the Board also emphasized the importance of reporting what is already happening in these groups as experiencing positive steps forward in "felt sense organizing." Astrid Schillings reported on the experiences of the International Functional Whole. She reported that there was a "quality shift" where people stayed in the process with one another, even when things got challenging. She said that what we have been learning is that if we only report outcomes, and not the process we tend to slide back into the old model. We need to document and share our felt-sensing process. We want to protect this felt-sense level, and carry forward as an organization. These groups that are functioning in this way are experiencing themselves as being part of the transition, to new forms of organization. In the International Whole, the members are doing a survey to learn more about the various forms that Focusers have used to organize "not to come up with "one right model", but to learn about different alternatives that work in different contexts.

**4. New Transition Management Initiatives.** The Board approved two initiatives to further carry forward the work of the Institute in this transition period: (a) Providing support for Mary Hendricks in her position as Executive Director; and (b) Creating a Management Support Team to help Melinda in her work as Managing Director.

**a. Support Plan for Mary Hendricks.** The Board approved having Kye Nelson function as part-time volunteer supporting Mary to help Mary keep track of projects and initiatives for the Institute. Mary will mentor Kye in her on-going work so that Kye can fulfill Mary's functions if Mary is unable, or only partially able to do so. Kye will be present at the Coordinator's meeting at the International so that members will have a chance to meet her and talk with her.

**b. Support Plan for Melinda Darer.** The Board approved developing a Management Team to help Melinda Darer in her work. The first two members of the team are Barbara Dickinson (management support and team building), and Margie Herrick (fund raising). The team will search out others in the Focusing community who might help, particularly someone with financial management experience and skills. Again, as in Kye Nelson's case (above) this team is a volunteer effort.

**5. News from Argentina and Japan.** One concern of the Board is to better understand how Focusing is and can be organized and integrated in organizations.

**Argentina.** Elena Frezza reported on how Focusing is organized and spreading in Argentina. In Argentina, there are two tracks for people who want to be certified: people who are certified as Trainers, and people who are certified as Listeners. People are encouraged to teach in the areas where they work. Two certified trainers have developed a curriculum to teach Focusing to classroom teachers. There are about 6,000 teachers in the public schools that have received this training. The government sponsors this Focusing training. Teachers get credit for taking the course. The Government became so interested in the results of this process that they made a book, consisting of the experiences of teachers who are using Focusing in their teaching. This book is free for all teachers. If you read the book, you will KNOW what Focusing is. Another Focusing student is an economist, working with micro-credit. He has been developing a way to teach Focusing to the women and children who are recipients of micro-credit loans. He received a grant from the IBD (International Bank for Development) so that the trainers can be paid to offer this training to the women and children served by the loans. These are both examples where an organizational slot has been developed for Focusing itself, not just for an individual person.

**Japan.** Akira Ikemi spoke about how Focusing is organized in Japan. In Japan, the coordinators are training coordinators ó their function is in the training. In contrast, the Japan Focusing Association (JFA) has nothing to do with training. It is composed of people who are teachers, or therapists, or philosophers, or have some other role. Only about 12% of them are members of TFI. They don't see the need to join TFI, as they are not trainers. When people want to become trainers, that's when they become members of TFI. There are about 110 members of TFI in Japan, who are coordinators, trainers and trainees. Japanese TFI members have set up a Japanese Focusing Professionals Forum, which is a forum for TFI members to get to know one another and exchange information. There is no membership fee structure to this Forum, as this is viewed as part of TFI. The Forum meets once a year, and have a mailing list. Broadly, we have these two associations that are distinct, TFI including the Forum, and JFA. JFA has greater membership than TFI. JFA may seem more attractive because members get 4 printed newsletter issues per year in Japanese, discounts on Focusing workshops run by JFA and TFI members in Japan, and have a convention once a year in Japan. Although it is not advisable for TFI to compete with JFA, we might say that TFI has lost the non-training track market to JFA.

Looking at the implications for the international context of relating members to TFI. Some of us see the "Japanese model" as very successful and may want to spread it. Yet it may not be applicable in other places that have different historical circumstances. In some parts of the world, there are parallel existing models functioning in one region at the same time. There is one form of organizing that has very few links with TFI, while others have much more direct links to TFI. There is not "one" model throughout the whole country as there is in Japan. It has been created this way as a result of various historical reasons. We need different models ó organizing Focusing is not going to be the same everywhere.

**6. Planning for International Meeting.** Mary Hendricks and Astrid Schilling will work on a final draft of Mary's letter to the Coordinators, introducing Kye Nelson and talking about the TFI Board Minutes 28-29/05/11

new management support team for Melinda. Board members will also talk about what we have accomplished this past year with the various Functional Wholes. Both the International Functional Whole and the Technical-Website Committees have prepared reports for the Coordinators. What we intend to do here is to simply acknowledge TFI's role as a "network organization" in nourishing and supporting organizing and organized groups. We want to emphasize the power that Coordinators already have to organize to accomplish work with and through TFI.

Current plans discussed for the TFI hour at the International include: a) a summary of how we have grown, and how we are internationalí stories that illustrate the accomplishments of this year; b) appreciating all of the people who contribute to the work of TFI, including: dues-paying members and donors who make monetary contributions; c) acknowledging and thanking all of our many volunteers, including: teachers who donate their work at workshops, the weeklong, summer school; d) authors who donate their books to the TFI store; e) all the members of the various Functional Wholes; and f) everyone who is helping to spread Focusing throughout the world.

We also want to let people know how we are "carrying forward" by sharing Mary's letter to the Coordinators, and emphasizing that the "process of change is here, now." We are improving our organization without losing what is special about it. We also will begin a first step in a wider planning process by introducing Barbara Dickinson so that she can listen to the visions and concerns of members as we seek to grow TFI.

8. Agenda Items Carried Over to Our June Meeting. Given time constraints, we were not able to attend to the following items:

- A. Fund Raising for TFI.
- B. Transparency regarding the nomination of Board members and creating term limits for Board members.
- C. Updating By-Laws to reflect the current practices of the Board.

**9. Next Board Meeting.** The next Board meeting will be via phone on 30 June 2011 at 9 am New York (USA) EDT.

Respectfully,

Harbert Rice