

Focusing on the experience of well-being in place.

A research protocol for a focusing outdoors exercise.

Preface

The notion that environment has something to do with well-being is by no means my discovery. Previous empirical research has firmly established the positive effect of natural environments on a wide range of experiential and behavioral variables. The current inquiry however, is focused on *the experience* of well-being in environments itself. As such, it deals with the unquantifiable subject of experience, considered to be the "hard problem" of consciousness science (This is because science as a discipline has a clear model of how to go about explaining third person data, yet this model fails when attempting to define subjective experience, which defies objectification). Furthermore, the particular experience we are studying, defies ordinary description, as it appears to be pre-linguistic. Both Focusing and Thinking-At-the-Edge (TAE), are great ways to approach implicit pre-cognitive meanings, and are therefore the main vehicles in the research for both data gathering and for interpreting the findings.

Some Definitions

Because of the multiple meanings words carry, it is important to "spell out what we mean by saying "Nature" or "Urban" environments. We therefore divide all environments into three broad categories, and would like to collect experiences of well-being in any of them:

"Nature", in the sense it is used here, is anywhere outdoors that is not too obviously intentional. It can be a wood, a beach, a park (if not too manicured), or even a country road. So long as the forces of the elements (sun, rain, growth, decay... etc.) are manifest in it. If the presence of maintenance or human intention is too obvious, then it may not feel natural enough to qualify as nature.

"City" is anywhere that is obviously man made and kept, in which people live, work, shop, entertain, etc. It can include the down-town city centers, as well as residential neighborhoods, boulevards, streets and even small parks if they are clearly a part of an urban environment.

"Country" is anywhere in between. It can be a village, a low density residential neighborhood, a farm, a field, a pasture, an orchard, etc. Or anywhere that feels like in-between Nature and City..

The protocol for all three is almost identical and quite simple:

It is best done with a focusing companion, or as part of a focusing class.

In both cases the focusing must be done on site in real time.

(I am working on another, separate protocol for focusing on memories wellness inspiring places, which will be out soon. Another most worthwhile research on indoor places, is awaiting a researcher...).

Research Protocol for "The goodness feeling in place":

Go to an outdoor place to focus in.

Make a note in advance what kind of place you are going to explore (Nature, City, or Country)

In pairs, spend 20 minutes doing the following, then switch roles.:

Focuser:

1. Finds (or looks for) a place that feels good / right.
This usually takes from a few seconds to a few minutes, but is OK if one spends the whole time looking for a place. So long as it is documented.
2. Spends time in that place and focuses on the goodness feeling of the place.
3. During the whole session, describe in words what is being experienced.
4. Records the session.

Companion:

1. Gives support, presence, care and listening.
2. Keeps time.
3. Follows the focuser around, assists in carrying things if necessary (such as a blanket or bag) to allow the focuser maximum freedom of movement.
4. Protects the focuser from disturbances such as encounters with people, branches, cars, poison ivy, etc.
5. Document in writing the whole session, as well as anything which seems important such as body-language, long silences, emotionally or otherwise loaded words, make note if parts of the focusing are done with eyes open or closed, etc. (This is a very good exercise, especially as preparation for TAE). However, if writing does not feel right, one can also just record the session and type it up afterwards.
6. Reflect to the focuser upon request, some "loaded" sentences which seem fit, in their exact phrasing (writing during the session is very helpful for this)
7. If focuser is stuck and requires assistance, the companion may offer a question directing attention to any *SENSE* (*sight, smell, hearing, touch, interior feeling, etc.*) that has not yet been given much attention to.
8. Avoid prompting or giving any other guidance.
9. At the end, ask the focuser: *What would make this an even better place for you?*
10. If permitted by the focuser, take a photo of the focuser in their found place.

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- - - - - - (now the research part:) - - - - -
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11. Type up your notes, or if the session was recorded, make sure it is transliterated (typed), and add your notes (see #5 above).

Instructions for typing:

- Focuser text is written simply.
- Companions text is to be written in round (-) parentheses.
- Companion Notes and observations, in square [-] parentheses.

12. Send transcript and photo to the research group via Email in an open format (i.e. docx, txt, rtf, etc.)

Thats it.

upon completion, type up the focusing session, and include the following information:

General info:

- Date - of the focusing session.
- Time - exact hour of beginning and end

- Place - name, as accurate as can be. If possible, provide Geo-coordinates (from a google-map)
- Weather - give account of weather variables influencing ones comfort.

Focuser info:

- Age
- Gender
- Education
- Profession
- Focusing experience
- Place of residence
- Relationship to place (or level of familiarity. I.e.:)
- Special - any special characteristics influencing experiencing such as: Hearing impaired, blind, in wheelchair, ADSD, etc.
- Other - any information which the focuser feels is important / relevant

Note of consent:

- indicate clearly if you allow us to use your text or photo in future publications (No mention of identifying information will be made).
For photos that show a face, we must have explicit consent for each.

Companion info:

- Name
- Email - (to make contact if need be)

Language:

- If the focusing session was done in a language other than English, a translation to english will be very helpful.

Thank you!

To make contact:

Rameis@technion.ac.il