

## THE WHOLEBODY FOCUSING STORY

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**This article is in two parts.** The first part is the story of my (Kevin's) experience of combining two disciplines: the Alexander technique and Focusing. This integration, that I call Wholebody Focusing, has been unfolding and continually reinventing itself over the last twenty-eight years. In this article I want to demonstrate how the key elements of Focusing have transformed my experience of the Alexander technique and how the Alexander technique principles—how postural use affects body functioning—have enriched my Focusing experience in very specific ways.

### Part I

#### WAKENING THE BODY WISDOM — AT THE EDGE OF AWARENESS

I am here at the very edge of a process that has evolved over many years of working with myself and others, and observing what happens when we connect with ourselves in this bodily way. I invite the body to do a specific activity in its own wisdom separate from my habitual pattern, which is often unconscious and dysfunctional. For example, I notice how my body prepares itself to make a tremendous effort to do something when effort isn't naturally required in this situation. Maybe the body in its wisdom can offer me an experience of a better way. In fact, this is how I introduce the first basic element of Wholebody Focusing.

While feeling grounded and present to myself, standing on my own two feet, I invite my body wisdom to raise my arms upwards from my sides in its own wisdom and deliberately step back from doing anything to make this happen. I also step back with the intention to unconditionally receive whatever comes as a bodily response to this invitation. The purpose of this exercise is to awaken a bodily felt connection between a sense *of me* and something *in me* that can respond to this invitation in a way that feels new, unfamiliar and yet just right. At the same time, the exercise raises the whole issue of control and gives me the opportunity to resist the impulse to *do something* at the very edge between doing and non-doing and to explore the power of *non-doing*. The process often brings up the fear of letting go of control. Maintaining control, the effort to do something just to try to stay alive, is so much a part of my survival instincts.

Many things do come, thoughts and body sensations that may seem to have nothing to do with my original intention, and yet I receive whatever comes just the way it is without judgment. There might be the usual mind chatter, the familiar fear of getting it right or wrong, or the temptation to make it happen, or the fear that nothing is going to happen unless I make it happen. Then gradually, I realize that some things are happening that seem intentional — maybe there is some movement and maybe there is nothing happening (and that is

something, too). If there is movement, I notice where it is. Since I am standing, I am probably swaying a little as the righting reflexes kick in to maintain balance. When I put a gentle awareness on this movement, more movement happens, maybe in other parts of the body too. Maybe the body is just realigning itself and yet what is happening seems to be purposeful. For example, the movement might be an indication towards something that needs to happen first, in order to enable the intention to be manifested. Maybe I need to feel my feet awaken, feel their connection to the ground, the awakening of legs and hips, all this so that my arms can feel the support they need in order to do something. Or maybe the movement is towards something that is *needed* even more than what I *wanted*.

In any case, something is happening. My body is coming alive from the inside because I have sent out this invitation to the body wisdom with an attitude of welcoming what comes into my awareness. In fact, this is what I am really looking for, this bodily awakening from inside; engaging my consciousness is my primary intention. Again, I recognize the purposefulness of these inner-directed movements and intentions that seem to originate from the body itself, and I give my consent to what is happening each step of the way. I also invite a relationship between a sense of me, standing on my own two feet, and what wants to happen in these different parts of me, and when I do, *more comes*.

What I notice is truly amazing. The experience I am having exemplifies the definition of “Wholebody Focusing”. What comes often feels fresh, new, and totally unexpected. My body feels full of life, effortless as though the whole body is totally engaged in this activity with a mind of its own — and it feels so right. I sense a whole new experience in this situation and a new experience of what can happen. I have learned from these experiences that the whole body needs to be dynamically involved to fundamentally change a function in any one part. I have also noticed that improved postural re-alignment changes dynamically how I think and feel about myself, and hence about life around me. In fact, Alex Maunder (a long time Alexander teacher and now a Focuser) suggested that in his experience, physical posture, alignment, and muscle tone can act as a solid support for new emotional and cognitive insights. I imagine this bodily experience I am having is something like what Alexander was so excited about in his own discovery — something he felt was so significant that he wanted the whole world to know. In Alexander’s words, “This work makes you an even better person than you want to be!” (1932).

## **WHAT DO THE WORDS “WHOLEBODY FOCUSING” MEAN TO ME?**

When I say these words to myself, my attention shifts towards a sensory awareness of my whole body, often starting with a sense of my feet on the floor or some other parts of me where my body feels connected and supported by its environment. I give my body the time it needs to open up to itself: where it is, and how it is — how it is supported by the environment as I begin to feel more grounded and present to myself. At the same time, specific parts are coming forward for special attention. There seems to be a natural process between being well-grounded and how parts that need something come forward. I welcome these parts and invite them to be in my consciousness just the way they are with unconditional positive regard.

## **THERE ARE FOUR BASIC ELEMENTS IN A WHOLEBODY FOCUSING EXPERIENCE**

These are actually skills for living a healthy life as much as the skills are for Focusing.

1. The ability to invite the body wisdom to awaken. This awakening is often experienced as spontaneous inner-directed movement of the body as a whole that seems to have a mind and purpose all of its own.
2. The ability to become aware of a whole body sense of your own Ground and Presence — the essence of you, separate from any issues or problems, as a preparation for being with something.
3. The ability to allow a bodily felt sense to emerge out of something that wants your attention in the context of your grounded presence — because now it feels safe enough to do so. The sense of the whole self as a container and the sense of something that wants attention is the place where the traditional Focusing step of ‘asking and receiving’ tends to happen.
4. The ability to hold both the sense of a grounded presence acting as a container and the felt sense of what wants attention with equal positive regard emphasizes the importance of each. It is not one or the other but both together that create the forward movement in our lives.

I want to stress that Wholebody Focusing is Focusing with emphasis on certain aspects of the Focusing experience that are already there in the original six steps. For example, Wholebody Focusing

- emphasizes grounded presence as the place from which we become consciously aware of what needs our attention.
- also makes room for inner-directed movement as a handle (something to hold on to) to move us from what is familiar and comfortable to what is new and hence unfamiliar and often uncomfortable.
- emphasizes the role of physical posture and how it affects the way we think and feel and respond to situations both familiar and unfamiliar.
- emphasizes the importance of grounded presence (that sense of me and more than me) as a safe container for the parts that needs our attention.
- finally, stresses the importance of holding both this quality of grounded presence and what needs attention with equal positive regard.

## **A WHOLEBODY FOCUSING EXPERIENCE**

Where am I right now? I am at the YMCA doing my daily workout. I am sitting on a bike programmed to challenge me with varying degrees of intensities to burn about 500

calories an hour. I am already feeling grounded and present. I am giving my legs and feet the space they need to let go into a physical activity at the speed and effort they enjoy as a workout. I am sitting back, just going along for the ride. Sometimes the challenge increases, and I am tempted to dig in and try harder. This is the signal for me to sit back even more and allow the body to find its own way. When I do, the body as a whole becomes even more involved in the movement, and the challenge becomes almost effortless and quite enjoyable once again. This process is the Alexander technique aspect of Wholebody Focusing in action!

So I decide to go with where I am now. And once I make that choice what comes to mind — and is sensed once again in my body — is an issue I have been working on for some time. It is a childhood story that I still find painful and confusing. The first time I was with the story, I realized how this sense of confusion dramatically affects the way I respond to new situations. For example, if you ask me “How are you?” — just a simple question like this — my body will often freeze, my mind will go blank, and I will not know what to say. I will mumble something, but it won’t be connected at all with what I am feeling. Actually, what I am feeling is panic.

So how does this issue feel in my body right now in the context of me effortlessly riding this bike, and feeling grounded and present in the movement? I realize my eyes are wide, and then when I sense the story again they want to close. Now that the eyes are closed, I start to feel a deep sadness in my chest and some pain in my head and behind my eyes. It feels like I am going back to the original situation, but this time it feels like I am having a bad dream. I acknowledge both the felt sense of having something like a bad dream and the sense that I am also riding the bike and how grounding that feels.

Suddenly, the eyes open again. They don’t feel so alert nor are they seeing clearly. I can feel a kind of headachy pain at the edge of my forehead. I make room for *both* — both the felt sense of the pain in the head and the sense of myself in movement peddling a bike effortlessly with my legs and feet, enjoying the movement. All of a sudden I feel something awaken in my chest around the heart. It feels like a sense of opening and expanding. The whole upper chest moves upward. I am becoming more upright in my posture, and my head is realigning itself slightly. This feels good, which surprises me. It seems connected in some way to this painful feeling in my forehead! Again I hold both, and now I am holding the sense of my grounded presence and the sense of the pain in the forehead together with the opening of my chest and the righting of my posture. The pain in the forehead seems to be easing. I welcome all this.

Now I begin to feel a familiar chronic tension at the back of my neck, a crunching down feeling. I welcome this part to be there just the way it needs to be and invite it to take the room it needs to become even more. My shoulders come alive and begin to move, lifting my arms as they do so. The whole thing feels assertive, my shoulders and upper arms and hands moving with that kind of playful “don’t mess with me” kind of gesture. Once again I am surprised, sensing a connection between the neck pain, the head pain and now this wonderful assertive dance coming from my upper body, all supported by the powerful action in my lower body. I want to mark here the vital role that postural re-alignment and changes in muscle tone have played in the unfolding of this new self-awareness process.

I realize I could continue just being with this process for some time, noticing the connection between different parts of me as they relate to one another. It is like parts of me that are alive and feeling good are supporting parts of me that feel tight, painful, and squished down. All this is unfolding in the context of a grounding presence that is burning calories as we speak! I have the sense that just being with the whole situation is an opportunity for these painful parts to somehow begin to rethink their possibilities. My enjoyment of what I am doing, riding the bike so effortlessly, and my willingness to be with these other parts at the same time in a receptive and caring way seems to stimulate these parts to more fully realize themselves in some kind of healing that doesn't need to explain itself.

This is what Wholebody Focusing is all about. My eyes are open now, and I am seeing clearly with alert eyes, a little differently than before. My eyes seem to feel more supported from the whole of me in their task of noticing what is out there. I also feel good about myself, more assertive. As I go back to the original issue, I realize the whole thing is connected. It is like parts of me are finding their way back to their rightful way of being in me.

## **WHOLEBODY FOCUSING AND FOCUSING**

What does Focusing with the whole body add or change in a Focusing process? What did I do differently from the traditional six steps of Focusing? How has my experience of the Alexander technique helped me in this pursuit?

There are two significant contributions the Alexander technique brings to the Focusing experience. One is the introduction of inner directed movement as a handle that seems to dramatically affect what wants to unfold and how. The second is the role of posture and how changes of posture, body realignment and muscle tone not only affect the way we think and feel about a situation, but also play a very important role in giving grounded support to new emotions and cognitive insights. Further, parts of the Focusing process are developed more explicitly in Wholebody Focusing. For example, the role of grounded presence is expanded. There is a direct relationship between grounded presence as safe container and the issue that wants to be held in my awareness. The more I feel grounded in the body as a whole, supported by the environment, the easier and safer it is for me to be with something that needs attention. Inner directed movement enables a Focuser to feel comfortable staying with a pre-verbal process that feels just right prior to the need for words that bring another level of meaning and understanding.

## **BACK TO THE DIRECT WHOLEBODY FOCUSING EXPERIENCE — THAT PAINFUL SENSE OF CONFUSION. WHAT HAPPENED?**

At the same time as a felt sense emerged regarding the pain of confusion, I sensed a grounding presence acting as a safe container for this chronic experience of freezing with a sense of confusion. Notice what I did.

- Inner directed movement was welcomed, a kind of hand holding to engage my attention as my body moved me towards a whole new experience of myself.

- I wanted to maintain that sense of the whole body alive in movement, and at the same time be with something that needed my attention. There seemed to be a natural flow back and forth between both as needed to maintain a safe distance at the edge.
- If for some reason I found that I couldn't be with something with unconditional positive regard, I knew I could invite 'something in me' to be with this part in a way I know I can't!
- There was always a sense of whole body involvement in whatever unfolded, and it seemed to create a safe space for parts of me to come alive and begin to heal and or connect with other parts of me where words or searching for meaning did not seem to have a place at this stage of the process. For example, there was something very safe and containing as my feet, legs, and buttocks were busily enjoying the movement. This action seemed to free up the upper part of me to notice what else was happening. I could feel strong support and powerful life energy flowing upwards from the lower trunk.
- This feeling of being physically supported seemed to make it easier for me to just be with what was unfolding in these other parts of my body that were both painful and alive at the same time. I noticed that as my body became more aligned, more of the painful connections surfaced which seemed to demand further realignment and support from the muscular structure itself.

### **WHOLEBODY FOCUSING HAS ENHANCED THE QUALITY OF MY EVERYDAY LIVING IN DIFFERENT WAYS:**

- I learned how to transition between doing and non-doing without losing the benefits of both.
- Spiritually, I know from my bodily sensing that I am not only part of a much larger reality that is essentially life affirming, but also I am able to engage with this larger reality to support my personal journey in life.
- I learned to accept what it is that feels uncomfortable or incomplete in me as natural and essential to becoming whole and that it has the energy and the wisdom within it needed to move my life forward.
- I notice that the more I can stand grounded in my own sense of self, the more open and receptive I am to others and able to seeing our differences as potentially of mutual benefit to both of our lives.

## Part II

### INTEGRATING WHOLEBODY FOCUSING IN FOCUSING-ORIENTED THERAPY

Motility is of special significance for the path of self-realization, for it involves the body *in its wholeness*. (Levin, 1985, p. 93)

#### INTRODUCTION

In this part of the article, I (Glenn) will be presenting how I have integrated Wholebody Focusing (WBF) into Focusing-oriented therapy (FOT). Working with the whole body expands Focusing and significantly transforms therapy. I will explore how WBF is already embedded in Gendlin's philosophy and theory of change, especially his concept of *bodily implying*, i.e. how inwardly arising movement is often the body's lead to next steps and direction of solution. In addition, some examples will show how physical movement generates new energy and positive space toward solution, transforming stuck patterns occasioned by chronic or acute trauma.

#### WHOLEBODY PROCESS IN FOCUSING AND FOT

I have discovered that WBF, as Kevin has presented in the previous section (also detailed in a recent manual by Van der Kooy and McEvenue, 2006), provides a pathway for the body to participate directly, creatively, and more fully in Focusing and therapy. Most of the practice of Focusing has been sedentary, sitting with eyes closed, and attending to the body as felt from inside (usually the viscera). We can call Focusing in this way as a process of the *outside moving inward* — bringing attention to the center of the body to allow for inward felt awareness (felt sense) of some issue or situation. This procedure of “chair-bound” Focusing relies primarily on *interoception* (Afford, 2008) i.e. capacity for being sensitive and receptive to stimuli and sensations that originate from inside the body. I would maintain, however, that this interoceptive quality of felt-sensing is only one way that we get meaningful information from the body.

When we include Focusing with our whole body, additional sensory processes are activated, notably *proprioception*, i.e. sense of posture, position, musculature and relation of parts of the body with each other and *kinaesthesia*, i.e. the feel or sense of movement of body position, the body and limbs (Afford, 2008). WBF can thus be described as a process of the *inside moving outward*, i.e. letting our body-sense move, do or show something of its own accord, in whatever ways that it feels or needs. This brings into play proprioceptive and kinesthetic senses, especially expanded felt awareness of areas of physical tension, posture and movement.

I believe that it is the interweaving of both of these aspects of Focusing that are crucial for a more full bodied and deeper change process in FOT. The felt sense is not only or primarily expressed in words or images, but as Gendlin (1981, p. 35) once asserted, “More powerful than letting words come from a felt sense may be letting body movement come”

(Wiltschko, 1996). When we stand (or even sitting with more encouragement), the body sense is allowed to move and express itself in various ways, independent of our conscious control or deliberate effort. What often comes is the body's right next step and life-forward direction toward solution and healing, in the context of Grounded Presence of the whole body as a safe container and strong base to hold and be with what comes.

## **DEVELOPING A WHOLEBODY FOCUSING-ORIENTED THERAPY**

Here I want to share some of my experiences incorporating WBF into the therapy process. I have explicated some of the key aspects of the process with brief examples from sessions.

### **1. Standing**

As I was learning WBF from Kevin, I began to experience very deep and profound changes in my own Focusing process and sensed that this could be of tremendous value to my clients. So I started to suggest that there is this other way of working that involves standing, grounding, and letting the body move, express, feel, etc. The results thus far have been very positive and encouraging as a way of working. It has opened a wider range of possibilities, including a stronger physical connection with the body, activation of spontaneous movement, and greater access to sensory, proprioceptive and kinesthetic information from the body. I have had clients report an immediate difference in their relationship with their body and a new physical quality of experiencing when they stand. There is a flow to the session as the body is free to do whatever it needs. Clients notice more energy, aliveness, along with a deepened connection with their whole body and feelings. One client almost immediately noticed a "distinct difference" when standing, reporting how he experienced more awareness of his physical being and a sense of wholeness he had not recognized before. Another client began to realize how much her body liked to move and how it felt more freeing to stand. Clients often enjoy standing, as it feels enlivening and enables them to follow what their body is doing and showing them.

### **2. Physical Grounding/Embodied Presence**

I spend a lot of time guiding clients into physical awareness, inviting them to feel their feet (legs/ arms/ back, etc.) as ways of feeling more connected to and grounded in their whole body. Holding and maintaining an accepting awareness (Presence) is also crucial in forming a solid, strong frame, and safe container for their body process to unfold. In WBF, *Presence* is embodied as a physically felt experience as well as an awareness that holds and contains what comes from within. There is a back and forth between the containment of one's Grounded Presence and whatever begins to emerge from the body's deeper order and felt sensing.

What clients report (and I have experienced, as well) is that Grounding and Wholebody Presence generate a more expansive space for their body process to open up and



express itself in whatever ways it needs. When clients are experiencing very difficult places (core wounds, traumas, high anxiety, tender/vulnerable parts, etc.), there is careful attention and active encouragement to sense their grounding and present sense of embodied living in this moment.

One client describes his Embodied Presence as being his “tree” and the places that need attention or emerge are living inside his big, strong tree. Another client began to feel very solid in his “trunk”, which he said gave him a firm “platform” he had not experienced before. This has allowed him to feel more willing to invite painful places to open up in our sessions. A woman who has had numerous physical ailments and difficulty walking has been able to stand for longer periods of time. She now reports experiencing a renewed sense of strength in her body and in her sense of self-support, enabling her to be more assertive.

### **3. Unfolding of the whole body-process in therapy sessions**

As clients become more comfortable standing, they begin to trust more in their body’s own process. Sometimes clients have some specific issue, situation or pattern they want to explore or find ways to change. As therapy proceeds, clients often become more open to inviting whatever wants to come in their space, trusting more in their own body’s wisdom to show whatever is important for them to feel, do, or experience. Clients notice movements and swaying, experience physical sensations, expressions and energy in peripheral parts of the body. They may receive information and meaning from listening to what their body is feeling and doing. There is a sense in which parts of the body and places in the self are being allowed to unwind and express themselves in whatever ways *they need*, without conscious control or deliberation. Many channels, including sound, postures, sensory awareness, behavioral qualities, role play, gestures, etc. are opened, providing expanded avenues for change, healing, realizations, release. At times, we touch on embodied patterns (that seem to want to control, fix, engineer, or avoid), which are also accepted for their reasons for being present.

### **4. Role of therapist in Wholebody Focusing-oriented therapy**

In FOT, the therapist-client interaction and relationship is primary. Wholebody FOT retains the same qualities of acceptance, empathic listening, sensitive being-with, and relational connection. I also foster the Inner Relationship (Cornell and McGavin, p. 21) between Wholebody Presence and any place or part that emerges. There are some important differences and additions when working in a standing, body-oriented way. Since I am also standing with clients, my body is in motion and in a more interactive space than sitting. Mostly, I reflect back what I am observing and sensing from the client’s process. In addition, I incorporate listening from my whole body, sharing realizations that emerge into my awareness from my own body movements or some inner somatic resonance. Listening from the whole body requires that I stay in my own Grounded Presence, while maintaining an embodied connection with the client. It also involves an open attitude of “not-knowing” what will come next, trusting in the body process to unfold.

I strive to hold a safe space for whatever is emergent in the client's body process, without stopping to have the client put things into words. This seems to allow an expanded sense of freedom and flow for the inner-directed process to open outward and unfold. This is a very important part of the Focusing process, that we don't just find what is already there, but are interacting with what is implicit in our experiencing so that something is allowed to form. In WBF sessions, this process of forming often happens at a physical, nonverbal level as we permit and directly experience incipient signs of energy-into-movement.

The other important function of the therapist is to notice and mark any sign of a body release — such as change of breathing pattern, different type of motion, shift in posture, facial expression, sense of something easing, releasing, or a new quality of energy. These shifts, however slight, are the signal of a possible change-step in FOT, something which has occurred that is a new possibility, a new way of being-with something that is just right for what the organism needs, right now. So I often say, “Ahh, there was a bigger breath, looks like your chest expanded. Maybe something happened just then.” Clients are invited to spend time nurturing these body shifts, while also being encouraged to give explicit permission to whatever new way their body is showing.

### **INNER-DIRECTED MOVEMENT AS BODILY IMPLYING OF NEXT STEPS**

Gendlin has stated in many places that “Every living body implies the next step of its life-process” (1993, p. 31). The notion of bodily-implicating (knowing; indicating; sensing...) of next steps in a life-forward direction (1996) is crucial in recognizing and facilitating change-steps in therapy. If our body-sense both *is* and *implies-forward* (Gendlin, 2007), inviting the body to do or show something without conscious control or deliberation often brings forward just what is needed for carrying forward our living. Meaning is not something static, but involves the whole body's intending and striving toward carrying forward next steps of living. As Gendlin (1992) states,

With a broad bodily process (including its muscles, nerves, glands, and circulation) the body *implies* its continuation, and thereby also the objects, things, or words, involved in this step. When these objects occur, they *mean* how they carry body-life forward (p. 39).

By starting from the inside moving outward, expressive body movement, such as spontaneously arising gesturing motions can be implicit leads toward solutions and positive change (Fleisch, 2008), instances in which the body “moves of its own accord; it makes its own steps...” (Gendlin, 1978, p. 325), and this is the essence of therapeutic change and growth. “It feels like the body doing what it needs and wants to do” (1978, p. 328). The body changes “*in the direction in which it needs to change*” (1978, p. 335). “The body will *move itself, and shift itself* into how it is as problem solved, if we let it.” (1978, p. 339, italics added)

Starting several years ago, I began to observe how gestures (what I called *gestural leads*) can function as one form of bodily implicating of next steps (Fleisch, 2000, 2008). This

phenomenon of spontaneous movement portending the body's next step or direction of solution occurs so frequently that it is a regular component of my work in FOT. When observed, these movements are harbingers of the body's next steps, life energy coming alive, starting to move the body in a life forward direction.

WBF invites and allows the body expanded avenues for moving toward its own healing. As I will demonstrate, these body movements are instances where "*the body first solves the problem so that the body is as the solution requires*" (Gendlin, 1978, p. 339). Note how the body, when allowed to move of its inner wisdom, aligns the organism into a space where the problem has already changed and a solution path is opened. Bringing Focusing attention to the moving process allows for a more explicit felt awareness and active permission for the implicit change to keep happening.

### 1) Postural shifts

In this section I will present two examples of how changes in posture are one way the body implies a new way of being or changed sense of self in the context of trauma.

**Example #1:** A male client in his 50's (whom I have worked with for several years) came to therapy following severe panic attacks. What later emerged is that he experienced prolonged emotional abuse and humiliation for years as a child, partly in relation to being very overweight. I introduced standing work and surprisingly he liked what he called "physical Focusing". In one session while standing, we observed how his posture tended to slump over, with his neck and head bent downward. He paused and attended to the posture, and while so doing, **his head began to move slowly upward, from this downward position to straightening itself out.** The movement of his head and posture continued silently for a few minutes, during which time he was aware that it seemed to be happening on its own. He was encouraged to (and did) pause at the end of each movement to sense into the change in his whole body posture. What came to him was that the downward look was the embodied posture from childhood — holding a lifetime of shame and a familiar sense of feeling small, inferior, inadequate. When his head moved upward, his posture straightened and his eyes were looking forward. This new posture felt like a fresh emerging sense of feeling equal — as good as anyone. When he allowed this awareness to ground in his whole body, he reported a sense of feeling more empowered, as if coming out of hiding into the world as an adult. What a major change from such a slight shift in posture! This new way of *being* that the posture is showing him (although still uncomfortable) has opened up a whole new way of sensing himself.

**Example #2:** A female client has a history of traumatic physical abuse and neglect along with chronic physical problems that have impaired her ability to walk and function. In a recent session, she was sensing how her body often feels trapped (with recurrent memories of being locked in a closet as a child), and how she is aware that she avoids enclosed spaces. While describing these recollections, her upper body had begun to lean backward, as if being pushed back or feeling cornered. She became aware that this is a familiar position where her body starts leaning against a surface for support as it feels more pressed, trapped and cornered with a helpless, panicky sense of doom. Suddenly, **her arms moved into a**

**“fighter’s stance” and aggressively pushed out, and her whole posture shifted to a more upright position, with her upper body leaning forward.** When invited to Focus on this shift of posture, her whole demeanor transformed. She felt a renewed energy, her face brightened. She said, “This is showing me I still can stand up tall, that my fighting spirit is here and won’t let anyone dominate me again!... I can stand up for myself.” She also noticed that her neck area loosened, her shoulders felt freer to move and her chest expanded, giving her more room to breathe. The next day she called to say that her body carried an “undefined positive energy” that “kept me a little steadier” for a good part of the day.

## 2) Physical movement

These instances show how movement in any part of the body, however slight, may be the body’s implying of positive development, new energy and next steps in (literally) moving in a life-forward direction, especially where the life-forward process had been stopped.

**Example #3:** A young man came to therapy in a state of severe depression and confusion with a great deal of self-doubt and negative self-image. He had failed college and felt unable to get his life back on track, feeling very traumatized by believing he had ruined his whole life. He reported having withdrawn into a shell, hiding out from the world. This client liked the standing work, finding that it enabled him to connect more easily with his body and feelings. Over time, while standing, he began to feel more “attached” to his body and himself. This stronger sense of embodied connection has been a powerful foundation for what else has emerged. While standing, with his arms at his side, I observed that **the fingers on both his hands were wiggling quite rapidly.** I invited him to notice what his fingers were doing, suggesting that they might be expressing something important. He was silent for a few minutes (while the fingers continued to wiggle) then said, “It feels like they are antsy, sort of like a restless energy in me that is ready to get going.” I reflected his words back and encouraged him to stay attentive to the hands and fingers and what they were expressing. “Yeah [sigh], feels really good, like I haven’t felt this ‘get-going’ energy in a long time. I used to feel this all the time, and it seems to have gone away. It is great that it is here...” and as he stayed connected with his body sense, we noticed how this energy was permeating through his whole body.

**Example #4:** A woman had a traumatic history of being exposed to physical violence and threats by her brother. As a result, her body learned to withdraw into states of sleep, low energy and hibernation (like crawling into a shell), whenever faced with any anger, aggression or interpersonal conflict. She was going to stop therapy because all of our years of therapy made no lasting change in this physical reaction pattern. I suggested that we try standing, which she liked, and immediately noticed a difference. She stated that she enjoyed moving and walking, often feeling more alive and active. In one session, **her shoulders started to wriggle very strongly along with pronounced writhing motions in her upper back.** When invited to give consent to continue, the wriggling movements soon expanded into her whole body. As the session unfolded, what came was a sense that the wriggling movements felt like her body was coming out of a tight fitting diver’s wet suit so tightly wrapped around her that it had been constricting her movements and depleting her energy. (At another session, it felt like she was a snake that was shedding old skin.) In subsequent

sessions, the wriggling movement of her shoulders and upper back has continued to occur, along with a growing sense of grounding in her body, resulting in a powerful sense of loosening and feeling more empowered. In a recent session she noticed how her upper body felt flexible and loose while her lower body felt solid — a sense of ‘flexible strength,’ not rubbery or weak, but strong and loose. This direct experience of a whole new way of being has helped decrease the sleep/withdrawal pattern, allowing a more vulnerable, traumatized place to emerge, as evidenced by the experiencing in a recent session of physical sensations of being held down, hair pulled, and throat constricted, as if being choked.

## CONCLUSION:

### **Moving outward — how the whole body process activates changes in FOT**

Gendlin (1996) has stated that “The body also provides an avenue of therapy” (p. 181). “Bringing *the body* into the therapy process can be quite vital... Much more therapeutic change can happen if the body participates.” (p. 279). Certainly this is true, yet the main practice of Focusing and therapy seems to leave the body out of the process, or limits the body to our inward feelings and sensations (Wiltschko, 1996, p. 65). This is due I believe to the fact that most of the practice of FOT has been sedentary, with the body in a passive, quiet, meditative state. Incorporating the whole body in Focusing and into therapy activates a different type of process, which Kevin so aptly described as “the body awakening from inside, moving with a sensibility and intentionality of its own.” WBF as a process of *moving outward* allows for the felt sense to not only be experienced but also at the same time to activate the felt sense as a physical impulse or urge that can be expressed via motility. FOT needs to involve the interweaving of both the quiet moving inward with the active moving outward for a more full bodied and deeper Focusing-oriented change process. When the body is dynamically alive and energized, then the organism’s inherent sense of solutions is activated, providing *implicit bodily leads* that can move us forward, at times without cognitive understanding (i.e. not knowing) and without effort (i.e. not doing).

Gendlin (1996) has made this observation when he stated, “Every focusing step is of course a bodily change, but we often notice that enough of the whole body has as yet participated in the change” (p.185). He goes on to observe that “It is not inevitable that a new physical energy will come from simply Focusing. Having a felt sense is a quiet process” (p. 185). So when there is a change step from Focusing, when a new way of being has emerged, “we often see that the client’s body has remained in that quiet, receptive mode that is typical when a person attends to a felt sense. In that posture the body cannot yet be filled with the new way of being...” (p. 185).

Gendlin (1991) has stated that,

“If therapy deals only with inward data, whether emotion or felt sense, it misses a crucial dimension of the process of change. Therapy must involve more than Focusing on inner data in reflective inner space. There also needs to be a movement outward, into inter-action. Focusing as such does not sufficiently provide the moving out (Gendlin, p. 266).

In inner and outward modes, the content can seem to be the same, but the whole manner of being alive is different. To change in a major way, both are necessary. To add this to focusing, I advise, not specifically catharsis, but any of the modes of therapy that move outward. Moving out, rolling out, is an essential dimension of therapeutic change that is not provided by inward process dealing only with inner data” (Gendlin, 1991, p. 266-7).

When Gendlin states that Focusing as such does not provide sufficient moving outward, he is referring I believe to ‘chair-bound’ Focusing. However, starting from a standing position does tend to evoke this more active moving outward, as a natural expression of the person’s embodied feeling process. By bringing posture and physical movement more directly into Focusing, proprioceptive awareness of posture and body alignment and kinesthetic sense of movement are activated, both of which have important life meanings implicit in them. Additionally, as I hope the examples I presented show, the whole body needs to be involved in the transforming and healing of trauma, especially when clients have been stuck in structure-bound embodied patterns of responding such as the freeze reaction. We could observe instances in which the body of its own accord actually began to energize and move, activating the body’s living process in places where it had been immobile, frozen and blocked.

Gendlin points to a more whole body process in the formation of the direct referent points in the Process Model (stage VIII), something that Kevin has developed more intuitively in WBF. Gendlin describes this stage of Focusing as an interaction between a new sense of Self in a new environment (bodily sentience of the whole), and letting this new feel come forward and move of its own accord. From connecting with the body’s “*whole body’s implicit richness* of situations and interactions, all changed at once in this particular focal implying now... the right postures and movements will come” (Gendlin, 1997, p. 221). Gendlin describes this step as that of *letting come*. “In letting it come, I allow my body-feel to stir, to move, to do whatever it does *independently of my deliberate control...*” (1997, p. 230, italics added).

Thus, this new (whole body) sequence activates and incorporates the body’s implicit richness and inward sense of rightness. When Gendlin (1996) states that the “organism can fill *itself* in...” that “*it* knows how to heal” (p. 282) he is offering a very profound model of how healing happens in Focusing and therapy. What he is inferring is the notion that our living organism is born with an inherent blueprint, an inner sense and knowing of how it should be, and how the environment should interact with it. From this perspective we can understand what Gendlin means by bodily implying of right next steps. Our body knows what should have happened and what needs to happen and will imply its next bit of life process to move forward in this pre-figured right direction. When we allow the body room to do so, it will often generate something that is needed to carry forward our living process in many creative, intricate, novel ways.

Kevin developed WBF as a way to allow for movement and posture to be integral aspects of the Focusing experience. I have attempted to show how Wholebody Focusing can be integrated into FOT, especially where clients are responsive to this way of being in ses-

sions. In addition, a more full body experience can be essential in helping to transform stuck patterns and structure bound states by first, allowing clients to experience a more embodied, grounded Presence in the Now, so that they sense their own wholeness and body as a safe, secure, and strong container. Clients gain an awareness of how parts of them actually function, how tensions are held and places feel stuck. Within this context of accepting awareness, something begins to stir and moves the body from within, as if something long stuck and frozen now feels safe to awaken and come outward. It is the integration or holding of both the whole sense of Grounded Self simultaneously with any places or parts that emerge that is the key to the healing of trauma and carrying forward of bodily living in new, fuller, and freer pathways. The challenge for both therapist and client is to stay in Presence and follow the body's lead, trusting that the organism will show and do what is implied as next, moving in the right direction. The body moves toward its own healing.

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