

IT NEEDS TO MAKE SENSE

Bebe Simon

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ROB: The first Focusing person I ever spoke to was Mary McGuire. This was in January 1988. When Mary encouraged me to come to Chicago for some Focusing courses, she asked Bebe Simon if I might stay with her. In this way, I came to have a home in Chicago, where I have always been made welcome; and there I learned Focusing at all times of the day and night.

So when Bala Jaison asked me to interview Bebe for The Folio about aging, I was delighted to invite her to share her stories, her experience and her wisdom. I listened to Bebe's thoughts and memories for an hour or two during the recent Focusing Conference in Pforzheim. But we never spoke about aging. Does this mean that Bebe's reflections are irrelevant to this Folio?

Of course not. As Bebe looks back over thirty years of Focusing and eighty-five years of living, I invite you to think of her words as a vast Receiving step — the sixth step in Gene Gendlin's Focusing model. Receiving has a peculiar poignancy in late life. But Bebe is not only receiving. There is also forward movement here — carrying forward — something youthful, very much alive and growing, something decidedly forward looking.

What was going forward as we talked was tender and self-directing. I was not about to shape it. Bebe had her own path. Mostly I listened very simply, in the way I like to listen, though with the special tenderness of long friendship. As you read, you will maybe get a sense of deepening process, of emotional levels emerging and shifting as our talk goes on. You will witness a person aging with Focusing, a life more and more fully human, and rich in memory.

In these stories, I hope you will feel the depth of years and experience in a dear friend and colleague; who never, she tells me, thinks about aging, never about getting old, never dwells upon her years of life. And I think Bebe will always be young. When I was watching her dancing with Christian, at the conference in Pforzheim, I was not thinking about aging. He was the most gallant, most graceful man on the floor; and she the most youthful, most radiant woman. So I was thinking of the sixteen year old Natasha at her first ball, in Tolstoy's famous novel. Is this what Bebe is telling us about aging, after thirty Focusing years: that with Focusing, you will always be young?

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*Note: Since my words are in italics, I have used underlining for emphasis.*

*ROB: I thought you might like to begin by telling me the bit of the story I don't know at all. How did you first come to be sitting down with somebody learning to do Focusing? And who was it? And all those things.*

BEBE: After many years of therapy, of more than one kind, I was informed by a member of my family that there was a new kind of therapy in the paper that day. When I went home I saw in the *Chicago Tribune* an interview with Gene Gendlin. The article said that there would be two upcoming Saturday afternoon introductory sessions at the university — and Gene would be there. I was about to go away for a vacation, and I thought, “Oh! This is Tuesday, for this Saturday. It's probably all filled up, but I will call, anyway.”

So I call up and they say, “Oh no, that's fine. Come.” And it was only fifteen dollars for the afternoon, so you know how long ago that was! It was something like '79, because the paperback edition of the book, *Focusing*, had just come out. The workshop organizers wanted to get us all to go to bookstores, to get them to stock the paperback.

I had a strong feeling of wanting to go and learn what this was. So I went there on that Saturday, and it was, I think, Ann Weiser Cornell who was doing an introduction for Gene — and then he spoke.

I very often ask questions, and I like to sit up front. And when I asked a question he said to me, “Did I answer your question?” My face hadn't changed. That's how he knew he hadn't answered my question; but I didn't know that. “Wow. He's up there, and he was able to ask that — very interesting!” And so I said, “Well, sort of . . .” and he said, “Ask it again” . . . (Bebe laughs.)

*ROB: So Gene Gendlin said, “Ask it again.”*

BEBE: Yes. So I asked it again, and then he answered. And I was very impressed with that, particularly, that he would have such an open attitude.

They were then talking about a program that they were going to be offering shortly, but since I would be away, I would not be able to be there for that. So I let them know that I would be interested in the future, and by the time I came back in the Spring, they were planning three Saturdays, each one by a different person, and in a different place. One was at Reva Bernstein's house, and that was the only one that Gene Gendlin would attend, and I wanted to be where he was, so I signed up for that one.

There was a woman at that time who knew she was moving out of the state to the west coast. She had taken the program while I was away. Now she wanted to take in as much as she could to get as much as she could; and I wanted to practice. We both worked down town. We were able to arrange to be at a university, maybe Roosevelt, in the cafeteria, where we could have a meeting at five o'clock, and do some of this work. She thought she would be guiding me. She did not expect me to be able to guide her, but I was already able to do that. So we had several exchanges, once or twice a week — and that, so to speak, was my introduction to Focusing.

Then I heard there was a Changes Group, involving Gene. I was interested enough to go, though it wasn't the most convenient location for me. The lady who was hosting was a nurse, and every week we went to her house. But the way Focusing was done in that Changes group was so different from what I was familiar with. First, what they did was guide the whole group, to get them ready for Focusing. And if you got a sense of what you wanted to Focus on, you then picked someone who was just sitting there, to listen to you out of the group.

“Would you listen to me?” — “Yes” — “OK, then I will work with you.”

This was my first experience with Changes. It seems to me that we always stayed in the big group. And as I continued to go there, I may have known then, I'm not sure, that someday I wanted something like that in my area — that I would want to have such a group — but not necessarily the way they did it.

Meanwhile, the weekend workshops had started. And it was quite expensive. It was \$250. And since Focusing was not part of my work life, there was no one else to pay for it. So it was a big decision as to whether or not to spend that much money. But the lady who was hosting the Changes group also wanted to go, and eventually we both went to that weekend.

The weekend was very different from those previous three days we had already done. And they were supposed to give you each one or two new Focusing students to work with, for a research project. You would guide somebody in Focusing, and the researchers would then have some record of this work. And I remember, when Gene was there, I said to him, “How do I know if I'm doing well enough to get a student? You know, am I succeeding in this course?” And being Gene, he was very casual about it. Oh, he's sure it would be fine, yes. (We both laugh.) There was no sense that he was really judging it. He didn't seem to have any questions about it. Why, I don't know. So I did get one person, and showed that person Focusing, to some extent. I don't really remember how well it went, but I did enjoy it.

And then I heard that Gene was going to present to the Illinois Psychological Association. There would be maybe two or three hundred people in a large room, and he asked all the people that were then interested in his work to come and help him. Reva and Ann may have been there. I don't remember everybody, but it was just an informal invitation, you know, “Will you come and help Gene?” — “Sure” — and of course Gene takes a room full of people, lots of chairs, and tells them to move into little groups, breaking up the whole room. He had us going around from group to group. They were supposed to be listening to each other, and we were supposed to be there to help them, if they needed it. So I went around, and if someone needed help, I stopped and saw what the problem was, and how I might help.

Not too long after that I was asked if I would come and help at the regular weekend workshops. Yes, I would — I was delighted that they asked me. Most of the young people there at the time were either psychology students, or had already studied with Gene at the University of Chicago. I felt that Reva and I were probably the only ones who weren't in that advanced category — it seemed to me advanced, you know.

But they did ask me to come. I remember going, and there were some young women from out of town. So since I was available, I asked them: Where they would they like to go for lunch and dinner, during the workshop? So we'd go out, just spending some time together, because I knew the places, and whatever they liked or wanted — I knew where to suggest. So we had a very nice, cosy relationship over the weekend. And at one point this young woman said to me, "Bebe, how long have you been doing this?" and I said, "It's my first time." She looked at me (Bebe is laughing) as if I were crazy. She was quite startled. I think she thought I was more experienced than I was. I said that I loved Focusing. I had such a good time. As it ended, Gene passed by, and I said, "Gene, I want you to know, I gave a lot, but I got much more than I gave." And he said, "That's as it should be."

For me it was an opening that was beyond anything I had ever experienced. It was very exciting that I could work so easily with people like that.

Well, after that I knew that what we were doing at that Changes group was not satisfactory. Unfortunately, you didn't have to have much experience with Focusing to come to the Changes group, and some people were not even interested in what I had just learned at my weekend workshops, such as guiding techniques. I went, and a friend of mine was going with me, and without knowing how to ask, exactly, I just started to guide her — and it worked. But the people there were not interested in what I had just learned. They didn't want to know. They were not impressed with the new developments in Focusing. Well, then I knew that I would not be able to stay in this Changes group very long. It was not what I wanted. I found what I wanted to do — it was exciting — and I wanted more of it.

So, sometime after that, Ruth Arkiss, who was at that time heading up the Focusing office, informed me that there was going to be a workshop in Boston about building community, and that I might be interested because I wanted to have the Changes Group at my home. The workshop was run by Kathy McGuire and her (then) husband, Zack Boukydis. They had rented this whole house for the workshop. We had the kitchen, we made the food; everything took place in this one house — we had the use of it for five or six days.

I had a cousin who lived in Boston, and she met me at the airport. I had gotten all dressed up for the airplane flight. My idea was: "I have to look proper when I'm coming into this group." So I showed up in my dress-up clothes and earrings, but everyone else was in jeans! Of course, they had come in cars because they lived close-by in that area, and I was the only one who looked so formal.

The house had dormitories, small rooms, for maybe three or four. You were supposed to pick a place for yourself, put your things down, and make yourself comfortable. Well, there was a room, and nobody seemed to be there, so I choose that place and I put my things down, and I guess it was at night when someone else — turned out it was Gladys — had also come into that room.

So when she saw me she said, "Praise the Lord!" (We both laugh.) And I thought, "What do you say to a person like that? How am I going to even talk to her? How are we going to be in the same room? We don't talk the same language at all. That's going to be

a problem.” But I did my exercise in the morning, and she did her meditation, her prayer, whatever . . . and it turned out we got along great! Really great!

Now Kathy had written a manual about Building Supportive Community — which also talked about Changes groups. And I kept telling the group — and they were getting somewhat irritated — “That’s really not Focusing like that.” I know my impression (to them) was that I knew better than they did about Focusing. And eventually they asked me to present something or talk about it — to tell them what it was that I knew. Gladys too said, “You’re always saying, ‘Well, that’s not what I know’.” So I did show them, and they liked it. And I was so pleased that it went over well.

By the end of the week, they had us go around, as a parting activity, and say something about each person in the group, that you had noticed or appreciated about them. So when it was Gladys’ turn she went around the circle, and she had really observed everyone, and had lovely things to say about each person — she was really amazing. And then I thought to myself, “She’s not got anything left to say to me. She’s said everything there is you could say to the other people in the circle. What will she say to me?” And when she came to me, she said, “Bebe, I love you.” I was so touched. We were already so deeply connected.

When it was over and I went home, there was someone that I knew, Sandy, who wanted to know more about Focusing, and I liked her, and I said if she would agree to come every Tuesday, we would then be a group. In case anybody wanted to come, we would put out the word that we had a group. Otherwise I would just be Focusing with her. I would show her what I could about Focusing, and she agreed to that. So for quite some time she came every week, and we started what we called ‘a group’, and we made it known that people were welcome to come — but in time she moved away.

Then, after Sandy, there was someone else. She was the best person in the whole world; I loved her so much. You know who it was? It was Lakme. Then Lakme Stanford, later Lakme something else. Yes, yes. Now she’s Lakme Elior.

She was working downtown, and she was going west to her family every Tuesday. So it was not inconvenient for her to come, since I was in that direction. I arranged with her that if she would come every week and make that commitment, we would Focus together; and then we could say we have ‘a group’. And she did that for a very long time. Some people did come, and sometimes they’d come one time and didn’t come again; and sometimes they came more. That was the start of the Changes group. That’s how it all began.

And that was very good for me — much better to have it at home. I didn’t have to go to a church, which is where the Hyde Park group met, and where you had to have keys and so on. It was easy, the whole thing was very easy, to have it in my own home. That’s how it began.

I continued to go to the weekend workshops. Ten months of the year. Unless I was out of town, I was there every single time. We did not get paid. I say it was like having free supervision. And although I learned, I found out that Gene was not doing what Peter Campbell and Ed McMahon were doing with the people that were helping them. They would talk to their trainers after the weekend, you know — to find out how was it for them?

Some of our people were working with Ed and Pete, as well as with us. One was Dave Young. And he would tell us things that he learned from them, that really interested me — and this happened often enough, that I got curious to find out more. Ed and Pete used to assign one person to you for the weekend — each little group would be one person's group. And I said, "Look, I don't want to be with one of the people I know. That's no novelty. I want to be with one of the priests." So Dave said OK, he could arrange it. And when I was going to the first weekend, Gene asked me to take them the book, *Let Your Body Interpret Your Dreams*, which had just come out. I took it to them as a gift from Gene, whom they knew.

In one session with Pete, something was said about 'accepting', and I said to him, "I don't use that word. I don't know why, but . . ." . . . he said (she laughs), "I know why. The church is full of, 'You should accept'." And so I really felt very connected to him — and part of it was that he always talked about the "Judaeo-Christian" background, and I always felt it was like . . . he knew I was there, too.

*He included you, with your Jewish inheritance.*

Yes, that was very, very special to me. And at the end, they conducted a mass. I didn't always sit in. But one time Peter was in his robes, and I said, "Can you hug a priest with robes?" "Oh, absolutely!" He was so warm, so welcoming, and I also learned certain little stories from them that I still use, that I like very much.

*Could you tell one?*

Well, the one that I use the most was about the tapestry. If you picture a tapestry on the wall, and you shrink yourself down to a tiny, tiny ant-sized creature, and you just crawl up the wall and hop on, it doesn't matter where, because the threads are all interconnected, all interwoven, so it doesn't matter where you start. Just hop on and follow the thread. And I always thought that was special. So I use that.

I'm also reminded now, that Gene used to allow for time that he could spend with someone after a workshop, if it was needed, because he never wanted anyone to be left going home in a bad place. There was one woman that I worked with, and evidently she had asked him for time afterward, but at the end, when he spoke to her, she said, "Oh I don't need it. I worked with Bebe." Well, I was a little bit taken aback, you know. But Gene said he got to know, from others' feedback, how it was — working with me.

Another time there was a friend of Gene's at a workshop, who came from far away — Alaska. It was a husband and wife and Gene knew the husband. He was a *big* man, a little too heavy maybe — and he tells me, when we sit down, he wants me to know that he has a problem. He tends to fall asleep when he sits down. He said he had narcolepsy. But that didn't mean anything to me, because I didn't know anything about narcolepsy. So I worked with him for a little bit, and I said something about the quality of his felt sense. So he paid attention, inside, then he said, "Relaxing" — "Oh", I said, "Is that the handle?" And he said, "No".

And suddenly I knew. I said, “Oh, that’s the answer before the question.” And he said, “Yes. That’s right!” (In other words, he had skipped the handle, resonating and asking steps, and jumped straight from the felt sense to the felt shift.)

At some point, his wife spoke up about his being a shallow breather. But I didn’t know any of that. I wasn’t picking up on that. I didn’t see it. I don’t know that I would have known if I saw it. So that was interesting — and the next time, he said he wasn’t falling asleep.

*And that’s even more interesting.*

Yeah, but I didn’t talk to him after that. I don’t know if it lasted. At the end of that session, Gene walked in, and the man said, “She’s good!” — and he said, “Yes I know.” — and I say, “How do you know? You never saw me work.” I was quite annoyed that he never seemed to know what I was doing. He said, “I know. I hear.” And they went off to lunch. We’d had a very good experience that stayed with me forever.

There were some other interesting people that I remember. There was a woman who told me that part of her wants to say it can have everything it wants, and part of her wants to give it everything it wants. And I heard something there: that you’re talking down to it, about it, at it, you’re never listening to it. So then I said to her, “What if you didn’t have to give it everything it wants, and what if you also didn’t have to tell it, it can get everything it wants. What if you just said ‘Hello’ to it?” — “Oh!” — So then she did.

I did some reflection after that — just saying back to her what I had taken in, what I had heard. I didn’t do much guiding. It didn’t seem to be needed. It just kept moving along, and by the end she had found her warrior, and was not going to allow anyone to intrude again without her permission. So it was obvious she had known intrusion at some earlier time — and now it could not happen again to her in that way. And so we learned the value of saying “Hello”.

Then there’s another time I recall so fondly: Ann had set up a Treasure Maps just before the Canadian conference, and I was a participant. On the second day Ann said, “Oh, by the way, ‘Hello’ comes from Bebe” — and this woman is incredulous: “‘Hello’ comes from Bebe!!!????” (Bebe is laughing again.) I just sat there grinning, you know, not saying anything, but tickled pink. That was something I will never forget — the way Ann said that. Total shock. But Ann has always been very gracious about acknowledging other people.

And it seems to me I’m talking too much.

*Well, maybe we’ve finished a piece of the story. That’s the story of your beginnings, to the point where you even began to be recognised as a person who can give some knowledge back.*

Then there was a friend in California. I went there every year to spend time with my friends and relatives there, and I would always arrange to see her. We would have a meal and do a little Focusing together. As I remember, she was talking — nothing very personal — but as something came to her she just said it. And I said, “I have found that sometimes that place inside doesn’t like to say it right away. It’s better to wait and see if *it* would say,

‘It’s OK to tell her’ — “Oh!” — She hadn’t thought about that. Later she said to me, “Do you know what *it* said to me?” — with a pouting mouth — “I didn’t want you to tell her.” So that validated what I had suspected. It’s not OK. I tell people, “Don’t say it. First have it for you; and then see if it’s OK to say it.” It’s OK not to say it. You can always say it later. Sometimes, if you say too much too quickly, it’s gone. You think you’ll never forget it, and five minutes later you can’t remember what it was. So it’s better not to say it.

So that was a very big step for me in learning how to have courage in what I believed and what I saw.

For a very long time, at the weekend workshops, I was very hesitant to say anything. As Gene talked, I would think, “How can I add anything? I don’t think I’m in that category. I’m not a student at university. I’m not anything.” I would wait. I was certain that other people would notice some of the same things that were bothering me. Surely, somebody would say something. And they didn’t!

I would wait and wait till I could no longer stand it; and then I would jump in and say something. Gene never seemed to mind. He always felt comfortable, and said, “You have never said anything wrong, and could never say anything wrong.” It was all fine with him.

One time he was doing dream work, and it was the strangest dream, because in the dream, half of the dreamer’s face was hard and rigid, and the other half was totally different. And as Gene worked on the dream he never said anything about that. When he was completing the dream, he asked if there were any questions. “Oh, I have a question” I said, thinking he must have known why he didn’t say anything about the two halves. So I would just mention it: “How come you . . . ?” — “Oh she’s right”, he said, “I didn’t notice.” That was always Gene: it never bothered him.

*He wasn’t just unbothered, but he was so quick to pick up what you were going to say.*

Yes,

*If you were going to pick one thing that had meaning for you inside yourself — what would come?*

There was a very special man named Jay . . .

He first came for a weeklong. I didn’t happen to work with him during the week, but at the end people could sign up for a half hour with any trainer. Mostly they were people that I knew, that I had worked with. And Jay’s name was on the list, but I didn’t know why, because he didn’t know me and I didn’t know him. So he sits down and he says, with a kind of weariness: “I guess if I want help, I’m going to have to tell the story again.” And I say, “No. You don’t need to tell the story. You know the story. I don’t need the story.” “Oh, really . . . !”

So then I ask him, if he remembers, can sense about whatever that is . . . and could he just spend some time there with it. And suddenly he gasps, as I have never before or since heard anyone gasp: “Aaahhhhhh!” he said, “It’s on my side! It’s not the enemy!!” I never

asked him what he was referring to, and I never needed to know. Twice he gasped like that. It took his breath away, literally.

When the weeklong was over, he came to say goodbye. He said, “You don’t know this, but I’m saying goodbye to you in a new voice.” So of course, that made him very special to me. I still didn’t know him that well. Then he came to the four-week program, the first summer school, and I was there — helping out each week. And that’s when we got to know each other better.

Then, one time, when I couldn’t attend a presentation about dreams I told him I was very interested in finding out what happened in the workshop, and would he tell me about it. So we made a date. We’d go out to brunch, and he would tell me all about what happened with the dream work. He did, and we became very good friends.

*And then, you went to stay with him a few times, didn’t you?*

Yes, he invited me to come. He had a lovely place in North Carolina — it was gorgeous there. He wanted me to teach Focusing. He would get all the people for me to teach. Everything was so comfortable and so lovely — I loved that house — and he wouldn’t accept my wanting to just teach for him — no, he insisted on paying me — I would have been happy to do it for him for free — just for the visit and for being there and enjoying so much, but no . . .

He was really somebody very special. Sadly, he died. And when he did, he left me a sizable amount of money that I now use as scholarship money. I figure it’s there to allow people to come for what they can’t afford. It was a special experience that I had with him, that first time; and (tenderly) we became good friends.

Then . . . I remember . . . there was a man who had a dream that was maybe fourteen years old. Gene always says it’s better to work with a fresh dream, but it was this old one that he wanted to work on. He told me that his father wasn’t comfortable with feelings. There was no talk about feelings in his family. His father very much wanted him to go to school or to college, to get this education. Yet in the dream, his father didn’t come to his graduation, and he had intense feelings about that — he couldn’t understand why his father wouldn’t come, when his father so much wanted him to study.

But I knew why his father would not come. How did I know? Because (in effect) he had just told me. I wasn’t using psychological knowledge. I was just noticing what he had said. So I reminded him of what he had told me: “Maybe it was because he was afraid of what his feelings might be when you graduate” — “Ah-ahhh!” he said, “Now it makes sense.” He has put two and two together. His father’s fear of feelings, and his father’s refusal to go where he would be overcome by feelings: of course they fit together. He said, “I never could make sense before. Now it makes sense.” And I always remember that. (Bebe is speaking very softly.) Yeah . . .

This point about making sense is something I learned from Ray Purdy. We were having breakfast in Madison, Wisconsin; and I was telling him that Gene says, “You can’t

take away the parent. You can't say the parent was not good, because it's like taking away the parent, and you can't do that. It's too upsetting for the person."

And Ray said, "No, I don't think that's what it is. I think there is a need from the beginning to make sense. And if someone is supposed to take care of you when you're little, and they don't treat you right, that doesn't make sense; but if you're naughty, and they mistreat you, Oh! Then it can make sense."

So there was this strong need to make sense: and when he said that, I said (with an edge of tears): "Let's get out of here." I paid the bill, I got in the car, and then I sobbed my heart out. For some reason that went so deep.

*(Slowly and softly — we are both deeply moved) You need to make sense. The child must be able to make sense.*

Yes. The alternative is to go crazy. That's why children blame themselves when something isn't right in their upbringing. See. It's the only thing that can make sense. When Daddy leaves the family: "Well, it must be something I did. It's the only way it makes any sense." And I kept hearing people saying, as I did with that dream, "Oh, now it makes sense." It verified what Ray said to me: that people need to make sense.

*And that made a big shift for you — Yes, yes, yes — in your being, in your feelings, in the moment of all that, all those tears in the car.*

Yes — and it taught me something that has always stayed with me: Inwardly, it needs to make sense . . .

So . . . Oh Rob, there are so many stories . . . I can go on and on like this. I would probably be very embarrassed if I had to hear all this played back.

*(Teasing) And I was going to give you the tape . . .*

*(Now we are both laughing) — Don't you d-*

*You can read it in The Folio!*

*So tell me more. . . who else was important? Gene of course was important — and I guess Mary McGuire?*

Oh, yes. Mary was very important. There was a point when Gene no longer wanted to do weekend workshops, so Mary was running them, and I was still assisting. And she would often say, "Oh, I forgot to ask you ahead of time: will you demonstrate with me before the group?" — "Yeah, I don't mind. Sure . . ." I said.

So then, she'd start with: "Where are you? — What do you want to say?"

One time I remember thinking, "Oh, my God! What if I don't have anything to say? What will I do? What if I don't come up with something?" I was feeling very nervous, and I said to her, "I'm feeling uneasy. What if I don't come up with something?"

And she said (gently): “You don’t have to come up with anything. You don’t need to come up with anything to get attention.” Well, that was it. I wanted to just sob then. I knew we were demonstrating. I didn’t feel that was the place for it. But I just wanted to cry my heart out. (Now Bebe is in tears.)

*You don’t have to do anything to get attention — that touches a very deep place.*

Yes, see . . . (very tenderly, murmuring) a very deep place . . .

Then there came the time when Mary said, “Would you want to do the Level One?” — “Sure. That’s fine with me.” And she said, “Well, there are only three people this time.” And I said, “What difference does it make? What do I care how many there are?” — because I just loved working with the people. So I would do the Level One, and then it became the Level Two that I took on. So I used to do Level One and Two for them.

(With great happiness) And it was the best part of my life, that I had all these wonderful people from all over the world . . .

*It was the best part of your life.*

(Bebe’s voice is soft and intimate.) Yes . . . And I made friends . . . without having to travel. And there was . . . . . the opportunity was like a gift, that they gave me . . .

*(Very softly) — It was a gift that they gave you.*

Yes . . .

Mary McGuire told a story. Mary loved her cats, and one cat died, and it was like a child to her. She was beside herself. So she called Gene to tell him what had happened. And he actually re-scheduled his class with his students at the university, to come and be with her . . . (Now Bebe is a little tearful once more.) I never forgot that . . . yeah . . . that’s what he did . . .

*Gene Gendlin rescheduled his class because the cat died.*

Yes, he did — because he knew how much she needed his support. And so he came over there to be with her.

He is such a wonderful person . . . I remember the day when somebody at a workshop asked him, “How do you avoid being a guru?” Because he is not a guru, could never be a guru. And he said, “A little honesty goes a long way.” That’s Gene. He is so honest about himself — he never has to hide.

And then there is a story I love to tell about partnerships. This couple had a practice together in some sort of therapy, and she came alone to the workshop. She just loved it, so then she brought her husband. They said that was the best thing that had ever happened to the two of them — Focusing together.

Gene said, “If you know these people, you know they are special people. However, if you want to try Focusing with your husband, wife, or significant other, OK. But also be

sure to get another Focusing partner. You don't need one more thing your partner can't do for you!"

Previously they had only been to some other training that some man had developed which got to be very well known — with a lot of pressure on people to bring their friends. It got to be called the Forum, but it was called something different then — and it had all kinds of rules: you don't wear a watch; you don't go to the bathroom until they say you can. And so she's sitting here waiting for the rules (laughing), at a Focusing workshop. We don't have rules! — but she was thinking there have to be rules. We're sitting and talking, she and I, and Gene wasn't really close by. We're sitting at a break, and they always had the nuts and raisins, so she was nibbling nuts and raisins and she dropped one on the floor. I said, "That's the rule. We're not allowed to drop them on the floor!" And Gene gets up there, and he says, "EST!" I couldn't believe he heard what we were saying. (Bebe is laughing again.) Oh, he was so sharp, you know.

*You hadn't seen a lot of Gene since he left Chicago. . .*

No, I hadn't, and I missed seeing him. Then, I had an opportunity to go to New York to the theatre. I had never done that. But my son said to me, "Mother, come to New York. It is worth it." And then I realised that the only thing that would make it worth it to me was if I could see Gene.

So I called him up and I said, "I'm coming to New York. Can I see you?" — "Oh, of course!" — "When?" — "Any time!" When I got into the city, I took a taxi to his place — I was so excited — and I sat with him and we just visited. We spent about two hours together. And at one point, I said, "Did you pay attention to that?" — and he said, "You're trying to get me to focus!" We had such a wonderful visit

And then, a few days later there was a message from Gene. Gene never calls. Never. If I call and he's busy, he says, "Call later." He doesn't call back. But this time there was a message from Gene. He said, "When you left, I realised how much you brought loving — so thank you." (Bebe is crying now . . .)

*That touches you very deeply.*

(Tenderly) — You know that's the way he says goodbye . . . he doesn't say goodbye, he says, "So hello!" — and that was the end of the message. And I told him I would cherish it forever.

*(Softly) It meant a great deal to you, and it still does. . . it still does. You brought him so much loving.*

(With much feeling . . .) Yes. Thank you. Coming from him that was unbelievable. He picked up the phone to call me . . .

The other thing that I'm remembering was when I was given a surprise party for my 70th birthday, and Atsmaout's husband took the pictures for my birthday — and there were

pictures of Gene blowing up the balloons — and I think it was Reva who saw the pictures and said, “He never blew any balloons up for me!”

*OK. Maybe that’s a good place to stop.*

Probably.

*Let’s see. Is there any last thing that feels important about Bebe and Gene and Focusing?*

One time I asked him to listen to me because I had a problem with sleeping and I could not get any resolution for it. And he did. He listened to me and I wanted to pay him and he wouldn’t let me. He said, “You have helped so much.” So I said, “Then I cannot ask you again if you will not take money for this session that I had with you.” I remember that. He would not let me pay him . . . Yep . . .

*A wise and a kind and a generous man — and one whom you’re very much involved with in your feelings and your life . . . However, the biggest feeling, when we were talking, was Ray Purdy saying to you, “It needs to make sense.” Maybe one of the two or three great revelatory moments for you . . .*

Yes. It needs to make sense. There is a need, a basic need to make sense . . .

*A basic need . . .*

It went in so deep and so fast. I just sobbed my heart out. (With much feeling) — I don’t know why it hit me that hard, but it did.

*It absolutely touched the child in you, who could not make sense, and who tied herself in knots to make sense —*

(Softly) — Maybe.

— of what was crazy-making

— Maybe.

*Something like that.*

It could be, but I have little memory of my childhood.

*But something knows, or the tears wouldn’t come.*

Yes . . .

And I wish I could tell you something, but I don’t know if it’s necessarily for this . . .

*(Rob is laughing, but Bebe is serious) — So shall I stop the tape?*

Yes.