

ZIGZAGGING OUR WAY TO EXPANDED POSSIBILITIES FOR FOCUSING

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This paper investigates some of the possibilities that can arise from the kindling of the inner knowing of Focusing with the outer fuel of scientific insights. Utilizing discoveries from the fields of physics and epigenetics, we'll explore how these concepts can dynamically expand, and possibly revolutionize, current understandings and practices of Focusing.

STARTING WITH A PARTICULAR DEFINITION OF FOCUSING

A definition of Focusing that makes helpful distinctions, and will set the stage for this paper, was articulated by Bruce Gibbs

He suggests that it is limiting to define Focusing as simply felt-sensing. Quite a few processes contact and work with felt-senses—but not usually in the same way as in Focusing. In order to understand this better, he distinguishes three levels of relating to felt-sensing:

- a) Contacting a felt-sense: Something in the body that has meaning, which is not yet clear in the mind. This level brings felt-sensing into awareness, but does not prescribe what kind of relationship one has **with** the felt sense—one may push, ignore, or manipulate felt experiencing.
- b) Mindful Awareness: Bringing mindful, loving attention (compassion and/or interested curiosity) **to** felt experiencing. Just being with felt experiencing in an open, accepting, connecting manner.¹
- c) Focusing: Focusing can be described as **a zigzagging and a checking**—offering mindful loving attention (“mindful awareness”), **between** felt experiencing **and** the symbolic, the conceptual, continually **checking** with the body for rightness or fit.

Using the **zigzagging** of Focusing as a metaphor, this paper itself will zigzag—in an open and curious way—between one of our favorite tools for First Person science (“the body” as a referent in Focusing), and some areas of Third Person science.

Whole branches of physics deal with sending, receiving, and transmitted energy. How might an understanding of radio antennas, tuning, and signal transduction expand our capacities for increasing **connection** and **apprehension** while Focusing? How might the physics of resonance influence the process of resonating while Focusing?

The study of optics enabled us to see farther and more closely through microscopes and telescopes. Radio telescopes and electron microscopes later expanded our vision beyond the limitations of optical lenses and direct perception. What might the physics of reflecting

and refracting offer to sensing-into? Might there also ways to **indirectly sense-into**, or to **sense beyond**, what is directly bodily-felt?

EPIGENETICS—CELLS, SENSING, AND ENERGY PATTERNS

We can begin with cell biology and the blossoming field of epigenetics: “the study of the molecular mechanisms **by which the environment controls gene activity**.” (Lipton, p. 26) As research has progressed, our understanding of what constitutes “the environment” has expanded. Besides physical influences and local chemical processes, the environment includes more complex processes and distant influences such as neurotransmitters and “**molecules of emotion**” sent from other parts of the body (Pert, 1999). *The Psychobiology of Mind Body Healing* (Rossi, 1993) elaborates biochemical pathways through which **mental** events may influence the expression of certain genes on the cellular level.

The scientific literature offers multiple studies supporting the role of emotions and mental states—including beliefs—in altering biochemical processes. These include studies on the placebo² and nocebo effect (Arguriou, 2007) (Klopfer, 1957) and on Dissociative Identity Disorder (Coons, 1988) (Braun, 1983). Others have studied spontaneous remissions from metastatic cancer (Hirschberg, 1993). The direct experience of many who practice hypnosis supports that some subjects, while in trance, can start and stop their bleeding from an induced needle stick, adopt altered state-bound physiology during age regression, and alter skin temperature upon suggestion.

Lipton takes Rossi’s work even further, offering new insights about the mind-body interface, and suggesting that we widen our understanding of what factors can be epigenetic influences to conceptualize “Environment” as including intracellular, environmental **and energetic** influences (Lipton, 2005, p. 26)

SOME INTERESTING RESEARCH FINDINGS ALONG THESE LINES

Several research studies point to some interaction between biochemistry, energy, intention, and information—even at subcellular levels. (HeartMath, 2011)

The DNA Phantom Effect (Poponin & Gariaev, 2002) found DNA affects the configuration of photons in a container. In other words, the photons in the empty space are organized into some alignment because of the presence of the DNA. What is even more striking is that this alignment of the photons **is maintained by them even after the DNA is removed from the container!** Moreover, findings from “The DNA-wave Biocomputer” (Gariaev, 2001) suggests that electromagnetic signals are of key importance in the regulatory functioning of DNA.

A study entitled the “Modulation of DNA Conformation by Heart-Focused Intention” (McCraty, 2003) is quite provocative. I would like to spend some time on it because it has quite intriguing findings that may increase our understanding of Focusing dynamics.

In these experiments, practitioners of HeartMath who were skilled in attaining “coherence” (HeartMath LLC, 2011) were compared to untrained control subjects as they

attempted to influence DNA. The study found that the length of strands of DNA in a test tube could be significantly altered by the combination of attuning to a certain emotional state and setting a certain intention.

According to this study, **both the feeling-mental state of heart-connection and the intention needed to be present** in order for this effect to occur. Either aspect alone had minimal effect; both together had a quite significant effect. Exploring further, the Heart-Math researchers discovered that **intention could be directed with quite a precise specificity**. Subjects who had attained “coherence” were able to effectively choose to lengthen two specific strands of DNA and not a third one which was also present in the same tube at the same time.

Other studies (Tomasino, 1997) have shown that changes in coronary blood flow were affected by water which had been charged with certain electromagnetic energies. Some of these changes seem to be able to be transmitted in a variety of ways. A lab at Northwestern University Medical School was able to digitize a signal from a solution of energetically affected water. The computer-digitized file was sent to Digital Biology Laboratory in France. The water “listening to this signal” affected coronary blood flow just as the activated water in Chicago had done! A dummy signal had no such effect. (“Transatlantic Transfer of Digitized Antigen Signal by Telephone Link”³)

AN INVITATION TO A THOUGHT EXPERIMENT

I find these studies mentioned above to be quite incredible. Even after having read the original papers, I am not totally convinced of their validity. But do we need to believe these studies in order to explore the ideas that they suggest? No. We can take a different tack—play with the idea that they **might** be true, then go from there. Asking, “*If* this were true, then . . .” is an invitation into a thought experiment.

Using some of these descriptions as metaphors, we can explore what an understanding of physics based on this biology might offer to Focusing. Then we can check to see if we can find any examples that might support or disprove our speculations.

Let’s begin with a passage from “*The Biology of Belief*” discussing the cell membrane, underlining some of the terms that seem to have some parallels in the world of physics:

Receptor Integral Membrane Proteins are the cell’s sense organs, the equivalent of our eyes, ears, nose, taste buds, etc. Receptors function as molecular ‘nano-antennas’ tuned to respond to different environmental signals. Some receptors extend inward from the membrane surface to monitor the internal milieu of the cell. Others extend from the cell’s outer surface, monitoring external signals

. . . receptors have an inactive and an active shape and shift back and forth between those conformations as their electrical charges are altered. When a receptor protein binds with an environmental signal, the resulting alteration in the protein’s electrical charges causes the backbone to change shape, and

the protein adopts an ‘active’ conformation. Cells possess a uniquely ‘tuned’ receptor protein for every environmental signal that needs to read . . .

. . . Receptor ‘antennas’ can also read vibrational energy fields such as light, sound, and radio frequencies. The antennas on these ‘energy’ receptors vibrate like tuning forks. If an energy vibration in the environment resonates with a receptor’s antenna, it will alter the protein’s charge, causing the receptor to change shape [Tsonga 1989] . . . because (some) receptors can read energy fields, the notion that only physical molecules can impact cell physiology is outmoded . . . (Lipton, 2005, p. 83).

FROM EPIGENETICS TO PHYSICS

I would like to work with some implications from Lipton’s ideas:

1.) Cellular metabolic processes can be considered to be electrochemical events—associated with changing electrical charges. Protein synthesis, cell metabolism, gene activation, and reproduction have accompanying electromagnetic fields along with the biochemical reactions. Electromagnetic fields penetrate space, so this includes both **intrinsic and extrinsic** electromagnetic radiation.

2.) Electromagnetic fields are created by the process of cellular metabolism. Therefore DNA, the cell membrane, and perhaps other cellular structures, **transmit** electromagnetic radiation in the process of the activity of the cell.

3.) At the same time, it could be said that certain aspects of living cells act as “**sensors**”. They sense, are affected by, and differentiate between types of electromagnetic energy and information. DNA itself is one form of this ‘sensor’, as are receptors on cell membranes and the proteins that cover the DNA.

So far, all of this is consistent with Lipton’s ideas and with the DNA experiments above, which suggest that certain components of cells can transmit, and receive, electromagnetic radiation.

4.) Interacting patterns of electromagnetic energy are generated during cellular activity. There may be a transmitting, sensing, and interacting occurring at various levels of an organism—from the cellular level on up to profound levels of complexity.

5.) There may be different patterns of this radiation at each level—organelle, cell, organ, body, or collection of bodies.

6.) Each of these might have its own ‘signature’, its own frequency and pattern. Combinations could create overtones, harmonics, and resonance patterns, as in music and with waves.

7.) If something is transmitting electromagnetic energy, then **it may be possible to sense into many of these frequencies** via human and/or mechanical sensors. This might be akin to tuning a crystal radio or a scanner.

As an example, one Focuser had an experience of connecting with a sense of the living form of a cell, leading towards healing nerve damage in one arm.⁴ (Rolsma, p. 158-9)

Many skilled Traditional Chinese Medicine practitioners are able to sense what they call the flow of “qi”, or life energy, along certain pathways or meridians, which correspond to certain physical and emotional aspects. Pulse diagnosis is one method of sensing these energies.

FROM PHYSICS TO FOCUSING

With that background, let us now ask: “What might the physics of sensing or tuning-into offer to the sensing and tuning-into of Focusing?”

One of the concepts that will be helpful is **induction, which is** the process by which electrical or magnetic properties are transferred, without physical contact, from one circuit or body to another.

The inductive tap takes advantage of the fact that an electric current passing through a conductor generates a magnetic field. Changes in the magnetic field, **under the right conditions**, can “**induce**” **current flow in another nearby conductor**.

The induced current in the second conductor will vary as the original current, providing us with a “duplicate” signal. Since the signal is induced magnetically, no direct connection to the original conductor is required. (Untertzuber, 2008)

Changes in energy and information in a human body, or in anything else, have the potential to emit fields. Any electromagnetic field that is generated has the potential to be picked up by a “conductor”. Many things can act as conductors, including mechanical instruments and living creatures. Common examples of our capacity to detect such fields include sensing when someone has entered a room, picking up “vibes” from another person, and experiences of felt resonance to another’s process in our own bodies when listening deeply—even when they are not speaking.

This vast potential of sensing-into is not always realized. Even if our sensing capabilities might allow us to detect faint currents by induction, **this information may be ignored or unregistered by filtering mechanisms in our nervous systems**. It may be considered as ‘background noise’, and not enter into awareness. (We shall return to this topic when we discuss the power of awareness and mental models to direct our sensing into new areas.)

Physics would suggest that the quality of our receiving and sensing is influenced by

- a) The **strength** (intensity/energy) **of the signal** coming from the initial “transmitter” (person, situation, body organ).
- b) The **alignment** of the receiver in relationship to the sender (**tuning and attuning**). If an antenna is perpendicular to the electromagnetic field, the induction cur-

rent is approximately zero. The closer the two are aligned (parallel), the stronger the induction current in the receiver.

- c) **The sensitivity of the receiver** and the suitability of the sensor (antenna) **to the particular frequencies** sought for are key factors, as well. Different antennas and sensors do better on different frequencies.
- d) **Receptive stillness.** Quieting down, lowering internal judgments, mental or intense feeling activity) can decrease the amount of **‘static’ or other current** running through the receiver (listening person’s mind and body) which might otherwise interfere with the signal.
- e) The **capacity of the receiver to ‘decode’, or translate** the energetic transmission from the sender, into something of relevance (how we make sense of it, what our understanding is) is key, for without it, there is no way to understand that which is received. (Wikipedia, 2011)

So far, this scientific discussion has laid out quite a bit of theory, without a direct application to Focusing. We already know that reflecting back and sensing for a ‘right fit’ in Focusing is a way of aligning and checking for attunement. Focusers are already aware of the need to be still /present as a listener, to attempt to attune both to ourselves and each another—this is not new for Focusers. But let us take these ideas further. What about tuning into other frequencies or increasing signal strength? What might that look like and how might that happen?

POINTING OUR SENSING INTO NEW AREAS

“In order to do the impossible, one needs to be able to perceive the invisible.”

(attributed to Frank Gaines)

Directing an antenna often involves pointing it in a certain way (deciding **what to sense into**). In Focusing, felt-sensing is often described as a process in itself. But, **sensing often has a directionality**. *Sensing-into* is sensing *in to*—some particular direction, *in to* some particular something.⁵ This aspect of our felt sensing often goes unrecognized. Whether the *directions* of felt sensing may be habitual or altered by conscious intention, it is possible to *aim* our felt sensing toward something we wish to connect with. Once aimed, we can do things to increase signal strength and *fine-tune*.

I first became aware of this concept of *attuning felt sensitivity* within the context of a workshop on “Focusing and Architecture” offered by Ellen Kirschner. After an introduction, the participants were encouraged to sense in a Focusing way into various architectural qualities, such as space and design, and then to share what was coming to them into the circle. Akin to a phased array of radio telescopes directed towards the same spot, participants offered input and shared it with the group.

Each person took in and resonated with **his or her own** felt-sense of their directed sensing **and with what the others were sharing** from their felt-sensing inquiries—checking inside for how exactly all of this information fit for them. This led to **a deeper understanding and depth** of connection with the subject than any one person could offer alone, and rapid learning and **development of a new sensitivity and capacity to articulate** within certain aspects of what had been a “new field” for some of us.

Later, we realized that this process could act as a model for showing **how to expand what one can sense-into**, and also as a model **for a synergistic group process for learning how to sense into new directions**. As we examine this process more carefully, we may notice some of these elements present:

- Being aware of what one is wanting to learn to consciously sense into (**directing** the antenna)
- A setting where one can get **direct experience and feedback from others’ mastery** of subtleties of the process (having something to align to)
- A co-sensing system where each piece of observation or suggestion or concept is allowed to resonate inside and between members, taken in as a reflection to see what is evoked in response (**reflecting as a form of both amplifying, and as a tuning-into**)

These insights suggest a very valuable, (and very marketable!) use of the Focusing process—in helping people learn more fully and more deeply from those who have acquired particular skills and sensitivities in almost **any** field. Attending to certain key essences within a field or a practice can be seen as another important component available in trainings (along with conceptual teaching and demonstrations).

For example, one painting instructor may be finely attuned to subtleties of contrast, another to shading, and still another to perspective. One therapist may be highly attuned to the sense of internal connection a person has to him/her self, another to the attachment dance between a couple, and another to the object relations. Once these sensitivities have been articulated, it becomes possible to intentionally sense-into a teacher’s perceptual gifts, into a sense of what they are tracking and connecting with in their work. This process can accelerate our own learning and sensitivity of these qualities, especially if done in a supportive cooperative setting.

ATTENTION, PERMISSION, AND MENTAL MODELS

If felt sensing can be pointed like a directional antenna, what are some factors that can shape the direction of our transmitting-into, and receiving-from?

Our filtering mechanisms run akin to software programs on autopilot. If we are not aware of something existing, or if we believe that something is not possible, then energy and information actually coming to us from those areas may not make it to our cortex—or be registered in awareness—unless the signal is strong enough to be registered *above the filters*

we have. This unexpected information may be considered as ‘background noise’ and not be registered consciously.

Awareness of what is possible is useful—but not essential

Unexpected things enter into our awareness (such as a sense of a ‘third presence’ at times while Focusing)—therefore being open to the unexpected does help. As conscious beings, we have the potential to influence some old and habitual processes. We can stop, notice, and become aware that there are other possibilities, and then attempt to connect with them. We can then **select**, or **search for, something else**. Analogous to a radio, we can **choose to change channels to another frequency that we are already familiar with** . . . or . . . we can hit the ‘search’ button, and sense into a more open field of what is out there, scanning until something registers on our sensors, and we begin to tune-into it. While we are on this topic of shifting frequencies, it is important to also be aware of **the key role of the pause** in this process. Pausing allows a stepping back from a presently operating pattern and making space for allowing a different one to occur.

One way to help us search or direct our attention into ways beyond the habitual is through the use of ideas—such as a model or theory. These structures can also offer encouragement and permission. Giving permission or welcome may bypass limiting beliefs that might hold one back from sensing into particular directions, or from registering ‘what came’ when doing so. Permission and acceptance also may encourage sensing into areas that were habitually unrecognized.

I have been very curious about how people have learned to be intuitive. When I ask the intuitives I have met over the past 25 years, many of them have given me the same response: “A workshop, (or a teacher) gave me permission to be intuitive. Then we were encouraged to practice, and got better at it.”

In those cases, the mental model that offered permission was, “You have the capacity to be intuitive—it is possible.” Ensuing experiences in the workshop support the results of operating from that belief. While other factors are also at play—a supportive group, sharing percepts in a co-sensing environment, self-selection bias of attendees—permission is a crucial element.

While we sometimes hold the realms of thinking and feelings as quite different, it is also very true that beliefs, concepts, and ideas—“mental models”—can influence our sensing. As earlier parts of this article have pointed out, we already are aware of how much these factors can affect our biology! If we can stop, re-orient, and shift from one operating model to another, we can alter the tape loop and the program that is running. This insight can apply to the cellular programs—both the programs that affect sensing and those that affect transmitting. This conscious choosing can affect the biochemistry being generated, the ideas and stories that are being generated, and the level of health or illness that is unfolding in that moment by cells responding to the informational patterns they are receiving and creating.

Focusing is often so useful in getting past certain types of stuckness, that it is easy to lose sight of the fact that **sometimes the life-forward step in certain situations is a**

change in the conceptual—a new perspective or understanding. Sometimes a ‘knowing’ is what can carry us forward. Just as we have habitual ways of thinking, we also have habitual ways of feeling, and habitual ways of sensing. Sometimes, when we pause to notice, we can identify the situation or remember a concept (“That sounds like a critical voice”, or “I feel way shut down—I wonder if some shame is here”, etc.) that gives us another way to frame things, another way to relate to our experiencing, so that we can *be with it* and *interact with it* more spaciously and constructively.

Aligning with an idea can help us connect with the life-forward-movement that **we may not be able to feel, but that we can know** must be there. This conceptual change can help us find ways to shift out of being too caught in something, too close to it, and to find things when they are otherwise too distant for our previous sensing to detect and connect with.

THE DIRECTION OF FELT SENSING AS A DIFFERENTIATING FEATURE AMONG FOCUSING STYLES

If we become aware of the possibility of something existing, and are offered cues or guidelines, then we may be able to *make sense out of our sensing*, so to speak. “Look there (at architecture, for example) and see what comes for you” opens a direction, a possibility, that one may not have previously explored—but it may not seem to be a mental model. Better illustrations of how mental models direct felt sensing can come from Focusing itself:

One meaningful way to distinguish differences in the various schools of Focusing is by studying their models and how these models direct the felt-sensing in distinct ways.

One of the several powerful aspects of the framework, or mental model, of Treasure Maps of the Soul (Cornell and McGavin) is the acknowledgment of *felt dissociation*. If a person is aware of really wanting to do something but feels that they cannot, **this model presupposes the existence of a part** (out of awareness) **that does not want to do that very thing**. Asking and then sensing inside if such a part exists often connects one with a very powerful dynamic inside, something new that one might not have been aware of had they been operating in their habitual Focusing manner. (In this case, the habitual pattern is being overly identified with one part of an opposed pair of wantings, and not sensing the other.)

On the other hand, Recovery Focusing is grounded in the 12-Step model. Each step incorporates a felt-sensing process. The felt-sensing in the context of each of these steps is done in three phases, or three ‘directions’. Each of these guides the sensing differently and encourages support and forward movement in dealing with addictions—first resourcing, then connecting with the difficult places, then allowing the body’s knowing what it wants to become to carry a person forward:

The “Honoring” phase is about experiencing a positive “helper” felt sense to begin the process. The “Opening” phase is about exploring the “stuck process/pattern” (in this case certain aspects of addiction); and the Widening phase is about experiencing “what could be” and expanding that felt sense. S.Noel (personal communication, Nov. 20th, 2011).

This lens of “felt sensing guided along certain mental models” could apply to other schools of Focusing, as well (Domain Focusing, Wholebody Focusing, Biospiritual Focusing . . .). Each master teacher has his or her own particular concepts, own worldview about felt sensing, own constructive maps for navigating one’s inner environment. In addition, each brings **their particular worldview about the inner landscape**, and **also their own personal refined attunements**, their cultivated felt-sensitivity in certain areas. And more . . .

Once we are aware of this perspective, we could begin to consciously articulate these aspects for each process, which would create some handles to help work amongst them in new ways. This clarification might also offer a way to enable students to increase “fluency” in several styles of Focusing without the expense and time involved in having to begin at the very beginning. Once a practitioner of Focusing knows the basic “operating system” (zigzagging between felt-sensing and the conceptual), they can learn and practice the new conceptual models and particular felt attunements of any style they wished to learn (the new “software program” that runs off of the same Operating System) much more rapidly.

TRANSMITTING PATTERNS

The “DNA Phantom effect” suggests that DNA may transmit something to the space around it—something that can organize the alignment of photons into a certain pattern. Let us spend some time with this concept of transmitting patterns—patterns that can organize or arrange energies into certain conformations. Where can we go with this?

In homeopathic medicine, the practitioner seeks a remedy that matches the disorder that in some ways resonates with it. “Like cures like.” A solution is then made from this remedy which is so dilute that **no molecules of the remedy remain in the solution**—only the informational pattern or energy remains. This pattern can act as a “seed crystal”, to allow a reparative internal re-organization and re-alignment to occur. (Lansky, 2011)

Brainwave patterns between people can coordinate and align. A Brain-Mind Bulletin issue from 1989 describes a study on brain wave synchrony between two people (Grinberg-Zylberbaum & Ramos, 1987). Each person in their pairs was instructed to close their eyes and “**try** to become aware of the other’s presence”. During the periods when both people reported that they had developed this awareness, the inter-hemispheric correlation brain wave patterns of each brain were very similar to the other. If partners reported that “it feels like we have blended”, the EEG patterns were nearly identical. Conversely, there was no such synchrony when they just sat in silence alone.

The researchers found that **the person with the highest concordance (the one with higher amount of right brain-left brain synchrony) was the one who most influenced the sessions.**

The implication is that, by centering and grounding more deeply, any of us can contribute to a partner, client or group’s increased well-being and level of connection. You may have experienced how someone in a group speaking from their deep connected place can bring other participants to a more connected level. Many participants in Community Well-ness Focusing groups experience this dynamic on a regular basis.)

BELIEFS AND WORLDVIEWS IN HEALING PRACTICES (as an example)

“A belief is a thought that channels energies all of the time.”

(Patent, 2011)

In this section, we will dip into the roles that beliefs and attitudes play in shaping flows of energy and information, and consider whether beliefs can be transmitted. One answer to this is a very clear **Yes!** We need only recall the placebo effect—how the patients’ **and also** the practitioners’ beliefs about the efficacy of treatment affect outcomes in many situations. Another example of the effects of changing beliefs is seen in hypnosis (in the form of giving suggestions—to believe something.) This point can also be illustrated by identifying a few different worldviews about the nature of illness or suffering:

- a) Illness is caused by a biological or chemical imbalance or aberration (machine model, common in Western medicine).
- b) Having emotional symptoms means that something is defective inside of you (very old, shame-based worldview). Sadly, this has mutated into a new variation, the “New Age Guilt Trip” . . . “If you can’t heal yourself from your dis-ease, you must be really messed up!”
- c) What happens is the result of Fate. It is destiny, and we can learn to deal with it (the fatalistic worldview).
- d) The Buddhist Four Noble Truths describe the truth of suffering, its causes, and cessation.
- e) Distress and disease comes from being out of balance; there are ways of regaining balance . . . (many holistic modalities). Some are more prescriptive, and others more allowing and listening-receptively based, depending on mental models of the practitioner and healing system.
- f) Who you really are is fundamentally good. Your distress is just your stuff; you are not your stuff. After emotional discharge, you can think more clearly. (Re-evaluation counseling and others).
- g) Your distress is some aspect of Life singing a song of something it wishes to become, some way it wishes to help—an emergent worldview—that which seems to be a problem may be life’s new growth edge encouraging the system to evolve further. (This idea is incorporated into the practice of Jin Shin Jyutsu, for example.)

Each of these different understandings—about the nature of who we are, our distress, and our relationship to the larger world—would lead to an entirely different orientation to our situation. Sam Keen stated this quite succinctly: “Be careful whom you let diagnose your disease, for you then give them power over its cure.” (Keen, 1985)

Depending on which system we operate within, we might make different choices, interpret what happened differently, monitor different parameters, relate to ourselves and

the distress differently, etc. We might welcome our symptoms, treat them with medication to suppress them, allow them to deepen our mindfulness, encourage emotional catharsis, or just hide them!

Beliefs and worldviews affecting sensing-into

If beliefs direct energy and information toward certain directions,
 And if felt-sensing can be directed in certain ways by intention
 and mental models,
 And mental models include beliefs in what matters and how things
 work and interact,
 Then, **felt-sensing can be significantly affected by beliefs.**

This includes beliefs of the client, beliefs of the healers (when applicable), and beliefs implicit within the process used for healing.

Using some of the diverse worldviews as to the nature of illness and healing, felt-sensing would be directed very differently within allopathic medicine (sensing into medical diagnostic clues, encouraging patients to sense into their felt rightness about medical treatment options), as compared to an “illness as a turning point” model (LeShan 1990), where one might sense into what wants to emerge, what “song wants to be sung”.

Jane Bell, who practices both Focusing and shamanism, shared that a surprising number of clients, who have had more traditional experiences with other Focusing listeners, will connect with shamanic content (animal spirits, etc.) during their Focusing sessions with her. These clients were unaware of her shamanic background! This example points to an openness or transmission from the listener that can subtly (or not-so-subtly!) shape another’s process.

Since energetic transmission is so affected by intention and belief systems, and since Focusing allows such a sensitivity to felt qualities, more attention to the role of worldviews and intentions within the practice, experience, and teaching of Focusing would add power to the practice.⁶

EXAMPLES OF INTENTIONALLY TRANSMITTING A BELIEF OR INFORMATION PATTERN

Along the lines of the brain wave experiment described two sections above, we can wonder if what one person brings **in terms of an embodied understanding**, can resonate with others, allowing a synchrony to occur, an alignment, a healing or growing. Reiki, Therapeutic Touch, and other forms of energy healing are intended to transmit certain qualities through the healer-as-channel (first connecting and receiving, and then transmitting) to the client.

A number of spiritual traditions utilize the capacity of a master teacher to transmit a blessing or a state of consciousness to students and devotees—such as in offering darshan (a Sanskrit term meaning “sight” or “seeing”). The student attempts to open to, and attune

to, the teacher's energy. At times, a transmission is received that affects the consciousness of the student. This process parallels the study findings on the role of intention, opening, tuning into, and that the one with the most synchrony (teacher) is the one more likely to be attuned and resonated with, by others.

Lawrence LeShan has done landmark research **into the particular worldviews of psychic healers when in the healing state**. He found that one person shifting their own worldview (understanding and relationship with the universe) can allow certain kinds of healing to occur⁷. Based on this finding, he was able to learn and teach healing based on principles that he found in common to most healers:

- centering, grounding inside
- making an intention to be of service to a particular person or group
- **holding** an image (a worldview, **an experiential belief**) **of connectedness and wholeness in one's awareness**. This awareness could somehow have an effect on the client⁸.

Another form of healing has the client, the "healer" (or both,) **hold a multi-sensory image** (felt, visual, etc.) **of a desired or ideal state in which they experience the client as if already healed**, as if the healing has already occurred in the present. (Braden, 2011—video reference)

Gandhi's "Be the change that you want to see happen" may be seen as an application of these the same principles to spiritual activism. If one lives as if it were already true, the closer it is to making it so.

Within Focusing, two examples of intentionally calling forth a positive outcome from the body include:

- the question: "What would come in my body if this were all ok?"
- the Widening step in Recovery Focusing (**experiencing "what could be" and expanding that felt sense**.)

In these two examples the 'vision' comes primarily from the body, rather than being directed primarily by one's conscious mind. These allow the possibility of more power and integration than one could do by mental intention alone.

REFLECTING SYSTEMS—AMPLIFICATION OF SIGNALS AND PATTERNS

Directing attention, connecting inside, sensing into—all can allow energies and information to resonate and expand within oneself, and within others. So, let us look at the most common intentional transmission that occurs in Focusing, which takes the form of **reflecting**.

What is reflected depends on what one believes is important or significant to the process. Therefore, (at least implicitly) **reflections contain a worldview about what is believed to be important or significant to the process!** In Focusing, we are often taught

to reflect back either what the speaker says, or feelings, or felt meaning. These types of reflections are intended to support the client's process in being with and holding their felt experiencing.

A “worldview and mental model, with reflections based on them”, is what I term a “**reflecting system**”.

Just as in sensing-into, reflecting is somewhat directional. **Particular aspects of one's experiencing are chosen to be reflected back, and shape the experiencing of the person receiving them.** If this were true, then, what else might we be able to sense into and reflect back—besides the clients' words, feelings, and felt meaning⁸?

- reflecting back **feelings and needs** (NonViolent Communication)
- reflecting back qualities of **spaciousness or holding** that seem to be present in the situation (some meditations)
- reflecting back the **aliveness** of a person's process (Gendlin⁹)
- reflecting back a therapist's sense of **the attachment dance** between a couple (Sue Johnson, Emotionally Focused Therapy)
- reflecting back a parent or teacher's awareness of **qualities of greatness** in the child in that moment (Howard Glasser's Nurtured Heart Approach) (Glasser, 2011) (Glasser, 2010)
- reflecting back the **divinity within** someone (numerous spiritual teachers)

David Young posted about a Changes Group experience from 1985, in which Marshall Rosenberg (developer of NonViolent Communication) was present (Young, 2008):

. . . Marshall listens to Z, but in a much different way, and Z gets to some honesty—not to change, but to a touch of reality, connecting with what's alive in him. All my classic, careful empathic Listening, and all Jane's and many others' beautiful Listening—hours & hours for years—**didn't do what Marshall did in a few minutes.** During an earlier Changes, Jane had spent the entire two hours Listening to Z, determined to get through. Nothing. With Marshall, Z arrives at what Gene might call “the edge”.

Afterwards, I ask Marshall how he knew to do that. [Marshall Rosenberg founded Non Violent Communication. He often listens for, and reflects, feelings and “needs”. As an example, when listening to someone who is expressing a judgment, he will not reflect their words back. Instead, making the intention to connect, he may offer a guess at what needs may be underneath their judgment, and have the speaker check that for fit.]

“Have you noticed,” Marshall asks, “**when you reflect content, you get more content?**”

“Sure, Marshall,” I reply, puzzled.

“And have you noticed, **when you reflect feelings, you get more feelings?**”

I frown. “Of course.”

Marshall fixes me with his dark intense eyes. “**When you reflect an alienated view of the world, you just get more alienation.**”

RESONATION AND COHERENCE

Part of the power of reflections has to do with **resonance**—how one transmission sets up a response in another, and vice-versa. This process creates a back-and-forth interacting, which may amplify or interfere with each other, leading to a phenomena such as harmonic overtones, which we so enjoy in music.

Resonation and amplification may be helpful, or harmful, depending on context. The same applies to dissonance, or discord. Energy and information entering a system will influence that system. Reflections are one such kind of energy and information. Whether or not the system adapts, evolves, or instead loses its integrity and breaks down, depends on how it is channeled and integrated into the system.

Soldiers are taught to break out of their usually coherent marching pattern when walking across a bridge. They disrupt their marching pattern because of a recognition (and experience!) that marching frequencies resonate with the bridge. If a single coherent back and forth marching frequency were to match the bridge’s structural design and periodicity of motion, it could cause sway, excessive oscillation, and possible damage or collapse to the bridge.

On the constructive end, nearly all holistic and mind-body healing modalities have ways to coordinate various patterns of life energy in order to better integrate mind and body. In general, processes that link different aspects of our being in a connected way support health and healing. The HeartMath Institute has done research on the effects of their practice—involving what they term Heart Focus, Heart Breathing, and Heart Feeling. They describe their process as leading to “coherence”—a synchronization (entrainment, mutual resonance) of certain bodily parameters such as breathing, blood pressure, and heart rate variability, all of which can be measured. They have illustrations of this synchronization of rhythms online (Institute of HeartMath, 2011). They propose that the effects of attaining this type of coherence can resonate personally—into benefits for health and intuition, and also into larger settings—such as decreased violence in social settings.

This is a good place to remember that resonance and attunement occur naturally, on their own. But, it is also true that alignment may sometimes be more likely to occur if it is intentional, rather than accidental. The combination of felt-connection and intention may help attune and resonate more effectively than either alone. Being internally coherent alone, and only making a positive intention alone, had little effect (1.1%) in the Modulation of DNA Configuration study. The combination of both together had a 10-25% effect. (McCraty, 2003)

Another kind of coherence between mind and body is created in the Focusing process. Focusing includes bodily felt resonance between the felt and the conceptual, or symbolic, within a certain kind of space that is held. Certain qualities of attention and reflection more fully amplify and assist in aligning with the body sense, so that something unclear comes into focus. It might be interesting to note that **a laser achieves its coherent beam through back and forth reflecting and amplifying in an optical cavity!** (WiseGeek, 2003)

SENSING INTO DIFFERENT MODELS OF WHO WE ARE, AND WHAT THE UNIVERSE IS LIKE

*“But that is not all!
Oh, no!
That is not all . . .” said the Cat in the Hat.*

(Geisel, 1957)

So far, we might say that learning to attune our sensors into activities within cells is using felt-sensing as a microscope. We can also shift the lenses of felt-sensing outward or towards the sensing of “larger bodies”—as a sort of telescope. Resonance and harmonics occurs at a cellular level, with organs, at the level of individuals, and to larger groups. Perhaps these larger patterns can be sensed into, and transmitted into, as well.

Some of what we find may depend upon our worldview since it does affect our sensing-into. The most common worldview used in Focusing is seeing ourselves as separate beings, each with our own distinct processes. We each take our own personal turn. We respect each other’s process, and avoid interfering with each other’s content—that is felt to be disruptive or intrusive. This description may seem **so** obvious, that some may consider it to be “how Focusing is done correctly.” Some may feel that changing these traditional guidelines will threaten the sanctity and protection which makes the Focusing process so gentle and safe.

On the other hand, sensing can be directional. **New mental models can offer new directions to sense into.** What might occur during Focusing if we tried on other ways of understanding reality?

- While Focusing, we may experience a sense of a “third thing”, some presence or sense of grace that is palpable, occurring without us intentionally attempting to seek it. What might come if we intentionally directed our sensing into the “between space” of interpersonal resonance? As each would be sensing into a shared field and shared space of interactive content, *it* could begin to assume qualities of its own as *it* was offered attention.
- What if we assumed ourselves to be part of larger bodies, such as a community, or an Earthbody, and allowed ourselves to acknowledge that dynamic and sense into it? What is it like for us to feel that way? Where in Earth’s body might *IT* feel *ITS* feelings?

- What kind of sensing and receiving might occur if we also did Focusing from the perspective of ourselves as interpenetrating waves of energy and information that inter-affect each other? How would our habitual sense of self, of who we feel ourselves to be, and how we relate to each other and the world around us be affected?
- We take for granted that it is “we” who are doing the Focusing, offering our attention to various aspects of our experiencing. But what might arise if we considered that there is a Larger Body that is Focusing, a larger ‘Something’ that is offering caring attention to us as if we were felt senses, so that **we** can shift and unfold into our right next steps? Such a process might involve a sort of letting go into a larger loving attention, allowing ourselves to be shaped by it . . .

This seems a good place to pause and breathe . . .

RESONANCE AND COHERENCE WITHIN LARGER SYSTEMS

If we decide to explore any of these other ways of understanding reality, we can pursue them on our own. And, we could potentially enter into these areas more fully if we were to choose a direction to explore, offer permission to try something “completely different”, make an intention, work with someone who is already attuned in that area, and be part of a co-sensing, co-reflecting group in these realms: This is already happening in many groups such as the Global Consciousness Project, the Global Coherence Initiative, and Transcendental Meditation.

The Global Consciousness Project¹¹ has been monitoring the effect of world events on random number generators (Nelson, 2009) for years. They claim a significant correlation for certain events. Interestingly, Sept 11, 2001 recorded the highest anomaly since the monitoring began. This is a measurement project, examining correlations.

In terms of creating peace through resonance, several groups and individuals make a heart-felt intention for peace and harmony, and offer it for the benefit of society as a whole. The Global Coherence Initiative (Institute of HeartMath, 2011) is one of many such projects¹².

Research studies sponsored by groups of Transcendental Meditation practitioners (Maharishi Institute of Management, 2004) suggest a measurable and significant decrease in violent events during the times when directed meditative attention and intention was being offered in certain areas (including during some of the 1983 Israeli-Lebanon conflict¹³). They offer a mathematical formula for the number of meditators needed to positively influence a community¹⁴.

BRINGING SOME OF THIS TOGETHER

Due to space constraints, much has been omitted. It **could be very valuable to discuss** integrating other frequencies (such as theta or disembodied intuitive connection) into

linear thinking and felt sensing, creating something analogous to an i3 chip—integrative triple-channel mind-body-beyond processing.

We did not get to the physics of bias and distortion. Analogous to how iron can cause a compass to deflect, can felt-sensing be distorted or deflected? Can it be protected from such influences?

Even so, by crossing only a few aspects of two fields of science with Focusing, we have insights that may have some personal, professional, and social implications for its practice. It is my hope that the ideas presented here may bring additional depth, breadth, and sources of wonder to the practice of Focusing.

But that remains to be determined. As the way to test a hypothesis is to try it out, I invite you to check whether you find practical value in applying any of these concepts:

- that felt-sensing can be directional
- that we have the capacity to intentionally attune felt sensing in multiple directions
- that mental models and belief systems can guide our sensing and transmitting
- that the role of reflecting systems has an affect on the process and outcome
- that when we listen, both transmitting and receiving are occurring on various levels
- that through the combination of intention and bodily-felt connection, we can influence much smaller (cellular) and much larger (social) systems than we may have imagined

Please feel free to send me examples from your own experiences along these lines—ones you have already had, ones that come in response to trying on ideas suggested here, and new discoveries that come for you.

A CAVEAT, A SUGGESTION, AND A BLESSING

As much as I am excited about these many concepts, I also acknowledge the good reasons that many Focusing practitioners historically are cautious about applying mental models and conscious intention to shape sensing and transmitting.

The sensitivity to, and honoring of, bodily-felt process in Focusing makes us loath to use the mind to push bodily-held process. The power of intention is sometimes used to force or manipulate the body in ways that do not respect its wisdom, that do not interact with it as partner. McMahon speaks to some of this in “Beyond the Myth of Dominance” (McMahon, 1993). We have direct physical experience of how willpower and beliefs can be “used” by one aspect of our being against less verbal aspects.

Focusing includes a type of kinesthetic biofeedback, in which we can feel how various aspects of our being are relating to each other. We can ask ourselves, or others, to pause and to check: “Is something being too pushy?” “Is something feeling steamrollered?” “How is everything inside with what is being suggested?” “

Focusing has been described as practicing and offering a “non-colonizing relationship with one’s inner landscape” (Zubizarreta, 2003). It operates within a respectful partnership between mind and body, listening, checking with, and following the lead of the body’s life and knowing. The worldviews implicit in the practice of Focusing could positively inform the worldviews of those who seek to improve the world through intention and applying concepts.

In combining the depth and respectful listening with the cognitive and the intentional, a dual channel zigzag can help us integrate the conceptual and bodily-felt realms. Focusing can help us hold **not only conscious intention**, but **also the bodily-felt sense of intention**, to help facilitate a synergy between what may be two hands of one Larger Intention. This creates a respectful partnership between ways of knowing and being in a time when we seek processes that are organic and eco-friendly.

This article closes with the hope that the zigzag and loving attention within Focusing can allow a crossing of what the heart longs to express, with what the mind longs to know and achieve—thereby carrying forward this vision of Teilhard de Chardin:

“Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.”

Thank you for your participation in this larger process.

Note: Footnotes as indicated by the small numbers within the text and further commentaries are available online at <http://serviceoflife.info/focusing/foliofootnotes.html>

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