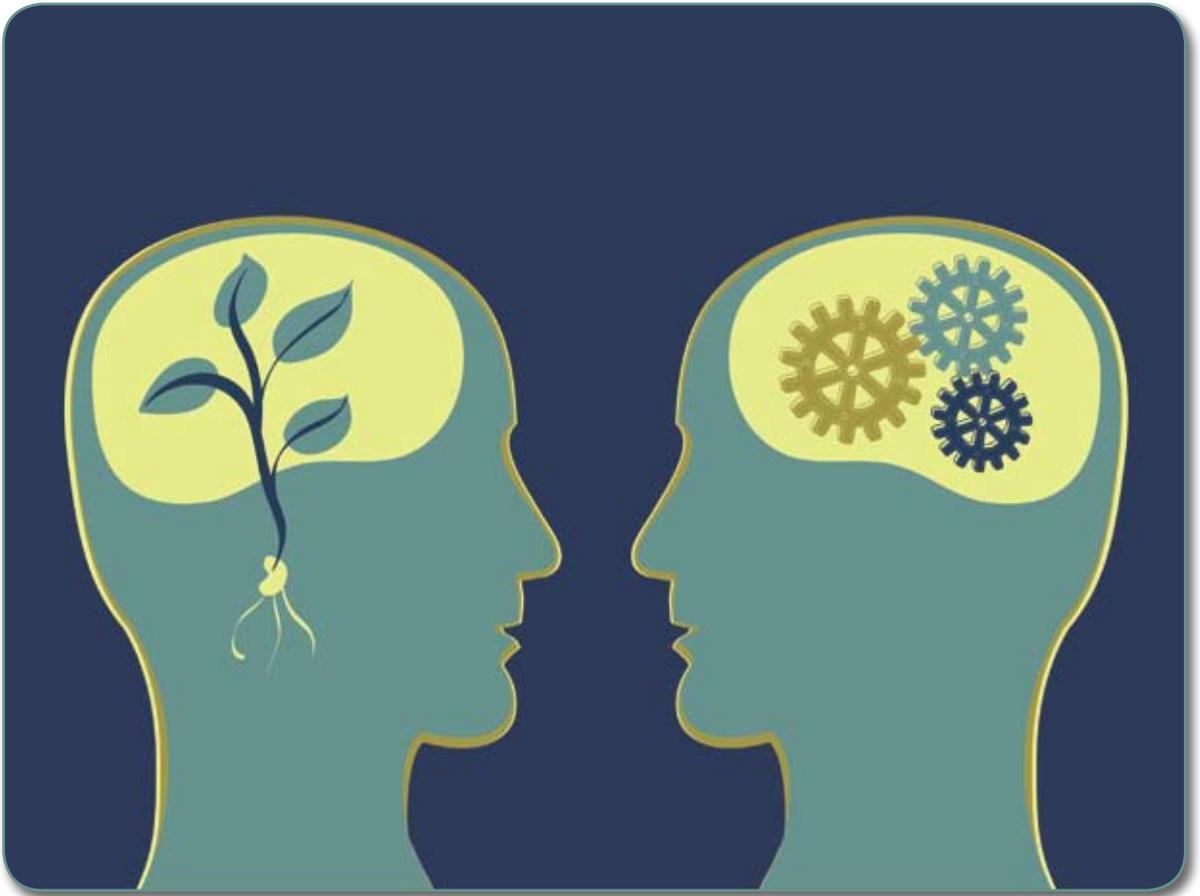


# THE FOLIO

A JOURNAL FOR FOCUSING  
AND EXPERIENTIAL THERAPY

Volume 23, Number 1, 2012



**FOCUSING, RESEARCH, AND  
CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE  
NEW MOVEMENTS FORWARD**

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## FOCUSING, RESEARCH, AND CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE: NEW MOVEMENTS FORWARD

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# THE FOLIO

A Journal for Focusing and Experiential Therapy

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<http://www.focusing.org/research-sciencefolio2012>

## LETTER FROM THE EDITORS

Before we embark upon each *Folio*, it is our custom to post a letter to the Focusing community to get a ‘feel’ for what topics are of current interest to our very diverse group. Needless to say, we never know what the current areas of interest or requests will be, and as Editors, get something of a thrill as we watch the responses come in.

To our surprise—and delight—many people requested/suggested the topic of Neuroscience, and how the recent findings in that field might contribute to the Focusing process, as we know it. Further, we received suggestions that we view Focusing from the perspective of Contemporary Science and Quantum Physics and Genetics, adding high quality empirical research on the implications of various applications to Focusing. We hope that this issue on *Focusing, Research, and Contemporary Science: New Movements Forward* begins to touch upon what we see as the cutting edge of Focusing.

We are in a period where science, especially areas such as neuroplasticity and psychology—in particular process-oriented models such as Focusing—are beginning to ‘find’ each other. For example, when we experience a felt-shift in the body, a process is also taking place in the brain. When Focusing, we don’t tend to think that much about what is actually happening in our brains given that our attention is so naturally focused in the body, but indeed, ‘something’ in the brain is, in fact, getting ‘rewired’ with each shift or *ahha*. Alternatively, we can study what exactly happens in a brain when we experience a felt-shift in consciousness, and can even get the brain to memorize what the felt-shift has given us—and—when we do, we are actually ‘crossing’ a scientific process with an experiential process.

Said another way, and in the context of actually crossing Focusing and Science, no matter how hard we try to change our brains, e.g. how we ‘think’ about something (or things, or points of view) unless the body actually ‘buys’ it, the change will not last—so we see the marriage between Focusing and Science as a both/and process—and indeed very timely.

Our writers for this issue each have their own distinctive understandings of these crossings that utilize two different areas of the brain, as well as their research on the topic.

In our opening article, *Process Generates Structure: Structures Alone Do Not Generate Process*, Gene Gendlin expands our understanding of how things “are” more intricate than the current models favored by science, wherein an object’s structure determines its process. Gendlin suggests that science can be limited because it often defines the world in terms of objects rather than *process*. But instead, he proposes a much bigger picture: that the way life unfolds is that processes interacting with each other implicate endless possibilities.

Bruce Nayowith, author of *Folio’s Zigzagging Our Way to Expanded Possibilities for Focusing*, outlines how certain unexpected discoveries in physics and epigenetics may be applied to Focusing, allowing us to expand our understanding of the ‘more’ that may be ahead for Focusing practices. For example, you will read about how startling findings in recent scientific experiments may encourage us to explore the possibility 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.

The relatively new field of affective neuroscience affirms Gene Gendlin's revolutionary insight that human beings (and all living organisms) are *processes* that cannot be understood as discrete, static units, nor apart from each other or their environment. Leslie Ellis, a Focusing-Oriented psychotherapist, presents fascinating data exploring current neuroscientific research about the brain in interaction, particularly Focusing on mutual emotional regulation, attachment, and empathy. Her article, *The Attuned Brain: Crossings in Focusing-Oriented Therapy and Neuroscience*, is rich with specific examples demonstrating how certain Focusing-Oriented-Therapy processes, can facilitate emotional healing.

In a reversal from the previous articles which described how science might influence Focusing, Carol Nickerson's, *Attachment and Neuroscience: The Benefits of Being a Focusing-Oriented Professional*, argues that neuroscience is finally catching up with Focusing. She discusses how the fundamental philosophy and practices of Focusing-Oriented Therapy are in accord with recent findings about brain plasticity and cortical executive function. Included in her discussion is an extended therapy session with another psychotherapist, demonstrating how a Focusing-Oriented therapist's presence, attunement and acceptance provide the kind of support that neuroscientists are discovering integrates underdeveloped neural circuits.

Having been at the forefront of Focusing since its inception in Chicago, Zack Boukydis' article, *Thoughts about Advancing Focusing Related to the Broader Scientific Community*, offers readers innovative strategies on ways to integrate Focusing research more solidly on the map of traditional scientific inquiry and scientific endeavor. It is time, he writes, that Focusing presents itself as a paradigm worthy of scientific attention and develops research networks and collaborations with the broader scientific community. His thoughtful article contains a wealth of practical suggestions for further Focusing research.

Kevin Kryka encourages readers to conceptualize their own unique contributions to Focusing research as a way to create 'inspired knowledge' which offers science a way to midwife the birth of new thought relevant to its own focus. Titling his article, *Incorporating Research into Your Experiential and FOT Practice*, Kryka brilliantly details how the process of Implicit Inquiry can legitimize body-sensing in many aspects of scientific research, leading to deeper exploration of human life.

Doralee Grindler Katonah has undertaken a comprehensive literature review of research studies that have investigated the effects of Clearing a Space on physical, emotional, spiritual, and educational well-being. Her article, *Research on Clearing a Space*, has as its inspiration Gendlin's 'model of processes', where the human 'self-reflexive dimension of living' becomes the content of scientific investigation. Her thorough review clarifies the nature of the process of Clearing a Space and under what circumstances it may be of particular value for facilitating change, healing, learning and transformation.

In *Clearing a Space: An Evidence-based Approach for Enhancing Quality of Life in Women with Breast Cancer*, Joan Klagsbrun and Susan Lennox demonstrate how a

rigorously designed, executed, and evaluated research can quantify measurable positive changes in women during all stages of cancer treatment and recovery. This meticulous study, supported by research in neuroscience, is an example of the high standards that must be met before the medical community accepts and incorporates Focusing as part of their multi-modal treatment plans.

What do people new-to-Focusing say about the specific benefits of Focusing as they first experience the process for the first time? And do very experienced Focusers share those same ideas as novices? Mako Hikasa writes about her year-long international research in order to empirically differentiate the surprising similarities and differences. The results of her study, *The Benefits of Focusing: A Qualitative Analysis of 30 Interviews with Focusers*, will prove to be both enlightening and invaluable for all who teach Focusing.

In her most interesting and personal article, *A Process Model Scientist: What Does It Really Mean in Practice?* Dana Ganihar Raz tells us a most compelling story. After wanting to be a scientist since she was a young child, and after completing her Master's degree in Neurotheology, she felt (as she well describes it) that she was in the wrong field. In the interim, she learned Focusing, and through the process decided—17 years later!—to go back to science, now using and integrating the felt-experience with her work in the lab. Dana takes the time from working on her Ph.D. proposal to share her most unusual story.

Peter Afford's first line: "Our experience tells us that our heads are full of thoughts and our bodies are full of feelings" sets the foundation for his article, *Focusing in an Age of Neuroscience*. He compiles scientific research that addresses the complexity of what occurs in the brain during a Focusing session, using scientific data to illustrate his points. You'll be fascinated with his stimulating conclusion that the Focusing process integrates both hemispheres of the brain by liberating the left hemisphere from the trap of the virtual world it has created for itself, and actuating the right hemisphere, whence all our experience originated in the first place.

When Karen Whalen and Glenn Fleisch submitted their article, *Quantum Consciousness: An Explanatory Model for Life Forward Movement in Wholebody Focusing*, we found ourselves with a bit of a dilemma. The article was excellent, but it was also 30 plus pages! So after some soul-searching and 'process-contemplation' between us (!) we decided—for the first time ever in the *Folio*—to break up the article into a Part 1 and 2. In Part 1, Karen and Glenn have pooled their innumerable resources to write about how Quantum Field Theory interfaces with Gendlin's Process Model of the Implicit. Part 2, develops this 'crossing' using clinical examples to illustrate the integration of Quantum Consciousness, Quantum Mechanics, and Gendlin's Process Model with clients.

With regards from your Editors,



Bala Jaison, Ph.D.  
Senior Editor



Paula Nowick, Ed.D.  
Managing Editor

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Three years ago we asked those members of our community who had well-honed writing skills to volunteer as Guest Editors to assist our *Folio* writers in the preparation of their articles. The contributions of these Guest Editors were beyond our expectations—and often beyond the expectations of the writers who told us how much they came to value the Guest Editors’ companionship, listening, organizational assistance, and grammatical expertise. The lonely task of the writer was often made far less so with a Listener’s support throughout the article’s development. Thus what started three years ago as an experiment has become an integral part of the *Folio* process, enhancing the quality of our articles.

So it is with heartfelt thanks that we would like to acknowledge: Frans Despestele, Marie Giannetti, Larry Hurst, Joan Klagsbrun, Kevin Kyrcka, Judy Moore, Carol Nickerson, Clive Perraton Mountford, Pat Oliver, and Chris Wilson,

Cover Art: We’ll address the Cover Art for this issue in Focusing language: After we’ve edited all the articles and get a *feel* for *the whole of it*, one of our favorite or more creative delights is searching for cover art that *matches* or *fits* the *whole thing* . . . We think that the picture we’ve chosen for this issue quite clearly speaks for itself. We loved the idea of showing two different kinds of brains that speak to both the concrete and creative aspects of the Self, and what is *implied* as the two areas of the brain face each other, creating a sense of balance. No doubt, as you read this issue, you will each have your own *felt-sense* of what the image and accompanying articles convey to you—enjoy!

Layout and Design: For those of you who have never edited a journal, it is hard to describe the role that Carolyn Kasper plays. It is she who takes all the Word docs and makes *The Folio* look professional and inviting. But more than that, we send her what we think are very well edited articles, and she miraculously finds all the tiny bits we’ve missed, from punctuation errors to miniscule typos and layout issues. Carolyn, you’re a miracle woman and we send you heartfelt thanks for your wonderful work—and patience!

Once again, we extend our sincere thanks and appreciation to the Focusing Institute for your consistent support and encouragement in producing *The Folio*.



PART 1  
CROSSING CONTEMPORARY SCIENCE  
AND FOCUSING





## PROCESS GENERATES STRUCTURES Structures Alone Don't Generate Process

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*E.T. Gendlin, Ph.D.*

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### ABSTRACT

In this article I refer to written works (see the section on “Philosophy” at [www.focusing.org](http://www.focusing.org)) in a very brief argument. How process produces structure is discussed in four sections:

I. Process *makes* structure, and can change and expand it. A process always has many implicit possibilities that are not structures. Exactly in what way something implicit exists is discussed. Process *implies and makes* the next events.

II. One way human beings make things is by first making stable separate parts. Then we arrange them together. So we can easily view natural things as if they were made of stable parts. But most living things don't do it that way. They constantly regenerate their parts. These are two different ways of making something. With separable parts comes the kind of “space” and “time” that is usually assumed. That kind covers up the implicit process so that most of our experience seems impossible.

III. I say how the implicit is more precise with more relationships than an explicit structure can provide. It interrelates innumerable possibilities that are precise and unfinished because they also imply further. They imply one sequence of next events which can “explicate” the generative precision. What actually occurs explicates the implying. Each explication brings a fresh further implying.

IV. The findings of science seem to deny our own experiencing, and vice versa. Although the two seem so different, we can think with both logical and experiential precision because they have an inherent relationship.

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### I. PROCESS GENERATES AND REGENERATES ITS STRUCTURES

When one part of the brain is damaged, its function can often be taken up by other parts that don't usually perform that function. We know this change is possible because we find it happening, but science needs to add a new kind of concept that can explain how it is possible.

Not only in special cases, but also in many ordinary ways, *how we function creates* or changes the structures. Ordinary thinking generates brain cells and new connections. Constant stress can bring physical changes. Psychosomatic effects are only puzzling when

one assumes that somatic structures normally exist apart from the “psycho”. But they are not two things, rather a process that generates and regenerates structures.

If patients only think they are taking a drug, 40% improve. With the drug, 60% do. The concept of a “placebo” splits “psycho” utterly away from “somatic”, as if it were nothing organismic. We can recognize and study the body’s own internally arising healing process. We need to study *that* process, since all medical intervention ultimately depends on it.

These seeming puzzles arise because the process cannot be thought about in the current *concepts*. I want to show that we can add another kind of concept.

If we consider only a structure, it seems impossible that its function can persist when the structure is destroyed. Doesn’t the function also disappear? The puzzle can be explained (and researched) if we consider all structure as ongoingly generated. *Structures are always being generated by a much wider implicit process of the organism*. There is never only what is already structured, always also, a process with many more possibilities that are *implicit*.

Let me introduce the “implicit”.

Here is an example from a familiar human process: Consider how you ordinarily speak. When you are ready to say *something*, you say *it* in a few sentences. But if others invite you further, or you think further alone, “*it*” can expand on and on. Then *it* (what you were ready to say) turns out to have had a great many strands and parts. Some of what comes surprises you. Did that all already exist in your *readiness* to speak? Surely not, and yet in some way it was there. The incomplete way it was there I call “*implicit*”.

Let us see in what way all that existed in your readiness to speak. These many strands and developments were not separate structures. There were not hidden structures there, waiting. As structures they are new. They developed as you went on. But they are not *just* new. They are *neither* just new, *nor* were they already structured. This “neither nor” leads to a new concept: The “implicit” consists of a multitude of *unseparated* possibilities which all function to enact the one specific next sentence you actually say.

What do you do to make the words come? You keep sensing what you had ready to say and you open your mouth. The words come out. You did not already have words for what you wanted to say. You had it in a bodily way. The readiness to speak is an *implying*. It implies something that comes next. If you give it permission, it will make actual sentences. Speaking is one way of “*explicating*”. Actual events can *explicate* the implicit.

Yes, a whole ensuing sequence is implied from the start, but the implying is much more than finished structures, and it carries itself further as it enacts one next structured event, and then another and another. What is implicit *explicates* itself in enacting what actually occurs.

You cannot help knowing when you lose track of something that you are ready to say, because then you can no longer speak or think from it. But sometimes there is another difficulty. We try to speak from *that*, but what we say does not succeed. It does not open it and carry it further. The implicit is very precise and stubbornly demanding. You can say and

think a lot for years, knowing all the while that you aren't touching what is implied. If there were only finished structures this would be a puzzle: You would only have what you are thinking. How can you know it is not what is implied, since you don't know what is implied? But we observe that we often have a stubborn discomfort with what we can say. We have an unsatisfied implying directly.

Speaking is only one example. Many others might occur to you. The implicit is totally familiar to everyone. The word "implicit" is widely used today, but with the usual assumptions it seems to be a paradox, "*was there, and yet was not*". The paradox opens if we widen what we mean by "was" and "is" or "exists". *What exists is not only structures*, not just structures or nothing. There "is" always also an implying. But of course, to change our notion of existence is not a small move.

The concepts of "implicit" and "explicating" can clarify our understanding of most events. Everything we do and say explicates an implying that is more than what is there as structures.

Something can be utterly familiar and yet very puzzling. Let the word "implicit" refer to this familiar but puzzling way we have what we want to say. As we say it, *it* expands. If you let the word "implicit" refer directly to that familiar readiness to say something, then you can decide as we go along whether or not to accept the concepts I present. If you let the word mean *that*, then you might also think of something further and better than what I say.

I want to emphasize that we can let words *refer to "that" which we experience*. Even if the word brings a concept, the word can also refer to the familiar way "that" is. These are two different uses of language. We can have the good of both.

The concept of the implicit is not only individual; it applies also to all happenings, including history. *Social events explicate earlier social events. The later events separate and emphasize characteristics which the earlier events implied. Only now do we see some of what the event "was"*. The further events *explicate* the previous.

The actual events bring fresh implyings, but these are *in a certain way continuous* with what has already happened. What "part" is new? We cannot divide a new part from the old because in explications the parts (units, structures) are neither just new nor just old. And each brings a fresh further implying. I call this kind of continuity "*carrying forward*".

Every happening is structured and freshly implies a great many further events that are not structured.

Our difficult situations become more hopeful if we recognize that events are never only what is explicitly formed. If we deal with events as having very many more possibilities, and if we understand that the possibilities can emerge only gradually as actual events bring new implying, then we may find a few steps that now begin something new.

What actually happens is a process of explicating. The innumerable implicit possibilities imply a sequence of next events, and they imply one next event which can change the sequence.

## II. TWO DIFFERENT WAYS OF MAKING SOMETHING

Human beings are “*homo faber*”; we make things. One way we do that is to make parts separately first. *We make each part as a separate structure*. A factory makes nothing but *that* part. Then we put the parts together to make the final thing. So we tend to assume that everything naturally consists of separable parts: bricks and bolts and microchips. We assume that the living things (including ourselves) also consist of separable parts: legs, and fingers, skin, and bones. We think of animals in terms of separate “systems”: the digestive and the reproductive. We separate nerves and cells. We find chemical “factories” making certain proteins.

But living things don’t do it that way. They don’t make only skin or proteins separately, *apart from the process of the whole organism*. The “factory” that makes those proteins doesn’t first do it alone. A living thing remakes itself and its “parts” freshly all the time. The factory is constantly being regenerated freshly. So these proteins keep having many implicitly changing characteristics, many more than proteins have separately. They are more precisely implied and occur in more precise ways than is assumed in the separable parts and particles that our current concepts represent.

We make the parts of a machine first. We don’t turn it on until we put the parts together. But a living thing is already “turned on” when it makes its parts, for example in the embryo. And it is always remaking them. This different kind of making is hard for us to understand, but it is actually more “natural” than making and combining separable parts.

*Living things do seem to repeat “the same” forms and patterns for millions of years*, but each “same” is also new and different. We seem to have “the same” organs and cells, but the doctors always tell us “each body is different”. How these supposedly “same” parts will respond to a particular drug is not quite predictable. The doctor has to deal with the living body and its living “parts”, but according to current assumptions we are made out of inanimate fully structured structures. It is a similar mistake to say that “the body” is what we leave here when we die. No, that will be a dead body; this one is a living body, engaged in implying and explicating, which brings further implying.

Living bodies consist of ongoing body-environment interactions, not first separate structures which then also interact with their environment.

The concepts of structures are irreplaceably useful. Knowing something about what a part produces enables us to intervene to improve or restore it. It is only foolish to denigrate science. (And to write that on a computer?) Any structured pattern that stays reliably the “same” for a while *is precious and invaluable*. But the medically classified illnesses are not separate entities in the body. That kind of concept cannot include how anything implicitly is. An implicitly intricate process generates not just that pattern but also much more.

We are contrasting two kinds of making. Let us now more closely examine this one human way. How do we make things with separate parts? We do it with patterns.<sup>1</sup> We impose a pattern on things that don’t have it from themselves. We make furniture *by moving patterns onto the wood*. *The wood has a much more intricate organization but it doesn’t*

*have this furniture pattern.* We make scientific patterns of the characteristics of wood too, and of its molecules and particles. We move the pattern from our design across to the things. Our patterns stay the same as we apply and move them. We seem (only seem) to work in a space which doesn't affect the patterns. Therefore the space seems obviously empty except for the objects in it.

The many "same things" made in a factory are distinguished only insofar as this one is here, whereas those others are there and there. Their positions are all that distinguish one from another. This particle here is *the one that was* earlier over there. Positions depend on some observer who relates a "here" to an "over there". The positions don't relate to each other. A perceiver's "there" from "here" must relate them.

The patterns we use are not the thing's own; they are *our* patterns, but made in interaction with the things. We make them by playing with the things on our instruments in the laboratory, trying out all sorts of moves until we find an operation that always (or nearly always) produces *the same result*. The results are truly possibilities *of the things*, but in response to us (see Gendlin 1997b). The things would have had these responses in ancient times, but only if our instruments and patterns had been applied. On our patterns they show more than they otherwise have, but only what fits our current patterns. What we consider *their* patterns are *theirs on ours*.

Although current scientific patterns are of many kinds, they mostly assume structures alone, nothing implicit. But only some of what we experience can exist on the pattern.<sup>2</sup> According to the current scientific concepts most of how we are all day is impossible. And a great deal that happens in modern physics is equally impossible according to this still ubiquitous old model.

Most current concepts assume that what "is" or "exists" means what fills the "empty" here-there space. This kind of space comes from our making *separable* things. *Separability* IS just this space: *each thing outside every other*. Each part or particle is supposed to stay identical to itself, and outside the others. But space is not empty and merely positional until we make it so by riding over what is there.

Now I need to bring home how this positional scheme of space and time *covers up the actual differences*. There is a *filled space and time* which has to be reduced down to make the positional kind.

A person's (and an animal's) action possibilities cannot be listed and enumerated separately. They are many more. They are also much more intricately organized because *any one action changes how the other possibilities could happen. An action is a "cluster" of changes in the other possibilities, and creates new ones. They form a great "space" that is very full. Any one action carries the whole "cluster" forward.*

The cluster keeps the past events, but also opens and expands them because it implies further. The cluster has a kind of continuity not reducible to a logic of same units, but it is not at all indeterminate, rather more precise than logical deduction. There is a way of making logical sense but with newly created terms, rather than staying within an antecedent set

of terms. This “inductive” kind of logic has puzzled thinkers through the ages because it often happened, but did not yet understand itself. It was assumed that logic requires a set of terms fixed in advance and kept the same throughout.

Logic cannot determine the units it uses. And what words mean cannot be determined within a fixed set of units. The words first say something: then one can examine how they were used.

New terms from implying-occurring-implicating can make “*organismic sense*” because speaking is a bit of further living, i.e., a bit of body-environment interaction. From the organismic sense-making we can generate *new units* with which we can logically explicate what happened. What can follow logically is *inherently related* to what could follow in actual body-environment interaction.

The organismic process in us continues even though it is hidden by the empty system of location “points”. The cluster of action possibilities is not really reduced, only covered over. We seem unable to think from the implicit because we try to make it fit the terms we have. We try to think of it as structured objects in the space of “there-from-here”.

No theory or philosophy (including this one, of course) will make the implicit explicit. But *as explications* we can let words and actions come *from it* to carry it forward. We can explicate many of its characteristics, one precise strand after another.

In defense of location space and structures alone, look at how much we have been able to achieve with these parts and particles! Our vast technology is partly due to this kind of concept. On the other hand, look at how physics has already had to reject that space and its “same” parts. The parts do not stay the same. Current physics uses only operations and mathematics. And what a mathematics! A mathematics tied just to operations. Physics goes beyond the old model by doing without any explanatory concepts at all. The “quantum field” is indeterminate until equations are developed to predict the results of operations. Most other sciences including neurology still use concepts that assume the old model.

*A similar emptying happens to time.* It becomes reduced to a sequence of mere time points. Each moment seems to be the same as every other, distinguished only by a position on a time line. But the past is not just an occurring at an earlier position. Consider the vast number of factors from the past which are *not now occurring but are shaping* what now occurs because *it would occur differently if they had not happened*. They function now, but they function implicitly, not as occurring structures. The effects of the past may seem imprecise, but we can trace the precision. We can identify many factors and causal chains, but they don’t have their effects separately like a list of “factors”. Their implicit function is precise in producing just this single occurring which we can explicate in ever new and more numerous terms.

*The merely positional time covers up how each moment is a different cluster which generates fresh possibilities that can be carried forward.* We can observe this in our human process, for example this moment’s shadows on the wall, how the light is playing on the trees, how the muscles in my hips feel now, and how the rest of my day and my life is implied from here.

Let us see what alternative model comes from explicating, and why the implicit has so many more possibilities than the patterns of structures have alone.

### III. THE ORDER AND PRECISION OF IMPLYING

Many people affirm “holism”. They say that the whole organism is one. This is true. The implying process is the whole organism’s, but in the current concepts this is considered “indeterminate”, a merged amalgam. In the traditional model “determined” means structured and separated. So the implicit seems indeterminate. But the implying is actually more specifically determined and determining, because it is the resultant of much more than structures can provide. I have derived this kind of “more determined” at length elsewhere but I will tell it very briefly here.

Implicit possibilities *inter-affect* each other. What each IS includes how it affects the others and is already affected by affecting them. Each becomes more precise because it is precisioned by the others. “Their” *interaction is first*, before there is a separable “they”. This greater precision makes them unfinished as structures. They each *imply the one next event and the series of next events*.

Any one possibility that actually occurs changes how the others are possible. For example, if we throw the ball we can no longer run with it or kick it; if we boil the eggs, we can no longer scramble or poach them. These possibilities always remain specific; scrambling and poaching don’t merge. The cluster of implicit possibilities implies one next action. And that action will carry the cluster forward.

Any one way I act is *already* precisioned by other possible actions. I lift the coffee pot in such a way that touching the hot part can’t happen, and so pouring it will be possible, and so I have control of how much I tip it and can pour a little, not too much too quickly. These other behaviors have already helped shape this ongoing action of lifting the coffee pot. Many other possible actions always participate in shaping what I actually do. Any action really carries forward a whole cluster of inter-affecting action possibilities. Many implicit possibilities shape a next happening.

For example, any *one* next chess move must make all of the opponent’s promising possibilities impossible and also open up new possible moves for our side. Chess is of course limited by its rules, but it is a good example of how one move is really the carrying forward of a whole cluster of precise possibilities. These are not merged or indeterminate. One couldn’t play chess without precise possibilities. They remain specific and separate in this more intricate sense of “separate”. The player tests out the move by tracing as many possibilities as time allows, but the new move first comes to mind directly from the implicit intricacy of the cluster of possibilities implied all at once. (See Gendlin, in press.)

The many events that have happened are retained, but in a more intricate way: Now they function *both* as they were *and* in the one further implying. (See “pyramiding” in Chapter VI of Gendlin 1997a.) The implicit intricacy does not consist of structures that are just there, just objects. Implicit intricacy is an active implying, generating and re-generating structures.

Here we have arrived at the main thesis of this article: Process generates structures. The generating is not done by structures alone.

We can change to a new model for what “exists” or “is”. I outline it very simply here with four terms:

1. Implicit intricacy;
2. Implying and enacting the sequence of next events;
3. Precise interaction that is prior to separate things (for example body-environment interaction);
4. Implying implies the sequence of next events, but brings a further implying.

The detail of this model is missing here, of course, but I cannot tell more of it in this article. Please see my *A Process Model* (Gendlin 1997a) for the complete version.

#### IV. THE INHERENT RELATION OF SCIENCE AND THE IMPLICIT

***The concepts of science change every few years.*** What science tells us today is different from what it said forty years ago. And forty years from now it will deny much of what it says today. We value its recommendations for our health, but we know these too will soon be different.

In the time of Kant and Hegel science was mechanics. They wrote that nature *is* a mechanical system. When I was young everything was said to be chemistry. I was told to think of myself as chemical equations. Today we are supposed to think of ourselves as neurological structures, what the neurons do.

After a while we and nature will seem to be something else again. Obviously we “are” not any one of these. ***So we vividly see the implicit nature of nature, and our own implicit nature.***

***We are not only the sequence of explications.*** We are the generative *implying* and *explicating*. Events are an *explicating*.

But explications don’t just change. The change is a development, but attempts to account for it show no deductive continuity because new areas open and always bring many more new terms (Fodor, 1974). But explications can last for some decades and give rise to many results which are only gradually absorbed. Great changes in the body-environment process can happen.<sup>3</sup>

How shall we think from here? Rather than structures alone, our concepts can be of processes that generate structures.<sup>4</sup>

We can also employ the implicit in the very process of our thinking. It becomes more systematic if we think both with logic and with the implicit. This kind of thinking requires a new understanding of how they are related to each other.

The usual thinking is in fact already both. Thoughts and words (and actions) can come to us from explicit knowledge and from implicit experiencing.

Any *clarity* is both. The “aha!” produced by a logical presentation before us is *its effect* on our experienced understanding. *Clarity, (we see) is always the fresh implicit effect brought by the explication.* Clarity is both the structures and the felt understanding.

We can think systematically with both if we can employ them in turn. We can pursue where just logic leads. We can also *pause* to refer directly to the implicit intricacy (“all that”) which can come freshly again from any words or concepts and in any situation. Then we can see what *that* implies and where it leads.<sup>5</sup>

These are two very different ways to go further. We can *first* let each go as far as it can, keeping both inviolable, preventing them from stopping or obstructing each other.

*Then* we can see how each can expand the other.

With logic we pursue the implications from fixed terms. Logic alone can arrive where nothing else can go. Computers can lead us to new conclusions and new territories that we could not reach in any other way. But *from there* (or from anywhere) a fresh implicit comes and opens a way to go further, beyond computers and logic alone. ***There is a reciprocal relation between logical calculation and the implicit.*** Each can go on where the other stops. Each expands what the other has done, if we first let them work in turn.

There is an inherent reason why they can continue each other. Logical units *are* explications. ***Logical units are body-environment interaction being carried forward.*** From that organismic carrying forward new units can be generated. Therefore each is inherently an implicit carrying forward of the other.

If we fall into thinking that we are mechanical, chemical, or neurological structures in the space of there-from-here, then we take ourselves as objects. We exist as an observer’s experience. Nagel (1986) posed the puzzle: “I am my brain,” he said, but this makes me an object, and not even my object or yours, rather an object viewed from nowhere. He called modern science “the view from nowhere”. Nagel’s puzzle brings home that we cannot be just objects.

This still current puzzle arises from the assumption that what “exists” consists just of what fills space. That is why humans and everything else seem to *be* mere objects.

***Our solution is*** a new understanding of how things “*are*”, not only objects, but also their processes which are generating their structures. Nothing is only objects. ***There are no objects alone.*** They are the implicit intricacy that implies a sequence of events in which each next event brings a fresh implying.

Let us not struggle to understand the new model in concepts that still assume the old model. Instead of the impossible task of placing the implicit–explicating process into a universe of structures, let us start in that more intricate process, and understand the structures within the wider implying-explicating process.

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## ENDNOTES:

1. Consciousness (sensation) arises in animal behavior. It does not consist just of the percepts; they are generated as they happen (and generate a more intricate kind of time (Gendlin 1997a, Chapter IVB), not just successive time positions. The human cognitive capacity using movable patterns has to be distinguished from (and derived from) animal behavior. (See chapters VI and VIIA of *Gendlin 1997a*.) Language and symbolizing are not at all arbitrary or conventional, as if not being generated by the organismic body-environment interaction which antecedes the development of perception and cognition.
2. Sometimes the fact that science has not found something is misunderstood as if it were a scientific finding. But it is well known that one can always easily *not-find* even a well known fact if one uses instruments on which it cannot register. (“The null hypothesis cannot be proven.”)
3. For example, water molecules had seemed exhaustively defined. Recently water turns out to have many other characteristics such as variable ways of crystallizing. Many factors can affect water in ways not previously known. This will also open a new branch of medicine, since water is such an important constituent of living things.

Many new effects are being found in other materials. A “*materials science*” now deals with new *fundamental properties* of many materials, with important results for

their use in engineering. Implicit intricacy does not consist of just a few more variables. It can open large areas which change the known factors and relevances. It is so also for speaking. Beyond the standard meanings someone seems to say, reflective listening reveals an implicit intricacy with very different meanings and relevances.

4. Gallagher (2005) offers the concept of “transmodality” connecting the five sensory modes long before the neurological structures that link them develop. (See my explanation in Gendlin 2009.)

Stuart (in press) defines “enkinaesthesia,” the bodily process of active probing with environmental responses. There is also much current work in mathematics, calculation, quantum computing, and nanoscience which points in this direction and needs a new model.

5. A detailed method of fourteen steps for concept-formation has been developed. See TAE (Thinking at the Edge) at [http://www.focusing.org/tae\\_steps.html](http://www.focusing.org/tae_steps.html).

## ZIGZAGGING OUR WAY TO EXPANDED POSSIBILITIES FOR FOCUSING

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*Bruce Nayowith M.D.*

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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.<sup>1</sup>
- 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 placebo<sup>2</sup> 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”<sup>3</sup>)

## 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.<sup>4</sup> (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.<sup>5</sup> 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.<sup>6</sup>

**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 occur<sup>7</sup>. 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 client<sup>8</sup>.

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 meaning<sup>8</sup>?

- 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 (Gendlin<sup>9</sup>)
- 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 Project<sup>11</sup> 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 projects<sup>12</sup>.

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 conflict<sup>13</sup>). They offer a mathematical formula for the number of meditators needed to positively influence a community<sup>14</sup>.

## **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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## THE ATTUNED BRAIN: Crossings In Focusing-oriented Therapy and Neuroscience

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*Leslie Ellis, M.A.*

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### ABSTRACT

Current findings in interpersonal neurobiology are providing scientific support for more emphasis on whole-brain approaches in clinical practice that use empathy, emotion, attachment theory and other relational approaches to psychotherapy. These ‘softer’ approaches have previously been largely ignored as brain researchers favored study of the more cognitive aspects of the brain functioning in isolation. In this paper, I will provide an overview of current affective neuroscientific research with an emphasis on how it supports the use of Focusing-Oriented Therapy. I will explain how some aspects of interpersonal neurobiology provide evidence about why Focusing works. I will include relevant ideas from Eugene Gendlin’s philosophy, and ground these ideas with clinical examples.

*Keywords:* Interpersonal Neurobiology, Affective Neuroscience, Focusing-Oriented Therapy

If the 90’s were widely referred to as the decade of the brain, the first decade of the new millennium could well be called the decade of the *social* brain. Over the last ten years, research into the inner workings of the human brain has shifted from its century-long emphasis on the brain in isolation, with its “almost restrictive focus on cognition,” (Schore, 2003a, p. 212) to the study of the brain in interaction, with a resulting greater emphasis on mutual emotional regulation and empathy. Many of these new discoveries offer strong support for the practice of Focusing-Oriented Therapy (FOT). In fact, the insights and discoveries from the field of affective neuroscience are bringing general psychological theories closer to what Gendlin (1997) has been saying all along: that human beings (indeed all living organisms) are *processes* that cannot be understood as discrete, static units, nor apart from each other or their environment. This paper will examine what we now know about the brain, with a particular focus on current neuroscientific research related to affect regulation and attachment, and will describe several specific examples demonstrating how FOT processes can facilitate emotional healing.

According to Schore (2003a), “The newer fields of affective neuroscience and especially social neuroscience are exploring inter-brain interactions” (p. 214). What he and other researchers in this field are finding is that the human brain cannot develop in isolation. The brains of newborns, for example, are not fully developed and will continue to grow and change throughout the lifespan, with a concentrated period of brain development within the first three years of life. According to Cozolino (2010), “Neuroscientists already possess the

perfect model for understanding interdependency—the individual neuron. We know that neither the individual neuron nor the single human being exist in nature. Without mutually stimulating interactions, people and neurons wither and die” (p. 179). And elsewhere, Cozolino (2006) states that we should view the brain “not as a fully formed structure, but as a dynamic process undergoing constant development and reconstruction” (p. 50). Gendlin’s own philosophical works suggest similar conclusions (Gendlin, 1997).

In an exacting survey of the current research, Schore (2003a) has concluded that the mother-infant dyad is characterized by right-brain-to-right-brain communication, and that this unconscious, automatic interaction through gesture, facial expression and tone of voice is what enables the infant’s right brain to develop and lays the groundwork for how the baby will process socio-emotional information throughout life. In addition, Schore stated that because of the right hemisphere’s deep connections with the limbic system and the autonomic nervous system, “it is centrally involved in controlling vital functions supporting survival, and enabling the individual to cope with stress and challenges” (p. 75). This new research is representative of a huge volume of new discoveries about the human brain that is leading to a model of psychotherapy that supports much of what happens in FOT.

Schore (2003a) offers several examples from FOT of empathic, two-way unconscious communication between therapist and client, and refers to the reciprocal effect of this relationship. “A successful therapeutic relationship can act as an interactive affect-regulating context that optimizes the growth of “two minds in the making”; that is, increases in complexity in both the patient’s and the therapist’s continually developing unconscious right minds” (p. 57). Even as researchers continue to study parts of the brain in isolation, they are finding a high degree of interconnection, not just within the brain, but also in brain-body communication, and in the brain-body’s relationship to others and its environment.

If ever there was a case for a process-model approach it is in the realm of affective neuroscience. Just because we can reduce something to its constituent parts does not mean we can understand ourselves that way, or that this provides a true picture of what is really happening in any living process. Gendlin likens the current trend of viewing human behavior in terms of neurology as similar to the previous trend that viewed our human behavior and pathology as a function of chemistry. Both are reductionistic and accurate as far as they go, but limited.

Don’t assume it’s all neurology. There’s a lot to be understood that way, but it would be a mistake to say we can understand things only that way . . . Living is the basic model through which I understand everything. It’s clearly superior to the dead unit model. Let’s model it *at least* on the living process where these separated things are not separate. The universe is at least this felt-sense living, implicit precise order (2011).

This sentiment is becoming increasingly accepted among those who are currently studying brain development.

## APPLICATIONS TO PSYCHOTHERAPY

Schore (2003a, 2003b, 2008) has devoted much of his recent study to the development of a new attachment theory that is based on the discovery that the infant brain is not fully developed at birth, and that the right hemisphere is the focus of development and growth for the first three years of life. In that time, the baby uses the mother's (or primary caregiver's) right brain for emotional regulation and gradually internalizes what it picks up in this interaction. Of special interest to psychotherapists is the fact that where the maternal environment does not meet the development needs of the infant, that part of the baby's development stalls. It becomes what Gendlin would refer to as a "stopped process" (1997, p. 12) which can change the trajectory of the infant's brain development and potentially lead to psychopathology. Schore (2003b) cites a large body of evidence to suggest "self-organization in the developing brain occurs in the context of a relationship with another self, another brain. This primordial relational context can be growth-facilitating or growth-inhibiting, and so it imprints into the early-developing right brain either a resilience against or a vulnerability to later forming psychiatric disorders" (p. xv).

Gendlin's process model (1997) suggests that there continues to be opportunity for the body to make up for what it has missed in early development. In *Implicit Precision* (Gendlin, in press) stated that when the environment does not cooperate with what the body is implying, "the body keeps implying the part of the process that did not occur. What is not carried forward becomes a reiterative implying" (p. 12). If the body can carry on, it will do so, in a different way than it would have, but always in a life-forward direction by whatever means available. "A reiterated implying is always new and regenerating. And it is always open to *whatever* will carry it forward" (p. 13).

This explains why geese can imprint on human beings if other geese are not present, or why an orphan kitten can attach to a crow, two real-life examples of life carrying forward with *whatever* is available. In the absence of a perfect maternal figure, infants of any species will attach to another living being that provides at least some of what it needs to move forward. Of course, for the brain to develop optimally, it needs to interact with the attuned brain of another member of its own species. One of the main findings, replicated over and over in recent neuroscientific research, is that we are deeply social beings, that our brains will not develop in isolation and that this need for interaction never stops.

In psychotherapy, it is the relationship that heals. This is not a new idea. What is novel, though, is that current brain research not only supports this idea but also offers insight into the internal mechanisms that allow human interaction to foster neural growth. This means we can begin to tailor our interventions more closely to what we know will foster neural integration, and I would argue that the Focusing approach is one that does this. Schore (2003a) suggests that the crossing of psychology and neurobiology has obviated the development of therapeutic practices that focus on the empathic connection between therapist and client, particularly their implicit, unconscious communication. Such practices, which are an intrinsic part of FOT, include mutual attunement and co-creation of an inter-subjective field that is spacious and allows mutual regulation in the dyad to move the process forward from

what the client's body is implying. Gendlin (2011) recently said that what makes Focusing work is this unconscious communication between two bodies:

Focusing is a way to access your bodily knowing. Your body picks up more of the other person than you consciously can. Your body also puts out more of yourself than you intend or than you know is visible. Others often react to that rather than to your conscious message. With a little training you can get a feel for your bodily knowing of what is going on.

This new definition of Focusing supports what brain researchers are discovering about how psychotherapy facilitates the healing process: that what effectively happens in a therapy session is more than what one can consciously articulate. However, with Focusing training, therapists can become more aware, through their bodies, of what is happening in the dyad so that they, at least, can be more conscious and in tune with the interactive process. And even where the therapist is not conscious of the interactive flow, I suggest that Focusing training will have enlarged their capacity to self regulate and tolerate intense affect, and the experience of this successful mutual affect regulation will be internalized by the client.

Therapy changes the brains of our clients because they are in the presence of an attuned brain (Schoore, 2008; Cozolino, 2010). Our clients' nervous systems become more regulated in the presence of a calm, regulated nervous system (Levine, 2010). We can theorize all we want to about what we are doing as psychotherapists in session, and say insightful things, but so much of what happens is simply a lived human experience. So much of what is healing in psychotherapy (and in any interaction between human beings) is the implicit wisdom of two bodies together bringing forward life's next step. This comes as a result of our clients' communication with and reaction to that greater knowing in themselves and in us, and in our body's concurrent, implicitly-wise responses to them. In addition, FOT encourages the articulation of what is implicit in the client through the steps of finding a felt sense, and then putting into words what is at first experienced as complex and ineffable (Gendlin, 1978/1981). This key aspect of the Focusing process is echoed in Schoore's (2003a) description of how the attuned therapist encourages neural integration across hemispheres.

This interactive regulation of the patient's state enables him/her to verbally label the affective experience. In a "genuine dialogue" with the therapist, the patient raises to an inner word and then into a spoken word what he/she needs to say at a particular moment but does not yet possess as speech. But the patient must experience this verbal description of an internal state as heard by an empathic other . . . . The patient's affectively charged but now-regulated right brain experience can then be communicated to the left brain for further processing . . . this allows for a linkage of the non-verbal and verbal representational domains (p. 268).

## CLINICAL EXAMPLES

Schore (2003) has deeply investigated right-brain to right-brain communication between the primary caregiver (mother) and baby in the first two to three years of the baby's life, and has emphasized the importance of an attuned relationship to the baby's brain development, as it lays down the blueprint for how the baby will regulate emotions and navigate relationships for a lifetime. Where this process is mis-attuned or traumatic, part of the implicit developmental process does not continue, and we have instead a 'stopped process.' As we have stated, the body goes on implying this unmet need while other lines of development continue. As clinicians, many of the presenting issues that our clients bring to us are the result of these developmental arrests.

What I have discovered through my therapy practice is that once trust and connection have been established, these stalled processes will show up in the intersubjective field, and that there is a sense in the client's body that some part of the stalled process has met what it needs to resume. This likely happens all the time in a variety of relationships, but in the therapy setting, it is my job to notice and meet these unmet needs to the extent this is possible. Although by definition, much of this mutual right-brain interaction happens below the level of consciousness, Focusing does facilitate some awareness and deliberation, even in this realm. Schore (2003a, p. 77) suggests that the therapist engage in a kind of "reverie" or "free-floating attentiveness" which facilitates communication from the therapist's to the client's right brain.

In my clinical experience as a Focusing-Oriented therapist, I find that tuning into my own felt sense via my empathic connection with my client (switching to a right-brain-dominant mode), enables me to pick up on various and changing self states within my client, whether they speak about them or not. Sometimes, for example, I feel as though I am in the unmistakable presence of a baby. When this happens, my communication style spontaneously changes to match what is needed. I often become more emphatic, tend to smile more, and to concentrate on my client's facial expression. In one specific example, I watched as a client's facial expression moved through a study of changes over a very short space of time. I felt I was in the presence of a very young part of her. She stopped talking and her face and body began to move, twist and contort. All of this was clearly out of her awareness, yet she looked at me intently all the while, as though searching. I calmly held her gaze for as long as she did this, maybe half a minute, and then the spell was broken, and we moved on. It felt as though her body received what it needed in that moment, and could move forward. When she resumed talking (it was about her early relationship with her mother), her outlook shifted to a more optimistic one.

Something I have noticed that might warrant further study is that the clients who most often give me the felt sense of "baby" during our work together all appear to have early attachment issues. I base this observation on both their life history and on the dynamics of their current relationships, including the therapy relationship. Early attachment wounds tend to be enacted in therapy when the client who feels safe enough is able to sense into their bodies and allow the next step to emerge. But it is impossible to generalize further. "Psychotherapy, like parenting, is neither mechanical nor generic. Each therapist-client pair creates

a unique relationship” (Cozolino, 2010, p. 30). With one client, their deep attachment need brings a felt sense of intense longing and pulls from me strong emotion and focused attention. With another, the attachment wound has led to a more parasympathetic response, a sense of hopelessness and withdrawal, and in this case, too much attention causes further withdrawal. As with parenting, in therapy there are times to be present with rapt attention, and times to blend into the background—to be available, but not intrusive. The key is to sense into one’s own bodily reactions, as we do in Focusing, and respond to moment-by-moment cues from the client. It is important not to operate from any preconceived notions or theories, no matter how tempting this may be.

### IMPLICIT COMPLEXITY

Every dyad is different and evokes a unique set of interactions. My work with a client may allow for some carrying forward in some respects, and in other ways, the client may continue implying, but in a new and different way. Gendlin (in press) discusses this increasing complexity as ‘implying-into-occurring,’ and he points out that once something has occurred, it changes all future implying. This has many implications for psychotherapy. One important implication is that while a specific attachment need that was a stalled process was going on implying throughout a client’s life, the rest of them continued to grow and develop. So in the therapy room, we are not sitting with a baby, even though there may be an infantile sequence that is implying. In adulthood, we have so many more cognitive, expressive and emotional resources to draw upon that were not available to the baby. We can articulate the process as we experience it, integrating all parts of the brain, and potentially accelerating the stalled developmental process.

I have the sense in this work that one instance of profound meeting can make up for many missed by the client early in their life. It is as though the stopped process formed a kind of dam, and once it breaks, all kinds of things are possible that were not before; there is a kind of domino effect. Gendlin (1997) would say that because there is a stopped process, the missing part of the client’s environment has “attained a startling power,” because when this missing aspect occurs, “all of that process which was stopped by the absence will occur” (p. 12). Schore (2003a) supports the idea of iterative implying and its power to evoke change; he refers back to Freud’s theory of the self as a “dynamic conception of forces in the mind that work together or against one another to strive toward a goal. A cardinal tenet of dynamic theory is that the nonlinear self acts *iteratively* [emphasis added], so that minor changes, occurring at the right moment, can be amplified in the system, launching it into a qualitatively different state” (p. 267).

Gendlin’s is an optimistic philosophy: he purports that it is never too late to carry forward places in us that are stuck. Brain research backs this up. According to Schore (2003a):

A large body of studies in the neurosciences indicate that although the effects of environmental experiences develop more rapidly and extensively in the developing than the adult brain, the capacity for experience-dependent plastic

changes in the nervous system remains throughout the lifespan . . . . In fact, there is evidence that the prefrontal limbic cortex, more than any other part of the cerebral cortex, retains the plastic capacities of early development (p. 31-32).

In particular, the areas of our brain responsible for interpersonal communication—empathy, affect and bodily awareness and regulation (all skills used in Focusing)—have the potential for change throughout our lifetime. The right hemisphere is where emotional responses and regulation, autobiographical memory, interoception, emotional communication of all kinds, and interpersonal nonverbal communication all are processed. According to Damasio (1994), the right hemisphere also contains “the most comprehensive and integrated map of the body state available to the brain” (p. 66). This detailed internal map is the starting point for the Focusing process. Although this way of dividing up brain functions into constituent parts comes from the old unit model paradigm, it is useful to have a map of the brain functions that wire together, and to identify the functions that are amenable to change throughout life. The right orbital prefrontal cortex is the focal area for both early brain development, and ongoing growth and change in the context of facilitative relationship. Schore (2003a) said this part of the brain is:

the only cortical structure with direct connections to the hypothalamus, the amygdala, and the reticular formation in the brain stem that regulates arousal, and through these connections it can modulate instinctual behavior and internal drives. But because it contains neurons that process face and voice information, this system is also capable of appraising changes in the external environment, especially the social, object-related environment. Due to its unique connections, at the orbitofrontal level cortically processed information concerning the *external* environment (e.g. visual and auditory stimuli emanating from the emotional face of the *object*) is integrated with subcortically processed information regarding the *internal* visceral environment (e.g. concurrent changes in the emotional or bodily *self* state) p. 42.

This is the part of our brain that is the interface between inner and outer realms, and thus is critical to our sense of self. Neuroscientists have discovered that it is through our body that we understand how we feel (Jacoboni, 2008). Empathy is a right-hemispheric process that leads to internalization of the emotion of others, and ultimately, a separate sense of self. According to Schore, (2003a), “the right hemisphere is critically involved in the maintenance of a coherent, continuous, and unified implicit sense of self,” (p. xv). As such, this area must be both a critical tool for and target of psychotherapeutic intervention.

## MUTUAL REGULATION AND MOMENTS OF MEETING

Every encounter in the therapy room is new and different, and Focusing invites the client to allow their bodies to express specifically what is needed next. For example, if the client intuitively feels that their early attachment needs can be met in the clinical setting, they will use the therapy for this purpose. But, as stated earlier, what happens in therapy is

not just like a caregiver-baby dyad. It is an element of a process that is so much more intricate, as complex as two human beings interacting can be, where the behavior possibilities are vast. One of the possibilities we are most interested in here is that the therapy will allow for the continuation of stalled early developmental processes. Much of what happens in the mother-infant dyad is a process of unconscious regulation of the baby's developing nervous system by the mother's more capacious one. The infant gradually internalizes her ability to tolerate distress (Cozolino, 2010; Schore, 2003a; Kohut, 1984). Later in life, we continue to co-regulate each other (Cozolino, 2010). Missed parts go on implying and implying until something in the environment matches the unmet need or is close enough to allow forward motion (Gendlin, 1997). It is the therapist's calm, regulated unconscious response, similar to the dynamic of the infant-caregiver dyad, that allows the client's body to pick up what it needs and move in a life-forward direction.

An important question to consider here is: if dyadic interaction is unconscious and reciprocal, how do we ensure that we as therapists set the tone? How do we prevent the dyad from becoming dysregulated by a client's intense emotional response? Schore (2003a) suggests that therapists need to do enough of their own therapy to be stable, reliable regulators of intense affect—their own and others. But he does not tell us specifically how to make sure that the regulated nervous system maintains the stronger frequency so that both bodies will eventually resonate with this calm state. This is where Focusing offers a specific map. Engendering and maintaining a “friendly attitude” towards the felt sense (Gendlin, 1996, p. 55) helps to ensure that the interaction ultimately helps the client settle and move forward. This outcome is not a given! As Schore repeatedly states, mutual regulation happens automatically and unconsciously. So how can we direct our unconscious to be helpful, when, by definition, we don't control it? I would suggest that through Focusing we can enlarge our capacity for holding and processing whatever comes up in a given session. Focusing teaches resilience, an open attitude, and the ability to stay with difficult emotion until there is a felt shift. The Focusing-Oriented therapist both models this and participates, enlarging the capacity of both therapist and client to regulate increasingly intense experiences. I would offer this analogy: not all of us are gifted with the ability to sing on key. But if there is a clear, strong voice that can hold the note steadily and consistently, other singers will pick up on it. With time, even a group of unskilled singers will resonate harmoniously. The key is for the therapist to *be* that clear, steady signal, consistently, over time, and under varying, and stressful conditions. This can't be taught. It must be practiced, like any skill or discipline.

As Focusing-Oriented therapists, our intention is to co-create harmony, but not to take the lead. We want to have a positive effect on our clients by offering them our own physical/emotional selves to assist in mutual regulation. It would be a mistake to assume that our clients do not and should not also affect us deeply. In fact, in many cases, it is critical that the client visibly affect the therapist so that the client has the direct experience that their difficult feelings are not disavowed and in fact are manageable by another human being. According to Knox (2011), in early developmental stages,

it would be catastrophic for the infant to be disillusioned about his role in creating the maternal response. In creating the mirroring response in a par-

ent, the child discovers that he actually exists as a person with a mind and desires . . . . It is as though the infant's experience is, "if I can't affect you, then I don't exist" (p. 113).

We must not make this mistake with our clients. The goal is not to experience them from a comfortable distance and allow their intense experiences to pass over us without a ripple. Instead we must have the courage to be affected by them, to engage at an authentic emotional level. It is also hubris to suggest that we will never be pulled off balance by our interactions with clients. The key, as was found in infant research (Schorer 2003b), is to be able to notice and repair the dysregulation when it happens. The concept of the therapists' unconscious, deep emotional involvement as an intrinsic part of the healing process was first discussed by Jung in *The Psychology of the Transference* (1954), a comparison of therapist-client relationship processes as analogous to those described in sixteenth-century alchemical texts. One image, for example, depicts the pair sitting at the edge of a bath, their feet in the same water, an apt symbol of meeting at the unconscious level. However, the detached, interpretive approach of traditional Freudian psychoanalysis had greater influence on the practice of psychotherapy in its early decades (Knox, 2011). Current findings from affective neuroscientific research are now moving the practice of psychoanalysis in a more process-oriented and relational direction, supporting the theories of those who have adopted an intersubjective approach (Bion, Kohut and others). Knox (2011) discusses her own changes as an analyst looking back at a case she would now have handled differently:

My focus at that time on interpretation as the main tool for change made me less open to the possibility of alternative ways of responding . . . . In contrast I would now focus on creating the conditions that allow the patient's own sense of agency to be mobilized, initially through the implicit relational exchanges between us, the "moments of meeting" (p. 161).

## RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

In light of current brain research and trends toward supporting affect regulation and the depth and quality of the therapeutic relationship as essential aspects of psychotherapy, FOT offers many specific and well-developed practices that could be more universally applied. From the study of affective neuroscience, Schorer (2003a) has suggested there is a need for new therapeutic practices to address early developmental issues because they affect brain development throughout the lifespan. In the appendix to his book, *Affect Regulation & the Repair of the Self*, Schorer (2003a) outlines 20 principles of psychotherapeutic treatment of early-forming right hemispheric self-pathologies. There are three areas in particular that could be addressed using Focusing techniques. Schorer recommends there be an emphasis on *process* rather than interpretation; that the interactive therapeutic environment should facilitate "an implicit self system capable of modulating a broader range of affects" (p. 281); and that the therapist's tolerance for affect "is a critical factor determining the range, types, and intensities of emotions that are explored or disavowed" (p. 281). FOT addresses all of these because it is based on a process model that is inherently relational, and because much

of the Focusing process has the effect of expanding affect tolerance in *both* therapist and client. In addition, FOT facilitates the process of neural integration with its practice of inviting clients to sense inside and to articulate what is implicit. Current neuroscientific research affirms and supports the current practice of Focusing-Oriented Therapy, offering concrete information about why focusing works. The crossing of FOT and current research in affective neuroscience is a promising area rich with possibilities for future study and refinement of psychotherapy practices.

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## ATTACHMENT AND NEUROSCIENCE

### The Benefits of Being a Focusing Oriented Professional

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*Carol Nickerson, MSW, LICSW, CFT*

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Over 20 years ago, fresh out of college, I witnessed my supervisor (at a residential treatment center for “emotionally and behaviorally disturbed” adolescents) be confronted by an aggressive and threatening adolescent equal in size to him. My supervisor took a deep breath, (maybe winced a tiny bit, as he was only human), paused, and began saying things to the boy like, “I will not let you hurt me. We will be safe here. You have been hurt very, very, badly and you didn’t deserve it. I don’t know what happened to you, but I know you were hurt and I know you deserve to be safe now and not be hurt again . . .” he went on in this way, and in a matter of moments, the boy was sitting down, and leaning forward. My supervisor sat across from him as if in a mirror.

People who practice Focusing, also referred to as ‘Focusing People’ by Eugene Gendlin, likely read the above passage with a *felt-sense-knowing* about the level of presence, attunement and acceptance that the supervisor holds in this scenario. We understand the analogy of the mirror. We understand that for the supervisor to create a space in which such a scared, ready-to-fight teenager felt safe enough to pause and engage in such a powerful interaction that the supervisor had to be aware of his own emotions, sensations and survival reaction. It is clear that he responded from a whole which allowed him a more therapeutic response than yelling, calling for staff and threatening consequences. Focusing people have a *knowing* that the supervisor responded from a place of presence, acceptance, and trust.

How do we develop the space inside us that can hold and contain not only our own affective states but also those of others? It is well known and accepted, through decades of research in the fields of psychoanalysis, psychiatry, and child development, that the foundation for optimal mental health develops within the attachment and bonding cycle between an infant and its primary caregiver. The sense of well-being that emerges from predictable and repeated experiences of care creates what John Bowlby, an attachment theory pioneer, called a *secure base* (a term which, for the purposes of this article, the writer has modified to a *secure-enough-base*, adapting early childhood pioneer, D.W. Winnicott’s phrase, “*good-enough-mother*”).

Perry and Szalavitz (2006) state that:

It is through the thousands of times we respond to our crying infant that we help create a healthy capacity to get pleasure from present and future human connection. Because both the brain’s relational and pleasure-mediating neural systems are linked with our stress-response systems, interactions with loved ones are our major stress-modulating mechanism. There is also a class of nerve

cells in the brain known as mirror neurons, which respond in synchrony with the behavior of others. This capacity for mutual regulation provides another basis for attachment. (p. 89-90).

The attachment cycle between caregiver and infant sets the stage for our emotional health. The regulation of emotion and affect play a significant role in how we learn, make decisions, and cope with our environments.

As explained by Allan Schore (2001),

Interdisciplinary research and clinical data are affirming the concept that in infancy and beyond, the regulation of affect is a central organizing principle of human development and motivation. In the neuroscience literature Damasio asserts that emotions are the highest order, direct expression of bioregulation in complex organisms (1998), and that primordial representations of body states are the building blocks and scaffolding of development. Antonio Damasio is an internationally recognized leader in neuroscience. His research has helped to elucidate the neural basis for the emotions and has shown that emotions play a central role in social cognition and decision-making (1994) (pp. 3-4).

Optimally, an infant develops an inner sense of well-being, a feeling inside their body which translates to “I am okay” or “I am safe”. This feeling develops within the consistent nurturance of the interactive relationship they have with their primary caregiver(s). The sense of a *secure-enough-base* develops, and the foundation for further growth and development is established.

Primary goals of parenting include providing a child with the capacity for self-soothing and the ability to form positive relationships. This allows the child to face the challenges of life and benefit from healing life experiences. The successful mastery of challenges throughout life leads to taking on even more complex challenges that will promote increasingly higher levels of neural network development and integration. When internal or external factors prevent an individual from approaching challenging and stressful situations, neural systems will tend to remain underdeveloped or unintegrated (Cozolino, p.30).

It is within this primary relationship(s) that we learn and experience that relating with others is comforting, fun and pleasurable. In the attachment relationship, we learn the beginnings of trust in another person. When our early experiences are filled with trusting reciprocal interactions with our caregiver(s), *the secure-enough-base* forms.

Thanks to the discovery of neuroplasticity, we know that developing and/or strengthening *secure-enough-base* is always a possibility. Not only does the research show that as we mature, the original attachment cycle supports attachment theory, but current interdisciplinary research is also finding that our brains are more flexible than it was once believed.

The brain's amazing plasticity at this stage [a child's developing brain] of development sets a lifelong template for thoughts, feelings, behavior and a variety of stress-related disorders. Moreover, because the brain remains flexible throughout life, nonverbal communication retains the capacity to change. Studies with people over age ninety show us images of mature brains that continue to produce new neural pathways at a time when older pathways are dying. The same experiential and social factors that profoundly shape the brain initially can also be instrumental in repairing the causes and symptoms of stress-related disorders. (healingresources.com)

Our brains have the capacity for plasticity throughout our lifetime which impacts the ways in which we function, learn, relate to others, and cope, and due to the plasticity of the brain, these functions can be flexible. Therefore, skills we need for self-care and for developing and maintaining positive relationships with others are able to grow.

Changing attachment status as we develop is quite possible. Studies have shown that individuals can move from what was an insecure child attachment to a secure adult attachment status. The studies examine the finding of an “earned-security” status, one that is important for our understanding of coherent functioning and the possibilities for change. (Seigel, 2003, p.123).

Current neuroscience findings confirm that our brains have the capacity for plasticity at any age. Therefore, even though we may have experienced attachment disruptions and/or traumas in our development, causing varying states of dysregulation, new neural pathways can grow, over time. Reparative processes can occur and transformation can be realized.

Attachment issues have many possible causes: maybe it was clear-cut child abuse, abandonment, neglect, or maybe it was that the developmental needs were not met due to multiple life stressors or illness impacting the parent-child bonding. Our clients come to us with problems in their relationships with others, low self-esteem, and difficulty managing strong emotions. Often our clients bring issues or ways of interacting that challenge us. Sometimes, we feel stuck with our clients. We don't know what more we can do to help them. We have our own issues with attachment and regulation of emotions.

## VIGNETTE

The following vignette describes how one Focusing oriented practitioner benefited from the practice of Focusing, and how this process supports the development and strengthening of *secure-enough-attachment*. Focusers will note that this is a partnered session, although a very similar process might take place within a psychotherapy session, a Focusing oriented supervision session, or other healing oriented session. Within the vignette below, occasional quotations from neuroscientists will be presented in italics.

**Focuser (F):** (the clinician, in this case): So, I'm aware of wanting to tell you a little about what I want to Focus on today; it's a case I have, and I'd like you to have a little background.

**Partner (P):** Yes, so take some time to share what feels right to share. (*Partner uses gentle, inviting tone of voice, creating openness and safety from the start.*)

**F:** I have worked with this client for many years. She has Complex Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and significant dissociation and depersonalization symptoms. She is very intelligent, creative, has a great sense of humor and the average person would never believe she has such severe mental health symptoms . . . such a serious childhood trauma history . . . (*pauses, yet only to catch a breath.*)

**P:** Hmmm . . . you might just take a moment to notice how your breath is . . . (*Partner listens and observes for non-verbal cues to help Focuser regulate her affect.*)

*Affective states, emotions and moods are contagious physically and can communicate themselves outside our awareness and intention, and beyond our conscious control because the right-brain experiences, holistically in a gestalt; encoding gestures, tone of voice, and spontaneous facial expressions, including the emotionally-revealing micro-expressions that flash across one's face too fast to be recorded consciously.*

*An infant is almost entirely right brained so, during the first preverbal months of life, all the infant-mother-dialogs occur implicitly, relying heavily on mirroring where the child learns to see himself reflected back. We continue to communicate with one another through the same right-brain modalities throughout our lives. Our training as psychotherapists [Focusing Practitioners] allows us to add an element of conscious deliberateness to this mirroring that has great capacity to heal. (Lapides, p.2).*

**F:** As I'm talking, I'm sensing shallow breathing and something constricting in my chest.

**P:** So you're sensing something there in your chest, like constriction, and shallow breath . . . (*Partner reflects, again, helping Focuser to pace herself.*)

**F:** Yes, and what I also want to tell you is that this client is as difficult as she is wonderful to work with. I hate using our pathological labels, but honestly, the diagnosis Borderline Personality comes to mind as I think of her now . . . she's so capable, yet she really isn't . . . she's just so hard to help.

**P:** Yes, so take some time to acknowledge something about how it's hard to help, something about Borderline Personality . . . noticing how that area in your chest is feeling . . .

*"The brain looks to the body to know how it feels and to assess the meaning of things; thus, becoming aware of bodily reactions can be a direct and effective means to deal with low road immersion." (Siegel, 2003, p.168). Siegel refers*

to low road immersion as a state in which our minds may shut off and become inflexible due to stressful situations or if we are triggered by past unresolved issues. *“When emotional reactions replace mindfulness, you’re on the low road and it’s very unlikely that you will be able to maintain nurturing communication and connection.”* (Siegel, 2003, p.155).

**F:** I’m feeling that constriction, tightness, and my face feel hot . . .

**P:** So tightness and a sense of how your face is feeling . . .

**F:** Yes, my face feels so hot, like it’s getting a sunburn. I’m taking time to say hello to it . . . and as I do . . . it’s cooling down . . . calming . . . calmer . . .

**P:** Taking time to feel how that feels as you notice it is calmer now . . .

*“Consciousness itself is not necessary for information processing, but it is necessary at times to achieve new outcomes in such processing.”* (Siegel, 1999, p. 260).

**F:** Yes, and something in me pictures her sitting across from me, talking about the same things she has talked about so many other times, and I want to yell, “Shut up! Stop! Do you hear yourself? When are you going to get it? You can make changes; it’s you, not everyone else!!!” That’s what I want to say to her . . .

**P:** Something in you wants to say all of this to her . . .

**F:** Yes, some part of me wants to scream this at her. It can’t take it anymore . . .

**P:** Part of you wants to scream, like it can’t take it anymore . . . maybe you want to let that part know you really hear it, how it’s feeling . . . like it wants to scream . . .

**F:** It wants to tell her to find a new therapist, obviously this isn’t working, find someone else! I’m noticing a deep breath. It feels so good to say this out loud . . . like a release . . .

**P:** Yes, and take time to notice how that release feels in your body . . .

**F:** No wonder my face felt so hot . . . it feels cooler now . . . like all this frustration was stuck there . . .

**P:** So, it’s like you are saying, no wonder it felt so hot like something was stuck.

**F:** Yes . . . something in me felt it wasn’t okay to feel like I wanted to tell my client to shut up and find a new therapist . . . I’m sensing that part now . . . like it’s not so sure even now . . . I can sense a shakiness in my chest . . .

*“Through the activation of multiple cognitive and emotional networks, previously dissociated functions are integrated and gradually brought under the control of cortical executive functions.”* (Cozolino, p.26).

**P:** Yes, you're sensing something feeling shaky . . . like it might not feel it's okay to express those feelings . . .

**F:** There's an image, it's vague like something is showing me a young girl . . . Oh, like it's me as a child, and I'm really mad at my sister, and I want to yell at her and tell her to stop, but I'm not allowed to . . . like I'm not allowed to be angry at anyone.

**P:** So you are remembering . . . and you are aware of an image. It's showing you a young girl, and something about not being able to be angry . . .

**F:** Yes, that feels right . . . she has her head down, like she's been bad, or done something wrong. I'm noticing a deep breath . . . and my chest is more open . . . her head has lifted some . . .

**P:** Yes, you are with her, like keeping her company . . .

**F:** Yes, she likes that; she expected to be scolded . . . like she wasn't allowed to be angry, or to express that she was, or both. I'm sensing if that fits and another breath . . . it feels like she's letting me know, yes, she has always felt like she had to be nice all the time . . . Hmm . . . I'm sensing how much that young place in me felt she shouldn't have anger or anything she thought was "negative feelings" about someone else . . .

**P:** So you might sense if there is more she'd like to let you know . . .

**F:** Yes . . . I'm sensing a relief, and deeper breathing . . . (*Focuser laughs a little*) . . . she, that young girl . . . is smiling . . . she's glad it was okay to be angry . . . Hmm, I'm noticing now that when I think of this client I have much more whole picture of her, what she's been through, how hard all of this must be for her . . . and that it's hard to be her therapist sometimes . . .

**P:** You might take some time to really feel that relief and allow your breathing to be as deep as it wants.

**F:** Hmm . . . I feel so much better, like I really care about her and my work with her again . . . how I have felt most of the time she's been coming to see me . . .

*In this process the therapist [Focusing Practitioner] plays essentially the same role as a parent, providing and modeling the regulatory functions of the social organism. As affect is repeatedly brought into the therapeutic relationship and successfully managed, the client gradually internalizes these skills by sculpting the neural structures necessary for auto regulation. As in childhood, the repeated cycle of attunement, rupture of the attunement, and its reestablishment gradually creates an expectation of reconnection (Lachmann & Beebe, (1996), (pp.1-13). The learned expectation of relief in the future enhances the ability to tolerate more intense affect in the midst of the stressful moment. (Cozolino, p. 21).*

The clinician resumes her work with this client as scheduled and notices a major shift in her own presence with the client. She no longer feels she needs to be hypervigilant about maintaining composure as she listens to her client. She feels openness inside, as though she is listening with new, fresh ears and a renewed commitment to providing optimal clinical treatment. This shift continues and the client's ability to self-regulate and observe her own felt experience is evident in her progress over many more months of treatment.

<b><u>Stages of Inner Relationship Focusing,</u></b> <b>Weiser Cornell</b>	<b><u>Focusing Steps:</u></b> <b><u>Short Form, Gendlin</u></b>	<b><u>The Cycle of Attachment, Bonding and Trust</u></b>
<p><b><u>Coming In</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bringing awareness to your body</li> <li>• Sensing or inviting what wants your awareness now</li> <li>• Waiting until something comes</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Clear a Space</u></b></p> <p>How are you? What's between you and feeling fine? Don't answer; let what comes in your body do the answering. Don't go into anything. Greet each concern that comes. Put each aside for a while, next to you. Except for that, are you fine?</p> <p><b><u>Felt Sense</u></b></p> <p>Pick one problem to focus on. Don't go into the problem. What do you sense in your body when you sense the whole of that problem? Sense all of that, the sense of the whole thing, the murky discomfort or the unclear body-sense of it.</p>	<p><b><u>Experience of need</u></b></p> <p>Caretakers are mindful of themselves, so they can tune into the infant's needs. The caretaker looks for, listens, senses, and intuits what the infant is wanting and receives feedback from the infant; a certain cry, body movement, or facial expression, which offers a message of what might be needed.</p>

<p><b><u>Stages of Inner Relationship Focusing,</u></b> <b>Weiser Cornell</b></p>	<p><b><u>Focusing Steps:</u></b> <b><u>Short Form, Gendlin</u></b></p>	<p><b><u>The Cycle of Attachment, Bonding and Trust</u></b></p>
<p><b><u>Making Contact</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Beginning to describe something (and checking with it).</li> <li>• Acknowledging it.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Get a handle</u></b></p> <p>What is the quality of the felt sense?            What one word, phrase, or image comes out of this felt sense?            What quality-word would fit it best?</p>	<p><b><u>State of arousal</u></b></p> <p>The caretaker considers the feedback: Hungry? Wet? Afraid? Sleepy? For example, when the mother checks to see if the infant needs a diaper change, she sees the infant’s diaper is dry which suggests, no, that’s not it. The caretaker moves on to check for something else. Hungry? The caretaker checks by offering a bottle, the infant is soothed, giving her feedback, yes, that’s it: hungry.</p>
<p><b><u>Deepening Contact</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Settling down with it and keeping it company.</li> <li>• Sensing for its point of view.</li> <li>• Letting it know you hear it.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Resonate</u></b></p> <p>Go back and forth between word (or image) and the felt sense.            Is that right?            If they match, have the sensation of matching several times.            If the felt sense changes, follow it with your attention.            When you get a perfect match, the words (images) being just right for this feeling, let yourself feel that for a minute.</p>	<p><b><u>Satisfaction of Need</u></b></p> <p>The caretaker stays with the infant and his/her need. The caretaker continues to offer her attention to notice if the infant’s need has been fully heard/tended to. The mother might say, “there now, little one, you were a very hungry baby”.</p>

<b><u>Stages of Inner Relationship Focusing,</u></b> <b>Weiser Cornell</b>	<b><u>Focusing Steps:</u></b> <b><u>Short Form, Gendlin</u></b>	<b><u>The Cycle of Attachment, Bonding and Trust</u></b>
<p><b><u>Coming out</u></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensing for a stopping place.</li> <li>• Receiving and experiencing what has changed.</li> <li>• Letting it know you're willing to come back.</li> <li>• Thanking the felt sense for bringing awareness out.</li> </ul>	<p><b><u>Ask</u></b></p> <p>“What is it, about the whole problem, that makes me so _____?”</p> <p>When stuck, ask questions: What is the worst of this feeling? What's really so bad about this? What does it need? What should happen? Don't answer; wait for the feeling to stir and give you an answer. What would it feel like if it was all OK? Let the body answer What is in the way of that?</p> <p><b><u>Receive</u></b></p> <p>Welcome what came. Be glad it spoke. It is only one step on this problem, not the last. Now that you know where it is, you can leave it and come back to it later. Protect it from critical voices that interrupt. Does your body want another round of focusing, or is this a good stopping place?</p>	<p><b><u>State of Relaxation</u></b></p> <p>The caretaker observes, checks, senses for the infant's satisfied need. If the infant is full, the caretaker stops feeding. If the infant has another need, it is attended to with more feeding, or burping. The caretaker notices the infant's changed state. She knows now the infant's need has been satisfied. She and the infant connect throughout this process. The caretaker by repeating these natural steps, instills the sense of trust within the infant that she will be back to tend to all of the infant's needs. The caretaker brings her awareness back to other thoughts, other activities of the day.</p>

The process and practice of Focusing embodies the original growth-producing ingredients of brain development: namely, the ingredients that grow within the attachment relationship. Theory and research supports that it is the trust and acceptance within the client-psychotherapist relationship that makes therapy work, regardless of the clinical method. In a review of hundreds of studies examining the outcome of psychotherapy, Orlinsky and Howard (1986) looked for those factors that seemed to relate to success. They found that the quality of the emotional connection between patient and therapist was far more important than the therapist's theoretical orientation. Preparing our minds to hold the fullness of

another's experience may be the most important aspect of our ongoing training as therapists. (Bodenoch, p.5).

In Cozolino's review of the research on attachment, he states:

Each parent's unconscious plays a role in the creation of the child's brain, just as the therapist's unconscious contributes to the context and outcome of therapy. This underscores the importance of proper training and adequate personal therapy for therapists, who will be putting their imprint on the hearts, minds, and brains of their clients. (p. 30).

Ann Weiser Cornell explains three key aspects of the Inner Relationship process: "the felt sense, an accepting inner attention, and a philosophy of what facilitates change. A felt sense is a body sensation that has meaning." She also discusses that when we tune into "that sensation from a purely accepting and curious attitude, it can be transforming. It is the process of this relational inner attention combined with the philosophy of being/allowing that supports the natural course of things (change)." (pp.11-16).

Strengthening and healing attachment-related issues using Focusing means we respond from a place within us that is calm, centered and resilient, instead of reacting or "acting out," or being "triggered". It means that instead of trying to cope with temporary and sometimes unhealthy choices, such as overeating, substance use, or over spending, we tune in to what our needs are and choose coping strategies based on a sense of wholeness and well-being. Within the process of Focusing, we become aware of our obvious, yet, subtle and not-yet-known to us needs and then action steps provide us with a way to tend to our needs, again and again, as they change and evolve. This translates to significantly improved relationships with our selves and with others.

"In the future, clinicians will be trained to be more sensitive to these features and will be skilled to attend to prosody of voice, facial expressivity, gaze, and auditory hypersensitivities as both diagnostic and prognostic indicators." (Porges, p.297-298). Focusing practitioners have been trained to do this for decades. The neuroscience is catching up.

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## **A PROCESS MODEL SCIENTIST: What Does It Really Mean in Practice?**

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*Dana Ganihar Raz, M.Sc.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

*At home the unit-model scientist looks into the eyes of the child, and the child looks back. But the scientist thinks: Isn't it sad that you are really just a machine . . . ! The natural sciences cannot really construct living things, but the unit model leads one to assume that some day we will (Gendlin and Johnson, p. 1).*

I once was on my way to become “a unit-model scientist,” a concept used by Gendlin to describe a person operating in the current scientific world-view. One of the features of unit-model science is explaining reality as being made out of separate units. I wanted to be a scientist as long as I remember myself. But after my Master’s degree in Neuroethology, I couldn’t continue. I felt that I’d been cut off from something alive in me . . . the scientific world view made me feel as though I were living in a machine-like, meaningless universe. I left science, convinced I’d never come back.

Seventeen years later, in a Focusing session, I got a felt sense that my whole body was becoming a DNA helix. I listened to the information which was encoded by this particular DNA, and what came, surprisingly and whole, was a message to go back to science and try to be a process-model scientist. That session was like a quantum leap that changed my life direction completely.

This article is an opportunity to reflect upon the six months since I started my journey as I felt sensed my way back to science. I hope that in subsequent articles I will write about Focusing with the scientific research itself.

### **I DON'T WANT TO PROVE SCIENTIFICALLY THAT FOCUSING WORKS:**

Naturally I intended doing a Ph.D. in the field I came from . . . but every day for a week, in the left side of my Focusing body, the immune system appeared . . . inviting me to be friendly with it . . . and have it as the subject of my research. I acceded.

“And no, I don’t want to prove scientifically that Focusing supports our immunity or helps us while sick or wounded,” I explained to everyone, including my supervising immunologist, who thought this approach would be my primary interest. “That I know already. I want to find out how Focusing supports my scientific work and myself during that work. I want to find out how to move back and forth from scientific knowledge to my embodied knowledge and not to discard either of them.”

I recently facilitated a workshop entitled ‘Focusing and Science: Two That Are One.’ After people volunteered responses as to what they thought characterized science, I invited them to sense how they experienced the term ‘science’ inside. The sharing was fascinating, touching so much of what this article is about. One of them said, “*There is a precision in science . . . it feels pleasant yet I felt that there is also precision in my body, a different kind of precision . . . it would be so exciting to bring this precision into the precision of science.*”

And that is exactly what I want to do.

## **TWO INTERWOVEN RESEARCHES:**

So while writing this article I’m also writing my research intentions for the Ph.D. committee in the university. For me it’s really two interwoven research projects. One is academic; its temporary name, “Pro-resolving properties of human macrophages from malignant, inflammatory and autoimmune disorders”. The other is independent, process based, and of course interwoven into the first.

My “independent” research question is: What does it mean in practice to be a process model scientist?

In another Focusing session the term ‘connected scientific knowledge’ appeared. It seems linked to the work of a process model scientist.

## **WHAT DO I MEAN BY CONNECTED SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE?**

What I understand so far (and I’m just in the beginning of exploring this) is that connected scientific knowledge is the result of producing explicit scientific knowledge while sensing the wider environment in which the research is going on. As a process model scientist, I am aware of how my body is connected to and affected by everything that is involved in creating the scientific knowledge.

I want to work in the lab like a ‘regular’ scientist, yet hold close to my heart Gendlin’s principle of Interaction First:

The body IS an interaction process with the environment, and therefore the body IS its situations. The body isn’t just a sealed thing here, with an external situation over there, which it merely interprets. Rather, even before we think and speak, the living body is already one interaction process with its situation. The situation is not out there, nor inside. The external “things” and the subjective “entities” are derived from one single life-interaction process” (Gendlin, 2004, p. 3).

Practically it means, for me, felt sensing the implicit interactions with the whole system I am working in and exploring how I am being affected by it.

So what am I interacting with?

- Space (my research is a co-operation of a lab in the university and a lab for bone marrow transplantation in a hospital)
- People (scientists, doctors, patients)
- Methods and materials
- Objects
- Scientific texts
- Scientific ideas

And more . . .

Connected scientific knowledge is created when I'm turning inward to sense not only scientific terms and ideas, scientific results and conclusions but also the interaction with the people, materials and objects in the lab, as well as the wider system (the patients from whom blood was taken, the building in which the lab is located, the lab animals and their fate), etc.

How can I feel all of the above?

*Your physically felt body is in fact part of a gigantic system of here and other places, now and other times, you and other people—in fact, the whole universe. This sense of being bodily alive in a vast system is the body as it is felt from inside (Gendlin, 1981, p. 77).*

Through my body, I can sense everything that is around me, and that felt-interaction gives rise to knowledge that emerged from interacting with all the above, not just with pure scientific data. I hope that such a process will help me find out how science can be made from a place that is not disconnected and disembodied and how it can be more life giving.

I am just starting this fascinating journey, yet there is so much I've already documented in my date-log. Every visit to the lab is full with instances I can learn from. Here I want to share some vignettes exploring what connected knowledge can look like.

**11/19/10:** I Focused about my goal: to move freely between the field of science and the generating process. *I felt a deep crack in my heart . . . I remembered how meaningful science was for me and how I lost my way there . . . and now there is a fear that I may lose my way again. After a long Focusing session the heart becomes a flexible whole—holding vaguely the memory of what happened but becoming a healthy heart again.*

What I've learned from this particular session (and many more that addressed the fears arising from moving back to science) is that science was for me much more than a field of study—it was like an inherent destination. And when it was blocked, something in me shattered and I have moved to an opposite pole of human experience. I left scientific inquiry and all the knowledge and experience I had gathered there, and went for a journey to challenge my assumptions and beliefs about the nature of reality, and explore dimensions that are considered non-scientific.

Now, I am in a personal journey to move beyond the split between science and process; between outer knowledge and inner sensing; and between material things and love.

**12/6/10:** When I came to meet the scientist in whose laboratory I'm going to work, he very sensibly asked me if I'm willing to work with animals.

"Definitely not," I replied. "What are my options?"

"Well," he said, "coincidentally, yesterday a team from the lab for bone marrow transplantation suggested that we do a joint research project. They are working with people who have Multiple Myeloma. Are you willing to work with human cells?"

"Yes," I said, "and by the way, I love coincidences . . ."

Before meeting with that team from the hospital, I sensed into "the sick people": *I feel weak, I feel life is leaving me . . . I feel despair and how my body is falling apart from within . . . I literally almost collapse. I remember Focusing . . . I move to a wider Presence, acknowledging the pain and fatigue . . . slowly I feel life energy gathering in the middle of my body . . . this energy is spreading into every single cell . . . I realize how, in the depth of death and despair, there is a life energy and healing.* I remember Gendlin's quote:

*"If there is something bad, sick, or unsound let it inwardly be and breathe. That is the only way it can evolve and change into the form it needs"* (Gendlin, 1986, p. 178).

What was so important for me with this session was the heart-connection of the research with the sick people themselves. I was not working with human cells without acknowledging the suffering of the actual people they were taken from.

**12/10/10:** I have articles which I need to read. I need to learn what this lab is specializing in. I don't understand anything. I read them again and again, and it's like banging my head against a wall. I Focus: "What is between me and understanding the articles?" . . . *My body is becoming smaller and smaller . . . I'm afraid to shrink to a dot . . . it's like entering a prison cell and being locked away . . . it's terrible . . . I don't have an independent existence . . . it feels like I'm locked in somebody else's thoughts . . . it's about freedom in many levels . . . science feels deterministic . . . the philosophy of Gendlin speaks about the generative body but entering those texts, this worldview, brings the anxiety of having no freedom. All of a sudden a wild white horse appears, he is radically free, with no reins or saddle. He is the freedom barometer . . . he will help me to notice if I lose my independent thinking . . . it feels better . . .*

After several days the articles opened up. Although I still didn't understand the concepts and their literal meaning, I could feel the meaning. It felt that "underneath the page" there is a space I can move in . . . it was like the article became three dimensional . . . now, six months later, I also understand the concepts in their public meaning.

**4/14/11:** I've noticed that when I read articles or thesis works, I skip the 'materials and methods' section, not wanting to read about the procedures they do to the lab mice. Even-

tually I had to pause and give space to the disturbing feeling that I had tried to avoid by skipping the ‘materials and methods’ section.

*I feel awful for the mice . . . their fate is determined . . . wild mice live in freedom, these mice have no hope . . . I want to bury my head in the sand . . . I want to let them free . . . I have images of Jews in the holocaust . . . my body is shaking . . .*

This was the first part in which I realize that scientists distance themselves (understandably) from connecting with the animals’ suffering. Letting myself get in touch with their suffering is part of creating connected scientific knowledge.

The rest of this process is very far from any scientific (or common) knowledge:

The creative person listening to me suggested that I turn towards the mice and ask them a question. The first question that jumps to my mind is: Why did you choose this fate? *I sense into them . . . their existence is a non-violent message . . . they enable people to cut them until humans will realize what they are doing . . . to them and to the rest of the animals on this planet . . . they choose science because it’s connected to the navel of human culture . . . It feels better, yet I still feel connected to the suffering of each individual mouse . . . to their mother who gave birth to the mice knowing they will be taken for experiments . . . then a new possibility appears—that humanity will find a way to move beyond experimenting with animals . . . it excites me, I want to contribute to this goal . . .*

**4/14/11:** *I don’t like the space of the lab in the hospital. I sense into this feeling . . . it feels dense and crowded . . . old and messy . . . full with angles and boxes . . . I wonder why scientists have to be in a space without beauty and harmony . . . this environment is not supporting a connected knowledge . . . but slowly I sense that it does still hold the spark . . . the flame . . . a spark that attracts those who are curious about the human mystery . . .*

I see how my body is so influenced by the space it is in. No wonder that not knowing these things led me so far from science 17 years ago. Now I have the Focusing process to support me.

Another example: There is a complex machine I need to work on. A nice woman tried to teach me for several days how to use it. I noticed that when I’m near it, I have a headache. I told her that. She responded that everyone in this lab suffers from headaches. The next time we approached this machine, I told her to wait a minute. I took a pause . . . I acknowledged the headache . . . I asked inside how can I be near this machine without getting a headache . . . I stayed a bit with what my body showed me.

This machine is very sophisticated, analyzing blood samples and showing the results as complex patterns of dots on the screen. I didn’t have time for a long Focusing session, I just sensed inside for a few seconds; it felt as if my body were being disintegrated into million dots, as if this machine were operating on me—no wonder it caused a headache. So I grounded myself, found the right distance from this feeling, moved into a wider presence, and the headache stopped.

**5/5/11:** I'm in the lab . . . I have to wear gloves . . . *I'm listening to my body . . . the skin feels repulsion from the material the gloves are made of . . . It doesn't want to put them on . . . my hands don't want the gloves either, for a different reason—they don't want protection or mediation . . . they want to be like a farmer's hands—immersing themselves directly in the clods of earth . . . I sense into the gloves—they feel like soldiers at 'the front', scarifying themselves to protect their wives and children . . .*

I continue that day to sense into every object I use . . . When I sense into objects, they unfold . . . revealing stories and memories. In a recent discussion Gendlin gave an example of entering into made forms:

Let's go into chair . . . we usually move it from here to there and take it as your concept of chair, but if you allow it to be the feel—then it becomes this chair, which you inherited from aunt so and so . . . and which you brought with you from the other place where you lived, and which has all this personal history . . . and not just that, but it has a factory in it that made it, and they made it back in the days when they made chairs like that and it has all of human history in it . . . this poor little chair brings you all of that because as something generated, the generating process is still there with you, it's never just in the past—it is there now . . . if you don't attend there, it is just a chair and you move it and you don't care which chair happens to be there, you need a chair over here and you move it . . . All the objects, all the situations, all the definitions, the cultural patterns, and different emotions are all **generated** . . . But this is not what basically is, what basically is—is the **generating**, what basically is, is like the living process itself . . . (Gendlin, 2011).

When I “go into” the objects in the lab, I feel that the objects around me are not separate units but are alive and meaningful and part of everything that is affecting my research.

**7/15/11:** I was Focusing about what is the essence of this journey for me so far. I got quite a spiritual answer: *I'm in a very strong movement into the heart of matter. I was like a hovering spirit, and now I'm entering matter. In this journey I encounter locked doors. I ought to sit in front of them and wait. . . . matter, like a religious text, is opening up for you when you wait . . . in the beginning I see just general words . . . then the letters in the text, like a carriage, carry me right into the depth of my DNA. Inside the DNA I find the peacefulness people are seeking. Scientists try to decode it with their minds, and succeed locally. That is the unit model. There is another way deep in . . . Inside yourself there is something that holds you with great care . . . and from there my research can be without fear. The connected scientific knowledge helps me to get there . . . move with my whole body into the heart of matter.*

## WHAT DO I SHARE WITH PEOPLE IN THE LAB?

**5/15/11:** I'm in a lab meeting. They are discussing two alternative research directions for a Master's student . . . I don't yet understand the details . . . I'm checking with my

body . . . *the first idea feels heavy; it feels like a dead end . . . something you can kick but get no response . . . I'm sensing the other direction. It feels light, lighted, with potential energy.* They choose the first direction . . . I don't say anything. Yet, it is so exciting to go around the lab, sensing all these things, knowing that if they knew what I was doing, they would be sure that I'm crazy. In the beginning when I shared a little bit of why I'm there, it felt as if I were speaking to them in a language they don't understand. Their gaze became blank.

At this point of writing this article, I need to pause and collect my thoughts. I come from a field of interaction. This is the philosophy and the practice. In my Focusing life outside the lab I work with people who are interested in that. I teach it, live it and love it. The learning I'm doing now is how to be my true self in the heart of the unit model field. Most of the people there are not interested in interaction; they see themselves as units, as separate from matter, from each other. I'm learning how to be there and to do what they are doing without letting myself forget the interaction. I'm learning how to listen to 'mind talk' and hold the *more* that is there. Sometimes it's very difficult; I ask myself what am I doing here? How did I get myself here? There is so much noise around; my body feels like a fish taken out of the water. These are the times when Focusing is so supportive, helping me gently to carry forward.

In July something exciting happened: another Ph.D. student asked me what I am doing when I'm not in the lab. I told her about Focusing. She was very interested and asked if I could recommend something for her to read. Sometime later she suggested that maybe I should do a workshop for the people in the lab . . .

**7/19/11:** Today I dared for the first time to listen in a Focusing way. I was in the other lab, in the hospital; someone was teaching me a long procedure, and while doing so, also complaining about how her research is stuck, how frustrating it is . . . she doesn't know what to do any more. Her speech was fast . . . she didn't breathe at all. We stood near the centrifuge, waiting for it to stop. People were passing by, occasionally speaking to us. It wasn't at all the quiet setting I'm used to while Focusing . . . but still I reflected back what she said and asked—as if it were the most common thing—what comes in her body as she's speaking. "I feel a pressure in my chest" she replied, "as if something is stuck there." Now I was in my "territory" . . . I invited her to acknowledge that feeling, and stay a bit more with it . . . she was quiet for some moments, then took a big breath and looked at me in surprise: "It feels lighter there," she said with a smile. "I need to speak with my supervisor. For too long I've been locked inside my situation." The machine started to beep. A universe of opportunities opened for me.

### **FURTHER DIRECTION:**

I didn't get yet to the exciting stage of using felt sensing while designing experiments and thinking about results and next steps. This is the challenge lying ahead of me. I don't know what will be the possible outcome of all this. Gendlin is describing the product of a 'unit model science':

*A combination "cowpig" was recently created. It could not stand up and was therefore not a practical success. It was also in constant pain. Currently it*

*is often said that “evolution” is now happening through science. But evolution was in the interest of the creatures. The purpose of an all-lean pig is the market . . . The creature’s own interest does not enter in. Unit-model science is redesigning the plants, the animals, and now also us . . . The unit-model science is running ahead so fast, one cannot be sure that humans can catch up with its effects. Whole industries and financial networks invest billions long before anyone can know the eventual applications. And science itself is now partly on “automatic pilot.” The findings from one experiment can be put directly into the computer to generate the next experiment, without a human decision about what it means coming between (Gendlin and Johnson, p. 10).*

I’m asking myself what will happen if humans will “come between”. What will be the qualities of connected scientific knowledge? How will that knowledge influence the “products” developed from it (for example drugs or technology)? How will it influence the people who will use these products? I don’t know when, if ever, I’ll get answers to those questions.

This project is a very personal journey and at the same time I feel I’m at the edge of something wider, something that is new to our culture. I know this because as I share my goal with more and more people, some of them step forward and offer their help. They say, “We feel it is important; we are here for you if you need support.” And this touches me deeply.

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## FOCUSING IN AN AGE OF NEUROSCIENCE

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*Peter Afford, M.A.*

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Our experience tells us that our heads are full of thoughts and our bodies are full of feelings. So we long to ‘re-connect with the body’ and be our true selves again. The English writer D. H. Lawrence expressed this eloquently a century ago:

*“My belief is in the blood and flesh as being wiser than the intellect. The body unconscious is where life bubbles up in us. It is how we know that we are alive, alive to the depths of our souls and in touch with the vivid reaches of the cosmos.”*

I imagine most Focusers would resonate with this sentiment, but if we look into the neurobiology of ‘going inside’ and ‘listening to the wisdom of the body’, the picture looks rather different. Some very interesting things happen in the brain, in fact most of Focusing happens in the brain, only we need to direct our attention to the body for the process that Focusing entails to happen.

This paper summarises some of what may be happening in the brain during Focusing and describes the nature of mind-body interaction from a scientific perspective. I shall indent and italicize the scientific information, put the technical terms in bold italics, and discuss its application to felt experience in Focusing and in life in the main text.

### **Brains are body-oriented**

*The neuroscientist who has most risked his professional neck by delving into the body and feelings is Antonio Damasio. He describes the brain as ‘body-oriented’, the body serving as a ‘ground reference’ for the brain. There can be no brain without a body to inhabit, and no body could survive without a brain to help regulate it. The whole body is one organism that includes the functions of the brain, and these include taking account of what’s happening in the body, including the part of it that is itself. The brain must see that the body survives, so it determines much of what happens there and, even when it doesn’t determine what happens in the body, it monitors what’s happening. The brain’s capacity to act independently of the body is limited, and it works better when it listens to the emotional currents of the body. Reason without emotion becomes irrational, and the body’s signals to the brain are needed for rational thought and decision-making.*

The difference between the scientific picture and our subjective picture of experiencing lies in the fact that most of what happens in the brain stays below the surface of

consciousness. We are aware of our thinking, but generally not of the processes that lead to our feelings. We simply notice the physiological changes that feelings bring in the body, if indeed we pay attention to them. So it seems to us that feelings and felt senses begin in the body, and maybe, that intuitions arise there too. Usually they don't, they begin in the brain, as will become clear.

### **I am a nervous system**

*The brain is part of the **central nervous system** which includes the spinal cord that descends from the **brainstem**. So when we talk about the brain, we are actually well down into the body, it's just that nature has tucked most of it away within the skull, close to the major sense organs and well away from all the stuff sloshing around in the body. The central nervous system connects with the **peripheral nervous system** along the brainstem and spinal cord, and this 'system', with all its nerves, radiates to every corner of the body, including every single blood vessel. The brain in the head is needed for most things that happen in the body, but not all—for example, reflexes like withdrawing your hand from a flame require only a pain signal from the skin to your spinal cord and a movement signal back to the muscles. The aspect of the central and peripheral nervous systems that you cannot directly control is the **autonomic nervous system**. It looks after sleeping, waking, arousal, heartbeat, breathing, digestion and much more. All these nervous systems—no wonder we get anxious!*

*The central nervous system in humans has the distinction of being the most complex thing yet found in the universe. Comprising a hundred billion **neurons**—brain cells—and a thousand trillion **synapses** that 'fire' so neurons can talk to each other, it has over a thousand identifiable areas, all massively interconnected. The brain is flesh that likes to network.*

One thing about the brain that everyone knows is that there are two cerebral hemispheres, left and right. While much pop psychology derived from this anatomical fact belongs on the rubbish heap—such as describing people as left brained or right brained—a mounting body of scientific evidence now points to the significance of the hemispheric division and its relevance to practices like Focusing.

### **The cerebral hemispheres: two minds humming in parallel**

*The anatomical separation of the two hemispheres means that we have two minds working in parallel all the time. Evolution has kept them apart, perhaps so each could develop in its own specialised way. Both hemispheres are always engaged, and both take part in most mental processes. They co-operate so exquisitely that we generally feel comfortable that we are of one mind.*

*At times of emotional stress, however, we may feel less comfortable—“I’m in two minds about this” or “I wish I could stop feeling like this”, for example. Such inner conflicts may reflect the different roles the two hemispheres play. While the right hemisphere gives us our sense of the body as a living experience of connectedness with ourselves and others, the left hemisphere stands back in a virtual world of representations it can analyse and manipulate. The right hemisphere deals with what is implicit, the left with what is explicit. The activity of the right hemisphere is less conscious, that of the left more conscious. The right hemisphere is needed for doing new and unfamiliar things, the left for doing what is known and routine.*

A book published in 2010, *The Master and His Emissary* by Iain McGilchrist, a Scottish psychiatrist and academic, summarises a mass of research evidence about the differences between the two hemispheres, linking this with philosophy and culture. His thesis is that the right hemisphere is the ‘master’ whose ‘emissary’, the left hemisphere, has wandered off so far on its own track that it has forgotten who the master is, thereby betraying him. I shall refer often to McGilchrist’s ideas here. Whilst he avoids the subject of psychological and spiritual practices that might return the emissary to his master, it seems to me that Focusing is an excellent practice for doing so. And I think the subjective experience of Focusing can help us in understanding the complex issues his work raises.

Let’s work our way through what we do in Focusing. Science cannot tell us everything about our felt experiencing, and it probably never will. But it has come far enough in recent years to offer a fresh understanding of our inner processes of feeling, thinking and Focusing.

## **TURNING ATTENTION TO THE BODY**

Focusing begins with re-directing our attention into the body. However the decision to pay attention in the body, and the whole process of paying attention (to anything), happens in the brain. So Focusing starts in the brain. And, while Focusing is obviously a highly evolved way to engage the human mind, it requires some evolutionarily old areas of the brain to fire up.

### **Vertical neural architecture: cortex and subcortex**

*The human brain is the outcome of a long evolutionary process reflected in the anatomical layers that have grown one on top of the other. The lower layers appeared first in evolution, the higher layers more recently. But the lower layers never stopped evolving and now participate in activities that did not exist when their structure first formed.*

*Start by picturing just two layers. The familiar wrinkly stuff of brain images is the top layer, the **cortex**—Latin for covering. The bottom layer is everything*

underneath the cortex, the **subcortex**. The bottom of this bottom layer is the **brainstem** which becomes the spinal cord extending down into the body. It regulates the body (heartbeat, breathing, sleeping, waking etc.), the autonomic things outside awareness. So-called ‘brain-dead’ patients have their brainstems keeping their body going even though the rest of the brain—the person—has stopped.

Above the brainstem are areas known collectively as the **limbic system** that are involved in emotion. These include the well-known **amygdala** that generates stress and anxiety, and the **hippocampus** that is involved in narrative memory. Above the limbic areas is the cortex. Directly above is the **paleocortex**—paleo for old—that includes two areas important for this discussion, the **insula** and the **cingulate**. And above that the **neocortex**—neo for new—arranged in four **lobes**: **occipital** at the back for vision, **temporal** at the side for hearing and speech, **parietal** above the temporal for mapping the body, and the **frontal** lobes that enable all the really clever things that humans do—poetry, philosophy, Focusing, for example.

Or alternatively, you could picture the brain’s structure in three layers, the so-called ‘triune’ brain, by dividing the subcortex into the ‘reptilian’ brain of the brainstem and the ‘mammalian’ brain of the limbic system. The human brain is the cortex above. This schema is useful in learning neural architecture, but scientifically inaccurate, as reptiles have some limbic areas, and dogs and cats have some cortex—though less than we do.

The decision to direct attention to the body begins in the frontal lobes, but doing so fires up the insula, involved in monitoring the body, and the cingulate, involved in emotional attention, in the paleocortex. It also requires the brainstem, as connections to and from the body pass through it, and this area generates the ‘here and now’ aspect of consciousness. So there is a paradox: a brain that wants to develop consciousness with cutting edge practices like Focusing has to enlist the help of evolutionarily older areas rooted in emotion and the body.

Turning attention to the body also requires the left hemisphere to leave its virtual world to give precedence to the connectedness of the right hemisphere.

### **Horizontal neural architecture: left and right hemispheres**

Everything above the brainstem is divided between right and left hemispheres. The amygdala, for example, is really the amygdalae—one on the right and one on the left. The two sides are linked. Cortical areas are joined by the **corpus callosum**, which connects just 2% of neurons on either side, illustrating the degree of separation. It enables each side to know what the other is doing, but it also enables one side to inhibit the other.

*The hemispheres are asymmetric in various ways. The left is better at inhibiting the right than vice versa—hence, perhaps, the ease with which we can suppress feelings. The right has more connections between the different areas within it, enabling integration of their functions, while the left has more connections within each area, enabling specialisation of each function. And the right hemisphere is more connected to the subcortical areas below, and therefore to the body, than is the left. So the left hemisphere says “I have a body”, while the right says “I am my body”.*

*Most forms of attention are handled by the right hemisphere, but focused attention is the preserve of the left. McGilchrist argues that the primary difference between the two is that the left does focused attention on one thing, while the right does global attention to the body and the environment. He gives the example of a bird pecking at grain it wants to eat: its left hemisphere focuses on the grain while the right keeps a look out for predators and danger. These are very different attentional tasks, making the specialisation of the two hemispheres an evolutionary advantage.*

*The majority of people, including many left-handed people, follow this left-right pattern, but not everyone does. Some people have their hemispheres reversed, and others do not follow a clear pattern of hemispheric specialisation at all. Nature creates exceptions to every rule.*

In Focusing, we use the right hemisphere’s body connectedness, and it seems that we use both hemispheres’ attentional styles—global attention for whatever inside wants attention, focused attention for holding it in mind. Focusing is an integrative practice, one that returns the emissary to a proper relationship with the master.

Damasio says the mind usually “draws a veil” over the inner workings of the body so that we can attend to the world around us. Focusing pierces that veil. It can seem an odd thing to do if you are not used to doing it.

## **SENSING INTO THE BODY**

There are two common ways to begin Focusing. One is to sense within the body and see what ‘wants’ our attention. We become aware of feelings and sensations that perhaps we had not noticed before—although our brain might have noticed them without passing the message on to our conscious awareness. This part of Focusing very much happens in the body—our physiological reality, a tightness here, or heaviness there, or a sense of wanting to cry.

But to notice bodily feelings and sensations consciously, we are back in the frontal lobes. And because the right hemisphere is specialised for everything to do with body and feeling, the firing patterns in the brain may be different from, for example, when we are writing emails or discussing politics with a friend, which require more from the left hemi-

sphere. If you put your head in a brain scanner while you Focused, the resulting neural imaging might illustrate this. The frontal lobes have switched to watching processes arising in the right hemisphere, including its mapping of the inside of the body. There's a lot going on inside to sense into.

### **Physiological change in the viscera and internal milieu**

*Muscles contract (tense) and let go (relax). They are not only to be found in our arms and legs, but also within the torso; for example, the major muscle of emotional control is the diaphragm that allows us to hold our breath. The rate of breathing and its depth changes. Heartbeat speeds up and slows down, and blood vessels constrict and dilate to alter the pressure of the blood being pumped around in different areas of the body. Digestion in the intestines stops and starts.*

*The term **viscera** refers to the major organs—heart, lungs, gut, liver, pancreas—and other aspects of bodily life such as the mouth, tongue, throat, endocrine glands, skin and blood. So when we talk of ‘visceral’ feelings, many things about the body are implied. The brain also senses the **internal milieu**, meaning the liquid that all body cells inhabit.*

The second way to start Focusing is to have a topic, and to allow a felt sense to form in the body for ‘the whole thing about it’. Here, we start in the brain by thinking about and imaging the topic, maybe saying something about it, and then look to the body. The brain will have changed something there by cogitating on the topic.

### **How the brain changes the body**

*Most emotional changes in the body, and most bodily movements, are triggered in the brain. It is here that changes in the environment are perceived and appraised for their significance, especially changes perceived by the global attention of the right hemisphere. It may not seem like this to us, because the appraising and triggering happen out of awareness, or before we become aware. Many aspects of bodily life are regulated by the autonomic nervous system outside our direct control, such as going to sleep and becoming sexually aroused—though we can have an indirect influence on them.*

*So it is the brain that changes heartbeat and blood pressure, breathing, the intestines tensing or relaxing. The brain triggers these changes via the electrical route of nerve pathways, and the chemical route of releasing hormones into the bloodstream, known as the endocrine system. At the same time, the brain changes itself, creating altered cognitive states and abilities to recall things, even altering the maps it makes of the body before the body alters them.*

*It was once thought that the glands in the body operated independently, but it is now understood that the brain is the master gland. The **hypothalamus** in the limbic system secretes an array of hormones that tell the pituitary gland (in the brain) to tell the glands in the body to release hormones—such as the adrenal glands that release cortisol when we get stressed.*

*All this doesn't mean that the brain is a command centre controlling every little thing. Rather, it sends out general signals about the need for change, and then what actually transpires is largely determined by the body.*

So my brain is changing my body, I am not changing it. I do not have as much power to change my body as I might wish. My frontal cortex, where my conscious awareness of myself resides, struggles to replace my bad feelings with good ones, because it is my sub-cortex that is triggering those feelings.

### **How the body changes the brain**

*While the brain triggers changes in the body, how those changes unfold in practice is determined by the body. The duration and intensity of an emotional state is largely determined by the body. And the body then signals what happens in it back to the brain—via the neural route of the peripheral nervous system, and the chemical route of the hormones and peptides that are released into the bloodstream and that find their way into the brain.*

*Examples of the body changing the brain . . . when you have eaten a certain amount, your intestines tell the **hypothalamus** in the limbic system that they are now full, the hypothalamus passes the message on to the frontal cortex, and you then have the opportunity to decide to stop eating. If you take beta-blockers for anxiety, they act on the heart, slowing it down; the heart tells the brain it's slowed, and the brain concludes that there's less cause to be anxious. And you can deliberately calm your mind via your body: if you slow down and deepen your breathing (breathing is unusual in being both autonomically and consciously controlled), your brain will hear of it from the lungs and change its cognitive state so that you experience your mind as calmer.*

*An interesting piece of anatomy: there are more **efferent nerves** leading from the body to the brain than **afferent** ones leading from the brain to the body. In the case of the **vagus nerve** between the brainstem and the intestines that plays a big role in how we feel in our guts, the proportion is 80% efferent and 20% afferent. This is because the changes that the brain signals are general in nature, whilst the changes the body signals are specific and complex.*

So the brain changes the body and the body changes the brain in a complex process of interaction. The brain is kept up to date with bodily life, whether we are aware of it or not.

## FINDING A FELT SENSE AND GETTING A HANDLE

What is quite extraordinary is how the brain can receive a mass of signals of a myriad of things changing all over the body and then present something to my conscious awareness that seems like one thing—such as a heaviness in my upper body, or a knottedness in my lower half. An image may form in my mind’s eye, as if all the changes to heartbeat, breathing, hormones in the blood, constriction and dilation of blood vessels and so on amounted to this one thing that I can name, communicate and focus on. Amazing!

### How the brain maps the body

*The brain ‘maps’ the changing state of the body in a number of brain areas, starting with the brainstem and moving up into the insula and then the **somatosensory cortex**, an area of the parietal lobes. Each area has a topographically organised map of the body, so specific neurons fire in response to signals from particular parts of the body. Different areas map different things. For example, signals from your hand when someone touches it affectionately go to a different brain area than the signals from the same hand when you pick up an object. The different aspects of body mapping are combined in the frontal cortex which acts as an **association area**. Here there is an increasing level of abstraction, so that as you think about what you sense in the body so you may reduce your attention to the fresh signals coming from the body. Damasio says body mapping is dynamic and normally unconscious.*

*The skin and limbs are mapped on the contralateral side of the brain so, for example, your left arm is mapped in your right hemisphere. But the inside of the body—the viscera and internal milieu—is mapped only in the right hemisphere, so only this side of the brain has an image of the whole body. This is a living image of our emotional experience, in continual flux. The right hemisphere offers a sense of the body as something we ‘live’, a part of our identity. It is where we meet the world.*

*The brain’s mapping of the body can lead to some strange phenomena. One is the experience of a ‘phantom’ limb after the real limb has been amputated. Another is that after strokes in the right hemisphere where patients are unable to move their left arm, a minority of them then deny their paralysis. Even more bizarre are the stroke patients who deny that their left arm is theirs —“doctor, this is my mother’s arm”. The same thing does not happen with the right arm after brain damage in the left hemisphere—because only the right hemisphere maps the viscera.*

So there is the actual body and the mapped body—and several versions of the latter. It is the mapped body that enables us to experience a *felt sense*, and this all comes together in the frontal cortex.

## Interoception

*Interoception refers to the brain's perception and mapping of what's happening inside the body, and the insula and cingulate are associated with it. Contrast it with **proprioception**, which is the mapping of the relative position of the limbs (such as knowing that you have your legs crossed when you're sitting so that when you stand up you first uncross them to avoid falling over), and the **kinaesthetic sense**, which is about the body's movement in space. So interoception is about what's happening in the viscera and the internal milieu.*

*Interoception and body mapping are the basis of having feelings. Damasio uses 'emotion' to refer to what actually happens in the body and 'feeling' to refer to the brain's mapping of those emotions. This seems sensible, for we talk about our feelings without necessarily experiencing the emotion in the body that underlies them at the same time.*

Finding a felt sense involves interoception to gauge the inner state of the body. Neuroscientists even talk of it as an unclear sense—we know we are emotional but we struggle to name the emotion. As Focusers know, time and space are sometimes needed to name what is felt. In Wholebody Focusing we use proprioceptive and kinaesthetic senses as well as the interoceptive one. Perhaps using all three senses makes the felt sense more accessible than just one, hence the popularity of Wholebody Focusing.

Experiencing a felt sense means combining the right hemisphere's more unconscious processing of feeling and body state with the left hemisphere's capacity to categorise and name things. Finding a handle is probably the left hemisphere trying to make sense of what's going on in the right hemisphere. Putting a handle word that doesn't fit on a felt sense might be a left hemisphere move, whereas allowing a handle word to appear spontaneously might be a right hemisphere one. While language is generally associated with the left hemisphere, the right has some language of its own. When the *handle word* seems an unusual use of language, the right hemisphere may have spoken.

Do felt senses have to be bodily sensations? Some felt senses come in the head or the limbs, others seem to be throughout the body, and some Focusers report them being outside the body. Gendlin includes physical sensations like a tight chest or a heaviness in the stomach as examples of felt senses, but he also talks of felt senses as fleeting aspects of experience, as if they had no physical substrate. His description of the felt sense being about the whole of a situation reflects the right hemisphere's wholistic take on what is happening.

## Feelings in the head: 'as if' feelings and somatic markers

*Damasio says a lot of things about feelings that make sense. Because the brain maps emotional states and enables sufficient abstraction that we can think about our feelings, it can also recall past feelings without necessarily having to generate the corresponding emotional state in the body, there and*

*then, every time. Instead it can refine its cognitive activity to take into account what we have experienced in the past. He calls these ‘as if’ feelings—as if we were experiencing them now in the body. He also talks about ‘somatic markers’—neural patterns left from previous pleasant and unpleasant gut feelings. The brain can refer to ‘as if’ feelings and somatic markers, all outside of consciousness, and maybe we can too in our conscious reflection.*

In practice, most Focusers open themselves to whatever they feel and call it a *felt sense*. It may be a physical sensation in a specific place, which may relate to specific organs and muscles; it may be a global sense of bodily state, which may relate to the chemistry in the blood; it may be an ‘as if’ feeling that has yet to change the body in a noticeable way; and it may be something else that comes into awareness and that seems meaningful. Whichever sort of felt sense it is, we engage our right hemisphere and our body sensing areas of the brain, which re-orient our attention. For myself, whether or not I experience a physical sensation, I have my attention in my body. Whatever then comes, whether feelings or thoughts or images or whatever else, I feel sure would not come were my attention not in my body. In fact, I’m not concerned about finding the felt sense in a nameable physical way. With my attention in my body, I’m closer to feelings and my mind has a fresh perspective. I’m happy with that.

## **RESONATING AND CHECKING BACK**

Words that come in Focusing need checking back with the felt sense. This deliberate process is good for neural integration of left hemisphere language with right hemisphere feeling. Some people tend to do this naturally, responding to the brain’s cues that suggest a mismatch between what is said and what is felt. In Focusing we do it deliberately, making the most of the brain’s aversion to mismatches.

Resonating is needed more with words than with images, possibly because words are left hemisphere based and therefore prone to depart from their grounding in bodily feeling, whereas images are right hemisphere based and therefore naturally rooted in the body. And some words that come in Focusing seem to need resonating more than others, suggesting that those that don’t have arisen directly from the right hemisphere and its links with the body. They come ready-resonated as it were, whereas the left hemisphere’s verbal offerings are a step removed from the body.

### **How do I know what I’m feeling?**

*My brain knows how I am feeling even if I don’t! There is a direct route for this from the limbic areas, that trigger emotion, to the frontal cortex. When the amygdala triggers anxiety, for example, it changes the cognitive state of the frontal cortex so that I think anxious thoughts and I think them quickly. I may or may not notice the change to my thoughts and conclude that I am anxious. What will make it clearer to me is if I notice the change in my body. The indirect*

*route for knowing what I am feeling involves the bodily changes triggered by the amygdala being fed back to the brain via the neural and chemical routes described above. These give the brain a more nuanced and in the moment picture of my emotional state—and me too, if I pay attention to my body.*

What an extraordinary achievement—the human capacity to describe our feelings to others! To do it satisfactorily, we must bring together sensing the body, allowing feelings to form in the mind, finding language that fits, and communicating it all in a way that another person can comprehend—so that their empathy and their hearing of our words match up in their brains.

In Focusing, we go to the trouble of checking each thing back with the body. McGilchrist says that whatever the left hemisphere has considered in detail needs to be returned to the right hemisphere for integration, because only the right can synthesize what both hemispheres know into a useable whole. If we accept the verbal and conceptual contributions of the left hemisphere without integrating them into the bodily and relational world of the right, we risk becoming detached from ourselves and others. So part of the value of Focusing is its insistence that we allow time and space for integration and synthesis into new wholes.

## **ALLOWING WHATEVER WANTS TO COME, TO COME**

‘See what wants to come’, we like to say in Focusing, encouraging the mind to be open within. Our driven Western minds can find this tricky—they’ve been educated to favour the purposeful cogitations of the left hemisphere. For fresh mental content to arise spontaneously, we have to be a little relaxed, and tuned into feeling and body.

### **Fresh experience arises in the right hemisphere**

*McGilchrist again. He says the left hemisphere deals with its own virtual world of representations of things, which it juggles, refines and puts in order. But for something new to enter our mental world, the right hemisphere, with its connectedness to body, others and environment, is needed. All the fresh and new stuff of our minds arises on this side of the brain. The problem for us is that the left hemisphere cannot know what the right hemisphere knows, and it functions more efficiently if it doesn’t have to deal with the right hemisphere’s conflicting version of the world, so it tends to blot it out. But if it doesn’t let the right hemisphere in again soon enough, it will find itself going round in circles that are stale and dull.*

For example, I am clearly leaning a lot on my left hemisphere in writing this article, as I have to order my thoughts, try to string them together in a coherent way, and polish up my words and sentences. But when I stop and do something else, sometimes a fresh idea for the article comes spontaneously, and I grab a notebook to write it down before it’s lost. This is

a right hemisphere contribution. Then I have to find a way to fit it into the left hemisphere's world of representations, so that I can make use of it—not always an easy task.

## FELT SHIFTS

Felt shifts in the body are the Holy Grail we seek in Focusing. They can come at any point in the process—but how do they arise in this dance of neurobiology and physiology? Somehow, by keeping our attention with the body and allowing what wants to come to come, the body sometimes relaxes and opens. Our breathing may deepen as the diaphragm muscle relaxes, other muscles may stop being so tense, the heart may slow down, the gut may relax, and blood chemistry may change as, for example, cortisol release is stopped and endorphin release started. All these changes come about through the parasympathetic nervous system, our autonomic switch for rest and relaxation.

### **More nervous systems: sympathetic and parasympathetic**

*The autonomic nervous system breaks down into two branches. The first is the **sympathetic** which gets the body aroused for action, stress, fight and flight. The second is the **parasympathetic** which does the opposite: it puts the body into rest mode, enabling good things like relaxation, digestion and sleep.*

My guess is that a felt shift enables brain and body to complete an emotional cycle that got stopped midway, leaving the body marooned in a sympathetic state of nervous arousal. With the openness to bodily feeling that Focusing encourages, these incomplete cycles can run to completion. And their completion triggers a parasympathetic response. It can seem to us as if the body takes over from the limited capacity of the brain to think it's way to feeling better, so the body must be cleverer than the head. We've already unravelled this understandable misunderstanding, but let's go into a little more detail.

### **The enteric nervous system: a second brain in the gut?**

*As well as the central and peripheral nervous systems, we have an **enteric nervous system** in the lining of the intestines. This fact led Michael Gershon of Columbia University in New York to write about the 'second brain in the gut' in the 1990's—and some Focusers got excited about it, as I recall. The enteric nervous system consists of neurons and synapses and the same neurochemicals (e.g. serotonin) that are found in the brain. But its job is to control digestion, so that the head brain need not bother with the detail of moving food around. As Gershon himself admits, the brain in the gut doesn't write poetry or think philosophy. But it does have a big effect on how we feel in our guts—and therefore on how we feel.*

*There is also a nervous system in the heart. Some rather wild claims have been made about the perceptual powers of this nervous system, but the reality seems to be that it looks after the movement of heart muscles. If this seems boringly mundane, remember that this nervous system governs the coherence and variability of heart rate which is of huge importance to our emotional and physical health.*

When the parasympathetic takes over from the sympathetic nervous system, the intestines start digesting food again. This gut movement is called peristalsis, and the theory of biodynamic therapy is that peristalsis includes psychoperistalsis—the digestion of food enables the digestion of stress (cortisol residues) in the gut. Psychoperistalsis feels good.

Why else do felt shifts feel good? The switch from sympathetic tension in the body to parasympathetic relaxation feels good—we like relaxing. Felt shifts move us from neurotic states of isolation to more open and connected ones—we rejoin the human race and feel more sociable again. With these shifts comes endorphin release: endorphins are the body's natural opiates that dampen pain and stress, and the subject matter of Candace Pert's *Molecules of Emotion*. There is probably also a release of dopamine, a neurochemical associated with the brain's 'reward' system that creates feelings of pleasure and with 'neuroplasticity'—the ability of the brain, throughout our lives, to grow new synapses so that we continue learning. Felt shifts have been shown to correlate with alpha waves, signifying a state of relaxed wakefulness in the brain (Don, 1977). Finally, a felt shift may involve a switch from a negative feeling state in the right hemisphere to more left hemisphere activity. An active left hemisphere correlates with feeling energised and outgoing, motivated to get on with our lives.

In a general sense, bringing conscious experience back into line with unconscious bodily regulation feels like a relief.

## **BODY WISDOM, THE FEELING OF 'RIGHT', AND FRESH LANGUAGE**

The 'wisdom of the body' is much too intelligent an aspect of mind for the limited neural networks in the body—or for any other aspects of our physiology. Rather, it points to the sort of knowing that comes when we step out of left hemisphere cogitation into body awareness. It's an intelligence rooted in the right hemisphere's direct connections with the body rather than in the virtual representations of the left hemisphere. The mind is not in the body, really, but we need our felt experiencing to link mind and body and thereby open up the real breadth and depth of our minds.

Likewise, when something 'feels right', it seems as if our body knows something our conscious mind doesn't. But it's the right hemisphere that has this right feeling, in its wholistic, linguistically limited way. The body, however, is the compass for our relationship with our right hemispheres—we need it to find our way around in our less conscious feeling mind.

Words may seem to ‘come from’ the body, but of course they don’t really. However, words that arise in the right hemisphere—or that arise when the left hemisphere is not inhibiting the right—feel different from words that the left hemisphere juggles with. Language sometimes seems limiting, but no one would say that poetry, good literature or a Shakespearean soliloquy limits the human mind. The point here is how we allow language to arise.

### **Embodiment**

*McGilchrist summarises research that points to some surprising aspects of embodiment. Language is an embodied skill, the origins of which lie in the empathic communication of music. But in evolution its development has coincided with the grasping of objects, a left hemisphere specialisation. Syntax is rooted in the patterned sequences of limb movements in creatures that run. Metaphors derive from our experience as embodied creatures. The structure and content of thought lives in the body before we articulate it in language. Our concepts draw on the commonality of our bodies and of the environments we inhabit, so they are sometimes universal across cultures. And truth is mediated by embodied understanding and imagination, so that our common embodiment allows us to have common and relatively stable truths.*

Intuition is a term that refers to ways of perceiving and knowing that arise in the right hemisphere. And the mind changes as emotional states change. Just reflect on the difference in your mode of thinking, and what you think about, between being calm and contented or being anxious and fearful. Cognition is underpinned by affect, and neuroscience turns cognitive psychology upside down by revealing how emotion arises in subcortical areas that then change the cognitive state of the cortex. It’s called the primacy of affect over cognition.

### **THE LISTENER BRINGS THE FOCUSER’S INNER EXPERIENCE ALIVE**

So far we have looked at one person alone with their brain and their body, but this is a hopelessly incomplete picture of real experience. We are social creatures, and our inner lives unfold in a world full of other people.

The right hemisphere attends to those around us (as well as to the body), and handles bonding and empathy. By contrast, the left hemisphere indulges in competition and self-belief. When the two hemispheres are at odds in a relational situation, you get incongruence—whatever the left hemisphere says, the right hemisphere communicates something different, in part via the body. So when we turn attention to the body in Focusing, all the implicit stuff of communication becomes significant. The Focuser may experience the listener as supportive of touching into vulnerable feelings, but this does not always happen.

### **The social engagement system: life threat, danger or safety?**

*Stephen Porges, a psychiatry professor in Chicago, describes a part of the autonomic nervous system centred around the vagus nerve, one of the bundles of nerves linking brain to body, in this case the heart, the intestines, the facial muscles and the pharynx and voice box. He calls it the social engagement system—it is found in all mammals and in its human form enables us to engage with each other actively without becoming aggressive or defensive. It can be in one of three states: ‘life threat’ where you run or freeze, ‘danger’ where the fight aspect of the fight/flight response is triggered, or ‘safety’ where you can engage with others in rewarding ways.*

Sometimes being with another person as we explore body and feeling triggers danger. In Focusing, we try to create the conditions that will keep both the Focuser’s and the listener’s social engagement system in safety, otherwise the capacity to attend to a felt sense goes up in smoke. If we are not in safety, we can very quickly feel quite uncomfortable. The background to this discomfort may lie in the childhood experience of empathy or the lack of it, but we are not concerned with this in Focusing.

### **Affect regulation**

*This is the ability to cope with the ups and downs of our emotional lives. It is learned in infancy through our attachment relationships. Problematic attachment patterns lead to problematic affect regulation, so our feelings can get out of control and we are unable to allow others to help us manage them. We need others for emotional support throughout our lives if we are to be on good terms with our body and feelings. Affect regulation is looked after by the right hemisphere, generally beneath the surface of consciousness.*

It follows that if in adulthood our capacity for affect regulation needs repair, then we need someone else to help us—to respond to us as mother wasn’t always able to. The experiential listening skills of Focusing are of great value here in creating a form of empathy that perhaps mirrors the empathy young children need.

### **BODILY ATTENTION EVOKES IMAGES, TRANSCENDENT EXPERIENCE—AND VULNERABLE FEELINGS**

I hope we all agree that bodily attention evokes images, transcendent experience, and vulnerable feelings. It is certainly my personal experience, and something I have noticed many times when teaching Focusing to others.

Why images? Probably because they are a right hemisphere specialisation—let us say, the right hemisphere is better at images than the left. The left hemisphere deals in words and processes them serially, whereas the right deals in wholes—and an image is a whole.

By engaging the right hemisphere with bodily attention, images are more likely to arise in our stream of consciousness. Of course, just because one right hemisphere function is stimulated doesn't mean that all the other ones are, as well. Nevertheless, as already mentioned, right hemisphere areas are more interconnected than left hemisphere areas are, so there is a tendency for one of its specialised functions to trigger another. Experience of Focusing would certainly suggest so.

Why transcendent experience? Because transcendent experiences also arise in the right hemisphere. Research into meditation shows that the particular patterns of brain waves (patterns of neural firing through large areas of the brain) that are evoked begin in the right hemisphere and then move into the left, as well. Bodily attention sometimes may be a way to trigger the right hemisphere going into transcendent mode. Meditation research also shows that less activity in the right parietal lobe can dissolve the boundary between the sense of self and the sense of non-self, leading to experiences of unity with others. Of course, if we go too far in this direction in Focusing, we lose the sense of the body.

And why vulnerable feelings? The emotional aspect of the hemispheric divide now looks like this: the left hemisphere is biased for anger, the right for sadness, while positive feelings involve both. In Focusing, it is common for sad feelings and tears to arise, and much more rare that anger unfolds (as opposed to recognising anger as an aspect of a larger felt sense). It is also common for the Focuser, especially if new to Focusing, to experience anxiety when turning attention to the body. Many people carry a fear of encountering unresolved traumatic experience, and if we put our attention in the body we run into it, so we stay away—which may be why some people do not want to do Focusing in the first place. But Focusing is also good for creating the conditions for safety that enable scary and painful feelings to be approached.

## CONCLUSION

There are many ways to ground ourselves back into the inner world of feeling and body when we have become disconnected—in McGilchrist's language, to return the emissary to his master. Music, dance, art . . . the list is long and includes having a good conversation with a friend. Probably most, if not all, spiritual practices achieve this grounding in some way. Focusing is a particular way of achieving such a grounding, and it has the advantage of embracing feeling, the body, creative self-expression, and relating when we have a listener. Here is a way to liberate the left hemisphere from the trap of the virtual world it has created for itself and to which it is so attached, and return it to the embrace of the right hemisphere, whence all our experience originated in the first place. No wonder there is both resistance to Focusing and delight when we let go to felt experiencing!

### **The left hemisphere 're-presents', the right 'presences'**

*Returning to the relationship of the cerebral hemispheres, McGilchrist details research showing that the left hemisphere is dependent on the right hemisphere, because it is the latter that is connected to the body and therefore the*

*outside world. The problem is that the left hemisphere behaves as if it weren't so dependent. It likes to grab what arises from the right hemisphere, conceptualise it, and then hold onto the concept while ignoring the experiential ground it came from. The left hemisphere just loves a good theory. It is always engaged in some purpose, while the right hemisphere has no designs on anything and is content to just notice what is. An outcome of this arrangement that may be of surprise is that while the left hemisphere likes to categorise things, the right likes to discriminate amongst fine detail, hence its tendency to throw up little feelings of 'something doesn't seem right here'. The right hemisphere sees things as wholes in their context, while the left sees things abstracted from their context and breaks them down into parts. The job of the left hemisphere is to make the implicit explicit, bringing things into focus so we can apply our will to what we see. McGilchrist says it re-presents, whereas the right hemisphere 'presences'.*

The world of the 'unit model' that Gendlin berates, where everything is broken into pieces and measured, would seem to be a left hemisphere one where the emissary may betray the master. The world of his *Process Model* is an attempt to re-instate the right hemisphere and the master in their rightful place, describing how even the concepts for understanding it are of a different nature from those we are accustomed to with a left hemisphere perspective.

I don't advocate trying to explain everything about Focusing with neuroscience. Let's keep a space for the mystery of experience that unfolds from within. But neuroscience does offer some fresh maps of the territory. For example, how about seeing the *inner critic* as the left hemisphere's comments on the right hemisphere's original contribution . . . if we float the question this way, where might it lead us?

Using science to look at our Focusing experience is an example of integrating both hemispheres. Grounding this exercise in our experience means we can avoid the absurd situation whereby science tries to explain even where it denies our personal experience. We can use it instead to elaborate on our experience where it seems to shed some light upon it.

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**QUANTUM CONSCIOUSNESS:  
An Explanatory Model for Life Forward Movement  
in Wholebody Focusing  
PART 1**

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*Karen Whalen, Ph.D. and Glenn Fleisch, Ph.D.*

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**INTRODUCTION:**

This article explores how Quantum Field Theory interfaces with Gendlin's Process Model of the Implicit (1997) to further our understanding of why and how the felt shift and life forward movement occur inside of a session of Wholebody Focusing (WBF) and Wholebody Focusing Oriented Therapy (WBFOT). As WBF practitioners and therapists we see again and again how bringing a particular quality of whole body awareness (consciousness) to any situation we are living in brings exactly that which needs our attention for a next step to occur. This sustained awareness of what is emerging in a bodily way activates fresh life energy and releases new information that is precise and appropriate to the Focuser/Client's experience.

When the living body becomes aware of itself as a whole, the felt shift comes not only as a small step in a series of forward movements (Gendlin, 1996), but as a change in the bodily living of the whole organism in its situation (Whalen and McEvenue, 2010). The subtle yet tangible field of shared consciousness between the Wholebody Focuser and Listener further amplifies and informs the whole bodily implying of the situation in a way that benefits both.

Part 1 of this paper will sketch out how the quantum field theory of consciousness helps us understand this direct experience of life forward movement (Gendlin, 1981, 1996) so familiar to Focusers. This theoretical description particularly supports the wholistic nature of psycho-behavioral change that emerges from the practice of WBF. Part 2 will illustrate the functioning of this theoretical model with WBF therapy session anecdotes. We will conclude with a brief discussion of the philosophical and clinical ramifications of the theoretical construct we are proposing. Possible directions for future enquiry will be suggested.

**THE HARD PROBLEM OF CONSCIOUSNESS, QUANTUM CONSCIOUSNESS,  
AND QUANTUM FIELD THEORY**

As human beings, we can more or less agree that consciousness is a direct experience of self-awareness. We are aware of ourselves and so, we are a Self. Until recently, the study of consciousness had been the purview of eastern mysticism and the disciplines of philosophy and religion. One noteworthy exception are the findings put forward by Quantum Physics and repeatedly confirmed for the last eighty years. The thus far undisputed theory of the quantum mechanical universe suggests that human consciousness plays a key

role in creating the physical world, from the sub-atomic fluctuations of electrons spinning around an atom to the spinning of planets in their orbits. The Copenhagen Interpretation of quantum mechanics states that human consciousness (the observer of quantum phenomena) directs, predicts, and changes the behavior of physical matter at the tiniest sub-atomic level. This huge statement begins to describe the process and systemic changes observed during sessions of WBF.

Since everything in the universe is made up of the same stuff of life, it is not a stretch to suggest that the sub-atomic behavior of electrons spinning around each and every atom of our bodies are subject to the same laws of physics described by quantum theory (Goswami, 1995; Wolf, 1989; Rosenbaum and Kuttner, 2006). Electrons orbit the nucleus of an atom, which is mostly made up of space. Atoms bind together in different combinations to form molecules that bind together in their turn to eventually give shape to visible organic and inorganic matter. Groupings of molecules bind together to form every existing variety of life, both animate and inanimate. The spinning of electrons around the nucleus of an atom radiates energy in a discontinuous jump like process, called a **quanta of energy**, thus the name Quantum Mechanics. This radiation of a quanta of energy is the atom's wave-form function. The behavior of this quantum wave-form is discontinuous and unpredictable, showing up and manifesting in unexpected ways along many possible pathways, often at the same time.

### **THE QUANTUM CONSCIOUSNESS HYPOTHESIS:**

The quantum mind or quantum consciousness hypothesis proposes that classical mechanics (Newtonian Physics) cannot explain our subjective experience of human consciousness. It suggests that certain quantum mechanical phenomena, such as entanglement, non-locality, uncertainty, and superposition, may play an important role in the brain's function, and may form the physical basis of an explanation of consciousness (Penrose, 1989, 1994; Chalmers, 1996; Bass, 1975; Stapp, 1979; Wolf, 1989; Hamerhoff, 1996, 1998; Schwartz and Begley, 2003). We will be exploring the implications of this hypothesis a little further on as it applies to the practice of Wholebody Focusing. First let us look at the larger context of this discussion about human consciousness as a quantum mechanical process.

Conventional neuroscience describes consciousness as an emergent property of computer-like activities in the brain's neural networks. This view suggests that patterns of neural network firing correlate with specific mental states and human consciousness as a novel property of computational complexity among the millions of neurons of the brain. In short, our subjective experience is simply a fortunate by-product of the brain, which is a complex algorithmic computer. This classical explanation of consciousness has been hotly debated for the last twenty years.

Australian philosopher David Chalmers (1996) objects to a computational view of consciousness because it does not explain the "hard problem" of subjective experience, what he terms the "qualia" or inner life of an integrated Self. He suggests instead that a theory of consciousness should take experience as a primary entity, alongside the physical concepts of mass, electrical charge, and space-time. Mathematical physicist Roger Penrose (1989,

1994, 1996) argues that consciousness is non-computable because it is neither random nor algorithmic, as are all computers, and that the personal experience of consciousness cannot be simulated. Anaesthesiologist Stuart Hameroff (1996, 1998) raises further objections such as the need to explain the binding of spatially distributed activities into unitary objects (macro-binding) such as vision, a coherent sense of self, or a sense of at oneness with self and other. Our sense of free will and our experience of subjective time flow all collide with the classical computational view of consciousness as the result of purely physical neurological function.

Gendlin's Theory of the Implicit (1992, 1996) proposes that human beings are ongoing interactions with the world (they breathe, eat, and interact with others in every context and in any field in which they work or play) so that their bodies are a knowing which implies further steps. Because human beings are in an ongoing interaction with the whole environment, living in the world has a kind of ongoing experiential validity. As we know with Gendlin's Process Model, the living body is in continual interaction with, and is inseparable from the environment. The body-environment connection is one process that is continually regenerating itself. Thus our physical body is continuous with, not separate from, the environment and the whole universe. To know (be conscious) and benefit from this expanded field of being requires us to bring a certain type of awareness to our everyday experiencing and situations. Each move we make, from pumping blood to discussing philosophy, implies a next step, an organic carrying forward (Gendlin, 1992). At each moment, it is possible to feel how things are moving and what is implied next. With a certain quality of bodily awareness, we can learn to attend to these feelings more deeply, so that a felt sense of the whole situation can form. A felt sense in WBF is a broader whole body awareness of this ongoing life process, intricately connected to Self and the whole environment.

Without needing to ask ourselves what consciousness *is* or *is not*, as Focusers we know that new life possibilities emerge from choosing to notice our direct experience in a bodily way. Consciousness (awareness) brings with it more consciousness (awareness). If we take this a little further and invite an awareness of a wholebody-environment-interaction with WBF, we also feel ourselves to be more alive, integrated, and more connected to a sense of self, other, and the environment. Could it be that consciousness underlies everything in the universe? Is this why everything seems to be affected by consciousness, at least in the quantum mechanical world view? If consciousness were a quantum mechanical version of God, then consciousness needs me, a conscious human being, to participate with it (to observe it) for it to function in the way nature intended. This view corresponds to the widely accepted Copenhagen Interpretation of Quantum Mechanics (as stated on the previous page), the most precise description of the physical world to date.

### **The Wacky and Weird Behavior of the Quantum Mechanical World:**

The following is a brief summary of the major findings observed by physicists for the past century and confirmed by repeated experimental evidence. Following each stated physical law, we will explore its implications for WBF and WBFOT. The observed behavior of the sub-atomic world looks something like this:

1) An atom is both a wave-form (vibrating movement of its electron cloud = energy) and a particle (mass of the atom) but never both at the same time. The wave-form function of an atom needs a human observer to notice (measure) either its speed (momentum= movement of the wave-form) or its position (particle = wave-form pops into existence somewhere as a physical particle). It is not possible to measure both at the same time, thus Neils Bohr's (1935) **complementarity principle**. Human consciousness plays a crucial role in the behavior of matter as either moving energy or positioning of mass in space-time.

### **Implications for WBF:**

WBF uses a certain quality of body-in-environment awareness to bring into consciousness new information and life energy, the very essence of forward movement, connected to a situation in our lives. Where we place our awareness and how we direct our awareness activates or impedes the forward movement of the organism. Human beings seem to relate particularly to the **quantum quality of position** (we are always located somewhere as part of our environment) which is directly related to our particular experience of gravity. With WBF, we consciously relate to our position and gravity as part of the environment to support the forward movement of the whole organism. When we notice the weight bearing boundaries of the body, the way the ground supports the feet, the way the chair supports our whole body, the way the room contains and supports us, different parts of the body become aware of themselves. We stay conscious in a neutral whole body way that is connected to the whole environment. This allows us to both contain (embody) and observe the whole field of awareness. We are now in a position to notice the subtle inner movements of the body which arise spontaneously out of the body's consciousness of itself.

For example, I might be noticing that my foot is sore, that it has become difficult to walk on it, and the more I notice my sore foot, the sorer it gets. However, I can take a moment to notice the chair I'm sitting on, how the floor holds up my foot, how the foot is connected to my whole leg, how there is a whole body being held up by a chair. Suddenly, the foot recognizes for itself that it is part of something larger than its soreness because I have invited it to become aware of the whole context of its position and location in space. Now the foot has become more precisely aware of itself, and it is ready to discover more possibilities for the forward movement of the life-in-foot.

**Movement of energy is the second quantum quality** we relate to during sessions of WBF. We allow our awareness to move back and forth from the primordial inner space of an embodied position inside of the outer space of environment, to the inner and outer body fluctuations of spontaneous movement. Awareness of both these states, position and movement, support and amplify the forward movement of my body, mind, and its situation. As a human experience, it seems impossible to be aware of both at the same time. Nor can the physical world reflect both position and movement at the same time. When we direct awareness to notice either the position or the movement of inner or outer life processes, a certain effect is achieved. Positioning provides the container into which bodily consciousness emerges. Subtle inner-directed bodily movements are the harbinger of new consciousness already emerging into awareness. New information and energy (consciousness) arise out of these

inner directed movements, as a right match for our situation and organism, supported by our awareness of inner and outer space.

For example, when I take the time to notice the whole context of the foot inside its physical space, with its connections to the whole environment, the foot begins to experience itself in a precisely bodily way. The toes begin to stretch outward to meet the edges of my slippers. There are subtle sensations of warmth and tingling spreading out from the painful arch of the foot. The foot continues to initiate its own movements as though they are intentional and seeking out their own right functioning. I observe my foot and its direct experience of itself in this precisely physical way. I notice how the foot feels softer now and when I stand on it and move around, gingerly at first, it seems, much to my surprise, to be comfortable with itself.

Neurophysiologist Ben Libet (1982, 1985) has shown in repeated experiments on volition and free will that the body readies itself to do something well before we become aware of wanting to do something. There are electro-chemical processes in the brain called action potentials that fire off well before (550 milliseconds prior) we become aware of deciding to move, take action of some kind or even having a thought. It is as though the body itself first decides to do something of its own making. Something in the brain/body bubbles up out of the yet unconscious living body and begins to fire and move. Only then do I experience something happening. In the example above, noticing my foot in gravitational space imbued my foot with consciousness of itself. Then the foot was able to access new information and life energy to move itself forward.

In WBF, the quality of awareness or attention (the neutral open and curious whole body observer of grounded presence) determines the nature of the consciousness that arises from the life processes themselves. We wait and observe the inner and outer space from a neutral stance of *not-yet-knowing* what will emerge. When, out of these subtle inner or outer movements something does emerge, a new awareness comes—*direct experiencing*. The foot explored new possibilities for more whole functioning. I experienced the benefit of that as a comfortable foot, no longer sore.

2) Until a human being looks at either its movement or its position, an atom exists only as a possibility in the universe. The quantum wave-form is thus described as a probability wave. There are an infinite number of potential locations and speeds of trajectory that the electron may follow, ultimately choosing only one dependent on what the experimenter chooses to measure (observe), thus, Heisenberg's (1958) **uncertainty principle**. The particles and wave-forms occupy an infinite number of superposed locations, at the same time, until they pop into physical form. Thus, many possible worlds exist until the human observer chooses one among an infinite number of wave-form probabilities. This is the law of **superposition** (Schrodinger, 1935, 1967). Quantum mechanics describes the world as being in a state of an infinite number of emerging possibilities at every level of existence.

### **Implications for WBF:**

The above depiction crosses with Gendlin's Theory of the Implicit and the experiential process method of Wholebody Focusing, which offers us a skillful way of relating to

the probabilistic functioning of our brain-bodies, our situations, and our environments. My broken kneecap, for example, isn't a fixed entity after all. If I observe my broken knee in a neutral way with the support of my conscious (self-aware) whole living body, my knee will explore its own possibilities of right functioning, and its cells will fire in new ways. When I offer my knee an awareness of itself, connected to an awareness of the ankle, the shin, the feet, the thigh above it, the hip joint, the firing activity of the knee discovers how it is or is not firing and can now synchronize itself with the firing of the whole leg. The knee itself, in its wisdom, knows how to connect with the whole leg and body. By simply noticing my knee, it naturally makes its own connections with the whole organism. I can invite whatever meaning might emerge from the consciousness of the knee itself—the knowing embodied within the knee's cells, tissues, and malfunctioning. Five years post-fracture and the knee has entirely forgotten that its structure and function had ever been compromised—an unexpected outcome for someone over 50! The potentially infinite possibilities of life forward direction available to the Wholebody Focuser and his/her living body interface with conscious awareness and emerges as the exact right fit for that person's body and their situation.

3) The Copenhagen Interpretation of the above findings states: whenever any property of a microscopic object affects macroscopic objects, that property is “observed” by a conscious human being, and thus becomes a physical reality.

### **Implications for WBF:**

Whenever we observe any part of the body or field of experiencing in an accepting, open, curious, and precise way, the quantum properties of its atoms and electrons, and their conglomerations into molecules, and on into molecular structures (proteins, enzymes, parasites, viruses, cells, neurons, hormones, etc) are mobilized. As a result, the cells will fire in new ways and will therefore affect the macrostructure and functioning of tissues, organs, bones, posture, and psyche. How we observe the body, mind, and its various manifestations has a direct effect upon them. Over 40 years of Focusing practices throughout the world provide ample experiential evidence of this fact. A certain kind of human consciousness changes the living body and its situation, activating the implicit energy and knowing of any part to open to its own healing direction. Both theoretically and experientially we are proposing a rich crossing of quantum mechanics and Gendlin's Theory of the Implicit. Whenever we invite the bodily life processes to *become aware of themselves*, our neutral conscious observer-Self activates the quantum firing of the cells of the various parts of the body-mind.

For example, my sore foot was able to rediscover its connection to its own inner knowing because of its connection to the physical supports of the whole living body and the environment. The sore foot needed my consciousness of it within the context of its connections to the whole environment so that it could rediscover a more right functioning to move its own life forward. Similarly, my broken knee cap could move its own life forward and achieve a more right functioning because I observed it in this precisely wholebody way. My

neutral observing-Self empowered these parts of my body to become aware of themselves so that they could discover new and more right ways of inter-cellular firing.

4) Any objects that have ever interacted in the past continue to instantaneously influence each other. Thus, there is a universal connectedness to the entire physical universe. In quantum physics, this phenomenon of subtle and cosmic inter-connectedness is called “**entanglement**”. The randomly fluctuating sub-atomic vibrations of an isolation chamber, or between any two points in the fabric of space-time, can be ordered and made coherent by a human observer (consciousness). **Non-locality** is the term used to describe how two previously connected particles (or molecules or groups of molecules or living bodies) can be separated across vast distances and continue to resonate with each other as though they were still touching, side by side, despite there being no energy exchange between them.

### **Implications for WBF:**

We have ample direct experiences and examples of such phenomena within family systems, distance healing phenomena, between close friends, and between Focuser and Listener. During sessions of Wholebody Focusing we tune into the interconnected wave-form function underlying the Focuser’s situation inside of the shared space between Focuser, Listener, and environment. Fleisch (2011) describes this process of relational co-presencing as a dynamic interactive space from which arise a wealth of information and energy needed by clients to support their forward movement. When we consciously make space for our confusion, suffering, and not knowing how it might resolve itself, and simply observe the body as a whole from a sense of grounding, presence, and connectedness to the environment, something happens to relieve and inform our situation. The bodily felt connection between Focuser and Listener supports this sometimes-mysterious process of life unfolding in its own right way, informing us of the next right steps. Often, the information that emerges is so new and so very outside of our sphere of experience, we are simply aware that something greater than us both has informed and infused us with life energy. Both the Focuser and Listener benefit from the new life forward movement in a way that neither could have accessed alone. Several examples of this phenomenon are presented in Part 2 of this article.

5) A later choice of experimental observation (peek in an isolation box) creates the atom’s earlier history so that we literally produce something backward in time. Space-time appears to be curved, no longer linear. How we relate to space-time can somehow affect its objects, events, and their impact upon my life.

### **Implications for WBF:**

How we relate in the present to a past situation influences and affects the way a family system operates—both today and in the past—bringing new possibilities to the experience of Self in the present situation. The same holds true for future generations and for our ancestors. A complex familial tangle from the distant past can emerge free and unburdened, providing new life forward movement and fresh possibilities for family members today. During

sessions of WBFOT, when one family member brings consciousness to a cross-generational pattern of violence, sexual abuse, or alcoholism, all the members of that family system benefit and heal from the process—even though they have passed away or do not have any conscious awareness of past and present circumstances.

This dynamic crosses with Gendlin's explication of time (Gendlin, *The Time of the Explicating Process*, in press), whereby a direct reference to the implicit functioning of the living body opens up a retrospective sense of "was". What emerges from Wholebody felt sensing is more of what *was* implied by the body. The next right step in life forward direction *was* implicit in what had been stuck or blocked all along, including cross-generationally, and wasn't yet present as something formed. Bringing one's whole body awareness to the edge of what *is* there *now* allows something to emerge in its own right way, filling in the present, the past, and the future.

### **Experiential Anecdote by Glenn Fleisch: Theater of the Living Body**

*Doralee Grindler Katonah and I have been developing a process we call Transformational Focusing, an integration of Wholebody Focusing/Spiritbody Focusing (Fleisch and Katonah, 2010). In this model, we have been exploring the active engagement of participants within the whole group called "theater of the living body". Group participants are invited to play a certain person, role, or inner part showing aspects of a Focuser's issue or inner dynamics. In a recent workshop, I demonstrated with myself as the client. Inside of this "embodied theatre" I explored a part of me that carries a strong sense of shame, often connected with a powerful inner critic that is dismissive of creative efforts. One man played my inner critic and the only information given was what I shared above. Each participant was first invited to connect with the self from a sense of his/her own grounded presence. Only then were they invited to embody a felt sense of the particular role or character. Finally, they were instructed to allow and follow whatever emerged into their field of awareness-as-a-part-of-me. During the process, I, as the Focuser, merely observed what was going on with the other characters. The person who played the critic, much to my surprise, was standing and began to wobble around, feeling very shaky and scared. The words "lost" came to him. At first, it seemed as if there was no connection to my own inner experience of the critic. My energy felt drawn to the critic in a very compassionate and comforting way. What came upon further reflection and mirroring was something new to my awareness and yet exactly right for carrying forward a part of my own experiencing inside of a much larger system. I became aware that the critical/dismissive aspect that I was carrying actually connects with generations of men in my family system that I had termed "lost souls." I have since then felt a sense of healing, not just within my own experience, but also relating to my father and grandfathers, as well as my own sons. Not only was the direction and space of the time-line transformed and enlarged around this issue in my life, but my connection to the space of the other living bodies and our shared environment was enlivened and expanded as a result.*

6) There is no such thing as an absolute vacuum in space. There is, rather, an ocean of microscopic vibrations in the space between things. An example of this is the radiation of

cosmic micro-waves from the original Big Bang which pervades all of space. The whole universe seems to be a heaving sea of energy, one vast quantum field that is continually expanding. All of matter and every kind of energy make up this cosmic field of vibrating energy, including us, all life forms, our consciousness, and our interactions inside this field. These are random patterns of information and energy underlying the physical world. Human consciousness appears to have the subtle ability to create order out of these archetypal or foundational patterns of life.

### **Implications for WBF:**

Gendlin's Theory of the Implicit (1997) proposes that the human being is always *implying* its next steps for living. In sessions of WBF we witness how the information and energy of the implicit emerges into our field of awareness. When we simply observe this emerging life information and energy and invite it to explore itself in a bodily way whilst staying at the edge of what wants to happen or needs attention, the whole organism moves forward in its own right way. The findings of Quantum Field Theory suggest that the forward movement in WBF arises not only from the human being's lifetime of embodied experiences, but also from the infinite potential of information and energy patterns permeating the whole environment and universe. With the practice of WBF in particular, the whole living body is invited to awaken to its own possibilities within the larger context and container of the whole living environment. More integrated and more precise information and energy are mobilized by a bodily awareness of Self, connected to the living body of the environment, and to the living body of the Wholebody Listener.

As we will show with clinical examples in Part 2, we invite awareness of multiple channels of information—sensorial, kinesthetic, energetic, gestural, postural, emotional, imaginal. With the support of Grounded Presence, we resonate with the whole field of vibrational exchanges between Focuser and Listener. We invite in a sense of other inside ourselves, supported by the whole environment. When we listen to the client in this open whole body way, there is a loving and neutral connection that is made, not of our own making. Something happens in the interactive field between us that amplifies our experiencing of this neutral loving presence. This is something we do not ordinarily do in our culture. The powerful interactive listening exchange enlarges the possibilities of being, becoming, and moving towards new relational and experiential meanings in the living bodies of both. Two beings, fully present to Self, yet separated from other in this healthy way, allow a larger, more intricate connection to be made—inside both and in the bodily living of the situation. This “new space” (Gendlin, Process Model, VIII) expands and opens up the possibilities for forward movement of its objects and relationships.

7) Quantum fields are mediated not by forces but by an exchange of energy that is constantly redistributed in a dynamic pattern. Solid particles of matter are simply little knots of energy which briefly emerge and disappear back into the underlying fluctuating quantum field of the universe. According to Quantum Mechanical Theory, human consciousness is needed to activate the flow of energy and information, creating meaningful patterns in an ever-changing, self-organizing, and forward moving biological system.

### **Implications for WBF:**

On a psychological level, a paradigm shift is implied regarding our ways of relating to Self and Other. We discover realignments and compatibility with the environment, not by force, but rather in an intimately relational Wholebody-environment-interaction. The WBF-oriented therapist uses consciousness of the whole living body, connected to the physical environment via gravity and grounded presence, as an embodied tuning fork. From a sense of a whole embodied Self, connected to Other, Focuser and Listener resonate with the flow of energy and channels of information that very naturally emerge, both internally and interactionally, as described above. When the body is invited to become aware of itself as a functioning whole, it resonates internally towards the Self, synchronizing its own quantum wave-form patterns into a master wave-form signature signal. This internal synchronous firing pattern of the whole living body then resonates with similar wave-form patterns in the environment, including the body of Listener. The energy and information available in the universal fabric of space-time is theoretically infinite. Because everything is theoretically connected to everything else inside of the universal quantum field, *a synchronously firing living body* attracts to it precisely the right matching of energy and information wave-forms needed to move the organism forward.

During sessions of WBF, we often witness how new energy and information seems to “come” from the environment itself. The Focuser’s living body knows how to take this energy in, resonate with it, and integrate it into the functioning whole. Thus, the Wholebody implying extends to the implicit energy and information contained within the environment and greater universe. We might call this the *whole universal implying* which supports the bodily implying of the Wholebody Focuser. Energy and information emerge, pop into existence, reconfiguring themselves inside of a field of dynamic interchange. It is the internal whole body awareness of a conscious expanded experience of Self, which initiates and supports this dynamic process of forward movement. Once initiated by human consciousness, the activated energy and information emerge equally from the outer milieu as the internal milieu. The knowing of the whole self-aware living body is always in relationship with the knowing of the living environment. During moments of integration in sessions of WBF, we make space and time for the matching and congruence between this inner and outer shared knowing. In very subtle yet noticeable ways, the outer environment and the internal human being interact together to move life forward. While Gendlin’s Process Model theoretically describes this intimate and natural transaction of the human living body as continuation of the environment, WBF offers a precise method that lives this reality inside the interactive space between Focuser and Listener. The following experiential anecdote is a living example of human consciousness actively participating in the unfolding of the physical universe in a Wholebody Focusing way.

### **Experiential Anecdote by Karen Whalen:**

*According to quantum theory, my awareness of my physical body can change my physical body. Now we are in the thick of Wholebody Focusing. I have spent the entire summer playing with children, swimming in the ocean, and living under the old growth*

*canopy of the maritime Cobequid Mountains. By observing my whole body in a neutral and frequently playful way, whilst being aware of the nurturing and effortless connection to my physical environment, I have experienced a stunning reversal in my body's experience of itself. I began the summer with some challenging body symptoms. These included an upper body rash (severe, what western medicine would call shingles), digestive difficulties, chronic fatigue for many months, weight gain, and a subjective sense that something in me was dying and needed me to get out of the way so that this dying process could unfold. This unsettling whole organismic process was connected to an emerging awareness about the young child who raged inwardly when her love needs were not met. An unconscious holding pattern of "I need to do everything for myself if I want to get what I need" was lived in the body as an underlying efforting and tension approach to doing anything in life. My body and mind were letting me know that this way of being was no longer working for me and perhaps, no longer necessary.*

*I gave my body as a whole my full consent to proceed in its own right way and time with these symptoms. I offered it some sessions of Wholebody Focusing but I in no way spent time thinking or worrying about these mysterious symptoms outside of session. What I did offer my body and self was a detached observation of my whole body and its connection to the whole environment in an ongoing way. This was easy to do given my location and proximity to nature and loved ones. Without visiting a physician or taking something for my body's situation, by simply living my life and remaining aware in a detached and wholebody way, all of my symptoms have disappeared. The weight gain has disappeared without dieting or changing my eating habits in any way. My rash has disappeared without taking steroids or some such medicine. My fatigue has evaporated without needing to sleep more or exercise in a certain way. My appetite and digestive processes have returned to normal. I now feel like I am somehow connected to more of life, my own life, but also, in very subtle ways, to the lives of my friends, loved ones, and also the life of the land I live upon. Is this not an intriguing story?*

### **Discussion of Experiential Anecdote:**

It appears that my neutral wholebody awareness, being present to and aware of my own life in a physical way, changed the way my body experiences itself. I observed my body's experience of itself, and I used my awareness of gravity and the support of the environment to anchor and contain my observations. Somehow, somewhere, in some way, the living body itself, the life processes themselves, changed the way they were firing and relating to the situation of troubling systemic body symptoms. In Wholebody Focusing, we call this the functioning of Body Wisdom or *the body functioning as a whole in its own right way*. Because of early childhood trauma, the body organized itself in a certain way to survive (the road of efforting). The "flare-up" of the cells and tissues in the form of a rash was the body as a whole saying it is safe now to come into my awareness. This new meaning is the body's implying of the underlying holding pattern. While my body lived the tension of that childhood story, it wasn't interested in the contents of that story. That's what I, with my ego identity, connected to and built upon in my nervous system, this strong sense of self which "must do" this and that to survive. The body is essentially innocent. It lived the direct

experience of that story (the underlying tension). Once I was ready to invite the body to explore its own experience of that bodily-lived tension, the body itself, in its own wisdom, could sort itself out.

The living body has evolved over millions of years and each cell of the body has a knowing about how to be in right relationship with all of the cells of its internal milieu. This is a result of the natural process of evolution. Human beings, unfortunately, have a habit of interfering with these instinctual life processes because of fear, trauma, and the unconscious conditioned response patterns. We can choose to interfere or not interfere with the unfolding of life forward movement through the living body. In this particular lived experience, I chose to not interfere with the unfolding of life out of that historical holding pattern. Instead, I chose to relate skillfully to my body and self with wholebody-environment-interaction awareness.

### **The Interface between Quantum Consciousness and Human Biology:**

Quantum wave-forms that correspond to vibrational frequencies contain information energy-bytes that are attracted to other waveforms of similar vibrational frequency. The curious quality of moving waveforms is that they are efficient carriers of information, and they do not lose their underlying characteristics upon meeting other wave-forms. There is something about the inherent movement and intelligence of the quantum wave-form function (movement of energy), and how human consciousness contains and mediates it, which supports the orderly life forward movement of the organism. A human consciousness that notices the flow and movement of these subtle quantum wave-forms, often in the form of subtle inner directed movements, can be said to be connecting to the functioning of their quantum consciousness.

How might quantum consciousness function inside of a biological system during sessions of WBF? A wholebody interaction between Self and environment inside the entire quantum field of consciousness may be mediated by the dynamic interplay between the central nervous system, of which the brain is a part, and the peripheral nervous system. The brain is the executive processor of energy and information coming in and going out of the body. The brain and central nervous system look a lot like a tree with its branchings of neural cells, neural networks and neural extensions going down into the body and extending out into each and every one of the organs, tissues, muscles and peripheral nerve endings of the skin itself. The organism connects with an experience of Self inside of the central nervous system. From a sense of grounded presence, the organism can then open up to its connections to the environment and bring in the life energy and information that are constantly flowing in from the peripheral nervous system. This information is taken in and processed continuously by the central nervous system (spine and brain). If the organism is nourished and supported by this energy and information, it will remain connected to its natural functioning with the peripheral nervous system. However, if the organism is overwhelmed or confused by this energy and information (life) coming in, it will *stop* and disconnect from the flow of life through the bio-system.

At a cellular level, there are hundreds of protein structures on the outer membrane of the cellular body which serve as a kind of radio antenna that vibrates and resonates with adjacent cellular units. This is a self-monitoring and an inter-cellular communication system that both transmits and receives complex and precise information about key biological functioning. Molecules of potassium and calcium may or may not be released into the synaptic cleft, the space between cellular bodies, causing neural cells to fire down the line, engaging in this electro-chemical way, with the complex functioning of life processes.

This built-in biological structure of the autonomic nervous system as the carrier, transmitter and energetic receiver of sub-molecular quantum wave forms may explain why awareness of the whole body activates a synchronous firing cascade of the entire nervous system functioning as a whole, while opening up to possibilities for new and more integrated information and energy coming in from the environment and creating new firing patterns within the body/mind system. During sessions of WBF it is often necessary to create a holding space of *not yet knowing* so that the knowing of the body functioning as a whole and the emergent knowing of a new possibility can move life forward in a way that is just right for the whole organism. Awareness of the body functioning as a whole does appear to generate a living field of synchronous firing patterns which then influences how the different regions of the brain, and its extensions throughout the central and peripheral nervous systems, fire and communicate with each other.

Hameroff and Penrose (1996) propose that microtubules act as quantum computers in the cells of the brain. Microtubules are cylindrical structures that self-assemble to form the shape of the cells that form neurons of the brain. These are essentially the posited micro-processors of cellular life. They constitute the nervous system of the cell and process information internally to organize what happens within each cell and also how cells interact with other cells. With WBF, we attune to and resonate with the direct experience of the body functioning as a whole. From this simple body awareness practice, we generate a quantum field which activates the functioning of quantum consciousness inside the cellular micro-processing systems of the living body. Once activated, this quantum field of consciousness entrains a more right function in any part of the body/mind to which we choose to bring our attention. For example, my awareness of my whole body supported by the ground, the chair, and the space of my living room, somehow supports the pain in my lower back so that it can explore its own possibilities of more orderly function and firing. Going back and forth between awareness of wholebody function and functioning of the part, the whole and the part come to a balanced and mutually supportive firing pattern which better supports my back and my whole life.

## **CONCLUDING SUMMARY OF THEORETICAL DISCUSSION:**

### **Implications of Quantum Field Theory and Gendlin's Theory of the Implicit:**

Quantum Theory has revolutionized how we perceive and understand the physical world. New ideas arise in physics not only because of experimentation, but because our consciousness is ready to discover new aspects of the universe within ourselves (Mindell,

2004). While Quantum Mechanics describes the functioning of microscopic phenomena, its laws apply very accurately to the macroscopic realm of visible objects, living bodies, and planets. Matter is, in its essence, not as solid as we thought. Nor are we really separate from anything or anyone. My choice to be conscious of any situation or bodily state fundamentally changes the nature of that situation or bodily state. The functioning of the universe potentially offers the resources of infinite possibilities of information and life energy for the mind, body, and life situations. A certain kind of human awareness has the distinct effect of popping the quantum wave-form of this potential energy and information, into a single possibility as bodily felt and seen by the observer—the very essence of the felt shift in WBF.

In WBF, we are proposing that Quantum Consciousness (QC) has a dual nature. QC firstly functions as an electro-magnetic field of awareness that constantly attunes to the whole of the organism via the mediation of an adult conscious Self in grounded presence. The central and peripheral nervous systems are the biological carriers and transmitters of this synchronizing master wave-form function. Secondly, QC arises out of the micro-molecular communication processing system (postulated microtubules inside neurons) mediated by the self-aware life processes and biological sub-units themselves. QC interacts with and supports the emergence of the bodily implying of the whole organism in a continuous way during a session of WBF. The tuning fork of the whole living body listens to, resonates with, and takes in the energy and information which match its master vibratory wave form signature from the environment. McEvenue and Whalen (2011) recently described this wholebody listening and resonance both inwardly towards the self and outwardly towards the whole environment as a process of “Heartfelt Listening”. Those parts of us needing our attention feel the support and energetic entrainment of our master wave-form signature as though a homing signal were reminding them of their own right function and wholeness. Just like the quantum wave-forms postulated for all of the physical world, the cells of my body vibrate as a potential life energy that needs my awareness of the whole body, my conscious participation with the life processes themselves, so that they can choose to pop into existence, firing in a new way, now aware of themselves and of their bio-chemical environment.

Part 2 will explore clinical applications and ramifications of this theoretical crossing of Quantum Consciousness with the Theory of the Implicit. During sessions of WBF, a slight movement, gesture or image coming into consciousness can be the carrying forward of many levels of Being or history all interconnected inside of this much larger universal field of potential life possibilities. By connecting to a wider more subtle field of awareness (quantum consciousness) in an intentional wholebody way, we will discover how the therapist and client access surprising possibilities for life forward movement.

**QUANTUM CONSCIOUSNESS:  
An Explanatory Model for Life Forward Movement  
in Wholebody Focusing  
PART 2**

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**INTRODUCTION:**

The development and understanding of Quantum Consciousness (QC) has emerged from decades of research, experimentation and study in Quantum Mechanics, as we detailed in Part 1. We also explored the implications of these findings for the understanding and practice of WBF, as well as how they cross with the Process Model and Gendlin's Theory of the Implicit. Part 2 will further explore this rich crossing, specifically in terms of its practice in WBFOT. We will first offer a brief synopsis of Gendlin's notion of bodily implying—how the whole body *knows* (is moving toward) its next bit of living in places where the life process has become blocked or stuck—and how the incipient energy in the body's implying can emerge into forms, i.e. *objects*, as avenues for activating life-forward movement. With clinical examples, we will illustrate the therapist's use of QC as an "instrument" for connecting and resonating with the field of energy/ shared experiencing with clients in this new wholebody inter-relational space. The vignettes and subsequent discussion will highlight the functioning of QC in WBFOT as a vehicle, via careful listening and attuning, to potentiate what is being implied and facilitating a whole bodily process of carrying forward blockages and stopped process into next steps of healing and transformation.

**WHOLEBODY IMPLYING AND QUANTUM CONSCIOUSNESS IN WBFOT:**

**Theoretical description of WB implying and formation of "objects":**

One of the core aspects of Gendlin's philosophy of the implicit is the notion that the living body is always moving toward its next bit of living. This tendency of the organism (body-environment-interaction process) to sense and live its next life movement he calls *bodily implying*. What the whole body implies is its implicit understanding of what is needed to carry forward its living in a situation, i.e. next right steps of development. Gendlin (*Implicit Precision*, in press) states that:

*When something implied doesn't occur, the body continues to imply it. Until something meets that implying ('carries it forward', we say), the body continues to imply what was implied and didn't occur. If part of what was implied did occur, then only the part that did not occur continues to be implied. This 'reiterated implying' is a basic concept. It explains how objects in the environment become differentiated. The body is first constituted as environmental events and material, and some of this is always present in the environment. But some of it is intermittent; it disappears and reappears . . . Then the body*

*has separate processes just for these parts of the environment. The moment they re-appear, just these processes resume. So we call these differentiated parts of the environment 'objects'.*

In order for what is being implied to actually occur, a quality of awareness, listening and attuning that we practice in WBF seems to be required. The *quantum field theory of consciousness* described in part I is an accurate description of what we have observed and utilized during sessions of WBFOT. As therapists, we often notice that the emergent phenomena is precisely that part of the body-environment process where something has been blocked or stuck. Something that should have happened didn't occur, so that the living body keeps repeating the pattern of what is needed. This is what Gendlin referenced above as "*reiterative implying*", a phenomenon similar to Freud's notion of the repetition compulsion. That part of the environment that emerges is often a specific *object*, i.e. a particular avenue or interaction that might carry forward clients' process. Fleisch (2008) for example has explored how gestures can present themselves as objects which *function* as the living body's implying of its next right step.

We are proposing that Quantum Consciousness is essential in bringing to awareness these emergent phenomena, which are operating inside of the inter-relational field of implicit experiencing between therapist and client. The therapist's QC pops the infinite number of superposed possibilities that inhabit this rich living space of the wholebody-environment interaction into an actuality containing new information and life energy. A new awareness is thus brought into form (matter) arising out of this complex and co-created field of energy (dual wave/particle functioning). What existed as a possibility has been activated by the dual presence of therapist/client into one actuality that seems to match the client's experiencing in a very precise way. In this way, QC interacts with and supports the emergence of the bodily implying of the whole organism in a continuous way during a session of WBFOT. The tuning fork of the whole living body listens to, resonates with, and takes in the life energy and information which matches its master vibratory wave-form signature from the whole environment.

The billions of cells of the body need us to observe them, in a very precisely physical way, with our awareness of the body functioning as a whole, so that they can remember their own possibilities of whole function. The wholebody master wave-form frequency entrains the wave-form frequencies of the part/issue (and its groupings of cells and tissues) which are wanting and needing awareness of them. This wholebody entrainment allows them to emerge into a new firing pattern or life forward movement. This is why, in WBF, we invite our neutral, curious, and bodily awareness to float back and forth between awareness of whole body and awareness of the part that is wanting attention. In this way, the self-aware (observed) living body knows how to move itself forward in most situations in a way that we, as conscious observers, cannot.

Thus, our consciousness is part of and always influences what is observed and experienced. We are *active participants* in the therapy/healing process, and, as shown in quantum physics, the observer's *way of being affects* the physical system acted upon. The quality and functioning of consciousness is inseparable from, and is an integral part of the

whole body-environment process of living. There is no way to know in advance what will emerge until it has been observed and thus experienced. We enter the inter-active space between therapist (listener) and client (Focuser) from a stance of *'not-knowing'* what we will discover there. When we connect with ourselves and the client from an expanded sense of our Grounded Presence, we simply wait and invite/notice what shows up. Our noticing of what shows up as we companion the client in this way appears to pop the wave-form function and brings with it a new emerging awareness and a carrying forward of the client's situation.

Let's look a bit further into how the implicit (whole body implying) comes to awareness as a phenomenon of this field of shared experiencing as co-constituted by client and therapist. This coming to awareness is both a product of implicit functioning as explicated by Gendlin and as a result of wholebody attunement to subtle energy/vibration/ resonance as described in Wholebody Focusing. With awareness of the body functioning as a whole, the Wholebody Focuser generates a master wave-form frequency signature throughout the whole quantum field of the living body. This proposed master wave-form signature then entrains the billions of superposed wave-forms of each of the cells of my brain/body to remember their own possibilities for emerging into existence and thus firing as an action potential across the synaptic divide within the micro and macro-structures of the brain/body.

Within this shared field of awareness we observe the dual function of consciousness. First, wholebody awareness is a **receptor** of information from the field of shared being. Second, by this shared wholebody awareness (consciousness), this expanded inter-relational field of awareness **activates** the potential energy and consciousness of whatever part/place is implying its own forward direction. Something informs our way of being with clients at the edge of an emergent life-forward movement as we share a whole body awareness of this "invisible" yet clearly felt dimension of embodied living between therapist and client. The therapist's awareness of the living process of implying allows for a felt sensing of something being implied or needed both at each moment of therapy and for the larger transformation and healing process we hope to engender.

### **WBFOT Session Vignettes-Application of Quantum Consciousness in therapy:**

How does a WB Focusing-oriented therapist "sense" the signs of life-forward direction or whole body implying that is (or could be) emergent in the shared field with clients? What are the different avenues or objects that indicate that *something* is being implied in the therapy space? How do we *know* what to say or do at these junctures, without having a pre-set agenda, yet being informed by what has come into awareness? How does quantum consciousness function in sensing the implying, this awareness of something forming or emerging as an object-interaction that can carry forward the implying into the next steps of living and healing? What types of interactions allow for the blocked or stopped process to activate and live further? We are particularly interested in exploring these questions from our clinical experience as avenues for accessing the *quantum consciousness* of the shared therapist-client interaction.

Using examples from our clinical practice, we will demonstrate how wholebody implying and quantum consciousness function in the therapist-client interaction. Our examples highlight the various ways that this process allows for an implying to be carried forward. They illustrate how bodily consciousness attunes to the various channels of information and energy that come into awareness moment by moment, and how we can sense the “something” from this flow of information that emerges into an “object” that is implied. The whole body implying can be experienced or observed in many forms, such as stirring of sensation and energy, as a tension, an emotional quality, as movement or gesture, a postural awareness, an image, or language. Any one of these or a combination of several indicates an emergent step or urge toward something that wants attention or needs to happen.

The four examples that follow illustrate the power of quantum consciousness to activate energy and life forward movement from the wholebody—environment interaction. A shared embodied awareness can attune to and resonate with the whole field of the implicit between client/therapist. Embodied consciousness starts from grounded presence which then allows the practitioner to enter the field with the client (Focuser) with an attitude of *not knowing* and *non doing*, thus staying present to what actually emerges into awareness without preconceptions and with an openness to experience what comes freshly and directly. At this edge, we can sense the ‘*something*’ that comes to awareness and starts to show itself, which is often the precise place where the whole body is implying (showing/indicating/moving toward/urging . . . ) an interaction or experience that is needed. As therapist, we are continually resonating with this implied energy and information in a wholebody way. The emerging energy and information guides what we say or do moment to moment during a session, and the therapist supports this emergence with a spacious inner attitude of *letting come*, inviting clients to check if they can allow what is emerging to *show more* of itself.

**Clinical Example #1:** *A client is in a difficult life situation. He feels overwhelmed and stuck. The more he talks about the situation or goes into it, the more his body becomes agitated and stressed. I observe that his old postural alignment begins to contract the whole body and pulls his head downward. I resonate with this whole body energy, and the felt sense in me is a posture of submission or resignation. I share this sense with the client. He says, “Yes, that’s exactly right, a big part of me feels very defeated.” As we stay with that place, inviting a welcoming attention and awareness of the body as a whole, I begin to sense a slight easing and loosening in the body, as if something new were emerging or coming to life. The client’s body begins to sway ever so slightly in the upper body. I wonder internally if there is more movement and energy there. I share this wondering with the client, and he affirms this, saying that he would like to stand.*

*We stand, first sensing feet on ground and the whole postural alignment and vertical position. I suggest that we just stay present to whatever wants to come, in whatever way it needs to. The client’s body begins to sway in a more and more organized way. The client reports that he feels a vibration coming from his belly up to his chest. As we stay aware of this vibration, he says that he feels like something “growling” inside—a very powerful voice that is screaming, “How did I get into this situation? How did I allow it to happen?” In making space for this powerful growling voice, I observe that his whole body posture*

*has shifted. It is now more upright and more expansive in the chest and shoulders. When I resonate with this new posture inside my own body, I get an image of a big cat, like a tiger or lion. I share this with him and invite him to sense if that feels right. He says that it does so we stay with this embodied image and energy of the big cat. He senses a bodily energy here that he had not felt before. This new energy is directly connected with the movement in his whole body and with expanded shoulders feeling strong. He reports that this body energy and expanded shoulders can protect him and create safety for the other parts to also be more present. This sense of holding both in awareness, the energized body and the “defeated part” allowed him to experience a new step in resolving the situation.*

**Discussion:** The above example illustrates how consciousness of and attention to (direct referencing of) posture and energy can facilitate a carrying forward process. I utilized QC to resonate with the feel of the original postural alignment and shared what came for me. Allowing this place to be welcomed then allowed something more to emerge, signaled by the coming forth of inner-directed movement (swaying). Letting myself be informed by the energy and feel of this movement opened further to a deeper vibration which brought a stronger and more powerful energetic feel (growling; big cat). Thus, we see here how I stay attuned at the edge of what is coming, allowing for a new possibility of being to emerge. The quality of *holding both* in awareness is crucial to allowing both parts to be felt and inviting them to find their own right way to integrate and carry forward in life. I often give attention to the felt sense of posture as an important avenue in WBFOT, engendering information of how a part of self is carried, and inviting more energy, movement, imagery and postural shifts to naturally come forward (Fleisch and Whalen, 2010). Direct referencing in WBF for me includes this quality of the implicit richness of the whole living body. It is a pause of the usual symbolizing or even the necessity of putting into words, so that something “comes in the body of its own accord but in a somewhat different space than the literal space of the body” (Gendlin, 1997, p. 231).

**Clinical Example #2:** *The client describes a kind of inner circular movement in her torso that is mirrored by a slight physical movement of her whole body. My own body spontaneously begins to move in a similar way, mirroring the movement and energy of the client. As we stay with this movement, I begin to notice a feeling of awkwardness and discomfort, as if it were moving in the ‘wrong’ direction, leaving something feeling a bit disoriented or unstable. I do not share this with the client, concerned that it might be something in my own living process, and/or could disrupt the flow of what is coming. I do however invite the client to sense what the movement might be conveying to her, and she says, “It feels like it’s moving in a counterclockwise direction,” then in another moment, “You know it feels like the body is winding back the clock, wanting me to discover something that happened in the past.” As we make space for this new awareness, we stay with the movement until it actually ‘lands’ in a time in her early life that was traumatic, extremely unsettling and life altering for the client. As her awareness settles there, I notice that my whole body energy has shifted into a much more upright, solid, very still and heartfelt place. Throughout the remainder of the session, this shift in me becomes very important as our interaction begins very slowly to fill in something that had been missing during those earlier life events. This*

*began a process of sensing and integrating a more stable, loving, and protective aspect of Self with that very young, vulnerable, wounded place.*

**Discussion:** In this instance, I want to point to two general principles that are part of my functioning of QC in WBFOT. One is the mirroring function of QC and the second is the felt sense of when/what/how to actually share what comes to awareness with clients. I often find quite naturally and spontaneously that my body is moving in accord with the movements of the client—and this allows me (QC) to resonate with the felt sense, information and energy of the body-in-motion. So when my body mirrored the movements of the client, it opened up the sense of what that felt like in my field of consciousness. I chose not to share this felt awareness with the client, as I could sense that there was more emerging, and I did not want to both interrupt that flow. I also wanted to be careful that what was emerging was from the interactive space between us, and not just from my own life situations (of which there was some similarity). This careful attunement to the shared field is extremely important and again my QC could discern not to disclose at that moment. This vignette also shows how the precise movement (wave function) of the living body became intentional when maintained in awareness—i.e. disclosed a felt meaning of “winding back the clock,” connecting with a “past” experience that was wanting attention and healing. To me, this is a wonderful example of how shared consciousness activates and interacts with body-wisdom to generate an important step in transforming trauma.

**Clinical Example #3:** *A particular client who had suffered severe childhood abuse would often have an image/sense of his body wanting to curl up in a ball and writhe with pain. Although the invitation to allow the body to move into that position had always been there in our work, it felt clear to both of us that it would take a long while for him to actually perform that curled-up movement because there was another very strong pattern that would block any movement or awareness that might bring us closer to the actual traumatic events. Thus, I provided a consistent attitude of “no pressure,” nothing needs to happen, that it’s okay just to be here in the room with me. It took many, many months for him to trust my reassurance, but over time, he was able to safely feel more in presence and more aware of his body, sensations, physicality, and my own presence with him. During this time, there would be micro movements toward this “fetal” position. In me, I felt a very strong gentle sense of extreme patience and need to go ever so slowly. Gradually he allowed his whole body to move into that curled up position, sitting on the couch, bending over so that his head nestled in his lap with his hands interlocked behind his head. I felt in me that we were creating a kind of sacred space—where everything in me became very quiet, still and attentive. He never asked me to do anything special, so I trusted in my own body wisdom to show me how I needed to be with him. In a recent session, I noticed my arms opening wide, my feet on the ground and gently leaning forward towards him—with my heart open. From a very neutral observer’s stance, I could feel my spirit touching the spirit of that abused child and at the same time, welcoming the emergent adult client self. It was as though the bridge of my embodied awareness, heartfelt, grounded, and without an agenda, allowed the adult self of the client to safely and directly contact the abused child self in a way that brought life to both. For the first time in our years of working together, he experienced sadness, and*

*allowed tears to flow outward, describing a sense of compassion toward the child who had suffered so much.*

**Discussion:** Oftentimes, something that wants to happen may require a prolonged period before it is ready or safe enough to allow itself to happen. One cannot underestimate the power of a gentle and patient consciousness as a supportive body-environment interaction to the bodily implying that is both frightened and also wanting to emerge. With this client, I had to remain very patient and truly hold a space of no-expectation or pressure at all. This is akin to what Gendlin describes as *holding* and *letting come*, which is a cornerstone of WBF practice. “I can only let it come. I can’t make it. In letting it come, I allow my body-feel to stir, to move, *to do whatever it does independently of my deliberate control . . .*” (Gendlin, 1997, p. 230, emphasis added). This example shows how the process unfolded with this client, the quality of both holding (an open and accepting) space while allowing ‘*something*’ to come of its own accord and own pace. As Gendlin describes, this is a whole body process and is a core aspect of the shared field inside which our QC operates. The vignette also showed me how awareness of what the body wants to do often surfaces in its own implicit order: in this case, first as an image, then as a feel, and finally then as slow, small movements that also hold awareness of places of fear. This kind of process requires a large space so the body can find its own way and in its own time to physically inhabit the posture. My felt sense of entering a sacred space is a way that my consciousness informs me/us that we are in the field of trauma—and gives me a deeper respect for listening to and following the wisdom of the living body.

**Clinical Example #4:** *A client had been struggling with many very difficult life situations in which she felt very stuck and overwhelmed. In one session, she reported sensing something like a cold hard block in her chest area, as if it were covering her heart. As she described this sensation, I got an image of a block of ice that had hardened to protect a vulnerable place in her heart. I invited both of us to bring attention to this block, without knowing if anything would happen. As we both directed attention to the block, the client began to experience a gradual thawing and loosening of the block and could feel energy moving toward her extremities, especially her arms and hands. We followed the gradual unfolding, and I noticed that her arms were moving into a sort of cradling posture in front of her body. Together we went back and forth from awareness of the whole body to awareness of the place that was thawing to the energized arms and hands. As we remained aware of all of the incoming bodily energy and information, I got a clear sense that something new was emerging. When I shared my perceptions with the client, she affirmed what had been implicit in my awareness—that she was experiencing her whole body—self as a mothering figure that was cradling her heart (her hands had moved right next to her heart area). I asked if there was something more that she needed from me, and she replied that she would like me to move closer (we were now standing), and just gently put my hands under her elbows. She guided me to just the right amount of pressure. I sensed a very sacred interpenetration of this nurturing, warmth and support that was coming from our living bodies as well as a larger force coming from the whole environment. Gently and softly her arms started rocking side to side. She had a tender loving look on her face toward this little*

*one in her heart. As the session ended, she invited the strong sense of needing to care for, protect and nourish the wounded place in her heart (that had been so deeply traumatized and hurt) to continue to offer it support outside of session.*

**Discussion:** The above instance illustrates the power of co-consciousness (whole body awareness in the shared field) to activate life forward movement. The first part of the example shows how awareness (QC) can activate energy that has become blocked (hardened)—like dense energy (cells/tissues/particles) starting to come alive, start into motion when it connects with our WB awareness. Our joint consciousness allows the energy (wave-form function) to awaken and come into being. Once that happens, we can see how the body began to open to a life-forward direction, e.g. hands and arms moving into the “cradling” position. WBF opens up many new avenues to the dimension of *direction* as implied in stage VIII of the Process Model, the sense of not-knowing what will emerge, yet trusting that what will come is more right than what one might think. So what unfolded here is a powerful instance of what Gendlin calls “a bodily solution” (1997, p. 247;1978), where the living body generates an *object*, i.e. that part of the environment or interaction that is needed to carry forward from where the process became stopped (reiterative implying). My awareness as a therapist in a WBF way stays attuned to the coming forth of these objects—e.g. images, energy, gestures, postures, emotional expression, movements etc., any of which can form as a direct referent capable of carrying the whole organism forward. The situation presented in this vignette exemplifies the importance of a caring-sensitive Co-Presence that allows for the type of interaction needed to establish client safety and support the next steps of life forward movement. Here, from my Co-Presence emerged an invitation and a willingness to be a more active and direct participant in the bodily expression of the forming of a new quality of Self, one that is capable of holding and nurturing a very hurt, wounded place. As in any Focusing process, what I offer and how it happens is always guided by the client’s permission and her felt sense of rightness.

### **Summation of clinical examples:**

These vignettes attempt to provide a brief window into how quantum consciousness operates in the therapist in sessions of WBFOT. We offered specific examples that illustrate the principles of quantum physics as they cross with those of the Process Model to show how the implicit functions in the shared field of experiencing. These instances reveal the richness of possibilities that open when our awareness stays attuned to the resonating vibrations and energy of the living body-environment process. Many avenues for carrying forward experiencing open and inter-affect each other—such as was evidenced in the examples, including awareness of gestures, posture, movement, energy, imagery, impulses, etc.—that arise at the edge of awareness in sessions. These edges are the bodily implying, the internal urging of the body-environment as consciousness in Grounded Presence. QC connects with the wave-form functioning of the whole body so it can interrelate with the frequency of blocked or stuck places. When invited to sense inwardly and to move outwardly, these places start vibrating and coming alive to their own possibilities that had been stopped or impaired. They contain the implicit energy (quanta) that knows how to heal and return to a connection

and integration with our bodily wholeness. But they need us to notice and welcome them in order for these potentialities to come into being, to form their own pathway toward a more right, functional and integrated bodily living.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Whichever proposed models of quantum consciousness turn out to be the most accurate description of how consciousness emerges out of the living body, WBF offers us a method of relating skillfully to our bodies, mind, and life situations in a conscious way that supports life forward movement. The quality of radically new awareness that arises during sessions of WBF and WBFOT seems to match the depictions of non-locality and the sudden emergence into form of some new entity, both of which are native to the functioning of quantum events. Patterns of current psychological and corresponding neurobiological conditioning are transcended and integrated with current functioning of consciousness, opening the organism up to very new possibilities of life forward movement. Holding patterns of structural functioning are equally transformed, expanding the whole organism's possibilities of movement and new ways of being-in-the-world. For example, if we are aware of a holding pattern of both wanting connection and denying connection to other because of past history, this can result in bodily and mental tension and discomfort. With the support of the whole living body in grounded presence, aware of itself and both these patterns, we can tolerate the discomfort of holding both truths until a new pattern, a new way of receiving support and connecting to other, spontaneously emerges out of the holding of both.

The more we allow consciousness to expand and deepen even to the cellular, tissue and microscopic level of wave-form energy, we eventually reach an open space between the nucleus and the electrons. We often experience a kind of "smoothness" when we open up to the underlying space of our inner being. If we continue to observe life unfolding through this inner body-environment space, we become aware that at the fundamental level of the universe, there is pure information and energy. These primal patterns of information and energy seem to carry conscious precursors that give rise to our complex consciousness. Eventually though, the objects of our conscious life processes inevitably bubble up out of our inner body-environment space. New information suddenly appears from a place of listening to ourselves, the situation, and the environment. My wholebody awareness master wave-form signature attracts to itself new life energy and forward movement. Something comes, emerging into complex and precise information and energy bytes, which match the client/Focuser's personal situation, and often their whole history of that situation.

In WBFOT, the possibilities for healing and return to whole function are theoretically infinite. The point of entry for most Focusing practices is the body as sensed from inside, especially the middle or torso area. In contrast, WBF opens up to four distinct spaces of the whole living body including: 1) the whole physical body space 2) the outer environmental space 3) the inner space of subtle sensory and proprioceptive experiencing, and 4) the relational interactive space of co-presencing between Focuser and Listener.

Starting from and including awareness of these four “types” of spaces, the wholebody-environmental interaction as one living process *is* the huge space that supports the formation of the direct referent and forward movement in stage VIII of the Process Model. As we illustrated in our examples,

*To carry forward the whole of a situation, [is] to be in a full-bodied process . . . Just how would it be to live full-bodiedly, to carry forward the whole of routine situations? It would be a new stage. Some new kind of “environment” could render the whole of our situation, and let us live it forward as a whole. (Gendlin, 1997, p. 225)*

As Gendlin explicates, “In VIII a new space opens . . . in interaction with a new sense of Self and a new kind of ‘feel.’” (1997, p. 218) In WBF, this “feel” is the activation of energy and movement from the whole living body-environment space, one that is much larger than previously acknowledged. This new stage or level of being human, as explicated by the quantum field theory of consciousness, connects our particularity (where we are now as individuals in our process) with a universality (the entire field of Being that has infinite possibilities). This is what we believe Gendlin refers to when he states that, “. . . *This is why the VIII space is empty, and yet is sensed as so full of the life meanings being carried forward as a whole complexity*” (1997, p. 246).

It is the holding of *both* that activates the quantum field, enlivens its energy and information, and thereby moves us toward our own right way of being-in-the-world—and what Gendlin may be referring to as a new sequence that changes/ transforms the whole context. Similar to Holographic theory in which the whole is contained in every part, and each part is intertwined with the whole, in this new sequence “the body always focally implies a next step, also implicitly includes *all sequences that ever were*, in a mesh so they are implicit in each other . . .” (1997, p. 220, emphasis added). In this sequence, the frequency and energy of parts of ourselves move toward reorganizing themselves in harmonic resonance with our master wave function. What results is our living body becomes more aligned within itself, with its own optimal way of being (Functional Wholeness), with others and with all of Life (Universal Field of Being).

We have found that WBF expands the process of Focusing both in therapy and in partnerships towards a fulfillment of Gendlin’s vision of the Process Model and philosophy of the implicit. Furthermore, the functioning of quantum consciousness as described above demonstrates the efficacy of this kind of wholebody awareness to sense more inside of the shared field of experiencing between Focuser and Listener (or client and therapist). We view the growth of Focusing as an expansion of consciousness that continues to be more inclusive of a variety of channels of information, energy, and knowing that comes from the whole living body-environment interaction. We believe that WBF is a carrying forward *in practice* of what Quantum Physics and Gendlin’s work have already laid out, including new avenues, edges, and concepts that allow for more to be included in Focusing theory, teaching, and practice.

## **DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE INQUIRY:**

Future research might take several different approaches to test the model of Quantum Consciousness functioning inside of sessions of WBF and WBFOT. First, it would be helpful to map out the characteristics of organismic wholeness in a precise way so that we could begin to measure the beneficial effects of WBF and WBFOT. In a laboratory setting, it may be possible to measure the electromagnetic field effects of wholebody awareness during the felt shift and forward movement phases of actual sessions, both for Focuser and Listener. As technology continues to develop its ability to measure subtle mental and energetic phenomena, it might become possible to track the actual moment of the postulated master wave form signal signature and its correlated effects on firing throughout the brain/body. For example, in a recent study, Senba (2011) reports using video and computer technology to measure differences in psycho-physical response patterns when subjects are both in and out of grounded presence. This evidence-based research project offers us a new methodological and typological framework to explore the subtleties and complexity of Wholebody felt sensing and direct experiencing.

Second, as practitioners and trainers of WBF and WBFOT, we can continue to record live sessions, transcribe them, and codify the patterns that emerge as evidence of quantum consciousness effects on both Focuser and Listener. Third, we encourage a detailed typological exploration of the various avenues and objects of experiential carrying forward during sessions of WBF and WBFOT. This typological exploration might include further study of the role of gestural, postural and kinesthetic awareness, as well as the various modes of outward expressiveness which also bring new life and energy to our issues and situations (Fleisch, 2010).

We hope that this article has fueled the reader's passion for Wholebody Focusing, Focusing Oriented Therapy, and Gendlin's Theory of the Implicit. We also hope that the scientific information and the broad scope of its philosophical and clinical implications have offered the readers some food for thought as to possibilities for future applications and life forward movement.

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## PART 2

# RESEARCHING FOCUSING





**INCORPORATING RESEARCH INTO YOUR  
EXPERIENTIAL AND FOT PRACTICE:  
Midwifing the Implicit**

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**ABSTRACT**

Thinking freshly is at the heart of an approach to research I call Implicit Inquiry. Implicit Inquiry has a process-oriented methodology with practical ways to carry forward one's whole implicit knowing into a form that can be publicly shared. It is part Thinking At the Edge, part embodied phenomenology and part aesthetics.

With this approach in mind, anyone can 'do' research better, but mainly, I want to emphasize that everyone who is using their felt-sensing is already engaged in the fundamental processes of Implicit Inquiry that makes for creating inspired knowledge. The aim of the Implicit Inquiry approach is to open up the arena of Focusing-related research conceptually and practically so that new knowledge flows into the world from multiple sources (e.g. psychotherapy, business, economics, physics, and so forth). Especially important to the human sciences is the idea that we advance and create knowledge that is relevant, responsive, and able to move forward the focus of inquiry—regardless of content or location. Listening, dwelling, and responding are key attributes of this approach that are well known to the Focusing community through both practice and through Gendlin's philosophy.

My personal hope is to build an atmosphere within the Focusing community that holds itself as a legitimate source of new knowledge.

**INCORPORATING RESEARCH INTO YOUR EXPERIENTIAL  
AND FOT PRACTICE: Midwifing the Implicit**

I think it a fair characterization to say that many within the Focusing community do not first see themselves as researchers. On the one hand, this is a good sign, as it shows we are primarily committed to dwelling deeply within as this is the fulcrum for moving forward in all sorts of directions and situations. Being-with, dwelling, resting alongside—these are in our blood. On the other hand, our community is maturing and is now in the position to offer to our respective specializations new forms of knowledge and new methods for birthing that knowledge. The Focusing community can offer to all researchers a generative attitude that includes acceptance, humility, and aesthetic appreciation. That an article on research is showing up in our community now, and in a volume highlighting the confluence of our work with science, does not surprise me. We are ready.

The poet Rainer Maria Rilke gave this observation to his young apprentice, Franz Kappus, regarding the moment a poem's life emerges within the poet:

*For they are the moments when something new has entered us, something unknown; our feelings grow mute in the shy embarrassment, everything in us withdraws, a silence arises, and the new experience, which no one knows, stands in the midst of it all and says nothing.*

*Letters to a Young Poet, (Rilke, 1992), p. 64.*

Most likely many of us have had this experience and have learned not only to honor the budding idea, but also to cultivate it. We know too something that Rilke doesn't mention. We know that *'the new experience, which no one knows . . . and says nothing'*, in fact has a great deal of wisdom. Research for me is cultivating those unknown feelings, especially at the beginning, and in fact, throughout its entire life cycle. It involves sensing something from the inside, letting it dwell perhaps in silence, but not always, and then having it assist me as I develop that 'something' into a project that will help give voice to some experience or situation.

I realized a few years ago that when I am purposefully tapping into my felt sense while working on a research project, I was giving something to the already defined method that hadn't existed before. My felt sense continued on in the sequences. When I refer to research approaches as sequences, I mean that they carry with them their basic assumptions and the host of possible applications and refined practices that will come with their use. But now my research continued in original, creative, and even unexpected ways. In doing qualitative research, which is my specialty, my felt sensing opened up the inquiry, taking me beyond the parameters set by the methodology. Out of this generative condition Implicit Inquiry developed.

In brief, Implicit Inquiry is the intentional use of bodily sensing for the production of knowledge.

I ask the reader to take this paper as an example of a way in which a knowing of something (in my case, knowing research methodologies) became silent, as something new wanted to come into it. By bodily referring to the something that wanted to come into an already established context (e.g. research methodologies), I do not abandon the context and its specificity (e.g. its sequences and symbolizations). Rather, my bodily stirrings become fresh sequences and spaces from/with new research conceptualizations and meanings can come.

## **PROBLEMATICS INVOLVED IN DOING FOCUSING-ORIENTED RESEARCH**

### **Choosing Between Kinds of Sequences**

All research strategies aim to reveal something about life, while at the same time they reveal assumptions about life. The many research approaches, which are already laid out and available to us, function as whole sequences. Each sequence has its own *implyings*: meanings, patterns and potential for carrying forward certain specific distinctions. If we use a research approach as its theory and practices dictate, we will get more of that sequence and what the approaches implying, imply. In other words, we will get more of the same,

only more complex. Admittedly I am putting this in either/or language while the actual practice of research often involves a creative element unanticipated by the original method (sequence).

Gendlin's Process Model (1997a) points to how felt sensing encourages something new to come from a given sequence, thereby changing that sequence and all it will further be. In chapter eight, he discusses how the felt sense can work to open up 'new sequences and spaces' from the sequence we are using. Let me describe it this way. When we use a sequence with precision and thoughtfulness, such as a particular method of research, we may notice that a kind of particular space has opened up for us that we can feel. Perhaps you have had this experience and recognize this space as 'being in the zone' or 'dropping into' a creative rhythm. The sequence is still there working, but now in a different way.

Gendlin explains his specialized use of the terms 'sequences' and 'spaces' in chapters seven and eight of *A Process Model* (a PM) (Gendlin, 1997a). In this spirit I refer to the major research paradigms as kinds of VII sequences that open up fresh sequences and spaces in which the VII sequence will go forward, even if unpredictably so. As Dunaetz (2011) has pointed out, in chapter eight, Gendlin also indicates that whole new approaches (sequences, in Gendlin's language) can come from the generative felt sensing we do. The freshly generative sequences 'drop out' a whole new space.

In the context of research, the first challenge in working with our whole felt-sensing process (what Gendlin terms *VIII process* in his Process Model) is the conundrum of choosing between the dominating research sequences: quantitative, qualitative, or mixed. It might also appear that this is a much too simplistic choice and does not fit the deeper understanding that life cannot be contained by these sequences. For those so inclined, determining the underlying philosophical, ontological, epistemological (three kinds of VII sequences) basis of each methodology is critical. However, as I discuss later, the real challenge is to be able to think freshly *with* and *beyond* these sequences.

Pragmatically, working from one's implicit knowing doesn't necessarily mean choosing between methods for research, but does imply that we have some basic understanding of their underlying methodological dimensions (their VII characteristics). Before I present more on Implicit Inquiry, let me say a little about the three predominant kinds of strategies currently used by the majority of social and human science research practitioners. I will necessarily leave to others more qualified to discuss research procedures and issues as they relate to biological, neurological, or environmental concerns.

### **Historical Overview: Three Classical Research Methods**

**Quantitative.** Most current approaches to social and human science research emphasize creating a quantitative measurement to demonstrate the truth/validity of a hypothesized theory about a condition, situation, behavior, thought process, etc.—basically, anything that can be transformed into a numeric value. Quantitative methodology asks the questions 'why' and 'how', based largely on a positivist worldview of cause and effect relations between independent parts. In this view, the world is given to us already complete. We unearth its

hidden parts and arrange them in casual relations through developing theory and methods that can ‘prove’ their existence in space and time. Quantitative methods have set notions of what constitutes validity, reliability, and generalizability. Validity refers to whether a measure (e.g. any test) will actually measure what it intends to measure. Reliability refers to the consistency of a measure. A measure is considered valid if the test items are found to relate to the intended concept under study. It is reliable if we get the same or nearly the same results repeatedly of the measure over time. Specific methods (e.g. survey and experimental research) are designed to test the hypotheses by asking why something is so, (e.g. why it is as it is) and how we can stop or encourage what is so . . . from happening again. For example, we want to study the effect of Focusing on depression. To help us determine if Focusing has any effect on depression, the quantitative researcher may have participants fill out the same depression scale before and after receiving Focusing instruction. The results give us a measurement of the level of depression which we can compare.

In many places Gendlin refers to the approach to reality underlying quantitative methodology as the ‘unit model’ (Gendlin, 1993; Gendlin, 1997c; Gendlin & Johnson, 2004). Limitations of this strategy include reliance upon causality and determinism, and reducing vast and nuanced experience to numeric values. Additionally, quantitative approaches focus on demonstrating effects. A significant part of qualitative research involves evaluating effects (i.e. outcomes) based upon measures of validity, reliability, and generalizability of findings. In the Focusing community there are many fine examples of quantitative research that help address questions like, ‘Why does Focusing work?’ or ‘To what extent does body-awareness make for successful weight reduction?’ A good resource to find out more about quantitative studies and Focusing can be found at <http://www.focusing.org/research.html>.

**Qualitative.** Qualitative methodology is best described as a family of approaches that can help us understand and articulate some aspect of life, and our living of life, by asking questions related to revealing ‘what’ is life? The ‘what’ is sometimes referred to as an essence (e.g. Husserlian and Giorgi descriptive approach), its interpreted meaning (e.g. Heideggerian and Hermeneutic approaches), its linguistic structure (e.g. Narrative approach), or its situational-environmental structure (e.g. Grounded Theory), to name a few. An example of a qualitative approach using Focusing can be found in my study on the impact of learning Focusing on persons with AIDS (Krycka, 1997).

Detractors of quantitative approaches like to say that qualitative work brings back the human element into research, and our understanding of the world in which we exist. Like quantitative methodology, a qualitative approach is based on a particular worldview, but a different worldview than the positivist one. Qualitative work emphasizes the world as given, interpreted, constructed, or participatory. Qualitative methodologies are really like a ‘family’, and like many families, are full of different opinions regarding how to best gather data and describe ‘what’ the phenomenon under study is or represents. Unlike quantitative methodology where there is a central group of guiding principles for conducting research (e.g. establishing validity, reliability, and generalizability), there are a vast number of guiding principles and versions of qualitative methodology, too many to present here.

The limitations of this approach are generally voiced as contrasts to the dominating quantitative strategies. Qualitative methodologies view validity and reliability as constituted through the rigor of study and systematic ways about how we conduct research. Since qualitative strategies are about producing deep knowledge and not generalizability to large populations, this is not a very important issue for the qualitative researcher. Examples of qualitative strategies include, Ethnography (LeCompte & Schensul, 1999), Grounded Theory (Strauss & Corbin, 1990), Case Studies (Stake, 1995), Phenomenological (Giorgi, 2009; Moustakas, 1994), Narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000), Heuristic (Moustakas, 1990), Embodied (Todres, 2007), and Intuitive (Anderson, 2004). As you can see there are probably as many qualitative approaches as there are self-defined qualitative researchers!

Two very fine general texts on both approaches are Creswell's, *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches*, (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) and *Research design: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches*, (Creswell, 2009). Additionally, Anderson and Braud (2011) have an excellent book on transpersonal research methods that might be of interest.

**Mixed Methods.** A seemingly creative solution to the limitations of quantitative and qualitative approaches in the social and human sciences is to 'mix' them together, by looking at one phenomenon through both lenses (Creswell, Klassen, Plano Clark, & Smith, 2011). The aim is to broaden understanding of an area of interest and thus better explain it. It is assumed that doing so will help cover the deficits of the quantitative and qualitative strategies and give us a more 'truthful' accounting of the world in which we live. Many mixed methods strategies have evolved in the health sciences, such as nursing and occupational therapy (Lysack & Krefling, 1994), communications studies (Daymon & Holloway, 2010), AIDS prevention, (Janz et al., 1996), and education (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004) are other examples.

As I have mentioned above, a problematic for doing Focusing-oriented research lies in understanding the orientation (e.g. the philosophical, ontological, and epistemological ground) upon which the methods we choose stand. Mixed methods strategies do not release us from the tough questions and decisions that arise from attempting to blend two methodologies; in fact, they may make it all that much harder because they come from very different starting points. Part of any successful program of research, even if it involves one project, is thoughtfully considering the basic orientation of the methods at our disposal. Focusing-oriented research has many options for research. The question for me has become whether the existing models and methods, mixed or not, do indeed have what it takes to reveal what is going on in the many practices of Focusing and felt-sensing that have emerged over the past 50 years.

### **Thinking from Whole Felt-Sensing Process, Not Distinctions First**

Another, second problematic issue for doing Focusing-oriented research exists to the extent that we are learning to think from implicit knowing. Anyone who has tackled A *Process Model* (a PM) will likely attest to the challenges it brings. But understanding a

dense philosophical text like a PM, with its many philosophically important terms, is not as important to me as the challenge in recognizing when I am reflexively thinking from sequences, particularly those VII sequences we know as quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methodologies.

To better understand Implicit Inquiry it is important to know that we do not need the philosophical concepts of a PM to make our way freshly to a new area. The process of thinking from one's whole felt-sensing of something is already available (even if you are not a PM geek!) For example, I may start off with a relatively small item to work on, and then find I am creating a whole new discipline, or maybe re-conceptualizing a well-known field. The Implicit Inquiry process calls me to make room for a big pause inside—at any juncture in the work—sometimes followed by an accompanying big smile of recognition, and then intentionally turning inward to find the implicit whole from which I mean to work, and the threads inherent there that I meant to get to. Simply put, thinking from implicit knowing within the Implicit Inquiry framework reveals that I cannot be sure where I will end up!

Let me offer two examples of knowledge-building that may help further distinguish thinking in unit model terms and thinking from the implicit. Each example might appear to be *like* process thinking (VIII process) but actually isn't, at all. I will then suggest a way for us to reveal what (I do believe) Focusing can offer to research and science.

**Example One: The Relativity of Approaches.** It is clear that in our various settings we Focusing researchers demonstrate the capacity to live along side differing orientations, even fostering well-matched connections between apparently divergent strains of theory and practice. We do this, I believe, with good intentions. We see that we do not 'own' the world of ideas and practices. We try not to exhibit hubris or solipsism. Still, we run the risk of stopping generating new authenticity in our situations (our freshly living of *this* living sequence) when we forestall the creative impulse found inwardly as we attend there. We rightly sense we are 'crossing' different kinds of knowing when we do so. We are indeed 'crossing' as Gendlin describes it in a PM when we 'make connections' to other conceptual families and practices, *if* we are not merely thinking reflexively from that conceptual family. We are crossing kinds of sequences, for instance, as we move toward making connections between Focusing and Mindfulness (e.g. more thinking from VII patterns). We are involved in Implicit Inquiry when we use our felt sense space (VIII) to make the connection and possibly then re-conceptualize them entirely. In Implicit Inquiry, crossing *kinds* of sequences helps carry forward its distinctive contributions while their very meeting changes each (Gendlin, 1995). Every bit of living is also an implying, a crossing *of* everything *by* everything. If we were simply bridging, or bringing closer together well-formed ideas (VII sequence kinds), we gain a small step but potentially forfeit something new in the world. This is good work insofar as we primarily wish to retain citizenship in our interest domains, but we can do more.

**Example Two: The Apparent Gulf Between Body-Sensing and Sociality.** It is clear that the Focusing community has championed the right and relevance of the *inner life* in many ways and places across the planet. The ongoing transformational work being done in the Mideast (Omidian, 2011; Lawrence, 2005) and Central America are just two examples.

This work is a significant and ongoing revolution. I heard Mary Hendricks once say at a conference (2000, Fifth International Conference on Client-Centered and Experiential Psychotherapy), that Focusing with its attendance to inward truth-telling brings with it freedom from the constraints of judgment, suspicion, and oppression—inwardly and outwardly. In this sense, she correctly captured the social import of living a life with felt-sensing at its heart.

A problem can arise though, when we assume that the richness of our inner world possesses a guarantee of a place in the public world where all we need do is go inside and find the correct word for it. Our body-sensing tells us that our inner reality is precious, but it tells us more, I believe. When we open to the knowledge within, we sometimes see that it (whatever IT is) is present to us, not only in finding a symbol's 'fit' to our inward body-sense, but also in our making an effort to bring the whole process sequence (not just this symbol fitting now) out into the world. As Gendlin (1997a) puts it, "The body-sensing is the new rendering, the new registry, the new environmental versioning of what the body is, implies, just was", (p. 239). In this regard, I understand felt body-sensing to function not only to make a bridge between major conceptual ways of understanding human existence (the *going on in* a VII sequence), but also to function in its own way—a way that is both inner directed and yet ultimately societal. But just here I have left Gendlin a bit. I am taking his 'new rendering' further to imply a new environment, a societal environment that the VIII sequence goes on in.

### **Implicit Inquiry as Midwifery**

Through the new rendering brought forth through embodied dwelling, listening, and responding, we have already created an open space for emerging forms of knowledge by simply 'doing' what we know so well to do as Focusers. But this kind of open/creative space, the generative kind, also needs some assistance from us (and by extension our Focusing community). A metaphor that resonates for me is that of the midwife. Midwifery may not be well known to traditional science as a metaphor, but for those of us working with body-sensing, it is likely something very well known. Midwifery helps me imagine the legitimization of the art of birthing knowledge through and with the embodied organization of my innerness.

As Gendlin has pointed out since his first published articles and book, it is through our consciously attending to and following our felt sense that we birth fresh thinking (Gendlin, 1997a). How human beings can 'Do thinking' from their felt sense is the focus of much of his philosophical and psychological writing. For Gendlin, sensing is what gives rise to our thinking. His concepts point to how 'thinking' comes from a whole process, not merely cognition or feeling. I find thinking from my felt sense to be amazingly generative work. It is personally refreshing and interpersonally compelling. My hope is that doing research from *thinking* (in Gendlin's way) will likewise be as refreshing and compelling to you in your life situation.

As mentioned earlier, to start research from inner experience may seem oddly out of place in traditional methods—such as quantitative ones—as they appear too slippery

and ‘subjective’. Arguably body-sensing is everywhere, ubiquitous to everything we are, do, contemplate, and envision. Embodied knowledge, on the other hand, presents us with a precise form of knowledge (embodied felt-knowledge) that we can intentionally utilize in our work. Implicit Inquiry uses this precise, inner knowing (inherent in all of us) to freshly form and explicate ideas and also to distribute these ideas and research in the many forms they may take.

Implicit Inquiry is an emerging model for research that understands any phenomenon being studied as a distinction from a much broader implicitly functioning world. The *ongoing occurring of environment, body, and language as one* is a way to describe both the implicit functioning of existence and our experiencing of it. ‘Implicit’ knowing is different in character and *feel* than knowledge based on already explicated, logically-ordered units. Just as Body is not just tissue processes, knowledge is not merely logical in origin. The Body and its knowing has its own experiential order, a wider order in which processes and sequences are distinguished from the experiential order (Gendlin, 1997c; Krycka, 2007). This experiential order is more precise than the precision of our logical thinking. For instance, we know far more than we can ever say. How is this so?

Gendlin, and now many others, have produced a significant body of work that attempt to give answers to that question. Gendlin’s response is found throughout his works, but is notably articulated in his new philosophy of ‘entry into the implicit’ (*A Process Model*). In my reading of it, *A Process Model* presents a model about living that has a great deal to say about research. In it, Gendlin speaks of key principles that I believe can be shown to directly relate to research: *Occurring into Implying*, *Interaction First*, and *Interaffecting*. Each is a very rich territory that deserves the attention of a researcher. For our purposes we want to see these principles in action and see how they can inform a fundamentally more generous view of research.

### **Occurring-into-Implying (OI)**

Events are studied in quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches. The general attitude in science and in most quantitative and mixed research (and even some qualitative) starts not with process events but distinct events (e.g. perceptions, feelings, behaviors, etc.). Gendlin’s genius is to start with process events by making new distinctions. Process events are thus startlingly fresh and relevant. Inasmuch as Implicit Inquiry helps us think freshly, it arises from any process event that can be studied as freshly specified distinctions. In commonly used research methods, the entire process is first subdivided, paying very little attention to the whole that is prior to its divisions needed for study. If we first name the sequences (e.g. kinds of research practices, behaviors, events, feelings, complex thoughts) as such, we can then move toward making of any aspect (the entire sequence, event, or behavior) of the whole process our focus of study and experimentation. Any sequence is still its own occurring-into-implying that can be bodily recognized, but is now also a ‘separate’ event. Distinction-first tends to leave out our whole living, but the OI concept helps us bring along the entire sequencing of events into our research.

## **Interaction First—Everything by Everything**

Before we are, there is *interaction*. We humans (also caterpillars, governments, events, etc.) do not begin as separated units. This is true for bodies, fish, concepts, ecosystems, and the universe. It is even true of doing research. We are whole first and the character of that ‘wholeness’ is a “gigantic system of here and other places, now and other times, you and other people—in fact, the whole universe” (Gendlin, 1982 p. 77). This is a bit of a philosophical phrase, one that may seem out of place in discussing research practices. However, if we extend *interaction first* into research, we will see that phenomenon interrelate already, waiting for us to distinguish significant aspects for study. Thus, instead of seeing research as involving discrete parts that can be rearranged and merged into some ‘whole’, we can see the research enterprise as a process, keeping in mind that the ‘things’ and ‘parts’ we find to study are products of the concepts we employ. Implicit Inquiry encourages researchers to make new concepts that will enhance experiencing in new ways. Thus, there is no one entire thing that we study; the sum of the parts does not equal a whole, but we need the freshly arriving new parts to do our work.

## **Interaffecting**

This is another new term that further signifies how interaction first functions in the world. The many possibilities are already affected by countless other influences, which are themselves already affected by (. . .). A version of this statement seems common knowledge today in the human and social sciences, but it retains the old model—though somewhat improved. In the old models, possibilities, events, and determinants still act by themselves. But any alternative has not been described or explained well, until now. Interaffecting helps explain/describe how perception, feeling, thinking, and behaving come to be as a shared (derived from unseparated ongoing living). Additionally, interaffecting describes how already distinct things relate (they inter-affect) and change each other (carry each other forward). In research developed from Implicit Inquiry, interaffecting is a key principle, as it can help us conceptualize how this or that phenomenon under study exists as it does, already shaped and constituted by a host of other unseen influences, such as how the phenomenon changes (even by just looking at it).

## **Implicit Inquiry: Three Principles in a New Kind of Research Practice**

These three principles (occurring-into-implying, interaction first, and interaffecting) form a conceptual scaffolding upon which research practices can be shaped and carried out. Since we are living beings, it is reasonable to suggest that we are also in each and every aspect of our work. Bringing the human along into research is just now being done, but we have a long way to go.

Including ‘felt knowing’ (e.g. embodied experience) as a fundamental aspect of research is relatively new to qualitative, quantitative, and mixed practices, in general. Phenomenology has a deep philosophical appreciation for embodied experience, but with

some exception (e.g. Moustakas (1990), Finlay (2011), Todres (2007)), has not recognized its importance beyond philosophy. Now felt knowledge, referred to sometimes as embodied knowledge, is the basis for a new family of human science research and professional practices that return embodied human experience to their center.

Implicit Inquiry is the term I give to a distinct development within a broader emerging family of human science research practices emphasizing Body as truth teller. Implicit Inquiry has two aims: to provide a conceptual scaffolding upon which the entire research enterprise can be re-enlivened and extended from the ground of the Body and to provide new ways to conceive, engage, and evolve current research practices: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods.

Implicit Inquiry explicitly employs our native wisdom, sometimes called embodied felt-knowledge, or felt knowing or body-sensing, at all steps in research—from its innovative beginnings, to modeling how to proceed, to finding the right method and form of analysis, and disseminating our findings. It can be used to enliven existing methods and create new ones.

TABLE I

*Body-sensing as Implicit Inquiry in Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Methods*

<b>Innovating®</b>	<b>Procedures &amp; Analysis®</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exploration: Finding body-sense of topic, determining fit and potential</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1<sup>st</sup> Phase: Refine specific procedures based upon body sensing &amp; knowledge of subject matter</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion: Period for idea development using body-sensing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2<sup>nd</sup> Phase: Employ procedures</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development: Determining the method; Consider subject selection, interview protocols adopted or created, surveys, experimentation</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3<sup>rd</sup> Phase: Collect Data (from interviews, surveys, experiments, etc.)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Refinement: Return to body-sense of project as a whole, adjust method as necessary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4<sup>th</sup> Phase: Perform Analysis per method</li> </ul>
<b>Verification®</b>	<b>Furthering®</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intersubjective Resonance: Finding yourself there, back to the original idea as body-sense</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deriving Concepts: With aid of processes like TAE new concepts come from any research project</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expressive (written) Product: Determine right form and placement, publish, disseminate in some appropriate form</li> <li>• Getting Feedback: from audience &amp; self</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concept &amp; Theory Formation: Some projects develop whole new areas</li> </ul>

In this very brief table, I am attempting to demonstrate how body-sensing, as its own, new environment, can carry across all levels of research both implicitly and explicitly. Implicit Inquiry is not confined to a particular method of research or approach to research practices, neither to the idea-formation stage, nor the revision stage when writing up our results. Body-sensing (and directly referring, though ubiquitous to our existence) is also a special kind of environment that can be engaged throughout our research. The Implicit Inquiry model, quite new, is evolving. I think of it as a holding space for new, more innovative approaches and practices to develop. In Implicit Inquiry our body-sense, that freshly forming sense of the whole of (. . .), becomes a new environment enabling us to create new versions of the contexts (VII sequences/spaces) in which we work.

## FINAL THOUGHTS

Knowledge that is demonstration-focused (e.g. cause-effect oriented) is often preferred today; this cannot be denied, but at its worst, in my opinion can be a mute kind of knowing, a kind of knowledge that may easily turn its ear away from the something that is yet to be seen. As Gendlin consistently points out, knowledge that is of or about an outcome or procedure is only half the equation of a more potent knowledge that is grounded in process distinctions rather than incremental bits of data (Gendlin, 2004; Gendlin & Johnson, 2004). As we emphasize the demonstration-focused approach in research, we fall risk of becoming numb to the nuances, character, and situation accompanying the phenomenon under study. Instead of placing discrete information first in our philosophic, epistemic, and aesthetic ways toward understanding some phenomenon, we can explore bodily sensing as it can be applied to research.

Gendlin's Process Model leaves little opportunity for reflexive thinking and speaks to the kind of research that inherently and simultaneously occupies intrapersonal, interpersonal, and social spaces in both implicit and explicit forms. As I see it, process methodologies and methods (developed from the Process Model) may, at some point in the future, stand out against/with quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods approaches as new strategies for understanding human and non-human living. Unfortunately, we are not there yet.

However, what we can offer to research now (and to scientific inquiry in general) is the triumvirate foundation we find in our Focusing practices: embodied dwelling, listening, and responding. These three elements set our work aside from others' who rarely make credible and legitimize dwelling, listening, and doing (Fiumara, 1990). These three elements form 'how' we come to birth knowing in general, and new research ideas in particular. It forms our basic epistemic approach.

For me, the concepts laid out in the latter part of *The Process Model* have the most exciting application for research, as Gendlin offers a new form or platform for thinking and doing: the body-sensing occurring environment (Gendlin, 1997, VIII space). These concepts have not been offered elsewhere with as much thoroughness. To go further into Gendlin's insights contained in *The Process Model* would require many more pages, but let me add this piece from it that I believe speaks to how Focusers can better appreciate research space:

The vastness of that space [body-sensing] is therefore understandable: It isn't the kind of space that situations are. We are in them. Here is a space in which the whole situation moves. We are not in the situation anymore, but in the new space, and we are here, the situation is now a something, a new datum, there, over against us (p. 239).

To think about research as a 'whole situation that moves' is a wonderful way to imagine how we might incorporate research into our Focusing work. When I consider research as a whole situation that moves, I become less interested in mixing approaches in the hope that 'the many approaches will help me understand the one' situation I am studying. From that sense of movement, I know we have an alternative, or at least potentially so. We have the body-sensing environment from which to dwell and take what arises 'there' in the body into the public realm through research or some other form that can affect society.

I contend that it is precisely at the moment that we are tempted to 'mix models' of knowledge (including mixing research methods) that we are also prone to becoming *numbed* to their different and varied philosophical foundations and epistemological directions. I have also emphasized that we have the potential as a community, to seriously consider how the Process Model can inform our research, and how, by intentionally using our bodily sensing we can produce new knowledge in general and a new family of research practices in particular.

I will say again that I believe the Focusing community can offer a distinct philosophical and epistemic approach to research that has yet to fully exist in the world. Perhaps, fair to say, we also need to work at envisioning ourselves as holding a unique inwardly-oriented map, the VIII space of body-sensing, that is ready to listen even when such listening may inescapably draw us to give up our precious assumptions and patterned thinking. It gives us the advantage of a willingness to take leave of those patterned forms so that we can speak '*when something new has entered us*' (Rilke, p. 64.)

I caution us not to think that 'fresh concepts', such as those I hope we someday form through Implicit Inquiry or some other process, emerge or actively work 'from nowhere'. We do not want to give up the power that the existing concepts (VII sequences) offer and have. In Gendlin's way of saying it, we cannot even 'give up' VII sequences as we are always living VII-ingly (symbolically). That is, we could no more live without electricity (which was developed from many versions of VII patterns and sequences in science) than we can live without the air we breathe. Rather, it might be better that we zig-zag between the already distinguished methods of research (as VII sequences) and the freshly arriving sense of the whole (. . .) that marks VIII process. I hope that Implicit Inquiry, or some other model built from VIII sequences, can result in generative space for doing research that brings new and helpful VII distinctions and meanings. It is important that we break the habit of mind in which we endlessly reorder the known sequences (e.g. methods of research), even through creatively blending them. Undoubtedly, this will take some time.

We are, after all, not panderers in the sense that we simply procure other knowledge from diverse areas or practices and squeeze our kind of embodied knowing into them. We

do not ‘wed’ differing orientations in an attempt to make of them better partners. Instead, we offer science, and in fact any kind of thinking, a way to midwife the birth of new thought relevant to its own focus. And as we continue to develop our own unique ways forward in research or any other area of interest, with Implicit Inquiry as a model or not, we will be legitimating body-sensing as an important part of creating knowledge. One day, very soon perhaps, our felt-sensing will lead to many more new avenues for exploration of human life than we already have and help further secure the strong tradition of Focusing for years to come.

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## THOUGHTS ABOUT ADVANCING FOCUSING RELATED TO THE BROADER SCIENTIFIC COMMUNITY

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*Zack Boukydis, Ph.D.*

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### INTRODUCTION

This paper presents another opportunity to promote Focusing by indicating several strategies which could place Focusing more solidly on the map of traditional scientific inquiry and scientific endeavor. There are different ways to advance Focusing and ways to develop research on Focusing. This paper has practical suggestions related to Focusing and science. As Focusing is seen over time as building in legitimacy as a ‘paradigm’ worthy of scientific attention, there is a substantial increase in resources which can be directed toward research on Focusing and Focusing-related practice.

### HOW RELIABLE AND VALID ARE THE MEASURES AND MEASURED RELATIONSHIPS?

If we look at some of the central criteria for developing a scientific paradigm, we have to understand the issue of reliability and validity in the measuring process and how this is understood in many scientific circles. While there are many diverse methods of doing research, these criteria provide a link between research on Focusing, typically seen as research in the psycho-social sciences and research in different areas of science. With the issue of reliability, one can ask whether the measuring process is done in a consistent or repeatable fashion. Thus for instance, with many scales there is training of new interviewers or raters so that they are as ‘reliable’ (that is, can obtain the same ratings) as the experienced interviewer.

With the Focusing process itself, the issue of reliability can be very challenging because the Focusing process is about change, and in essence the ‘contents’ are changing with the person’s experiencing (meaning creating) process. One solution has been to develop measures of the person’s ‘mode of experiencing’ or paying attention to their *bodily felt sense*. This situation gave rise to the Experiencing Scale. In developing this scale the issues of reliability and validity had to be addressed (Klein et al, 1969). Related to reliability the question is: *Is it possible that different ‘raters’ can obtain the same rating while listening to an audiotape of an interview or a psychotherapy session?*

Further, is it also possible to determine if there are certain reliable patterns which can be measured ‘in’ a person’s body concurrently with their Focusing process? This issue will be addressed below in a consideration of ways to combine measures of the Focusing process with immunological and neurophysiological measures.

Another way that a new phenomena (in this case, the intricate, complex Focusing process) gains credibility in science is through three types of validity: concurrent, predictive, and consensual validity. When a new phenomena can be shown to have a stable and

strong (but not perfect) relationship with accepted measures, the work relating measures of the new phenomenon to accepted measures is said to satisfy criteria for concurrent validity. Concurrent validity refers specifically to the empirical relationship between a measure of Focusing process and another already established, accepted measure. For example, is there an acceptable relationship or correlation between a measure of Focusing process and a standardized measure of depression?

In the context of this paper, one might ask what is the relationship between, for instance, the Experiencing Scale category and a person's blood pressure response to a stressful situation? One might expect that regardless of experiencing level, people might show a similar physiological response to a stressful event, but that people who are *high experiencing* have a more rapid recovery to normal blood pressure levels than do those who are *low experiencing*. Thus, experiencing level has gained in validity because it has helped to discriminate the blood pressure recovery rate of people exposed to a stressful situation. The relationships in this example are somewhat hypothetical, and initially in a research protocol, it would be important to see if initial stress reactions and rate of recovery vary by experiencing level.

The issue of predictive validity is complex, but one essential feature is that, given that the new phenomena are reliably measured, how well does it predict from one's current status to future status or outcome in the future? For example, we might ask: How accurately are we able to predict how 'well' (and in what situations) a newly trained Focuser will focus in the future? Further, we might ask how well can we predict a measure of the Focuser's depression, life satisfaction, and ability to control their blood pressure, etc. in the future?

Consensual validity usually means that recognized experts come to an agreement that a new phenomena has been documented and is worthy of more complex scientific attention. This issue of the *Folio* is one attempt to build consensual validity about Focusing and research related to Focusing in the eyes of a broader scientific community. Another way to establish consensual validity would be to invite Focusing 'researchers' and recognized scientists to talk with each other about what the important questions are related to advancing research related to Focusing. They could jointly review questions which arise from the existing body of research on Focusing and decide how collaborations between Focusing researchers and other scientists may advance research on Focusing.

## **A CALL FOR RESEARCH ON FOCUSING AND SCIENCE**

There are four broad areas of research. The first is on the Focusing process itself, including what people tell us while they are Focusing, people's process while engaged in counseling and psychotherapy, and how Focusing is taught and learned. Much of this work was reviewed by Hendricks (Hendricks, 2001). A valuable review of these issues and others in developing research on Focusing and science is available (Iberg, 2000).

The second area relates to what difference learning Focusing makes in other aspects of people's living. How does learning Focusing or engagement in Focusing consultation predict other types of functioning?

The third area involves scientific collaboration between Focusing researchers and colleagues from other areas of scientific research. This area involves the ways in which Focusing is related to accepted measures in science and includes what happens concurrently in people's bodies (on a measurable neurophysiological level) while they are Focusing.

The fourth area involves developing collaborations with scientists which might change how we are able to freshly see/attend to the Focusing process and change how scientists ask questions in their own fields.

I will expand on the second to fourth area of research here. (Second Area): How does learning Focusing or engagement in Focusing consultation predict other types of functioning? For a number of years, I worked with a medical researcher to address a serious concern: stress, disease, and health in air traffic controllers—and—to develop a protocol using Focusing instruction in order to examine potential reduction in stress (Bidwell, 1990). The plan was to use a randomized design with two groups: those in the first group who received only the current standard of health care for air traffic controllers, and those in the second group who, in addition to the standard of health care, would engage in an Optimal Functioning Inquiry (OFI) which included attention to Focusing process and experiencing. One of the key points in this research was to measure blood pressure at the same point in time, before the training for both groups, and then to repeat the blood pressure monitoring for both groups after the training was concluded. For several reasons, mainly the inability to attract enough funding, this project has not been completed. I included this project as an indication of the type of research that can be considered in developing Focusing. This kind of Focusing research could make a profound difference in many other aspects of people's living, including their general health and average daily blood pressure.

Grindler & Flaxman (2011) reported a study "Focusing: An adjunct treatment for adaptive recovery from cancer". I encourage the reader to read the research report for more detailed understanding. Using a matched-pairs experimental design, Grindler & Flaxman matched people based on their having a similar clinical rating of survival prognosis following a cancer diagnosis. One group received training in Clearing a Space during six 90-minute sessions, and the other group were a wait list control or comparison group. Grindler & Flaxman then compared both groups on five measures, examining the results for both groups on these measures immediately following the training, and six months afterwards.

The results "showed a significant decrease in depression and a significant improvement in body attitudes for the treatment group when compared to the control group. A trend toward improved scores for the treatment group appeared in hardiness scores and body cathexis scores. At the six-month follow-up, treatment group scores did not change significantly, suggesting that subjects sustained the changes achieved with this intervention over time." (Grindler & Flaxman, 2011; Results section). Related to the issues in this paper on Focusing and science, this study makes an important contribution, including showing that the training decreased depression and body attitude scores and that the results were sustained over a six-month period. This finding reflects the issue of predictive validity, and that the Clearing a Space training can be shown to indicate differences in both established quantitative (depression measure = Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Index—depression

score) and qualitative measures. Very important was the Grindler & Flaxman comment: “It would be very interesting to look at the impact of treatment on more objective dependent measures, such as biological measures of immunocompetence.” (Grindler & Flaxman, 2011, Discussion section). In essence this comment reiterates the main point of this paper build collaborations between Focusing researchers and scientists (experts who measure immune system functioning and possibly researchers who measure chronic stress using neurophysiological measures).

Another recent study reported on the Focusing website, “Effect of ‘Clearing a Space’ on Quality of Life in Women with Breast Cancer” (Klagsbrun, Lennox & Summers, 2011) shows similar promise and reflects positive differences for those who participated in clearing a space training in a quantitative measure The FACT-B (a 44-item self-report instrument designed to measure several facets of quality of life in patients with breast cancer) and a qualitative self report instrument. As in the Grindler & Flaxman study, it would be interesting to look at the influence of treatment on biological measures such as immunocompetence. In other work, it has been shown that writing-therapy can have a positive effect on the immune system (Frattoroli, 2006). Lutgendorf and Ullrich (2002) have shown that in using the Experiencing Scale, the more experiential the writing is, the greater the benefit is to the immune system.

Drawing on these studies and others, I advocate for the inclusion of measures of immunocompetence and neurophysiological functioning (see below) as valid outcomes and potential correlative indicators of the Focusing process (see below) in future research.

The third area of possible research is how Focusing is related to accepted measures in science? In 1977, Norman Don, a colleague of Gene Gendlin’s at the University of Chicago, published a paper: “Transformation of Conscious Experience and its EEG Correlates”, dealing with the relationship between self identified felt shifts and patterns in EEG frequency spectra. According to the article, five people, previously trained in Focusing, gave ‘verbal reports’ about ‘internal experiences’ which were audio taped during sessions that lasted ‘up to 43.7 minutes’ (Don, 1977, p.151). During the sessions, each person’s left occipital EEG’s were recorded onto tape, and later Fourier analyzed by a digital computer into component frequency spectra. Afterward, people reviewed their own audio tapes and selected 1.) Moments where unusual insight and psychological movement were beginning (called ‘felt shifts’ in the study) and 2.) Moments where they experienced the least amount of psychological movement (called ‘negative shifts’ in the study). The study reported that there were significant patterns in the EEG that could be identified about 75-80% of the time—especially when people indicated that they were starting to have felt shifts. In addition, the researchers found a very different distinct pattern when people indicated that they were having ‘negative shifts’.

This research is an example of the kind of collaboration that I propose. While there are uniquely experienced events taking place during each individual’s experiential process, there may be predictable patterns at the neurophysiological level which can be measured. The measures themselves, in this case EEG frequency spectra, can be recognized in broader fields of scientific endeavor, and as such, have their own history of development and

application to other aspects of functioning in the human body. Other measures, for instance changes in blood pressure, cortisol levels, or vagal tone (Porges, 2007), are already seen as acceptable markers of, for instance, ‘healthy’ or ‘stressful functioning’. These results can be used in research paradigms like the one above to infer that Focusing itself can be a healthy, stress reducing process which is probably not harmful, and which can be reliably demonstrated to be a valid indicator of healthy human (neurophysiological functioning). I do not mean to imply that the only area of research relating Focusing to science should be stress reduction or healing and healthy living. However, these areas afford collaborations of the kind I suggest, and there are already precedents in previous research on the Focusing process which could be built upon.

The Don study (1977) was limited and only suggestive of potential relationships between self identified felt shifts and EEG frequency spectra. The research would need to be replicated with more people to see if the same patterns existed. Also the strategy could be reversed so that pattern recognition of the EEG spectra could be done first, to identify the unique patterns thought to be connected to Focusing events. And then, the data for self-identified felt shifts could be examined to see if just by examining the EEG spectra alone there was the ability to identify the times when felt shifts were beginning. Further, one can ask, ‘Are these EEG patterns for each person reliable over time?’ Another question is whether people who have this predictable pattern are similar or different in other types of physiological and psychological functioning? Are there differences between ‘self identified’ (people indicated on the tape when a felt shift was beginning) as compared with ‘other identified’, (others, for instance, those trained in the experiencing scale, indicate where they think a felt shift is beginning)? Finally, EEG measurement has changed since the Don study. There are new ways to quantify and analyze EEG patterns and other measures of neurophysiological functioning are being used in more recent studies, such as functional M.R.I.’s.

Despite limitations in this study, the methodology is promising as a prototype for relating events during Focusing to neurophysiological events in the body (Gendlin & Berlin, 1961). While examining the relationship between events in Focusing and neurophysiological events, it is also possible to concurrently relate the potential linkage to other measures of psychological functioning. So, for instance, one might ask whether people trained in Focusing (and who have these unique EEG frequency spectra) also have lower depression or better documented performance in job interviews, etc.

The fourth area of research potentials centers on two related questions, namely (1) how developing collaborations with scientists might change the way we are able to see/attend to the Focusing process and (2) how a knowledge of Focusing could change the ways that scientists ask questions in their own fields. An example of the first question, how scientific discoveries may help to shed light on processes occurring during Focusing, has been the discovery of mirror neurons—areas of the brain which appear to be activated when we observe or are in the presence of someone else (Rizzolatti & Craighero, 2004; Molnar-Szakacs & Overy, 2006; Iacoboni, 2009; Ramachandran, 2011). In a way, these findings are the closest that this type of scientific measurement has come to indicating that some aspects of events ‘between’ two people can be experienced ‘concurrently.’

So for example, when we observe someone else reaching for an object, the neuromotor association areas in one's brain related to one's own reaching for an object are 'activated.' The activation of mirror neurons has been connected to watching physical events, watching someone touching someone else, hearing sounds/music and possibly, watching emotional expressions on another's face. The typical focus in new research with mirror neurons has been on brain function and neurochemistry. With the understandings of the experiencing process during Focusing, events are noticed 'in' the body as one's felt sense of the event. During a Focusing session with two people, it would be interesting to see how, and under what circumstances, the listener's mirror neurons are activated when the Focuser is, for instance, ready to have, or having a felt shift. Parenthetically, I think it is problematic to call this event, an event indicative of 'empathy'. The listener may be attentive to subtle changes in the body process of the listener, but cannot know the differentiated inner experience, or meaning-forming that is occurring for the Focuser.

As a Focusing teacher, I often wonder if there are differences in the ability of a listener to attend to, be aware of events in the body of the Focuser, especially, for instance, the forming or changing of 'energy' that can occur as a felt shift is taking shape. I expect that there are individual differences in what I am describing (some people may start Focusing training with this ability and some may not). It would be interesting to see if there are changes in mirror neuron activation (during the beginning of felt shifts) over time during the course of Focusing training. While this is a brief statement of a complex problem, it highlights how advances in neurology and measurement of mirror neuron activation may shed light on questions related to Focusing training and practice.

The second question in the fourth area of potential research concerns how scientists may change their thinking as they build collaborations with Focusing-oriented researchers. We might study how scientists who learn Focusing for themselves begin to change the way they ask scientific questions and therefore modify the nature of their inquiry. Clearly, these changes are outlined in the work on Thinking At the Edge, including an innovative program using training in Thinking At the Edge with Ph.D. students beginning their research (Tokumamru, 2011).

## **BUILDING FOCUSING AND SCIENTIFIC COLLABORATIONS**

Within the Focusing network it is common to think of 'Focusing and . . . ' for example, Focusing and Art Therapy (Laury Rappaport) or Focusing and Preparing For Job Interviews (Jim Iberg), and so on. It may be useful to think of what 'Focusing and Scientific Endeavor' can contribute to medical and health concerns such as: excessive use of prescribed medicines, length of time to heal from certain types of physical injury, and so on. It would be worth studying whether Focusing can contribute to a deeper, more differentiated understanding of the issue, for instance, if healing processes might be complemented or accelerated by Focusing. As Focusing contributes to understanding and changing the 'and', then there is another phase that looks back to Focusing, i.e., what is it about this person's Focusing process? . . . and are there stable differences in individuals where Focusing helps some and does not help others—and so on.

In summary, this paper has suggestions for ways of building on these contributions (finding neurophysiological or biochemical correlates of the change processes influenced by Focusing, and using multiple methods of inquiry such as measures from ‘within’ Focusing research related to other standard, acceptable measures; continuing to validate well used measures with concurrent validation and predictive validity research designs and developing collaborations with researchers who are addressing serious well funded research concerns).

The paper points to a model encouraging those in the Focusing network who want to do research to build bridges and collaborations with people who are involved in other areas of empirical scientific endeavor. It is through these collaborations that a common ground for inquiry and evaluation can be found which may increase the validity of Focusing in the eyes of a broader scientific community. I have outlined some of the basics of what is often called ‘programmatically research’ involving a series of connected studies and ways to look at a research question from different angles using different methods. If the scientific collaborators come to know or learn Focusing for themselves, then the nature of their questions, over time, may change and important life concerns can then be collaboratively researched, embracing both science and the intricacy of inner experience.

This topic, “How knowing Focusing has changed the way I ask questions in my scientific work” is worthy of a conference or another issue of the *Folio*. One simple suggestion arising from this paper and this issue of the *Folio* is to have people who know and value Focusing research talk and meet together to outline: 1. An online consulting service and 2. A ‘research program’ on Focusing and science which can have several key interrelated topics. All of the research does not need to be housed in one place, but there should be a respected ‘lead institution’ and innovative communication and networking strategies to allow Focusing researchers to contribute to the building and advancement of the research program.

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## RESEARCH ON CLEARING A SPACE

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Gendlin (2004) proposed the development of ‘first person science’—a method of scientific inquiry that avoids the pitfalls of a science of ‘things.’ Alongside traditional scientific methods, he proposes a ‘model of processes’ where the human ‘self-reflexive dimension of living’ becomes the content of our scientific investigation. In this method, scientific inquiry begins with differentiating different human processes and looking at their contributions to human living.

Clearing a Space (commonly known as the preparatory step for Focusing) has been developed as an experiential process in its own right and explored and applied to many issues and special populations. Research studies have investigated the effects of Clearing a Space on physical and emotional well-being, its impact upon specific physical illness/syndromes, as a stress reduction tool, work with children, education, and as a way of accessing spiritual resources related to one’s situational struggles. In addition, the role of Clearing a Space in long-term psychotherapy has been investigated in several qualitative studies and other studies have specifically investigated its contributions to trauma work.

The results of these many studies both confirm and further clarify how Focusing impacts physical well-being, emotional/mental shifts in meaning, the psychological healing of significant wounding for both children and adults, and spiritual development that increases empowerment to make changes in one’s life. These results now enable us to further understand the nature of the process of Clearing a Space (also referred to as CAS), and under what circumstances it may be of particular value for facilitating change, healing, learning and transformation.

The purpose of this paper is to present the results of this wide range of research on the effects of Clearing a Space. Clinical vignettes will demonstrate results. A brief overview of the scales developed for the original research on CAS is included

When Focusing was first discovered, there was an emphasis on the difference Focusing makes in addressing problems. At this early stage, what was significant about Focusing was that the felt sense carries the whole of our situation and knows more about what is needed to carry life forward than what we can figure out or think about. This direct access to the complexity of the felt whole changed our understanding of the unconscious (Gendlin, 1964). What is carried forward through exact symbolization wasn’t ‘already there’ but rather becomes the next step of living.

Clearing a Space was initially understood as a preparation for Focusing. One is invited to bring one’s attention inside to notice what life issues “keep me tense inside.” As each issue is sensed inside, it is acknowledged with a *Focusing Attitude*, and then placed at a little distance, in a metaphorical way. When this process is complete, a space opens up inside the person, and from there one is invited to sense freshly what issue wants attention now.

Since this initial formulation of CAS, the value of directly attending to and working with the Cleared Space itself has furthered our understanding of the nature and value of this process in its own right and suggests a larger understanding of not just particular problems per se, but of a wider field of living that shifts our relationships to our problems. What is this capacity and what is this space? The current research seems to indicate that CAS can be generative of a kind of change process that moves one in the direction of greater self-care and physical wellbeing as well as in the direction of a larger self-integration that rests in the vast space of the larger Self that some describe as a spiritual connection. The experience of ‘the more’ that is not ‘these problems’ also shifts the person’s relationship to a problem and becomes a directly felt connection to the potential in their lives. In a session with the author one Focuser describes CAS like this:

*It’s like I came home to myself . . . It was like I had been away from myself for a long time. It was incredible. I could just rest there with all of Me. I did not know about this, that there is this inner home, that is like the essence of me . . . and it is free of my ‘problems’ (Grindler Katonah, 2010, p. 160).*

## **I. CLEARING A SPACE AND HEALTH**

### **1. Stress Reduction**

There are many known techniques for stress reduction—progressive relaxation, mantra meditation, guided imagery, yoga, etc. Often one experiences deep relaxation after a practice period. However, the actual issues in one’s life that are creating ‘stress’ don’t go away, and after a respite of relaxation the body tenses up again. As Gendlin (1999) says: “All the stresses are what we call crossed in the body. Rather than being next to each other, each gets into the others so that they add weight to each other. A large overall stress weight results.” (p. 178) With the practice of CAS the stresses are identified, separated, and encouraged to be placed outside the body in a metaphorical place that holds the stressor in a relaxed way. “We find that each stress is far lighter when released from crossing with the others . . . They do not reconstitute the same degree of weightedness as when they were crossed” (Gendlin, 1999, p. 178).

In addition, the placing of a particular concern at a distance in a friendly way (not trying to get rid of it) shifts one’s relationship to the problem in such a way that fresh information becomes available and moves the person beyond the stuck pattern. “As long as the body is carrying the implicit meanings unexplicated, the body remains stressed and our capacity to continue to create and live out our meanings is brought to a halt” (Gendlin, 1999, p. 178).

Example:

*“I suddenly feel like I have the energy to stand up to my husband. I’ve wanted to do that for a long time, but I felt dragged down by guilt” (Grindler Katonah, 2010, p. 163).*

## 2. Medical Decision-Making

People diagnosed with a serious medical condition often have to make difficult decisions quickly. Physicians often present treatment options and respective statistics regarding outcomes. Often there is no definitive conclusion as to what is best, nor are there guarantees of a cure; while at the same time, physicians communicate the sense of urgency to decide. Patient's emotions are intense, and families can be left feeling helpless. In this state, it is not easy to think through a decision, to weigh alternatives, or to process the medical information productively.

There are several typical ways in which people tend to approach this decision-making task. Some weigh the logic presented by the doctors to make their decision. Sometimes family members have a strong opinion about what is best and push for it. This family pressure often silences and disempowers the patient. Others just assume "the doctor knows best" and abdicate a more active involvement in decisions. Both patients and family members are often driven by fear in making a decision and are too anxious to really come down into their bodies. Research indicates that patients who are actively engaged in their health care do better. (Greer, 1991, Wiebe and Williams 1992, Graham-Pole 2000). The practice of CAS enables patients to place fears at a distance in order to distinguish concerns, and then when the 'cleared space' becomes accessible they are able to listen to a deeper layer of bodily wisdom before a decision is made.

The following case study segment demonstrates the effects of CAS:

Sarah is a 69 year-old woman who has been living for two years with a second occurrence of ovarian cancer. When the new tumor was discovered, her physician presented her with the choice of doing nothing or trying chemotherapy again.

When she came to see me, she was quite distraught. She felt the burden of this decision and felt hopeless that she could come to a decision that really felt "right" to her. Her head was spinning with thoughts going round and round about this ultimate decision. She was in a non-process state because she was 'too close' to the situation, making it difficult for her to form a felt sense.

I invited her to clear a space:

DGK: *There is so much you are feeling about this right now . . . how crucial this decision is and how you don't really know what is right for you. Could we take some time now, to imagine taking all of that and putting it outside you at a little distance . . . Just notice how it all feels in your body . . . we are not going to figure anything out right now . . . Just be with it . . .*

M.T.: (Takes a deep breath) . . . (quiet) . . . *Well, I was just noticing all that is there and then the thought came . . . put it in God's hands. But it wasn't really just a thought . . . I could really imagine placing it outside of me . . . in the center of a flower . . .* (begins to cry) . . . *Oh, my God . . . I feel such relief . . . just in letting go like this . . . I didn't know I could feel this way at this time . . . I really need this . . .* (Sighs and becomes silent for awhile) . . . *But I still need to make a decision . . .*

DGK: *Yes, I know . . . but, perhaps you could begin by continuing to listen within . . . Asking that place that is now held by a flower, in God's hands . . . what is needed next to help.*

M.T.: *(Silence) . . . Oh, what came was . . . it's time to wait now . . . and the answer will come . . . That feels right . . . I know that will happen . . . I feel more relief and confidence . . . that in time I will know what I need to do for myself.*

For further examples see Grindler Katonah (1999) and Hendricks (1999).

### **3. Clearing a Space impacts quality of life for people with cancer**

Research demonstrates the need for interventions that address social and psychological needs of both individuals and families dealing with life-threatening and life-altering diseases (Carlson & Bultz, 2003). Several research studies evaluated the usefulness of CAS for people with health concerns.

Klagsbrun and colleagues (2010) taught CAS to 17 breast cancer survivors, age 43-65, during 6 weekly, 45-minute sessions. The first and last session was in person and the remaining 4 sessions were conducted over the phone. Quantitative results showed:

- A significant improvement pre and post intervention (compared to the control group) in the FACT-B measure of quality of life.
- No significant differences between the delivery methods. Participants achieved equivalent scores on the CAS Checklist whether the intervention was delivered live or by telephone.
- Equal preference was expressed for both phone and in person delivery of the intervention.
- Qualitative results found these common characteristics: reduced somatic concerns, increased emotional self-regulation, mental clarity, and calm mood.

Klagsbrun, J., Rappaport, L., Marcow Speiser, V., Post, P. Byers, J., Stepakoff, S., Karman, S. (2005) investigated the impact on quality of life of a two one-day intensive retreat for 18 women with breast cancer that integrated both CAS and expressive arts therapy (dance, movement, visual art, and creative writing). CAS was taught prior to the beginning of the workshop, at the start of each day, and practiced once with a partner between the two retreat days, and a final time at the end of the second retreat day. Results showed:

- Significant increase in CAS scores pre-and-post treatment. (p.01).
- Significant increase in quality of life as measured by the Fact-B scale (p.01).
- Subjects with High EXP showed greater improvement in Body Attitudes and ability to CAS.
- Significant improvement in Body Attitudes for subjects with low to medium experiencing level at the beginning of the intervention (p.05).
- Significant correlation (.7) between EXP Scale and CAS Check List, suggesting CAS is a valid independent measure of 'experiencing level'.

Grindler Katonah (1999) evaluated the usefulness of Clearing a Space as a psychological tool in the treatment of 12 cancer patients between the ages of 30-55, who had cancer within the last five years. Subjects were matched for severity of illness, and randomly assigned to the immediate treatment or to a wait group of four weeks. The treatment consisted of 6 weekly, 1 1/2 hour training sessions in CAS. This CAS protocol emphasized a Focusing process on the cleared space itself. A six-month follow-up showed the following changes over time.

- A statistically significant decrease in depression (p. 025) and improvement in body attitudes (p. 02) for the treatment group when compared to the wait group.
- A trend towards significance appeared in the hardiness scores and the body cathexis scores.
- At the six-month follow-up, no significant differences in the scores emerged for the treatment group, suggesting that subjects had sustained the changes achieved with this intervention over time.
- Qualitative results revealed that through sustained practice, patients experienced increased self-care behaviors.

For further case study results applying CAS to work with people surviving cancer see: Kanter (1999), McDonald (1983), Gendlin, Grindler Katonah, and McGuire (1984).

#### **4. Clearing a Space and weight loss**

Most current weight loss interventions continue to be conceptualized from the Cartesian model that separates mind and body. Either the focus is on changing the physiology through physical mechanisms (exercise and changes in eating habits) or through behavioral interventions that emphasize changes in behavior or environment. Most of these approaches only show short-term results. The experiential theory (on which Focusing is based) posits that the mind and body are not separate processes, but rather are one interactive whole that changes in relation to all aspects of one's living.

Antrobos, J. (2008) evaluated the subjective experiences of four women, age 23-32, and concerned about weight, during a combined treatment of CAS and yoga over a period of 6 weeks. Once a week each participant attended a one-hour yoga class followed by a Focusing session guided and audiotaped by the investigator. Results include:

- Report of weight loss ranging from 2-5 pounds.
- The scores on the Grindler Body Attitudes Scale increased from pre-test to the three-month follow-up by an average of 10%.
- Three of the 4 participants stated at the follow-up interview that they were less concerned with their actual weight than with their overall sense of 'feeling healthy.'

Qualitative results include reporting that during the CAS sessions the participants discovered 'unique instructions' for their self-care. For example, one participant reported that she is now able to recognize what feels good in her body. All participants reported learning more effective ways of handling their stress.

Holstein, B. (1990) examined the effects of Clearing a Space and Focusing on the maintenance of weight loss for 14 subjects following a 10 week cognitive behavioral weight loss program. Half of the group received 10 Focusing sessions. All subjects received 10 sessions in Cognitive Behavioral Therapy weight loss strategies. Results showed:

- Control group lost 6.7 lbs at the end of treatment and at the 3 month follow-up the average weight loss was 3.3 lbs.
- The Focusing treatment group lost 3.3 lbs. at the end of treatment, and at the 3 month follow-up the average weight loss was 7.7 pounds. Maintenance weight loss was significantly higher for the Focusing group. (p.05).
- Qualitative results in both studies show that the subjects who practiced CAS and Focusing did not Focus on weight as an issue but rather attended to the personal issues that arose from the body suggesting that the ability to lose weight is part of a larger holistic process.

## **5. Clearing a Space and AIDS**

Krycka, K. (1997) researched the impact of CAS, which included Focusing on the cleared space itself, as an intervention for four men with AIDS. Four males between the ages of 19 and 45 who tested HIV positive and had stage four HIV infection participated in this study. They received training in CAS over a six-week period. Results showed

- A significant increase in Hardiness, Self and Body Cathesis, and Body Attitudes.
- Two subjects evidence significant decrease in depression.

Through a phenomenological analysis of the audio-recorded sessions Krycka identified three distinct phases on the 'recovery of will'. 1. The process of attending to one's feelings and body awareness were more difficult than imagined for the subjects. 2. A new fresh dialogue was established between formerly disowned, or denied aspects of experience. 3. A shift in each person's sense of meaning related to their illness occurred, with a return of vitality and the integration of previously disowned parts.

## **6. Clearing a Space and Chronic Pain**

Ferraro (2010) investigated the impact of 6 weekly Focusing sessions, including CAS, for 4 chronic pain patients. The CAS protocol included becoming aware of the quality of the pain, to keep the pain company, to place the pain at a distance, and to find a pain-free area. A series of measures administered 5 times (including base-line measure and at two-week follow-up) over a 10-week period assessed levels of symptoms. Results indicate:

- 28% decrease in depression
- 23% decrease in anxiety
- 21% decrease in level of pain
- 34% improvement in body attitudes.

- Increased alertness and re-engagement with family and life outside of pain experience.
- Qualitative analysis of transcripts indicate participants found a pain free area in their bodies and learned about a personal belief system that restricted their life.

They also gained a new, active coping strategy.

Following is an example of one subject's new awareness of his limiting belief that he wasn't 'supposed' to be pain-free:

T: *So what's it like to be a person who knows that you can actually be relaxed and free of pain sometimes?*

C: *It's kind of . . . (pause) it kind of makes me nervous a little because . . . (pause) oh . . . am I supposed to be like that? I still have that thing of 'are we allowed to be this?'*

T: *Comfortable and relaxed?*

C: *Yeah, yeah . . . not me!*

T: *Ummm . . .*

C: *You know, are we allowed to be that comfortable?*

T: *So here you've been wondering inside, even as you're feeling . . .*

C: *Right.*

T: *Your 'something' is creeping up saying, "Wait! Is this okay?"*

C: *Right. DO I have the right to be like this?*

T: *Do I have the right to be what I asked to be?*

C: *To be this relaxed? (Ferraro p. 53)*

## II. CLEARING A SPACE IN OTHER CONTEXTS

### 1. Clearing a Space and Children

Yuba and Murayama (1988) reported case studies in which CAS with drawing was used in play therapy. The qualitative results indicate that CAS:

- Helps the child experience a sense of himself that is not involved in the problems
- Brings physical and mental relief
- Increases the child's capacity to attend to problems in a constructive way
- Positive behavioral changes in school were observed

Santen (2007) (reported the results of three case studies applying his model of Body Maps (a spatial model of Clearing a Space) for helping severely traumatized children to reconstitute their experiencing. Santon recognized that children and adolescents who score

high on dissociation-scales report experiencing dissociation-linked phenomena as located in fixed spatial positions. With this understanding, Santon developed a treatment model that helped children make the avoided places ‘exist’ in an out-there space (outside their body) as a doorway to access these places in the in-here space (inside their body). “My experience is that it can be very hard for dissociated children to connect with a feeling place; their bodies do not ‘talk back’ easily. It is difficult to reach and maintain the required quiet inner sensing” (Santon, p. 61).

His treatment approach begins with offering dissociated clients life-sized empty ‘bodies’, drawn on paper. These could be used as out-there containers that—used as reflectors—stirred up and clarified the current spatial positions of dissociation mechanisms in their body. In most of the cases this appeared to cease the grip of their anxiety and release the reconstitution of experiencing.

The case example of Raphael summarizes the results:

After 4½ months of treatment the landscape of a newly-made-second body map confirmed what Rafaël had told: the impact of shocks on his life had been minimized. His parents reported considerable change. Rafaël’s nightmares had almost gone. Symptoms like his vomiting and being “deadly frightened of death” had disappeared. He was coping better with unexpected events. School-results improved. He began to take more initiative. Therapy was cut back; we finished shortly after (p.67).

## **2. Clearing a Space and Education**

Zimring, et. al. (1974, 1983, 1985, 1990), in a series of five studies demonstrated increased performance on complex mental tasks through CAS, especially tasks that require attention to internally generated stimuli. These results suggest that CAS, which trains a person to reflect inwardly and find a space free of problems, strengthens one’s ability to concentrate one’s attention.

However, it is not just younger students who need help to reduce their stress levels before settling down to learn; a complex and daunting series of stressors beset college and graduate students, as well. See Klagsbrun (2008).

## **III. CLEARING A SPACE AND PSYCHOTHERAPY**

Successful psychotherapy requires a directly felt bodily process that is experienced both within the relationship between client and therapist and within the client’s inner relationship to his/her own subjective experiencing (Gendlin, 1984). CAS can be integrated within a Focusing-oriented psychotherapy in many ways. What impact does it have for a client to shift their relationship to an issue (too close or too distant) and what impact occurs when the cleared space itself becomes a direct referent? The potential contributions CAS may offer psychotherapy have just begun to be investigated, and the following studies give us more information about the value of this process as it is integrated into a psychotherapy relationship.

Leijssen (2007), differentiates ‘microprocesses’ that are aspects of the full Focusing experience and may be needed at different times and for different reasons during a therapeutic process. She describes how clients can feel overwhelmed or in a state of heightened anxiety when talking about a very sensitive issue. What is needed is to create a relationship between ‘me’ and the sensitive issue.

She offers many suggestions about how to help clients create some distance between themselves and the problem. For example, she describes how CAS allows concerns to surface spontaneously in response to an interested curiosity about ‘whatever is there’ and then giving each a place to be for a few minutes before a deeper exploration. Her case study results indicate that clients report “experiencing a deep feeling of peace, rest, life energy and being centered . . . which may come near to a spiritual/ religious/ transcendental experience” (p. 11). This sensing what it is like to be free of a problem creates room for an “influx of positive energy and lightness” (p.11). “This process is in itself a healing one; it creates the experience of a ‘new me’, untouched by difficulties but capable of finding a better way of relating to one’s problems from its position as observing self” (p. 11).

Rappaport (2009) introduces CAS with art as a fundamental approach in Focusing-Oriented Art Therapy. She reports that CAS can be used with individuals, couples, groups, and families. The client is invited to identify the issues that are in the way of feeling ‘all fine.’ Through the use of imagery and art supplies, issues are symbolized and placed at a comfortable distance (for example, in a basket). The ‘all fine place’ is also attended to with all the kinesthetic responses to the colors, textures, and shapes created. Rappaport discusses how CAS creates a connection to an aspect of the self that is separate from the concerns and also helps them to experience themselves as essentially whole (p. 122).

One question within the experiential psychotherapy field considers the difference between using “guiding techniques” vs. developing the kind of client-therapist relationship that furthers experiencing. Ikemi (2006) evaluated two cases over time, in which the combination of a self-regulation method (an Asian development of autogenic training incorporating aspects of Zen meditation) and CAS were introduced at the beginning of a therapy relationship. The results show a gradual decline in the use of this protocol over the course of the therapy. In the early phase this process was applied in each session. In the middle phase of the therapy it was applied in an average of 63% of the sessions. In the final phase it was used 16% of the time for case one, and not used at all for case 2. These results suggest that the introduction of these techniques served the function of teaching the client how to relate to his/her experience in a Focusing-oriented way, enabling the dropping of the techniques as the Focusing-oriented therapy process began to function on its own.

Ikemi discusses the significance of this progression.

The decline in the use of SRM/CAS procedure indicates that the use of the SRM/CS method was replaced by the developing relationship between the client and the therapist and within the clients themselves. It can be speculated that as clients learn to relate to their own feelings, the use of therapeutic methods become no longer necessary (p. 228).

Grindler Katonah (2010) conducted a thematic analysis of CAS experiences that occurred in the context of an ongoing change process and suggests that the direct engagement of the cleared space (applying all the Focusing steps to the felt sense of the cleared space) contributes to a spiritual development process that shifts a person's orientation to their life—from one of goals and problem-solving to a way of being that centers one's life in a larger purpose. The central focus is no longer on solving particular problems, but becomes instead the desire to live one's life in alignment with one's higher values and purpose.

The following process dimensions were differentiated: All of these dimensions articulated below are the qualitative results of the thematic analysis reported in Grindler Katonah (2010).

### **1. Each issue finds its 'right' place**

Through allowing each 'issue' to generate its own image of where to place itself, a kind of mandala is created where "each issue places itself in relationship to the larger whole and the whole organisms' living is carried forward" (p.162).

### **2. Sense of wellbeing is increased**

There is a noticeable physical experience of wellbeing when the cleared space is discovered.

"Often a breath occurs when an issue is placed at a comfortable distance. Energy is freer. One is no longer burdened by 'all of that.' Laughter may spontaneously emerge. One tastes *a way of living* unencumbered by a particular difficulty" (p. 162). This increased well-being helps one act differently. Once this experience of a different way of being is accessed through CAS, particular action steps become possible that otherwise felt 'stuck' or 'too difficult.' Action steps are crucial to experiential change (Gendlin, 1996, p. 228).

### **3. Direct experience of one's essence:**

Without the practice of CAS the person may relate only to situational issues.

Through Focusing we can find what is true for us about any experience or concern—the exact symbolization that carries forward the *situation*. Yet, there is another experience of 'Me' that is more central, a directly felt connection to an essence of one's being that lives through all of one's situations. In touching the cleared space we experience wanting life more for its own sake. It may even come for someone who is terminally ill—even then, it is there . . . a kind of force or strength that 'rolls through all things' (Wordsworth, 1964, p. 92) and can never be destroyed. Over time, entering the cleared space stimulates a desire to center one's life in this wider self (Grindler Katonah, 2010, p. 163).

Example 1: (from a client of McDonald (1984)

T: *Is there a word or image that fits the quality of the Clear Space?*

C: *Clean . . . and . . . light.*

T: *Clean and light. Is that the quality that exactly fits?*

C: *Mmm . . . (head nods) . . . (Pause)*

C: *I just want to stay here. It's so free. I feel free.*

T: *You feel free . . . (Pause)*

C: *I never knew I could experience anything like this! (Eyes open wide.) (p. 125).*

Example 2: (from a client of Klagsbrun et al. (2005)

*“What comes is that the cancer is a tunnel, which is limited and constricted, but I sense that it's the illness that is limited and constricted, not me.” (p.132).*

#### **4. Increased confidence**

Another development that occurs over time through practicing CAS is confidence.

This direct encounter with the cleared space releases fear and increases confidence that an answer will come, without trying to figure something out. With this connection to the “more” one realizes something larger is participating in one's healing. Confidence in life and life's process is strengthened (Grindler Katonah, 2010, p.163-164).

#### **5. Awakening to the Significance of one's Life**

Usually we see the significance of our life through evaluation. It is rare to experientially value our life for its own sake.

The experience of sitting with the cleared space often includes recognizing the unconditional significance of one's life. One realizes that one's value is not contingent upon outcomes. Rather, one's life is inherently significant. This felt insight begins to change one's sense of purpose—being becomes more important than doing. A way of life that expresses one's values becomes more central. Over time a greater commitment to self-care develops. Change steps emerge relating to exercise, diet, spiritual practices, attention to relationships, etc. (p. 164).

#### **6. Not one quality but many: What emerges fits what is needed**

Each time someone accesses the cleared space, it is experienced differently. Qualities that emerge in the cleared space resemble a kaleidoscope. Handles frequently described are: peaceful, still, comfort, clear, whole. Other

handles describe ‘something so big and significant that it can never be grasped; yet it is real’. The purpose of finding a handle is not to define the experience but rather to access more of what the cleared space offers for this moment. When the explication fits exactly, one’s relation to all the issues shifts towards a sense of greater unification (p. 165).

Grindler Katonah (2010) suggests that over time, when practicing CAS in such a way that the cleared space is focused upon directly, a different kind of growth process occurs which leads to a shift in the locus of the self to include a connection with a ‘higher source’ of meaning for one’s life.

#### **IV. CLEARING A SPACE AND TRAUMA**

Literature indicates that immersion in the affect of the trauma does not lead to recovery. (Van der Kolk, 1996). The Felt Sense, in contrast to emotions, forms a more complex differentiation of experience; however, for the felt sense to form there needs to be the ‘right distance’ between the ‘I’ and ‘the issue’. This inner relationship is created through CAS and generates an experiential process that moves beyond the patterning of the trauma.

Bhat (2010) taught CAS, over 6 weekly sessions, to two trauma survivors who were diagnosed with both Post-traumatic Stress Disorder and Substance Abuse and were currently residing in a residential treatment center for substance abuse. Participants were guided through CAS in each session. The protocol began with experiencing a positive memory; then each subject was guided to put aside their felt sense of life stressors until each experienced an inner space free of problems or concerns. Results showed a significant reduction in trauma symptoms as measured by the Trauma Symptom Check List, including less flashbacks, difficulty concentrating, and sleep disturbance.

Qualitative analysis of CAS sessions over time indicate the following changes:

- New sense of bodily awareness.
- Sense of interpersonal boundaries and safety through trust in their bodies.
- Acceptance of their humanity.
- Greater sense of vitality through taking action.
- Shift to positive thinking.
- Ability to be playful and laugh.
- Greater confidence in their own ability to maintain sobriety.
- Participants reported at their follow-up interviews that they had developed a commitment to living with a new purpose.

For research on CAS and trauma see: Coffeng (2003), Grindler Katonah (1984), Hendricks (1998), Hudek, C. Folio 2007, Klagsbrun (2007), Leijsson, (2007), McGuire (1984).

## V. TWO MEASURES OF CLEARING A SPACE

The Clearing a Space Check List measures the number of Focusing steps the subject experienced during Clearing a Space (clearing a space, felt sense, handle, sitting with felt sense, background feeling, and a felt shift). This Scale is designed to include the guiding instruction to apply the steps of Focusing on the cleared space. The Check List is scored after each session and allows for calculating an overall mean score and the range of scores achieved over time. The trainers who administered the intervention were trained in scoring the Check List and achieved reliability amongst each other. The reliability coefficient obtained was .84. For anyone wanting to use this Scale a similar training process should be included for the raters as well as establishing reliability with the original ratings used in this study through rating the reliability tapes. A significant correlation (.7) was found between the CAS Check List and The Experiencing Scale, thus establishing validity.

The Clearing a Space Check List was developed for the purpose of measuring the experiential success of a Focusing intervention and to be able to correlate degree of Focusing success with other outcome measures. To obtain a copy of this measure go to: [http://www.experiential-researchers.org/instruments/grindler/clearing\\_a\\_space\\_checklist.html](http://www.experiential-researchers.org/instruments/grindler/clearing_a_space_checklist.html)

The Grindler Body Attitudes Scale was designed to investigate health-related attitudes toward the body after an illness. This measure rates the degree to which a person who has had an illness is maintaining positive attitudes towards his/her body and the extent to which the body is seen as capable of healing. The range of possible scores is 30-150 and the key for rating this scale is enclosed. Validity was obtained by correlating The GBAS with the Secord and Jourard Body Cathexis Scale. (Secord, P. and Jourard, S. (1953). The Appraisal of Body Cathexis: Body Cathexis and the Self. *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, 17, 343-347.) The two scales correlated significantly ( $r = .62$ ,  $p = .001$ ). We evaluated the reliability of the scale using a Spearman-Brown Split Half Reliability Test and found a reliability coefficient of .88, which showed the internal consistency of the questionnaire. To obtain a copy of this measure go to: <http://www.experiential-researchers.org/instruments.html#Grindler>

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this article reports on the research developments regarding applications of CAS that contribute to many developments of the person: mind/body integration, empowerment in making decisions from a bodily wisdom, other applications in the fields of medicine, education, psychotherapy, spirituality, and trauma. These results suggest that CAS contributes to a furthering of integrated development (towards wholeness), empowerment of the person to carry forward in action, to a spiritually informed development that moves beyond problem-solving, and to ways of engaging in learning that bring the whole person more alive.

Further research investigating experiential processes continues to be important. A broad range of research methods now enable us to measure the kinds of changes that occur in order to differentiate the qualitative changes, and to illuminate what is happening during a particular process. Hendricks (2001) has analyzed a body of research within the experi-

ential Focusing field; however, the field still lacks large scale studies, replication of smaller yet promising studies, development of cross-cultural studies, and further investigations of applications to specific issues and populations. May this review stimulate further research in these areas.

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**CLEARING A SPACE:  
An Evidence-based Approach for Enhancing  
Quality of Life in Women with Breast Cancer**

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## INTRODUCTION

Focusing is a body-oriented method of bringing attention to one's inner experience. Developed by Eugene Gendlin in the 1960s, Focusing accesses meaning that is carried in the body via the 'felt sense'—a term Gendlin coined to refer to those sensations one can feel in relation to a particular situation or issue (Gendlin, 1981, 1991). As Gendlin continued to refine the Focusing process, he noticed that when practitioners began by naming their current issues, the Focusing process that followed was deeper and more effective. Eventually he developed a systematic way of acknowledging and cataloging current issues, without becoming consumed by them. He called this preparatory movement Clearing A Space (CAS).

In this study, the researchers aimed to see if CAS, offered as a thirty-minute guided experience, could positively affect the life quality of women with breast cancer. CAS, rather than the whole Focusing process, was chosen because it was easier to teach and to measure, using the Grindler Katonah checklist (Grindler Katonah & Flaxman, 2003).

Gendlin found that CAS led to a welcome distance from encroaching problems. While originally presented as the first step in a longer Focusing process, Gendlin also noted that it can be done alone for its own sake (Gendlin, 2003), and that this can often result in an opening out into "a vast space inside." CAS differs from other stress-reduction methods in that it is a process that explicitly names and places aside each person's list of current stressors. It is both a means of becoming aware of one's stress load and reducing it at the same time. CAS uses the metaphor of searching inside oneself and allowing whatever obstacles one finds to feeling "fine" or "all clear" to be noted, tagged, separated from the self, and placed at the right distance away (Gendlin, 1981).

Early research on Focusing reveals that the inner bodily attention an individual develops through the Focusing process helps the body to relax (Gendlin, 1981). Since we carry situations in our body as physical tension, it makes sense that if we pause, we can connect each tension to a particular psychological issue, e.g. we might carry tightness in the stomach about a disappointment, shallow breathing and constriction about a threat to our health, or tight shoulders about a feared event. When we try to relax by turning our attention away from the problems, often the body retains the stress, tension, or upset. Placing the generalized feeling of agitation or tightness aside in one fell swoop isn't usually effective. However, with CAS, we slowly attend to how the body is carrying each stressor or problem, and then we place "all about that one" aside. This specificity permits us to relax the bodily tightness associated with each issue. The end result, after pausing to sense how we are carrying a particular issue and placing it at the right distance away, is a more relaxed and peaceful

mind-body state. As individuals achieve this sense of a clear or clearer state, their perspective seems to shift in the direction of a wider and, for some, more spiritual experience of their lives. There typically results a sense of distinct physical relief and psychospiritual well-being that brings a fresh viewpoint on their problems. (Grindler, 1991; Klagsbrun, Rappaport et al., 2005; Pettinati, 2002).

Previous studies of CAS have shown that subjects achieved an improved ability to process and resolve emotional and psychological issues in their lives (Grindler, 1991; Klagsbrun, et al., 2005). Research in neuroscience (Siegel, 2010) gives us a scientific understanding of the brain that helps explain how CAS can shift our experience of ourselves and our situations. Bringing gentle attention inwardly activates the pre-frontal cortex, which helps us observe the internal processes of the mind. This activation enables us to witness our physical, emotional, or mental distress, thus inhibiting previously unconscious and automatic neuro pathways. By means of the instructions, suggesting that we place aside our concerns one by one and then dwell in the “clearer space,” we mobilize the right hemisphere’s capacity for visualizing positive possibilities and outcomes. With repeated practice, the CAS process seems to calm the limbic system and allow for a deeper feelings of integration and equanimity, as well as a reduced vulnerability to stress (Bray, 2011; Ziff, 2011).

Research on Positive Psychology also offers support for the notion that staying with this feeling of well-being (even in the midst of difficulties) offers an experience of safety and protection that seems to leave lasting traces in the brainstem and limbic systems (Hanson & Mendius, 2009). Other researchers have found that positive experiences and thoughts lead to positive cognitive changes, expanding the conceptual connections and increasing positive feelings towards others (Frederickson, 2009). The regular practice of CAS can actually increase the ratio of positive to negative experiences, seen as leading to a tipping point that is a gateway to flourishing (Frederickson, 2009.)

Both Focusing and Mindfulness are effective forms of CAM (complementary alternative medical measures) which 80% of women with early stage breast cancer have chosen to use to improve life quality (Wyatt, Sikorskii, Wills & Su, 2010). Individuals who are ill or are in physical pain have found emotional benefits from regular Focusing practice (Klagsbrun, 1999, 2001; Pettinati, 2002). Mindfulness practice has also resulted in an increase in well-being, improved coping ability, and a diminishment of stress-related symptoms in cancer patients (Ott, Norris, & Bauer-Wu, 2006).

A growing body of research on the treatment of cancer patients indicates a need for a multi-modal approach, addressing a composite of social, psychological, and emotional realms of both patients and families (Carlson & Bultz, 2003). CAS, which is both a short-term treatment and a long-term practice, has the potential to be of great benefit here. One study has shown that women with breast cancer are still in need of supportive therapies five years after treatment (Holzner et al., 2001). Other studies indicate that there are elevated levels of distress (i.e. anxiety, depression, sleep and eating disorders, fearfulness) during all stages of cancer treatment and recovery. Cancer treatment and recovery also induce social isolation and disorientation, and create a drastic change in lifestyle and agency, all

of which may increase distress and depression in cancer patients (McDaniel, Musselman, Porter, Reed & Nemeroff, 1995; O’Leary, 1990).

Not surprisingly, major depression is the most common psychiatric disorder generated by patients’ experience of cancer detection, diagnosis, treatment, remission and/or recurrence. The incidence of depression in this population ranges from 13% to 56% (Croyle & Rowland, 2003). Depression is also a marker for lower survival rates as well as an increase in symptoms, and a greater reduction in life quality (Ciarmella & Poli, 2001; Parker, Baile, DeMoor & Cohen, 2003; Spiegel, Bloom, Kraemer & Gottheil, 1989; Spiegel & Giese-Davis, 2003).

Since CAS is a psychosocial intervention, it is important to note that studies have affirmed that this type of intervention does alleviate distress and improve immune functioning in patients with cancer diagnoses (Fawzy, Fawzy, Arndt & Pasnau, 1995). While there is some controversy about whether survival rates improve as a result of psychosocial interventions, several meta analyses have demonstrated other beneficial effects such as improved emotional adjustment, functional adjustment, and symptoms in adults with cancer (Mayer & Mark, 1995). A larger, more recent meta analysis looking at 37 different studies on quality of life in cancer patients found an overall effect size of .31, which suggests that psychosocial interventions have benefitted the population of adults with cancer (Rehse & Pukrop, 2003; Newell, Sanson-Fisher & Savolainen, 2002).

## **METHOD**

In this study, participants were guided through the CAS protocol individually by a certified Focusing Professional (whom we referred to as a “Focusing coach”). (The complete protocol is in Appendix A.) Each weekly session was limited to a half hour. During the first and last sessions, coaches met their participants in person, while the intervening four sessions were carried out by telephone.

During each session, the coach guided the participant in the protocol and then completed a post-CAS checklist (Grindler, 1991) to assess the degree to which the participant had been able to place her difficulties aside and attain a ‘cleared space’ during that session. In addition to the checklist, the following four instruments were administered both before the treatment began and after the treatment sessions were complete: 1) The Functional Assessment of Cancer Therapy-Breast (FACT-B), 2) Grindler Body Attitude Scale, 3) Inventory of Attitudes 32-R, and 4) Brief Symptom Inventory (BSI).

In addition to the quantitative findings, qualitative data were gathered by the Focusing coaches both during the six CAS sessions and during exit interviews conducted several weeks after the conclusion of the interventions. There was a waitlist control group that completed all the questionnaires at the same time as the other participants and then, without having any intervention, took them again in 6 weeks’ time.

## **PARTICIPANTS**

Out of the initial group of 24 participants, 17 completed the study. The participants ranged in age from 43 to 65 years. Twelve had spouses or partners and four were divorced. All but two had one or more children, with three of the participants coping with school-aged children at home. Sixteen were college graduates, six with graduate level education. There was a broad range of years since the cancer diagnosis, as well as what stage their cancer was, and what their course of treatment was. Five had stage I cancer; six had Stage II; two had stage III; and the balance were unknown. Nine of the participants had been diagnosed within three years preceding the study, and eight had been diagnosed from 4 to 9 years prior to the study. It is noteworthy that five of the seven participants who dropped out of the study came from the waitlist control group.

## **RESULTS**

### **Quantitative Findings**

The majority of the participants were able to successfully clear a space, as measured by the Clearing a Space checklist. Of the 17 participants, 11 were able to successfully reach a cleared space in every one of their guided sessions. Five were able to reach a cleared space in half or more of their sessions, and only one participant seemed to have difficulty achieving a cleared space. Overall the participants were able to reach a cleared space in 86% of the sessions held (87 out of a total of 101 sessions among the 17 participants).

Only one of the four measures, the FACT B, was found to show a positive statistical effect after the CAS intervention. This self-report instrument was designed to measure several facets of life quality in breast cancer patients, including their physical, social, familial, emotional and functional well-being. We believe that our results were affected by the small sample size and by our choice of instruments, which were not a good fit for this population. For further discussion of our quantitative findings, please see Klagsbrun, Lennox and Summers (2010).

### **Qualitative Findings**

Qualitative data were collected from the participants in two ways. First, the Focusing coaches took notes of participants' comments during each of their CAS sessions. Secondly, the coaches conducted exit interviews with the participants several weeks after the conclusion of the intervention, using a series of open-ended questions. The research questions are attached in Appendix B. The coaches asked the questions and recorded the responses verbatim in handwritten notes, which were subsequently analyzed for content.

The qualitative findings derived at the end of participants' sessions from their descriptions of how they felt upon achieving a cleared space demonstrate a high level of efficacy. Thematic analysis revealed the following four categories of response:

- a sense of being peaceful, calm, relaxed, refreshed and/or nurtured
- a sense of having achieved lasting change and an ability to recover the sense of cleared space at will
- positive changes in the sense of self
- a transcendent or spiritual quality.

Thirteen of the 17 participants made themselves available for exit interviews. The following brief summary of the data suggests, once again, the positive value the participants experienced from the CAS process. When asked if and how CAS was of value and whether they noticed any differences in their state of mind after the intervention, the participants uniformly answered in the affirmative and identified the following positive outcomes:

- greater mental clarity and focus
- a more relaxed, calm, peaceful state
- reduction in somatic concerns
- greater self-awareness
- increased sense of empowerment
- appreciation of the social support inherent in the process
- confidence in the ability to emotionally self-regulate.

All of the participants who engaged in exit interviews reported that they would like to continue to use CAS in their life. The majority (N=8) of those responding said they would like to find a CAS partner, while the others were less sure or did not respond. All reported that they felt CAS would benefit others with breast cancer, citing not only the benefits listed above, but also the more specific ways in which CAS could help women to deal with their illness-related fears, emotions and somatic concerns. The following represent some of the participants' opinions on this question:

If done during treatment, it could help a lot. It would take the fears away. The way it is done now is totally wrong. The message you get is to “get on with your life,” “march on,” “things will be fine.” They want you to pretend things are normal and they are not. It is a time when you need to pay more attention to your body and have time to think about what is going on. I had time and it served me better.

Yes, because I know for me all sorts of little body concerns come up and it's helpful; and also times of feeling overwhelmed come with breast cancer and treatment, and having this form as a way of working with these feelings is a wonderful tool to have.

Definitely, because when you have cancer, you get so wrapped up in yourself. What happens next is that I get scared and anxious. This would help to put it aside and deal with it when you're in a better place and calmer. I have always

found that when I look at something the day after, it's not as bad and I can deal with it easier.

An especially interesting finding was that most participants were as satisfied with receiving the CAS intervention by telephone as in person. Three people expressed reservations about the telephonic format, citing the impersonal feeling, the difficulty of hearing the coach, the awkwardness of holding the telephone equipment while Focusing, and the greater risk of distractions and interruptions. The others, however, either had no preference for in-person vs. telephone formats, or preferred the telephonic delivery.

## CASE STUDY

This case report describes the experience of a participant named Lauren (pseudonym), a 43-year-old married mother of a teenager. Lauren's cancer was diagnosed in 2004 and at the time of the study was at Stage III. A few months before the study she had undergone reconstructive surgery. Unlike several other participants, she had not employed other CAM treatments, with the exception of a short period of time using guided imagery procedures. Asked what her expectations were upon entering the study, she wrote, "I hope to gain more inner peace and a calmness that I haven't felt since before diagnosis."

When the CAS protocols were administered to Lauren, she was able to successfully clear a space in 5 of the 6 sessions (score of 10), and she achieved a score of 8 in the remaining session. In her first session, she got in touch with a number of concerns and issues common among breast cancer patients, including a fear of death, chest pain, concerns about letting others know how she was feeling, and fatigue. As she explored her feelings during the session, the image came that she was being dragged by a hook at the back of her neck as she struggled to please others. As the session proceeded, she imagined giving herself much needed time to relax, which engendered an inner vision of a white dove peace image. At the end of the first session she reported feeling that her burden was gone, as her body could float.

During her second session, the only session when she did not achieve a fully cleared space, Lauren worked on the burning pain she felt in her back from her surgery. As the session progressed, she was able to reframe her response to the pain, seeing it now as her body's way of reminding her to take care of herself. She was then able to experience the burning sensation in her back as "a positive body glow" and "calm like a bright sunny day."

During her last four sessions, Lauren primarily worked on feelings of anxiety caused by her hectic work life and exacerbated by her concerns regarding her illness. In the third session, she was able to set aside her stressed feelings and arrive at a feeling she described as "fine and light, like I just had a good meal, but not too full—a just right feeling." She reported to her coach that in her day-to-day life she had been more able to access feelings of happiness and contentedness and that she was beginning to experience "a sense of ease, flow, and things coming together in such a good way." In her fifth session, Lauren told her

coach that the Focusing was making her calmer and happier and that the people at work noticed that too.

By her final session, Lauren found she was able to set aside a sense of overwhelm, “of having a tornado spinning in my chest and back, from too many things to do.” As she proceeded into the protocol, she realized she could ask others for help and this brought an easing in her breathing. At the end of the session, she described herself as feeling as if she were standing up straighter and taller, with warmth in her heart, and much calmer. Her final image that captured how she felt at the close of the session was “a fresh feeling like a sheet blowing in the wind,” a feeling she knew she could bring back to herself at will by using the protocol.

During her exit interview, Lauren attested to the overall calming effect that CAS had had on her life. She said, “The main thing is that it made me feel much more peaceful. I had a clear mind at the end of the week.” When asked if she felt a difference in her state of being before and after the study, she said, “Definitely clearer; and other people have noticed it too. I have really held onto it.” Contrasting Focusing to other CAM modalities, she said, “Meditation is harder because the mind wanders. Focusing is easier to do.”

## **DISCUSSION**

Although CAS generally takes only 20 to 35 minutes to complete, it seems to result in a greater sense of calm, enhanced emotional self-regulation, improved coping, a greater overall sense of well-being and a sense of empowerment in dealing with anxiety, fear and other cancer related issues. Since there is a clear need to find ways to address the trauma of serious illness, we recommend that medically-oriented practitioners might well benefit from knowing and using CAS with their patients.

A useful finding of this study—that participants found the telephone as useful overall as an in-person session—suggests that this intervention can be made available to those who cannot easily travel in the midst of their cancer treatment or for whom the hospital has a negative association. Being able to be guided in CAS in the comfort of their home seemed as though it was a notable benefit for some of the participants.

Comparing CAS to other CAM modalities, a few participants volunteered that there were two aspects of CAS that made it preferable to meditation for them. First that CAS is relational and provided witnessing and company as they reflected on their current state, and second, that CAS has steps that offered structure to their self-reflections and guided them to a clear space and a sense of how life would be without their problems. The nature of this intervention helped them reliably arrive at a place of peace and spiritual well-being.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

This research points the way to larger studies of the efficacy of CAS in larger populations and populations with differing health issues. We suggest a study with mixed gender

populations and with people with differing diagnoses, such as diabetes, heart disease, AIDS, autoimmune diseases and different types of cancer.

It is suggested that a waitlist control group such as we used, not be utilized, since five participants waiting for the intervention dropped out of the study.

We also suggest using telephone or Skype as a medium for the intervention, both to facilitate intervention delivery to a larger sample and also to explore whether the use of Skype might overcome some of the perceived limitations of telephone delivery.

Finally, it is suggested that non-certified Focusers, such as nurses, social workers and counselors, be trained as coaches in order to determine whether these professionals can be taught to successfully administer CAS and how the levels of efficacy they achieve compare to the results of this study.

For Focusing researchers who would like our support, we would be happy to share the proposal submitted to the IRB (Internal Review Board) at Lesley University, which sponsored the research.

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## APPENDIX A

### CLEARING A SPACE PROTOCOL

Before we begin, it would be helpful for you to choose a comfortable space. You could be lying down or sitting in a comfortable chair . . . hopefully somewhere where you won't be distracted or interrupted. So take some moments to get comfortable and let me know when you feel ready to begin.

1. When you are ready, you might want to close your eyes, if that feels right, and then begin becoming aware of your body as it rests into a comfortable position . . . feeling how your body is being supported by the chair—or if you are lying down, sensing that surface—and then just taking a few deep breaths—in and out. You might notice your breathing as it begins to slow down with each exhalation (5 seconds pause) and just allow your attention to gently come into the center of your body. Ask yourself, “How am I right now?” (PAUSE) or “Is there anything that might be in the way of feeling fine?” (5 seconds pause) Just let your body do the answering and let me know when something shows up. (10 seconds pause) Now take a moment to sit with it with friendly acceptance, notice the quality of that in the body. (10 seconds pause)

2. Now, seeing if there is a word, phrase or image that captures the quality of how all of that feels in your body; let me know if you find something (5 second pause) . . . saying the word, phrase or image back to yourself, check to see if it fits the sense you have there exactly. Is that still the right way to capture your *concern*?

3. Now giving this concern your accepting, friendly attention for a few moments so that you can acknowledge that it's really there (5 second pause) then putting it aside for a while by imagining that you are placing the whole thing outside of your body, in a safe place at the right distance away. Sometimes it helps to imagine that you are sitting on a park bench, wrapping each *concern* up, and placing it on the bench next to you—or at whatever distance would feel right. And let me know when you have been able to set it aside or if you need more help doing this. (10 second pause)

4. You might find yourself noticing whether you feel a little lighter or clearer inside without that one.

5. Now again, bringing your attention inside ask, “Except for that, am I feeling fine?” (5 seconds) Wait and see if something else wants your attention next and let me know whether there is anything else there. (PAUSE)

6. Now allow a felt sense of that *concern* to form (PAUSE) and see if a word, phrase, or image captures the quality of how this *concern* feels in your body. (PAUSE) And then, after spending a little time with it, see if you can place it outside your body in a safe place as well. (10 second pause) You might be noticing now whether you feel a little lighter or clearer inside without that one. (PAUSE)

*(Allow the person to clear out up to five concerns before moving on to #7. If they cannot set aside a concern or they get stuck here . . . you may continue working with them until you have reached the time limit and note that they did not reach a cleared space.)*

7. Now in addition to those issues, most of us have a background sense—always feeling a little anxious, or sad, or harried, or tense—and just checking inside, you might see if you can find a background sense that’s there for you today? Now see if you can place that out as well and let me know whether you have been able to do that. (10 seconds pause)

8. Now, bringing your attention back inside your body and noticing, is there a clearer space there? (10 seconds)

*(If they get to a cleared space at this point, skip ahead to #10 if not, continue through #9.)*

9. *IF THEY DO NOT GET TO A CLEARED SPACE, choose one or more of the following:*

9A. Is there something your body might want or need from you right now? (PAUSE) If you could imagine yourself doing that how would it feel?

9B. Is there anything else there that might be in the way of feeling fine?

9C. There may not be one, but see if there is a forward step that comes right from this place.

*(If they cannot set aside a concern or they get stuck here . . . you may continue working with them until you have reached the time limit and note that they did not reach a cleared space.)*

10. *IF THEY DO GET TO A CLEARED SPACE, choose one or more of the following:*

10A. You may find yourself welcoming this space and allowing yourself to rest in it. (10 second PAUSE) Remembering that you are not your problems, even though you have them. (PAUSE) See if a word, phrase, image or gesture captures how it feels. (10 seconds). Now check to see if this fits how it feels there.

10B. Spending a little time with whatever comes there for you, you might check to see if there is a way to remember or mark this spot so you can come back to it if you would like to.

10C. Now you might notice what it would be like to have more of this in your life. (PAUSE)

10D. There may not be one, but see if there is a forward step that comes right from this place.

11. *CLOSING TO USE WITH OR WITHOUT CLEARED SPACE: use both of the following:*

11A. Now that we’re about to end for today, you might take a moment to check in with yourself and ask, how am I feeling right now?

11B. And when you are ready, slowly and gently bring yourself back into the room. (END)

## **APPENDIX B**

### **EXIT INTERVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Can you say if the process of Clearing A Space was of value to you and if so, HOW was it of value?
2. Do you notice any differences between your state of mind or state of being now versus before you learned Clearing a Space?
3. How would you describe Clearing a Space in your own words?
4. Is this a process that you might want to continue to use in your life? Would you want to find out about having a focusing partner?
5. Do you think other women with breast cancer would benefit from this practice? How?
6. What suggestions, if any, do you have about improving the study or the way Clearing A Space was done?
7. Did you notice any differences between the telephone sessions and the in-person sessions? Do you prefer one style over the other?
8. How does Focusing compare to other alternative/complimentary treatments you have tried?

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## THE BENEFITS OF FOCUSING: A Qualitative Analysis of Thirty Interviews with Focusers

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### ABSTRACT

Focusing contributes to numerous fields of study and endeavor. It has resulted in new forms of counseling and psychotherapy, and it is widely practiced as a form of self-help. Even so, the benefits which we Focusers experience are complex, intertwined, and difficult to list. Focusing teachers introducing Focusing to new audiences would have an easier job if we could more clearly articulate the purpose and benefits of Focusing practice. That is why I started a program of research and interviews in 2008. My purpose was to ask 30 international Focusers what benefits they personally gained from Focusing. I found the following:

- *The benefits cited by interviewees could be organized within three meta-categories: 1) The Focusing experience itself. 2) Benefits brought to therapy, working partnerships, etc. 3) Benefits for practicing psychotherapists.*
- All benefits in the first category—the Focusing experience itself—could be categorized as: *Felt Shift, Healing, Self-understanding, Authenticity, Forward Movement, Improvement in Relationship, or Creativity.* (The precise nature of these benefits will be discussed in detail below.)
- The benefits cited varied depending upon how long a Focuser had been practicing. More experienced Focusers named more positive and more basic benefits compared with novices. The latter tended to stress relief from immediate difficulties and pain.

I hope that what I have learned and will share in this paper will help us to conceptualize more clearly the benefits of Focusing and facilitate the introduction of Focusing to new audiences.

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*Focusing is a little door. Some people want to give the name “focusing” to everything they find through this door. No, focusing is just attending to the bodily uneasiness of a problem (Gendlin, 1996, p.303-4).*

Focusing is a psychological self-help practice originally enunciated by Eugene Gendlin (1969, 1981). According to Gendlin, Focusing involves just “spending time with, the at first unclear body sense of a problem, so that new steps come” (Gendlin, 1996, p.303). Despite such apparent simplicity, Focusing has found application within diverse fields including psychotherapy, education, creative activities, and community wellness. That, I think, is because

what exists “through this door” is *so* rich and beneficial. I call it “the benefits of Focusing”, but what, *precisely*, are those benefits?

I have been practicing and teaching Focusing and practicing Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapy for 18 years, and I know from personal experience that it has powerful effects and benefits. However, when a person who is new to Focusing asks, “What are the benefits of Focusing?” it is somehow difficult to articulate them. This is not satisfactory. When bringing Focusing to new audiences, we need to be able to clearly articulate the purpose of and benefits of Focusing practice. Thus my research question: *What are the benefits of Focusing?*

### AN INITIAL SEARCH FOR AN ANSWER

Looking first to Gendlin himself for an answer, we learn that Focusing facilitates a “carrying forward” (1964), or “felt shift” (1981), or “experiential step”(1996). All of these involve a felt, bodily process of interaction between experience, meaning, and symbols, and Gendlin explicates its benefits using terms like “Self-propelling process”, “Personality change”, or simply “Process”. These expressions certainly make sense once one has had Focusing experience and a real felt shift, but they are pretty opaque for the new-to-Focusing people.

Ann Weiser Cornell, a world wide Focusing teacher for many years, tells us that Focusing “can be used for so many purposes that it is impossible to list the whole range of purposes”. (Cornell, 1993 /1996, p.13) However, she notes some particular practical benefits such as *knowing one’s real needs and wanting, having a comfortable relationship with one’s feelings, getting unstuck, and decision making*. Cornell does not attempt any systematic account of Focusing’s benefits.

More promising, perhaps, is Neil Friedman’s article titled, “Benefits of Focusing” (2000, pp 109-119) in which he lists 10 benefits he personally obtains from Focusing. They are presented under the headings: “My preferred way of self-therapy”, “A realm called ‘inside’”, “Head → body”, “Get a handle on feelings”, “Physiologically good”, “Source of insight”, “Strengthen real self”, “Self-empowerment”, “Authentic action”, “A door way to altered states”, and “Personal change”. However, this is still just a personal list without system or a research basis.

In summation, the benefits being attributed to Focusing by Friedman and Cornell tend to the personal and miscellaneous. If we look to Gendlin for guidance, then we find only his evolving terminology and philosophy of the Implicit. Nothing here offers a satisfactory source of answers when new-to-Focusing people ask about the benefits and purpose of Focusing. All one can do is invite them to try it for themselves and discover their own answers, and although this is certainly the most *direct* way for people to learn the benefits of Focusing, there are situations where it would be helpful to be able to outline the benefits beforehand such as when introducing Focusing in the classroom or in the big professional conferences. I needed to look further.

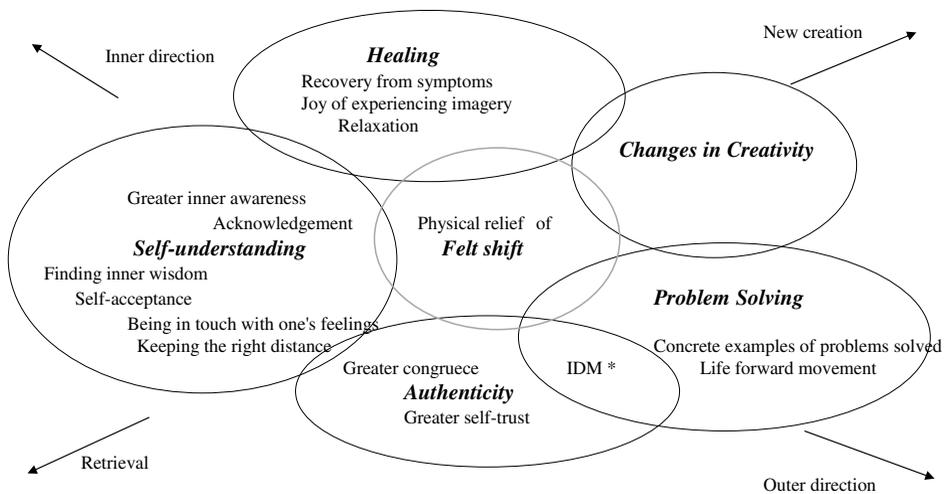
Digging deeper into the literature, I examined what is said about the benefits of Focusing in introductory Focusing books and DVDs available in Japan. (Gendlin, 1981; Cornell, 1993/1996; 1996/1998; Murase et.al., 1995; Murase, 1997; Friedman, 2000; Hikasa, 2008, in Japanese; Murayama et.al., 2005) I listed and coded the benefits cited, then used the “KJ-Method” (Kawakita, 1967) to obtain a structure for representing and categorizing them. (The KJ-Method is a process for qualitative analysis briefly described in an appendix at the end of this paper.)

The results of this more systematic exercise were as follows:

**I) The benefits of Focusing can be divided into three major categories**

- 1) The benefits of the Focusing experience itself
- 2) The benefits which Focusing practice brings to therapy, working partnerships, etc.
- 3) The benefits which Focusing practice offers to psychotherapists.

**II) The *main* benefits of Focusing all belong in category “1” (The benefits of the Focusing experience itself), and they can be presented using six subsidiary categories as in Figure 1.**



**Figure.1: ‘The Benefits of the Focusing Experience as determined from Introductory Materials’**

\*IDM is short for “Improved decision making”.

This Figure was developed using the KJ-Method. The categories are spatially arranged on the basis of similarity and detail is added later. The axis upper-left to lower-right represents an “Inner-Outer” continuum. The “Inner direction” end (upper-left) lies between *Healing* and *Self-understanding* while the “Outer direction” end runs in the direction of *Problem Solving*. There is a second axis running lower-left to upper-right which represents a “Retrieval-New creation” continuum.

In the centre of Figure 1 is the physical relief experienced in consequence of the *Felt Shift* which is the core of Gendlin’s change process (1981). Around the felt shift there are then five further categories: *Healing*, *Self-understanding*, *Authenticity*, *Problem Solving*, and *Creativity*. (As will be discussed later, there are differences between these categories and those which emerged in subsequent research.) This representation of the benefits of the Focusing experience occupies a two dimensional plane and involves *continua* rather than *fully separable* categories. The possibilities for personal change and growth represented one the plane should *not* be thought of as reducible to such categories as “mental”, “psychological”, “physiological”, “spiritual”, “personal”, “relational”, etc. They are *holistic* changes involving the growth of the whole of the person and involving all their interactions with their environment.

**III)** Focusing offers what I think of as “micro-benefits”, “short-term benefits” and “long-term benefits”. Micro-benefits are felt at the same time as a shift happens. They are *cotemporaneous* with the felt shift and involve “physical relief” or “relaxation”. Short-term benefits are felt after *one or more sessions* and involve, for example, “spiritual experience” or “improved decision making”. Then there are the long-term benefits requiring *multiple Focusing sessions* and much Focusing practice to find, for example “self-acceptance” or “finding inner wisdom”.

Because this schema of benefits was extracted from introductory Focusing literature and DVDs, it might be just an artifact of the things Focusing teachers say in order to promote the training they offer. Or perhaps there are more subtle biases at work. In order to check how genuinely representative the schema is, I needed to conduct empirical research in which individual Focusers get to speak about the benefits of Focusing as they experience them. That is why I set out to interview a diverse sample of Focusers about their experience of Focusing and the benefits of their Focusing practice. I would then be able to ascertain whether the benefits experienced by my sample Focusers were similar to the benefits schematized above and whether benefits are in any way dependent upon how long a person has had a Focusing practice.

## ASKING FOCUSERS

### The interviewees

The interviewees are 30 international Focusers as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: 'The Interviewees'

Group	Years of Focusing practice (average)	Number of interviewees (male)	Age range (average )	Nationality
Novice	Less than 6 years (2.9)	10 (4)	27-62 yrs. (43.8)	U.S.A., France, Japan, U.K. etc.
Medium Experience	9-18 years (12.2)	10 (0)	30-68 yrs. (54.3)	Japan, U.S.A., Netherlands, Italy, Greece, etc.
Long Experience	more than 20 years (25.9)	10 (2)	55-76 yrs. (63.9)	U.S.A., Canada, Japan, Netherlands, etc.

Interviewees were recruited at International and Japanese conferences, Focusing retreats, and from graduate school students interested in Focusing. Interviews were conducted during the author's sabbatical year which facilitated the acquisition of international data. The interviewees themselves were divided into three groups:

- 1) **Novice Group:** Each had less than 6 years (2.9 years average) experience. Their professions were varied. The group included a carpenter, a sculptor, language teachers, and graduate students.
- 2) **Medium Experience Group:** This group included 7 Focusing professionals and 3 non-professional Focusers with a range of experience of 9 to 18 years (12.2 years average). 5/10 were coordinators of the Focusing Institute. The three non-professional Focusers were a writer, a nurse, and a school teacher.
- 3) **Long Experience Group:** All were experienced psychotherapists or Focusing teachers with more than 20 years of Focusing experience (25.9 years average). All but one were certifying coordinators of The Focusing Institute.

### Data collection

With the agreement of the interviewee a semi-structured private interview was conducted by the author. The interview was digitally recorded and written notes were made during the interview. Out of the questions around which the interviews were structured, five were eventually used as a data-source and supply the findings presented here. They were:

- 1) What are the benefits of Focusing for you?
- 2) What were the benefits of your very first Focusing session?
- 3) What were the benefits of your most impressive session?
- 4) What would the benefits of your most recent Focusing session?
- 5) What effect does Focusing have upon your the daily life?

All the questions were asked in a Focusing manner. Interviewees were encouraged to take their time and answer with reference to felt sensing. The interview itself gave the interviewee a chance to reflect upon their Focusing life. Taking question 2 as an example, the interviewee was first asked to remember their very first Focusing session and to talk about the session if they wished. Then the interviewer asked, “What is the sense of it right now in your body?” When that sense was established, the main question came as, “Ask yourself what were the benefits that experience brought to you?” In this way, it was hoped to get a fresh and concrete description of the benefits from the Focuser’s own perspective.

### **Data analysis**

**Step 1:** Using the notes and audio recordings, each benefit referenced by an interviewee was coded into short phrases.

**Step 2:** Thee codes were then grouped together into categories using the schema obtained earlier. When a coded description from an interview matched an existing category, it was placed in that category. When a coded description did not fit any existing category, a new category was established and named.

**Step 3:** Within each group of Focusers, the number mentioning each kind of benefit and category was counted. This was done so that differences related to the length of Focusing experience might become apparent even though the samples were too small for statistical examination.

## **QUALITATIVE RESULTS**

### **Result 1: Categorization of the benefits of Focusing**

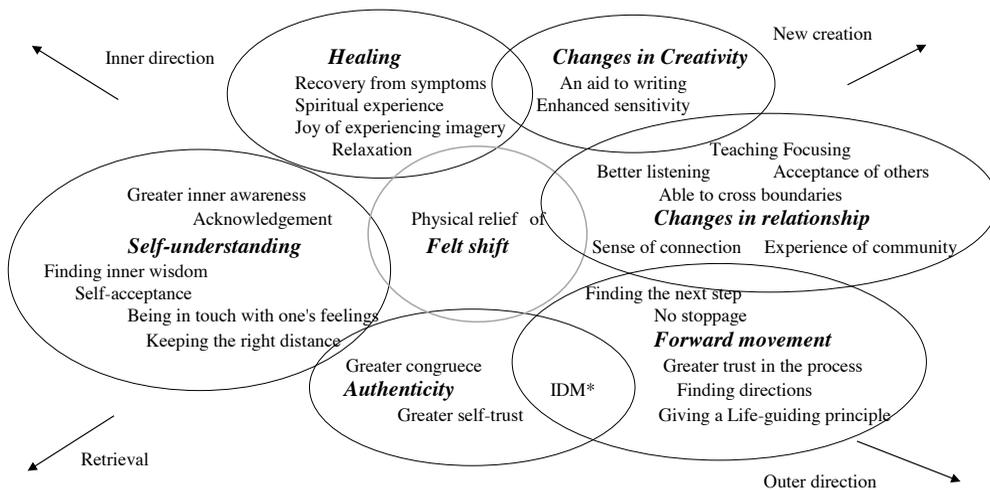
The same three main categories were evident as when I used the KJ-Method on introductory Focusing materials, namely:

- 1) The benefits of the Focusing experience itself
- 2) The benefits which Focusing practice brings to therapy, working partnerships, etc.
- 3) The benefits which Focusing practice offers to psychotherapists.

**Result 2. The benefits of the Focusing experience itself**

Consistent with the approach I adopted earlier, I will continue to concentrate on the first category of benefits. These are shown in Figure 2a below. Like Figure 1, Figure 2a was developed using the KJ-Method. In the middle is the *Felt Shift* which is surrounded this time by six categories: *Healing*, *Self-understanding*, *Authenticity*, *Forward movement*, *Changes in relationship*, and *Changes in creativity*. The names of these categories are self-explanatory. In addition, Table 2 (also below) lists the *sub-categories* mentioned by interviewees accompanied by shortened examples of how the interviewees actually referred to the benefits they experienced. (I will say more about sub-categories below.)

In Figure 2a, two *new* categories appear which are not present in Figure 1. This is because although interviewees spoke of benefits related to their every day lives which were located—diagrammatically and according to the KJ-Method—in the same *place* as *Problem Solving*, no interviewees actually *spoke* of “problem solving”. Instead, their responses demonstrated a need for two separate categories occupying the same part of the two-dimensional plane as *Problem Solving*. For example, interviewees said things such as, “Focusing shows the right direction” and, “With Focusing, I can find the right next steps.” Benefits like these are better represented by the new category *Forward movement*. Interviewees also spoke of benefits that could be characterized as part of a second new category: *Changes in relationship*.



**Figure 2a: ‘The Benefits of the Focusing Experience as determined by Research Interviews’**

\*IDM is short for ‘Improved decision making’

### Result 3: The need for sub-categories

In addition to the *categories* discussed above, the need for a number of *sub-categories* emerged from the interviews.

In respect of *Forward movement*, the sub-categories generated by the interviews were: “Finding Direction”, “Finding the next step”, “No stoppage”, “Sense of forward movement”, “Greater trust in the process”, and “Giving a Life-guiding principle”. *Forward movement* is a more accurate description of these benefits than *Problem-solving*, and it has a more positive and constructive flavor. Focusers found that Focusing is useful not only when there are “problems” to solve but also in carrying forward their ordinary daily lives.

The other category unique to the interviews was *Changes in relationship*, encompassing the sub-categories: “Better listening”, “Greater sense of connection”, “Being able to cross boundaries”, “Greater acceptance of others”, “Improved relationships”, “Experience of community”, and “Teaching Focusing”. These benefits were all listed in introductory books, but they were not cited sufficiently frequently to make a category using the “KJ-Method”. However, from the actual Focusers came many rich descriptions of Focusing’s capacity to improve relationships. Perhaps this is indicative of the fact that human beings are inherently social animals and that relationship is a big issue in our lives.

### Result 4: Similarities of structure

As with the results obtained from introductory Focusing materials, the results obtained by interview can be placed in a two dimensional plane with an axis upper-left to lower-right representing an “Inner-Outer” continuum, and an axis lower-left to upper-right representing a “Retrieval-New creation” continuum.

Looking at the first of these axes, the “Inner direction” between *Healing and Self-understanding* (upper-left) yields benefits for the inner experiencing of the person. The “Outer direction” involves *Forward movement* and *Changes in relationship*. These are benefits experienced by Focusers interacting with their environment. Looking at the second axis, “Retrieval” (down-left) is the direction of a Focuser’s own authentic self and involves *Self-understanding* and *Authenticity*. The other end of this axis, “New creation” (upper-right), involves *Changes in creativity* with, perhaps, some *Changes in relationship* and *Forward movement*. This two dimensional representation of the benefits of Focusing in their entirety corresponds with all aspects of a human life.

### Result 5: The time factor

Consistency between the Focusing materials results and the results obtained by interview also extends to the division of benefits into “micro-benefits”, “short-term benefits”, and “long-term benefits” depending on the length of time needed to acquire them. (**An initial search**, result III.) Accordingly, in Figure 2a, each sub-category of benefit is positioned

within the two-dimensional plane according to the length of time involved in its acquisition. More precisely:

- The closer a benefit is to the centre of the plane, the more immediate its acquisition.
- The further a benefit is away from the center of the plane, the greater the time involved in acquiring it.

In consequence, it is the distance from the center of the plane to a particular benefit which indicates whether it is “micro”, “short-term”, or “long-term”. Therefore, because the physical relief involved in a felt shift is the most immediate benefit, *Felt shift* occupies the very center of the plane. *Felt shift* is what I call a “micro-benefit”.

Now consider the category *Healing*. “Relaxation” (as in the statement that “Focusing brings us calmness, peacefulness and a safe feeling.”) is the most “micro-benefit”, and it is closely related to the physical relief of the *Felt shift*. The “Joy of experiencing imagery” (as in “One can enjoy imagery.” and “Feeling the open space.”) could be either a “micro-benefit” or a “short-term benefit” coming after one or more Focusing sessions. “Spiritual experience” also comes as a “short-term benefit”. “Relief of symptoms” and “Self-healing” are usually experienced as “long-term benefits” requiring many sessions or a lengthy Focusing practice.

The same logic applies throughout Figure 2a: each sub-category of benefit is distanced from the centre according to the length of time needed to acquire it, and that distance indicates whether it is a “micro”, “short-term”, or “long-term” benefit.

### **Result 6: A comprehensive table of benefits**

Table 2, below, provides a comprehensive list of the sub-categories of benefits revealed by interview. The length of time required for acquisition of each benefit is indicated as follows:  $\triangle$  denotes a micro-benefit,  $\circ$  denotes a short-term benefit,  $\odot$  denotes a long-term benefit. Table 2, also provides examples of the ways in which interviewees spoke about each sub-category.

Table 2: 'The Benefits of Focusing revealed by Interview'

categories	nature of benefits	sub-categories	time scale†	examples from interview data
<b>Felt Shift</b>				
	<u>Physical relief of Felt Shift</u>		△	"Aha!" experience. Relieved and relaxed.
<b>Healing</b>				
	Relaxation		△○	F brings a feeling of aliveness. Satisfaction.
	<i>Peace</i>			It brings us calmness, peacefulness, and a safe feeling.
	<i>Ease</i>			Helps to relax. Feeling of easiness. Do not need to be perfect.
	<i>Freedom</i>			One becomes free. Liberated. Feeling of not being restricted.
	The joy of experiencing imagery		△○	One can enjoy Imagery. Feeling the open space.
	Spiritual experience		○	Feeling of "I am more than me". Beautiful, sacred experience. It feels like a gift.
	Relief of symptoms		○◎	Relief from panic attacks. F calms down the sadness of grief. Less worries.
	<i>Physical symptoms</i>			F helps me to notice physical problems. Coping with the cancer, pain or symptoms.
	<i>Self-care</i>			Can take care of oneself. Promoting one's own health.
	<u>Self-healing</u>		○◎	I feel healed.
<b>Self-understanding</b>				
	Greater inner awareness		○◎	Connection with inner self. Awareness of the energy inside oneself.
	Acknowledgement		△	Acknowledgement of one's situation. Noticing the situation as it is brings relief.
	<u>Self-knowledge</u>		△○	Notice the things one has not seen before. Deeper self-understanding.
	<i>Expanded view</i>			One can have a different view. Notice alternative possibilities. Broader view.
	<i>Clarity</i>			More clarification. One can see the situation more clearly.
	Being in touch with one's feelings		△○	Easy to be with feelings. Respectful to feelings. No need to oppress feelings.
	Keeping the right distance		△○	Able to set aside a long-held troubling issue. Not overwhelmed. Able to see things with humor.
	<i>Space</i>			Able to have space. Space for experiencing is given.
	Self-acceptance		○◎	Feeling OK as it is. Less criticism. Less self-blame. Able to cherish oneself.
	Finding inner wisdom		◎	Connection to the inner resource. Having a mentor or listener inside oneself.
<b>Authenticity</b>				
	Improved decision-making		○	Good decisions fit the situation. Able to know one's own wanting.
	Greater congruence		△○	Congruence between feeling and knowing. Able to be real. Authentic self.
	<u>Greater sense of authenticity</u>		◎	Being empowered. Confidence. Centered.
	<i>grounding</i>			Grounded. Being stable.
	Greater self-trust		◎	Trust in oneself, body, or process.
<b>Forward Movement</b>				
	Finding direction		○	F shows the right direction. Able to face life crises without being overwhelmed.
	Finding the next step		△○	Able to find the right next steps. F leads to the action steps.
	No stoppage		△○	Not stuck. Able to ride the flow. Life goes on more smoothly.
	<u>Sense of Forward movement</u>		○	F brings changes and evolvment. F brings new movement. Feeling of "Let's do it".
	Greater trust in the process		○◎	Able to behave naturally and easily. Following intuition in the moment.
	Giving a Life-guiding principle		◎	A way of living. A handrail for life. An easy way to be.
<b>Changes in Relationships</b>				
	Better listening		△○	Able to listen to others, empathically.
	Greater sense of connection		○◎	F deepens the relationship with others. Open to others.
	Being able to cross boundaries		○◎	Communication beyond boundaries. Dissolving conflicts.
	Greater acceptance of others		○◎	Acceptance of others. Being non-judgmental and accepting.
	<u>Improved relationships</u>		○◎	The relationship with others changes. Improved communication.
	Experience of community		◎	Connected with gentle and loving people. Rich and better community.
	Teaching Focusing		◎	Wanting to teach Focusing to others. Teaching.
<b>Changes in Creativity</b>				
	Enhanced sensitivity		△○	Increased sensitivity to the arts. Enjoying the art works fully.
	An aid to writing		○	Helpful tool for writing. Being able to express from a deeper place.
	<u>Enhanced creativity</u>		○◎	F promotes creative activities. Able to make art works from a cleared space.

† △ : micro effects ○ : short-term effects ◎ : long-term effects

Note: Within some categories there is a sub-category that has been underlined. These sub-categories may be considered *equivalent* to the *categories* within which they fall. Although that may seem initially illogical, there is good reason for it. While some interviewees clearly broke a given category into sub-categories, others tended to treat the same category as one whole thing. (For example, while some interviewees broke *Self-understanding* into sub-categories, others treated it as a single whole, thus giving us the apparent sub-category, “Self-knowledge”.) To avoid confusion between levels, the names of categories and equivalent sub-categories have been made slightly different. (Thus the category *Self-understanding* contains the sub-category “Self-knowledge”.)

## QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

### Frequency of mention

Table 3, below, shows the numbers of interviewees mentioning the benefits of each sub-category. (It also provides additional information which will be explained below.)

Table 3: 'The numbers of people who mentioned the benefits in each sub-category.'

	numbers of statements	numbers of participants			comparison			
		from all participants	① Novice	② Medium Experience	③ Long Experience	① v ②	① v ③	② v ③
Numbers of participants in each group		30	10	10	10			
<i>Felt Shift</i>		<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>1</b>		
Physical relief of Felt Shift		9	6	2	3	1		
<b><i>Healing</i></b>		<b>84</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>8</b>		
<b><u>Relaxation</u></b>		37	22	5	9	8	<	<
Joy of experiencing imagery		6	4	0	1	3		
Spiritual experience		6	5	1	2	1		
<b><u>Recovery from symptoms</u></b>		31	17	7	8	2	>	>
Self-healing		7	6	4	2	0	>	
<b><i>Self-understanding</i></b>		<b>204</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>		
Greater inner awareness		18	13	4	3	6		<
Acknowledging		21	11	4	5	3		
<b><u>Self-knowledge</u></b>		70	24	10	7	7		
Being in touch with one's feelings		30	14	7	5	2	>	>
<b><u>Keeping the right distance</u></b>		28	19	8	5	6		
<b><u>Self-acceptance</u></b>		37	18	4	8	6	<	
Finding the inner wisdom		3	2	0	2	0		
<b><i>Authenticity</i></b>		<b>80</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>		
Improved decision-making		14	10	2	5	3		
<b><u>Greater congruence</u></b>		30	19	5	7	7		
<b><u>Greater sense of authenticity</u></b>		22	17	5	6	4		
Greater self-trust		15	11	3	5	3		
<b><i>Forward Movement</i></b>		<b>106</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>		
Finding Direction		9	6	3	1	2		
<b><u>Finding the next step</u></b>		23	15	4	5	6		
No Stoppage		11	8	2	3	3		
<b><u>Sense of forward movement</u></b>		20	15	3	6	6	<	<
Greater trust in the process		22	12	2	6	4	<	
Giving a Life-guiding principle		24	12	2	4	6		<
<b><i>Changes in Relationship</i></b>		<b>77</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>		
Better listening		8	6	1	2	3		
Greater sense of connection		24	12	2	5	5	<	<
Being able to cross boundaries		13	10	2	4	4		
Greater acceptance of others		9	7	2	3	2		
Improved relationships		6	5	2	3	0		
Experience of community		10	7	2	2	3		
Teaching Focusing		7	5	1	2	2		
<b><i>Creativity</i></b>		<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>		
Enhanced sensitivity		2	2	0	0	0		
An aid to writing		5	5	1	3	2		
Enhanced creativity		7	4	2	2	0		

Although they are not statistically significant because of the small sample size, the following details exhibited by Table 3 are still suggestive:

- 1) Out of the 7 main categories, *Healing*, *Self-understanding*, *Authenticity*, *Forward Movement*, and *Changes in Relationship* are mentioned by most (more than 2/3) of interviewees.
- 2) *Felt Shift* and *Creativity* are mentioned by only 6 people, and 8 people respectively, out of 30 research participants.
- 3) All participants mentioned benefits from the category *Self-understanding*. The total number of statements citing benefits from *Self-understanding* was 204. That is more than twice the number of citations for any other category.
- 4) The same 9 sub-categories are mentioned by more than half the interviewees. (In Figure 2b, below, the categories and sub-categories mentioned by more than half the interviewees have been underlined.)
- 5) Within *Healing* “Relaxation” and “Recovery from symptoms” are mentioned by 22/30 and 17/30 people respectively. Within *Self-understanding* “Self-knowledge” (24/30), “Keeping the right distance” (19/30) and “Self acceptance” (18/30) are the most popular categories. Within *Authenticity*, “Greater congruence” (19/30) and “Greater sense of authenticity” (17/30) are the most popular. Within *Forward Movement* “Finding the next step” (15/30) and “Sense of forward movement”(15/30) are the most popular.

Figure 2b, below, is a modified version of Table 2a which highlights the “most popular” categories with underlining—“most popular” being defined as “mentioned by more than half the interviewees”. As before, “IDM” is short for “Improved decision making”.

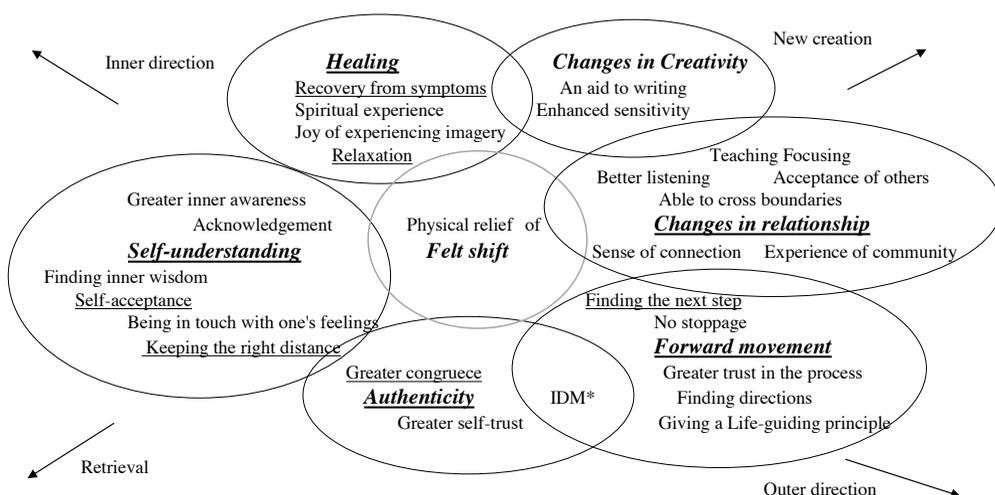


Figure 2b: ‘The Benefits of the Focusing Experience as determined by Research Interviews with the Most Popular Categories underlined’

\*IDM is short for ‘Improved decision making’

## DIFFERENCES BETWEEN EXPERIENCE-LEVELS

I examined the numbers of people who mentioned each of the main categories for a correlation with the experience-level groups discussed above (**The Interviewees**). I found none. In every group, references to *Felt Shift* and *Creativity* are rare, and most people, irrespective of experience-level, mention the other categories.

However, in respect to the *sub-categories*, there *are* differences between the groups which are noteworthy but not statistically significant because of the small sample size. To indicate the nature of these differences, signs of inequality were put into the “Comparison Column” of Table 3 (above) when there is a difference of more than 3 between experience-level groups. Here is a summary of what Table 3 reveals:

- “Novice” Focusers cited “Recovery from Symptoms”, “Self-healing”, and “Being in touch with feelings”. Such benefits evidence recovery from negative experiences and ways of living.
- By contrast, “Medium Experience” Focusers cited “Relaxation”, “Self-acceptance”, “Sense of forward movement”, and “Greater trust in the process”. These kind of benefits represent the more positive side of Focusing practice.
- “Long Experience” Focusers cited “Greater inner awareness” and “Giving a Life-guiding principle”. These are benefits consequent upon the integration of Focusing into daily life. It would not be surprising if they required lengthy practice to achieve.

In general, among the novices—and despite their average years of experience being 2.9 years—relief from immediate difficulties is the most salient consequence of Focusing practice. Perhaps this is because it was those difficulties that initially brought them to Focusing. Furthermore, these are the kind of benefits which more experienced (Medium Experience and Long Experience) Focusers might well take for granted. Or perhaps more experienced Focusers have been free from such difficulties long enough that they are starting to notice the more positive aspects of Focusing practice. After a *sufficiently* extensive practice, Focusing seems to become integrated into a Focuser’s daily life and turns into the life-guiding principle spoken of by Long Experience Focusers.

These differences point toward a natural developmental process involved in the practice of Focusing. However, here I need to admit the possibility of sample bias. In this research, *all* of the Long Experience Focusers and  $\frac{7}{10}$  of the Medium Experience Focusers are either practicing psychotherapists or otherwise employed as Focusing professionals. This compares with only such person among the Novices. There are also age differences that may be relevant. The groups average ages are as follows: Novices—43.8 years, Medium Experience—54.3 years, Long Experience—63.9 years. These differences in professions and age might be the source of the differences between groups.

## THE “MOST POPULAR” *BENEFITS*

Paying attention to only the *benefits* mentioned most frequently by interviewees, it can be said that Focusing results in:

- 1) *Healing*—especially by encouraging “Relaxation” and promoting “Recovery from symptoms”
- 2) *Self-understanding*—especially through “Keeping the right distance” from troubles and fostering Self-acceptance”.
- 3) *Authenticity*—especially in promoting “Greater congruence”.
- 4) *Forward Movement*—especially through “Finding the next step”.
- 5) *Changes in Relationship*.

### EXAMPLES FROM AN INTERVIEW

In order to provide concrete examples of how the categories and sub-categories relate to the words actually spoken by an interviewee, here is a summarized version of the interview data of A\_\_, an English carpenter in his 40s who has been Focusing for two years. He is a “Novice” who has found Focusing very helpful and is enthusiastic about partnerships and attending workshops.

Q1. What are the benefits of Focusing for you?

**Healing “relaxation”:** *I found the real deep stillness in myself. Something in me worries about work, money . . . all those things, and I can hold all of those and be with them . . .*

**Healing “Recovery from symptoms”:** *I used to have separation anxiety disorder. I had panic attacks and I could not function. Since I came to know Focusing, I don’t have panic attacks anymore. There is less anxiety, and when the panic happens . . . occasionally . . . I can hold it . . . I don’t have a fit anymore.*

**Self-understanding “Keeping the right distance”:** *I became emotionally stable. All my life was about managing my emotions. Now with Focusing, I do not manage them. I just allow them . . .*

**Healing “Joy of experiencing imagery”, “Spiritual experience”:** *Allowing my emotions to just be, they manage themselves. I do not have to do anything. Just offer them presence and allow them to be there, everything, every part of my emotions is sacred.*

Q2. What were the benefits of your very first Focusing experience?

*It was about the separation from somebody in an unhealthy relationship. Focusing’s benefits were . . .*

**Forward Movement “Finding the next step”:** *I came to a resolution that this relationship is relationship unhealthy. On the train from the session, I decided to split . . . For me this was an action step.*

**Authenticity “Greater sense of authenticity”:** *She and I were in an enmeshed relationship and it did not allow me to be as I am . . . Being separate, I got unhooked from the enmeshment . . .*

**Changes in Relationship “Improved relationship”:** *Focusing is very good at carrying forward . . . being free of a stuck relationship.*

Q3. What were the benefits of your most impressive session?

*The session was impressive because of the image of my two parts . . . the introvert . . . the shy part, and outgoing clown part . . . being in the same the same room . . . together.*

**Self-understanding “Self-knowledge”:** *I realized that the very shy and scared part and the controlling part are brothers. There always used to be filters between me and world before . . . then I could not see . . .*

**Authenticity “Greater sense of authenticity”:** *Before, a lot of energy was needed to separate those two parts. When those two parts collapsed, it allowed me to operate with integrity for myself, for the first time. Now I can tell . . . communicate . . . my feelings to others.*

**Self-understanding “Self-acceptance”:** *I was given a gift called “life”. All my life, I was in a survival mode before. Now I can live. I was given a life and I would like to honor this life. I have now come to the stage where I can be happy.*

**Forward movement “Sense of forward movement”:** *My process used to be going away from something. Now I am moving toward something. Now I embrace what is there and can wait for what is next.*

Q4. What were the benefits of the most recent Focusing session?

*It was about a relationship with somebody who just told me the relationship was finished.*

**Self-understanding “Being in touch with one’s feelings”:** *I feel hate. Before Focusing, I never hated. I do not hate her, but I hate what she did. There was a lot of bitterness, anger and . . . . Focusing allowed me to be with a lot of hatred.*

**Changes in relationship “Improvement in relationship”:** *I came to know that there was a limitation in the relationship.*

Q5. Are there any other influences of Focusing in your life?

**Forward Movement “Giving a Life-guiding principle”:** *I now function from there . . . (Focusing).*

**Self-understanding “Self-acceptance” and Changes in Relationship “Greater Acceptance of others”:** *Acceptance of my own physical pain, acceptance of other people’s annoying behavior.*

**Authenticity “Greater sense of authenticity”:** *For years I was like a leaf blown by the wind. With Focusing, I became a tree, even though I may not be such a big tree. Being a leaf, you do not have any sense of who you are. You are dealing with the wind of emotions.*

**Authenticity “Greater self-trust”:** *I have been in therapy for years, but managing myself and looking after myself is not dependent upon my therapist . . . but it is dependent upon my reflecting upon my situation.*

A\_\_ is representative of the interviewees, and these excerpts are representative of the interview process which touches upon “popular” benefits such as: “Relaxation”, “Recovery from symptoms”, “Self-knowledge”, “Keeping the right distance”, “Self-acceptance”, “Greater sense of authenticity”, “Finding the next step”, “Sense of forward movement”. (There is only one popular sub-category which is not mentioned: “Greater congruence”).

Additionally, A\_\_ mentions all three categories typical of the Novice Group (which is consistent with these categories being cited when Focusing is used to overcome present difficulties.) However, there is also a mention of benefits more commonly referenced by experienced Focusers: for example, A\_\_ touches upon “Relaxation”, “Self-acceptance”, “Sense of forward movement”, and “Giving a life-guiding principle”. Here, A\_\_ is providing evidence that he is integrating Focusing into his life and making it a life-guiding principle.

One final characteristic to note is that A\_\_ cites “Improved relationship” twice. This is consistent with the major new finding of this research compared with the introductory Focusing materials: accurately representing the benefits cited by interviewees requires introducing new categories and sub-categories. “Improved relationship” is an example of a new sub-category, belonging within a new category that is clearly important to A\_\_.

## FURTHER DISCUSSION

### The unity of Focusing benefits

Although the core of change, the felt shift, is rarely cited as a benefit in itself, its influence extends across the whole of the two-dimensional plane used to model those benefits. This, I believe, is a natural consequence of Focusing being an innate, primary, and *holistic* way for humans to process experience. Thus, the felt sense is both *inner* (Inner direction) *and* about the whole situation and the *outer* world (Outer direction). The “Inner-Outer” axis is a continuum involving twin aspects of one process. Similarly, the “Retrieval-New creation” axis is a continuum whereby at one end of it the felt sense is *found*, and at the other end we can say that the felt sense is *made*. Campbell Purton explains this as follows:

We can say that we *find* the felt sense when we turn our attention to what we feel. However before we Focused our attention, there was not this *specific* feeling. It only emerges as specific, as a ‘this,’ through the impact of our attention. So we could also say that the felt sense is made in the interaction between our feeling-process and our attending to that process. It is impossible to draw a sharp line between ‘finding’ and ‘making’ here, but this is so whenever we are concerned with creativity (Purton, 2004, p.176).

Just as the two axes imply not strict separation but process, so the categories and sub-categories of the benefits of Focusing are not separate entities but discernible aspects of one

living process which can, for purposes of our understanding, be individuated. Sometimes, because of personal circumstances, certain aspects of Focusing will be particularly prominent for a Focuser. Perhaps, too, some people are more inclined to notice the inner aspects and benefits of Focusing while others tend to notice the outer aspects and benefits. Even so, these aspects and benefits are part of one whole thing and flow one into another.

## COMPARING THE INTRODUCTORY MATERIALS AND INTERVIEW DATA

As demonstrated by Figures 1, 2a, and 2b, the structure provided by analyzing introductory Focusing books and DVDs proved largely appropriate to categorizing responses elicited through interview. The one significant exception to this was the need to establish the categories *Forward movement* and *Changes in relationship* in place of *Problem Solving*. In consequence—and this seems a significant finding—I find that the introductory Focusing materials emphasize the intra-personal benefits and changes represented by *Healing* and *Self-understanding*. Contrasting with this, the Focusers I interviewed were more appreciative of tangible changes in their external lives and the impact that Focusing had on the way they interacted with others and with their environment.

## TIME AND THE EXPERIENCE OF BENEFIT

As discussed above (**Result 5: The time factor**) some Focusing benefits are immediate and others seem to build up over time. The terminology and associated time-scale I have used to represent this—“micro”, “short-term”, and “long-term”—are an entirely personal attempt to understand what I believe I have myself experienced and am noticing others experience. I am *not* claiming any rigor for it. Empirical quantitative data could be sought in order to better understand the precise relationship between time and particular kinds of Focusing benefits, but this research does not provide that data.

## AN INVITATION

It was rewarding for me to receive so many comments offered by interviewees at the conclusion of their interview which might be summarized as: “This interview gave me a good chance to look back at my Focusing and personal history.”

I would like to invite you, the reader of this paper, to ask yourself these interview questions. They may offer opportunity to reflect upon *your* Focusing life.

## FURTHER DATA

In the interviews I conducted I also asked questions about the effects of Focusing partnerships, attending workshops, and using Focusing within the practice of psychotherapy. I asked, “What is the distinctive feature of Focusing compared with the other self-help practices?” The analysis of the responses to these questions is not yet complete and may yet become the subject of a further publication.

### **To the beginning Focuser**

In conclusion, I would like to offer a summary that conveys the benefits of Focusing for beginners, as I believe them to be revealed by this research project.

Focusing takes us to the core of our life process. Its benefits are felt across the broadest aspects of our lives, and the process is applicable to most, if not all fields of human endeavor.

Focuser's find that Focusing benefits their inner and spiritual lives. They have listed "Relaxation", "Self-healing", and "Self-understanding" amongst its effects. They have found that Focusing is especially helpful when there is a need for "Keeping the right distance" between ourselves and our feelings, helping us to achieve "Self-acceptance".

Focusing helps us find a "Greater sense of authenticity" and "Greater congruence". It assists us in dealing with the outer world, "Finding the next steps" and creating a "Sense of forward movement". Focusing promotes beneficial "Changes in relationship" and enhances creativity.

These are clearly evidenced benefits that more than two thirds of the interviewees have mentioned. Some of these benefits are noticed immediately, during (or right after) a session. Some need time to develop and become noticed.

Everyone I interviewed found that Focusing enhances *Self-understanding*. So let us try to practice "Being in touch with our feelings" while "Keeping the right distance". That is the essence of the Focusing practice. Focusing changes lives and deeply enriches us in the process.

## APPENDIX: THE K-J METHOD

(Adapted from <http://www.mycoted.com/KJ-Method>, accessed 2011-09-19.)

This development of the “Snowball Technique” concentrates “groups of ideas pertaining to the same problem” and then assigns a recognizable “theme” (what Focusing would call a “handle”) to each group. Developed in Japan, it has become one of the “Seven management (New) tools” of modern Japanese quality management. The **Basic Cycle** is similar to mind-mapping but utilizes nested clusters rather than a tree structure:

1. **Card making:** All relevant facts and information are written on individual cards or pieces of paper and collated. This generates a supply of ideas.

2. **Grouping and naming:** The cards are shuffled, spread out, and read carefully. Cards that look as though they belong together are grouped together and any ‘oddities’ ignored. For each group, an appropriate title is written out and placed on top of its group of cards. This process is repeated using new titles to create a diminishing hierarchy of groups until there are less than 10 groups.

3. **Redistribution:** This step is skipped by a person working alone as the researcher did.

4. **Chart making:** Once there are less than 10 groups, some of which may contain sub-groups, sub-sub-groups, etc., they are arranged in a spatial pattern that facilitates appreciation of the overall picture.

5. **Explanation:** The researcher now tries to express what the chart *means*, writing notes and being careful to differentiate personal interpretations from the facts contained in the chart. Ideas for the solution are often developed whilst explaining the structure of the problem to others.

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