

FINGERTIPS AND DRAGONS: A MEMOIR

Katarina Halm

INTRODUCTION

My memoir springs from a Focusing session with Birrell Walsh in 2008. The images and gestures that arose during my Focusing session four years ago are alive in me today in new ways. That session brought meaning, comfort and ease within a life of physical limitations and pain from an old injury. Today the gestures from that session have grown. The images have developed and now support my Focusing projects out in the world.

The little wind whirled into a new shape; the little wind from my fingertips is now accompanied by a sunny dragon within those daring moments when a project takes a sudden turn. The little wind now moves out into the world with a gentle timing while also keeping me safe, as it did in 2008.

THE FIRST FOCUSING SESSION

Fingertips Send a Gentle Wind to the Door, and it Closes Softly

During the session I sense into tears that stem from physical pain from an old injury to my eyes and spine. I see those tears turn into flower buds that are bursting into even smaller clusters of buds. The flower bud clusters become a buffer and container for the intensity of the tears and pain. Then I become aware of how my fingertips can send a little wind towards a door, and the door gently closes. The wind is streaming from my fingertips, and my whole body is in the movement. As the door closes I feel a sense of safety...even comfort...and hope for next steps.

* Katarina:

Staying on my side of the door and not rushing out after what is on the other side...feels like a kind of stillness, a quiet stillness.

* Birrell:

You're sensing a quiet stillness, the stillness of staying on your side of the door, not rushing out to the other side.

* Katarina:

As the door closes...the door itself is almost invisible, and there is a kind of...pressure in me everywhere in a soft way...it is a gentle moment, more gentle than the tears that are sharp and shivery and cold.

* Birrell:

You are sensing how the closing of the door is very soft, and more gentle than the sharp shivery tears.

* Katarina:

The moment of closing the door is so complete and so soft and real . . . it's warm and a kind of a . . . kind of a whole body, whole body gently pressing the door.

All of me senses right down to the ground beneath me, as that door closes . . . as if my fingertips were sending a little bit of wind to the door at a distance and the door closes, softly on its own!

* Birrell:

You are aware of a wind . . . your fingertips are sending a wind to the door, and it closes softly.

* Katarina:

Yes, I am receiving that fully in me . . . that gesture that promises me that I have a place to rest . . . it promises me that this is my own "Place".

Reflecting on the session

I experience a whole-body knowing of how to ever so softly close a door, have my own space, just be, and let the world wait for a while, even two minutes. Letting wind flow from my fingertips . . . I am comforted by the gesture . . . amazed and curious about how it will continue to unfold in each day.

DEVELOPMENTS

The door, gesture, wind, fingertips and flowers are symbols of safety which continue to bring meaning to my life. These symbols of safety weave into a second Focusing session where I discover a further dimension of safety in the power of "Reversibility". This safety moves out into the world, taking shape in a new project

THE SECOND FOCUSING SESSION

"Reversibility" in those daring moments when a project (or the earth) takes a sudden turn

One day in the early Spring of 2012, I wondered, "How can I best contribute to my professional community and also to my neighbourhood?"

Solo Focusing with a Sunny Dragon

I took my question to the Sunny Dragon, a small gray stone sculpture that lives in my studio. Settling into a solo Focusing session, I found myself sitting on the wooden floor by the Sunny Dragon and her plants.

* I can see the studio door at a distance and feel the quiet stillness of staying on my side of the door.

* As I sense the weight of my whole body settled there on the floor, a new dimension comes to the quiet, a growing strength arises . . . the dragon is secure in her place. I am settled for now.

* Hushed by my question . . . I begin sensing how much I want to bring my best efforts, knowledge and heart to my professional community and neighbourhood.

* My spine becomes painful . . . my breathing is tight . . . I continue to wonder . . . then instead of my question something else comes rolling into my awareness, there comes that big sadness about events from the past ten months . . .

* Receiving that sadness . . . as my head bows with acceptance . . . the sadness is soft and there comes a little bit of wind all around me.

* The sadness is soft and also big, it feels like a big bird sitting there wanting to move and fly into the wind . . . yet the bird is confined in an awkward way.

* The little wind lightly touches my fingertips . . . awakening a knowing of how it is to be safe . . . safe in a new way now, while holding a sadness and accompanied by a sunny dragon. The bird has vanished, yet the softness of its feathers stays with me.

* Suddenly I feel a shaking all around me . . . the room is shaking, the earth itself is shaking . . .

* From one moment to the next the world turns upside-down . . . I feel the essence of change . . . I am ready to turn and spin in any direction to keep safe.

* Ah . . . I feel the power of the wind as the dragon turns towards the sun. The scale-like feathers on the wings of the dragon are like my fingertips, and the little wind is now a protection for all our earth!

* Weaving together the power of stillness and movement, dragon and the earth, the Focusing session comes to a natural stopping place. I am aware of a fresh perspective, a renewal. My question turns into a promise, and I know there will be more ways to contribute to my professional community and also to my neighbourhood. There is a trust that the next weeks and months will bring a new project.

DEVELOPMENTS

“Reversibility”

The ending of my session with Sunny Dragon embodies reversibility. My work as a Feldenkrais practitioner is central to my Focusing projects. One aspect of Feldenkrais is “reversibility”, the ability to stop and reverse or change an action at any point, thus to be in control of my action at all times and able to stop and reverse or change it if circumstances require. In my session with Sunny Dragon I am ready to turn and spin in any direction to keep safe. With reversibility comes an awareness of where I am in each moment and the ability to meet what comes even when a project takes a sudden turn, even when the earth quakes and disasters ensue.

The action of reversibility is easy to see when it is physical. Reversibility can mean turning my body in any direction without hesitation. Reversibility can also be cognitive or emotional. Reversibility is supported by Focusing: that inner knowing of how to sense the whole of a situation. With Focusing we hold all the aspects of a situation with respect and awareness, attending to whatever needs care in the inner or outer world. The Focusing process allows for a global awareness from which reversible steps can arise and be expressed physically, cognitively, or emotionally.

Reflecting on my session with Sunny Dragon continues to bring a Focusing pause. With that pause come grace and strength, protecting that moment of quiet as I sense for a next step in the world.

Focusing, Reversibility and Earthquake Preparedness

Since meeting my Japanese Focusing colleagues at the International Focusing conference in June 2011, the seriousness of an earthquake had been in my awareness and dreaming. Following my solo Focusing with Sunny Dragon, I began attending public meetings on Emergency Preparedness in Vancouver neighbourhoods and soon joined my local team. Currently we are helping people prepare for the possibility of a big earthquake on the West Coast of North America. The program we use can be adapted to disasters, natural and man-made, all over North America.

Focusing with the Sunny Dragon, I sense her protective energy moving into the world. Sunny Dragon continues to bring the little wind from my fingertips into the world as I work with neighbours to prepare our homes for an emergency. Focusing helps us honour the small steps of awareness and actions to prepare our homes for any emergency.

FINGERTIPS & DRAGON, KEEPING SAFE WITH REVERSIBILITY

My ‘aha’ from the first session with Birrell was knowing how to create a safe place even within pain and chaos. Then my session with the dragon the ‘aha’ was a further dimension of the safe-place. I learned another way to keep safe through the power of reversibility.

The evolving project of earthquake preparation is yet a further development which creates more safety for everyone.



Sunny Dragon by Neil Darymple from Wales
(<http://www.neildalrymple.com/>)

Katarina Halm offers workshops and classes in Focusing and The Feldenkrais Method® of Somatic Education in Vancouver, BC, Canada.

Contact: <http://happybones.wordpress.com/>