

## HE AIN'T HEAVY; HE'S MY BROTHER

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*Bruce Nayowith*

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*Sometimes the most transformational parts of an experience are the ones in which it seems that nothing is happening.*

I had my first introduction to Wholebody Focusing with Kevin McEvenue and Paul Huschilt at the Focusing International Conference in 2002. Always interested in variations of the Focusing process, I enjoyed how, in Wholebody Focusing, the Focuser holds two senses at once—a felt sense of the issue, and also a sense of their body as a whole.

In Wholebody Focusing, gestures, as well as words, can be handles for felt senses. These gestures can also be used as reflections, touching pre-verbal levels of experiencing, and potentially bypassing language barriers between cultures. So, I was excited to try it myself.

After a presentation and solo exercise, we did a second exercise while standing up and facing a partner. The listener was asked to gently invite the Focuser's arms to rise (to initiate some movement), then the Focuser would take it from there. We had 5 minutes, then we would switch. Afterwards, we would be able to debrief with each other.

On my turn, I closed my eyes. My partner then gave me an invitation for my arms to rise. My arms slowly rose for about 12 inches. Then, they stopped, and stayed there.

That was it—nothing else. I could feel my arms, and this was as far as they wanted to go. There was some vague sense that staying with the felt connection in my arms was how I was listening to what 'it' wanted...

This was somewhat frustrating. I had a sense that, if I intentionally raised my arms—even a little bit—they would be able to move. Yet I did not do that.

For about 4 minutes, I stayed with this feeling in my arms, like they were just *there*, up against something, not wanting to move forward. It was unclear whether this was a 'real' sense, or if it was some way I was just holding back, or over thinking. Nonetheless, I decided to honor the way my arms felt, and not try to intentionally move them. My awareness stayed with my arms, continually sensing for something new coming, and continually feeling nothing except this sort of blank... *not moving*...

I was feeling disappointed—I was drawn to take this offering on Wholebody Focusing, but this process had all of the appearances of being one of the most uneventful Focusing sessions I have ever had. [If my description so far seems repetitive and dull, then I have been successful in conveying to you the sense of what it was like so far...]

As I approached the last minute or so of my turn, my emotional discomfort increased dramatically. Was I going to spend my entire session just standing there with nothing hap-

pening? Better to lift my arms, just in case I had been unnecessarily inhibiting myself from contact with something that was alive. So, I did.

As soon as I initiated a small voluntary move, something released. My arms began to rise and feel much lighter, as if they had broken free from something. Up they went, meeting over my head, then slowly swirling in a few ways. While they were rising, several images came into my mind—perhaps an Egyptian motif. There was also a sense of more lightness in my arms.

I thought to myself, “I should have done this 4 minutes earlier and taken some personal initiative, instead of letting myself just stand there stuck for so long like that.” No big shift of any kind, but at least it was better than being still with nothing happening.

During the debrief, I described to my partner what had happened: “For most of the time, my arms felt as though they didn’t want to go up for some reason. It felt as if I was just stuck there. So, I finally just decided to lift them a little. After that, they went up and started moving. I was curious that something opened up when I made the choice to pull away from that sense of being held or kept in one position.”

Next, my partner shared his experience as my listener. With a puzzled and surprised look, he began. “In the beginning, your arms went up a bit. Then, as they stayed there, I began to have a feeling—as if I were being lifted into the air. It was the darndest thing—all of the time that you were just standing there, not moving, I felt as if I was being held up about 10 feet off the ground . . . !

“Near the end of your session your arms suddenly began to lift up. As soon as they moved up, I fell back down to the floor . . . and that was all that I felt.”

As you can imagine, I was quite surprised to hear this! The connection and resistance I felt was occurring while he was feeling lifted, and it stopped once I disconnected from that feeling and did my own thing during the last minute.

If my partner had not shared with me, I would have walked away feeling more secure in trusting the “me” voice, and in my choice to have disconnected myself from the “it” (that feeling in and around my arms), which felt like restraint and a holding back. But now, it seemed that there was much more happening than I was aware of from my perspective.

My partner’s feedback pointed out that I actually had been trusting something all along. Even when “I” couldn’t make any sense of it, even when there didn’t seem to be any content to it, even when it seemed to be holding some other part of “me” back—I had been choosing to trust a rightness that had its own knowing. As it turned out, that which some of me had been interpreting as “resistance” or “restraint” *had been so much more!*

As I listened to him, I felt sadness about not having held my position longer, about my partner “being dropped.”

Some might be surprised that this was how I responded to his sharing. After all, this was “my” turn, “my” experience, not his.

Yes, it was my turn. A very meaningful one. Even a decade later, I feel moved each time I recall this glimpse of participating in a larger, interconnected process, and remember that there is often so much more going on than we usually are given to know . . .

The experience of what support can feel like from each side is more richly spoken to in words written by Kahlil Gibran:

*“ . . .The archer sees the mark upon the path of the infinite,  
and He bends you with His might that His arrows may go swift and far.  
Let your bending in the archer’s hand be for gladness;  
For even as He loves the arrow that flies,  
so He loves also the bow that is stable.”*

*(The Prophet, Kahlil Gibran)*

I will close this story as it began . . . sometimes, the most transformational parts of an experience for one person can be the ones ° it doesn’t seem as though anything is happening at all for another.

And so, dear readers, may you, too, find blessings both in your flights of transformation, and in your steadiness of offering support, as well.

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