

MEMOIR: THE BEGINNING OF A FRIENDSHIP

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Many years ago, the Focusing Institute had weeklong workshops at Villa Redeemer in Glenview, IL. There, the weeklong workshops were born, and later the Focusing International Conferences began—with of course, the famous Focusing Follies.

Bala Jaison and Mary McGuire came up with the original idea of a weeklong training. Bala always came down from Canada each time to help with the planning and co-teach with Mary. Participants would come from out of town, out of state, and other countries, wanting to learn Focusing, or seeking more experience as a follow-up to previously taken weekend workshops.

The rooms at the retreat center were very small, but each person had their own little private space. We were able to offer a variety of activities, break-out sessions, and of course Focusing training and time to practice. Reva Bernstein, a long-time Focusing trainer, became well-known for bringing all sorts of artistic materials with her. She organized wonderful creative and playful sessions. Some people drew pictures and some wrote poetry, some made mandalas and, at times, there might have even been some chanting.

Because I was only able to participate for part of the time, on one occasion when I arrived, I noticed that something new had been scheduled.

A list was posted for each Trainer. Participants could choose whomever they wished to sign-up with for a half-hour session. Most of the people on my list were people that I already knew and had worked with at other times. But there was one man who was unknown to me. He chose me to work with and I wondered why? When we came together to have our Focusing time I asked him, mostly out of curiosity, how he had come to chose me...? He told me simply, that some of the other participants had suggested it. Ummm...I wondered who...?

Then I asked what he was wanting...from me...from the session...He started off in a very weary tone, saying that he knew that if he wanted help he would have to tell the story—yet again. I heard that he was sick of telling the story, but then he added that he didn't think there was any other way—except to tell it again. I quickly reassured him that retelling the whole tale was not necessary, and that took him by surprise. I told him that since *he knew* the story very well I didn't need to know the story—all he had to do was...*go inside...and be with whatever was there about the story...*

He got quiet for a few minutes...then suddenly he gasped!... as *it* literally took his breath away, and he said, "It's on my side!" I just reflected, "It's on your side!" More silence, followed by a second gasp and he said, "And I thought it was the enemy!" I had no idea about his content, but clearly he did. I simply reflected his statement. I made no comment to him, but mused to myself how much can happen for a person/Focuser, when given the space, the

time, and the presence of a Listener. For myself, I felt so pleased and fulfilled to know that he had such a big shift in such a short period of time.

I can't remember right now, any of the details following this short but amazing shift that he had experienced. There wasn't much time left in the session, and yet he had gotten everything he needed—and more. I hadn't done very much and yet I felt so confirmed in knowing that simply listening and reflecting was all that I needed to do. Shortly after this Focusing session the workshop came to a close.

He came over to say goodbye to me and as he shook my hand he said, "You don't know this, but I am saying goodbye to you in a new voice." There are no words to express how very moved I was. What had I really done? I sat with him, I listened as deeply and presently as I knew how to do—and—his words were a fresh confirmation to me that deep-process, i.e. Focusing, was my preferred way of working. I didn't need to know the content, the details, or the story. At some point in time later, I was surprised to find out that he had been a stutterer, but I never asked him about it.

Some time later . . . he returned for the very first summer school, which was actually for four weeks, but people could decide how much time they wanted to spend there. He stayed for the whole time. That was when we got better acquainted, and as fate would have it, we wound up becoming very good friends—for the rest of his life.

He invited me to his home in North Carolina to teach Focusing to some of his friends. He later asked me to assist him with his consulting work in Chicago. Many years later, he very sadly became ill and withstood many years of treatment. At some point, his choice was to refuse any further treatment, and he spent his last days peacefully in hospice care. He had no close family, and to my total astonishment he left me \$10,000. I started a scholarship fund in his name—and his memory.

For many years I assisted Eugene Gendlin in his weekend workshops, which were held ten months of the year. Later, I assisted Mary McGuire, who became the Director of the Focusing Institute. She asked me to take on teaching Level 1, then level 2, until the Institute transferred locations from Chicago to New York. Then, I began conducting my own workshops in Oak Park, Il. with James Turk assisting me. Today I have a website with live stream video: www.focusingforlife.org

Edward Danforth, is the designer of my site, my webmaster, and also my assistant teacher. He monitors my site and delivers email messages in person, Therefore, I can most easily be reached by phone: (708) 524-1114. (I will return all phone calls regardless of distance!)