

HOW FOCUSING HELPED ME RELEASE THE TANGLED KNOTTED ROPE

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MY JOURNEY INTO FOCUSING

I am going to start off with a story of how Focusing has changed my life. On January 2005 I completed my first Introduction to Focusing Workshop, with Peter Afford, a Focusing teacher in Great Britain. Over that weekend, I discovered that by just paying gentle non-judgmental attention to how my body reacted to my life issues, those issues shifted, felt different, and that I could change on a deep level.

From this experience I went on to do a Focusing Skills Certificate, most of the work of a Practitioner Certificate, and completed an MA in Focusing and Experiential Psychotherapy, at the University of East Anglia.

I am going to recall and share one of my own Focusing sessions, which took place during my training in Focusing.

BACKGROUND

Back in 2003, I experienced the sad and distressing death of my mother. My mother was very ill in hospital. Although I had, along with my sister and father, kept vigil at the hospital, keeping Mum company, I decided on Sunday, February 9th to go to a Church Service—something that Mum, as a devout Christian, would have approved of. I recall thinking that Mum would not die that day. I was sure of it, hence, I was surprised when half way through the service, my phone began to vibrate, and I rushed out of the Church to find my father on the other end of the line. My mother was dying, and I needed to get to the hospital, right away. Although I jumped in my car, and drove as fast as I could, I missed my mother's death, by about 10 minutes. As I drove to the hospital, I had only one aim in mind—to get there as speedily and safely as possible. I remember praying that Mum would not pass away until I arrived. I felt so guilty about not being with Mum, when she passed into eternity.

Several years later, probably in 2005 on a Focusing training course, I got a vivid picture of a dirty knotted rope in my stomach. It felt knotted, painful, tangled up, and very uncomfortable. There was some guilt there, and something else that I could not identify, but which was very painful. I said hallo to it, kept it company, and knew that this picture and the distressing feelings of being knotted were related to my Mum's death. Because it was a training session I did not have the time to complete the healing process. However about a week later, I had a dream. The knotted rope re-appeared in my dream. There were lots of negative feelings including guilt and pain. Then two things happened. The Knotted rope began to spontaneously untangle. At the same time I heard my own voice say to me, "I have now forgiven myself for not being with Mum when she died." In the dream, I felt this huge

release of tension in my body, radiating from my stomach, the guilt and the pain seemed to be dissolving; there was also a warm healing feeling that radiated from my stomach, and seemed to reach every part of my body. I woke up feeling that release of tension, and also very exhausted.

As I said, my Mum was a devout Christian, so I knew that she would have forgiven me for not being with her. What I had not realised, was that I had carried this burden with me, for so many years, of not being with Mum when she died, and of not being able to forgive myself. It really is true that my body remembers and carries my burdens. I still regret my decision to go to church, which led to me not being with Mum at the point that she departed this world, however I have not re-experienced the agony and guilt of making that decision to go to church that morning. And I know that Mum would not have wanted me to carry it anyway. And I know that Mum, being a very generous woman, who was quick to forgive, and who loved me greatly, would have not wanted me to carry around this sense of guilt and burden for the rest of my life. I am also amazed as well, at how my body continued to work through healing this issue, even though I was not consciously aware that it was doing so. I was even more amazed that such a huge issue that weighed so heavily in my gut, was completed and healed in a dream.

From this experience, I realised that the Focusing process works not only during the Focusing session itself, but that our amazing body continues to work on our issues, even after, although we may not be aware of how the body process is working at the time—as we get on with the rest of our lives. Also, my experience shows me that we can carry emotional burdens, for years, without even realising what we are doing. Our bodies *do* remember, and want to heal, if only we allow them to do so.

I love Focusing, and I have watched many brave clients face that which is within, and begin to heal, just as I have done in my own life. They have travelled the journey that I have also travelled. I have a very privileged role, as a Focusing-Oriented psychotherapist. I would not swap what I do for anything else.

John L Threadgold holds an M.A. in Focusing and Experiential Psychotherapy, and runs a private counselling service called New Focus Therapy. He offers guided Focusing, Focusing-oriented Counselling and Supervision, and training in Focusing and Focusing-oriented Therapy.

Find out more from his web site. www.newfocustherapy.co.uk