

AN ODE TO FOCUSING, PEACE, LOVE AND ALL THAT JAZZ

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The Focusing Institute is in transition just like the weather, the planet, humanity. Like you and me. There could not be a better time for Focusing, for peace, for love and all that kinda jazz to help us become clearer or clear-ish when the foggy thunderstorms of life are surrounding us on every front.

As I see it, the great gift that Gene Gendlin has given all of us is Focusing as a *democratic* practice meant to heighten inner peace even amidst the most un-peaceful situations. Focusing, employed as such, can allow the world itself to nudge closer and closer towards that elusive *Peace on Earth*.

Democratic is the defining word here. Rather than seeking out a Madison Avenue branding firm or hiring an army of PR agents to make him the next hot ticket “Psychotherapy Superstar” whose work would be destined exclusively for the well-heeled layperson or for the professional establishment, Gene did something unheard of: he gave his work away. Gene generously made it available to anyone and everyone through what we all know as “Changes Groups.” He offered the co-evolution of Focusing to all of us long before *Open Source* became a business model.

I surmise that as a child caught up in the winds of War, he wanted people to be “free” of all the implicit and explicit inner messy stuff that makes hate of self and the acting out of the hate of others, possible. The other side of fascist or racist or terrorist or all the other *ists* that lead to War is awareness, understanding, affectionate attention or simply, Love.

Love. Focusing to me has always been a respectful, loving moment where whatever is held by the body and its aura, memories, rages, somatizations, pleasures, pains, poetry — its traumatic this-es and surprising thats-es — can be held in the warm embrace of a safe interaction-in-the-body-and-with-other space. Whatever our Larger Body has to say is listened to. As Zen meditation teacher Thich Nhat Hahn says, “To love is to listen.” In Focusing, Gene leads us to listen, newly and deeply, with all our ability to be present to our fears, our joys or our whatevers. In other words, to Love.

And Jazz? As a fan of improvisational jazz, I am in awe of its similarities with the Focusing Process. There are real, live events constantly evolving in the body. The body has messages, something to say and feel, a life to live, all sorts of “felt senses” beyond any words we could ever cognitively elect to say — to be brought forward into the world. And the body will improvise over and over, year after year, decade after decade playing different cells, neurological pathways, organs and so much *else* — And in the process, a more subjective consciousness like new chords or variations on a theme we call “my body” or “my life” or “my issue.”

It is my hope, as the new leadership of the Focusing Institute moves and grooves into place, that it leads Focusers into the future with evolving democratic spirit providing a beacon of Peace amidst a storm of change, with Loving decisions and actions played out from diverse Jazzy ways and in doing so helping us all nudge, synchronize, syncopate towards more peace with our selves, others, and towards all the elements of our earth, sooner than later.

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Dr. Lyly Rojas, University professor, feels fortunate to be a Peacemaker and professor of The Culture of Peace as well as consultant to multinationals in Corporate Social Responsibility. Among other articles, she has written about Focusing in War Zones while working for the UN. She was present when the city of Vienna honoured Gene's contributions to the world and gave him its keys to the City, which Gene accepted with great humility. When she is not grooving at a jazz concert, you can find her doing improvisational comedy with professional and amateur groups. She can be reached at: choosingpeace@hotmail.com