

THE FOCUSING TRAINER CERTIFICATION PROGRAM

The Focusing Trainer Certification Program¹ is a specialized mentored training designed to deepen the participant's competency in Focusing, and to further develop skills and awarenesses necessary to teach Focusing to others in informal as well as professional settings.

Prerequisite to enter training program

Course Work

4 Levels of Focusing Training, or the equivalent. (See Appendix A for a summary of Ruth Hirsch's Basic Training Levels.) A minimum of 3 of these Levels are to be taken in a group setting, either on the phone or in person. Courses taught by Ruth will be in 3 sessions of 3 hours each, or 4 sessions of 2 ½ hours each. Reading and practice assignments are provided for each class session. Phone class size is limited to a maximum of 6 students per class to optimize learning. Each class includes both didactic and experiential components.

Training Program

The training program is skills based. A list of the recommended skills and objectives for certification are included in Appendix B. In addition to these competencies, you are welcome to add more skills that you would like to accomplish. A key part of the program is your self-assessment of your progress in gaining these skills as well as your readiness for becoming a Focusing trainer.

Partnership

A regular Focusing Partnership that meets at least once a week, either by phone or in person is required.

Mentors

Ruth will be your primary mentor. If desired, one or more additional mentors may also be selected by the trainee. The role of the mentor(s) is to support your process of training by being present for your self-assessments, and by being available for practical questions and emotional support between the self-assessments. If a second mentor is chosen, each mentor may also support your relationship with the other mentor. Should you and either mentor encounter issues between you that need to be worked out, the other mentor will support the working out of the issues.

Self-Assessments

As noted above, a key part of the training process is self-assessment. The trainee will have at least three self-assessment sessions with the mentor(s). A possible self-

¹ Specific training and requirements for becoming a Certified Focusing Trainer may differ between Certifying Coordinators (CC). Each CC works in conjunction with the International Focusing Institute (www.focusing.org). This plan summarizes the program for certification by Ruth Hirsch

assessment format is provided in Appendix C. The self-assessments may be done by telephone (conference call if there is more than one mentor) or in person. The first session will be at the beginning of the training, the second in the middle, and the third or final session at the end, as a completion to the training.

Each self-assessment session begins with the trainee focusing on issues related to the training, and may include focusing on questions such as “How am I feeling now about Focusing?” “What are my strengths?” “Where do I need/want to grow?” “What support do I need?” The mentor listens to your focusing, and offer guiding suggestions if asked. Following the focusing, the mentor responds from her felt sense in a focusing way.

The self-assessment is not an evaluation of you by your mentor(s). It is truly a self-assessment, which is a radically different educational form. In the process, trainees find that they actually experience in a bodily way their growing readiness to teach Focusing. Thus, rather than being told from outside that you are ready, this process allows you to feel it from the inside.

The completion of the training is determined by a consensus process between you and your mentor(s). Consensus means that the felt senses of all are respected, heard, and trusted, until a shared result emerges. The primary judge of your readiness is you, and your felt sense. This process generally takes about a year after completion of the core courses.

Supervision

Supervisory sessions to help to develop and refine personal Focusing and personal/professional facilitation skills are recommended as follows: Twice a month for a minimum of 6 months. The fees for these sessions are set at a special rate for Program trainees. Currently, the fee is \$95 per 50 minute session.

Apprenticeship

This includes two major components: The first is active observation of the mentor’s classes, which may include assisting in the teaching of these classes. The other component is a requirement that the trainee plan a curriculum and teach at least one Focusing Level One training. This course will be offered gratis or for a very low fee, with participants understanding that the trainee is not yet a Certified Trainer. The primary mentor will provide supervision for this training. There is no additional charge for this aspect of the program.

Project

Each trainee will complete one project related to Focusing in an area in which the trainee has a strong interest and/or enthusiasm. An example of a project might include writing an essay about the teaching or practice of Focusing with respect to a particular subset of the population (i.e. Focusing and visual arts, focusing and business, focusing and healing); writing a review of literature pertaining to Focusing; or another subject of the trainee’s choosing.

It is suggested that a draft of this project be submitted to the mentor(s) for feedback at 1-2 months prior to anticipated certification, to allow time for the mentor(s) to offer feedback prior to the trainee's finalizing of the project.

Required Reading:

Gene Gendlin: Focusing, and Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapy

Ann Weiser Cornell: The Power of Focusing

Ruth Hirsch: Focusing Manuals (2nd edition), Level 1-2, and 3-4

Membership in The Focusing Institute is required from the time a trainee becomes a Trainer-in-training. The current fee for membership as a trainer-in-training is \$75 for trainees in the U.S.

Becoming Certified

At or near the completion of your training you have the choice of either attending the Certification weeklong² in New York, which is highly recommended, or paying \$500 to the Focusing Institute in lieu of the weeklong training. The philosophy is that your work with your mentor is complete training in itself, and the Focusing Institute receives a fee, either directly or from the weeklong workshop, for your certification. The weeklong is an extremely valuable experience, both professionally and personally. Currently it is given once a year, in the late summer or early autumn.

What Certification Means

When you have completed the entire process, you may call yourself a Certified Focusing Trainer. As long as you remain a member of the Focusing Institute, your name and contact information will be listed in the Directory published by the Institute. For a small additional fee you may also have your name and contact information listed on the Focusing Institute's web site.

Fees

There is an initial fee of \$500 to the mentor, payable at the start of the program. This includes the fees for the three self-assessment sessions and is also an overall fee for "shepherding" your training.

Other expected costs include recommended supervision and individual Focusing sessions (discounted for Trainers-in-training.)

The fee for membership in the Focusing Institute as a Trainer-in-Training is \$75 per year from the beginning of your training. Reduced fee membership of \$50 per year is available

² Prior to 1995, certification was only possible by participating in person in the weeklong workshop after working with a mentor. Since 1995, trainers-in-training have had the additional option of working with a Certifying Coordinator and paying \$500 to the Focusing Institute in lieu of attending the weeklong. A full list of Certifying Coordinators is available from the Focusing Institute.

to Israeli trainees. Once you become certified, the membership fee will be \$165/year for trainers in the U.S. Please contact me for membership fees if you reside outside the U.S.

Depending on whether the trainee opts to take the optional Certification Weeklong offered by the Focusing Institute, there is either the cost of the weeklong, or a final payment of \$500 to the Focusing Institute.

Appendix A

SUMMARY: FOCUSING TRAINING PROGRAM

Level One Focusing Basics

Attaining a basic understanding of Focusing, including the ability to Focus alone (self-guiding), and with a partner, and the ability to be a listener to another Focuser. It is the goal that by the end of the course participants will be able to Focus either with a partner or on their own.

Level Two Advanced Listening and Beginning Guiding

Enhancing competence in self-guiding, learning advanced listening techniques, and a few guiding techniques that can deepen the Focuser's ability to stay with present awareness. The essence of the course is learning to be an increasingly facilitative companion to the Focusing process for yourself and for others.

Level Three Advanced Guiding: Basics

Beginning to learn how to facilitate a Focusing session for someone new to Focusing. Supportive suggestions for each stage of the Focusing process will be taught.

Level Four Advanced Guiding: Troubleshooting

Learning a compassionate approach to handling various possible obstacles in the Focusing process including working with the Inner Critic. Participants will learn how to assist a Focuser who encounters one or more of a variety of inner experiences such as "feeling nothing," or experiencing overwhelm, or having one part attacking or victimizing another.

Level Five Seminar in Deepening Focusing Facilitation Skills

The essence of this course is learning to work with people new to Focusing including various pre- and post-session contextual processes, as well as being responsive to special needs that may arise during the session.

Appendix B

SKILLS & OBJECTIVES

The Certification Training Program is competency-based. Here are the competencies we expect you to have by the end of the training.

I. The Ability to Focus.

Understanding that Focusing is an inner relationship.

- ◆ Being able to bring awareness into the body, especially torso area.
- ◆ Being able to find a felt sense about an issue.
- ◆ Being able to find a felt sense without specifying the issue in advance. (What wants my awareness now?)
- ◆ Knowing that a felt sense is different from an emotion and from mental activity.
- ◆ Being able to hold an accepting attitude toward inner experience, or at least notice when you can't be accepting.
- ◆ Knowing what to do when you can't hold a facilitating attitude.
- ◆ Being able to acknowledge any inner experience.
- ◆ Being able to find a "right" distance if something is too close.
- ◆ Being able to describe a felt sense.
- ◆ Being able to check or resonate the description with the body sense, and to check other meanings that come.
- ◆ Being able to sit with the felt sense with a curious, interested attitude, and ask it questions if necessary without answering the questions mentally.
- ◆ Being able to receive new and positive awareness when it comes.
- ◆ Knowing about the commonest blocks to Focusing, such as the Critic, the Doubter, fearing, fixing, imposing, forcing a choice, etc., and being able to recognize and acknowledge them when they come.
- ◆ Being able to create a "fence" around what has come in order to protect it.
- ◆ Being able to Focus alone, and knowing techniques to enhance this.

II. The Ability to Listen (Basic)

- ◆ Being able to be deeply present with another person who is focusing.
- ◆ Being able to give listening reflections, some word-for-word and some paraphrasing, without asking questions, leading, or interpreting.
- ◆ Being aware that the Focuser is in charge of the Focusing/listening exchange
- ◆ Including the focuser in the reflection (i.e. "You're sensing," "You're realizing.")
- ◆ Being able to help the Focuser to "dis-identify" (i.e. using a part of you, or something)
- ◆ Being able to notice when something is in the way of being able to listen to a Focuser, and knowing what to do about this.
- ◆ Knowing how to be present to oneself and to inwardly acknowledge one's own feelings while listening to another.

III. The Ability to take part in a focusing partnership

- ◆ As a Focuser, being able to tell a Listener how you would like to be listened to.
- ◆ As a Listener, being aware that the *focuser* is in charge of the Focusing/listening exchange.
- ◆ As a Focuser, being able to use listening responses to check what has come inside.
- ◆ As a Focuser, being able to give feedback to a listener, to say when a listening response is not right or only partly right, and to use that not-quite-right to sense what it is right instead.
- ◆ Being able to have a successful experience of focusing partnership.

IV. The Ability to Listen (Advanced)

- ◆ Being able to respond to what true for the focuser in present time (vs. past).
- ◆ Responding to what's there rather than what's not there.
- ◆ Not responding to doubts or what's not known.
- ◆ Using "something" to respond to what's not yet specified.
- ◆ Unpacking.

V. The Ability to Guide a Focuser.

- ◆ Knowing that the guide is guided by the focuser's process.
- ◆ Having the attitude of the absolute rightness of the focuser's process.
- ◆ Being able to say "Yes" to whatever happens for the focuser even if gently suggesting something else.
- ◆ Knowing how to use tone of voice and pacing to enhance the focuser's experience.
- ◆ Being able to help the focuser bring awareness into the body.
- ◆ Being able to help the focuser acknowledge what comes.
- ◆ Being able to help the focuser find the description.
- ◆ Being able to help the focuser check and confirm the description and other meanings that come during the session.
- ◆ Being able to help the focuser find a positive attitude toward the sense.
- ◆ Being able to help the focuser be with the sense in a curious interested way, and ask it questions if necessary.
- ◆ Knowing how to help the focuser create a positive inner relationship by sensing it from *its* point of view, and by letting it know they hear it.
- ◆ Being able to help the focuser receive new and/or positive experiences.
- ◆ Being able to help the focuser end the session gently, usually by marking the place and thanking what came.
- ◆ Being able to help the focuser find the right distance if something is too close or too distant
- ◆ Being able to help a focuser with distant process find a felt sense, using evoking techniques, inclusion of whatever comes, and awareness of positive feelings.
- ◆ Being able to help the focuser be compassionate and interested in interfering parts or voices, including the Critic.

- ◆ Knowing how to help the focuser when two or more “somethings” come, especially when they are in conflict.
- ◆ Being able to help the focuser move awareness to the Feeling about the Feeling.
- ◆ Being able to help the focuser be compassionate to blocks.
- ◆ Knowing how to sense when a silence has lasted long enough and how to come in.
- ◆ Knowing how to gracefully accept a Focuser’s reluctance or refusal to do what’s been suggested.
- ◆ Being able to tell when something suggested has confused or stopped the focuser, and knowing what to do about this, including being able to take it back, back up, or break it into smaller steps.

VI. The ability to teach focusing and listening to a newcomer

- ◆ Being able to make a new person feel comfortable and safe.
- ◆ Being able to answer the question, “What is Focusing?” and to answer other typical questions.
- ◆ Being able to explain to the focuser before the session what is expected.
- ◆ Being able to use guiding skills with people new to Focusing.
- ◆ Being able to rephrase any suggestion using different language when the language used may not have been understood by this person.
- ◆ Understanding that reflection does not have the same effect for a new person that it does for an experienced focuser, and being able to rephrase reflections as suggestions to resonate, acknowledge, or be with, if necessary.
- ◆ Being open to the unexpected; being able to "forge new tools" as needed.

VII. The ability to teach focusing and listening to a small group, workshop, or class, etc.

- ◆ Knowing good materials to use
- ◆ Knowing good exercises to use
- ◆ Knowing and being able to describe the philosophical basis for focusing
- ◆ Knowing the research on Focusing
- ◆ Being able to plan a class for teaching Focusing and listening.
- ◆ Being able to talk about/describe the following:
 - ◆ What is Focusing?
 - ◆ What is a felt sense?
 - ◆ What is the Focusing attitude?
 - ◆ Blocks to Focusing, especially the Critic, and how to respond
 - ◆ Finding the right distance; strategies for Too Close and Too Distant process
 - ◆ Being with the sense with an interested curious attitude
 - ◆ The other steps and skills
- ◆ Being able to gently guide group process, setting an atmosphere of safety, setting and enforcing ground rules such as no discussion of content, and making sure each person is acknowledged.
- ◆ Being able to lead group Focusing exercises.
- ◆ Being able to develop and to lead an introductory talk on Focusing

- ◆ Being able to develop and to teach a Level One Focusing Course.

VIII Professionalism

- ◆ Being able to have a focusing attitude toward someone (i.e. a client) even when outside the actual session.
- ◆ Understanding and being able to explain the differences between Focusing teaching and psychotherapy.
- ◆ Knowing when Focusing is not appropriate for someone, and being able to refer that person in a respectful manner to someone who might be more appropriate.

IX. The ability to apply focusing and listening in a specialty of your own

- ◆ Choose an area of specialty
- ◆ Read the relevant literature about it
- ◆ Explore whether there are other resources available.
- ◆ Formulate your own application of focusing/ listening to the area
- ◆ Report on your project.

Appendix C

SUGGESTED SELF-ASSESSMENT FORMAT

(Adapted from Barbara McGavin, the British Focusing Teachers' Association, 1994)

Following is a possible outline for each assessment session. It is understood that the session is flexible, and is to be guided by the felt senses of both the trainee and the mentors.

1. The person whose assessment it is goes first. Examples of what they might focus on might include one or more of the following, as well as whatever else they might wish to focus on. Please note that this list is in no particular order.

Where am I now?

What have I accomplished?

What do I feel I have made my own?

What do I feel good about?

What might I feel is missing?

Do I need more information on something?

Is there somewhere that I feel I would like support?

What feels undeveloped, and as though it would like more attention?

What are my interests/passions at this time?

Do I need something from someone to help me?

What feels like the right next step for me?

Is there something between me and carrying out my next step(s)?

Is there something that needs attention right now in this assessment?

Where would I like to be in a year? 2 years? 5 years?

2. After the trainee feels finished and heard about a particular point, feedback may be given. All feedback is to be given from the felt sense.
3. The trainee then has the right to reply, from their felt sense.
4. The mentors may suggest a question or area for the trainee to focus on. At the same time, it must be OK for the trainee to say that they don't want to answer that question or explore that area at that time.
5. Action steps come first from the felt sense of the trainee. It is only after this that any additional thoughts or feelings of the mentors are shared.

The assessment process is one that is based on consensus. It is not possible to fail an assessment. If, after the third assessment, the trainee is not yet ready to be a trainer, if the trainee wishes to go on and the trainer is willing to continue to work with the trainee, there must be clear action steps and the possibility of another future assessment.

The purpose of assessment is for the trainee to become aware of their progress and development to date and to help them to develop action plans for the future. It is an opportunity for reflection, Focusing, thought, sharing, and for receiving support, information, and feedback. It is a time of sensing for what has life-forward direction. It is also a time to develop skills of communication, reaching consensus, and using Focusing interpersonally.

General principles and qualities of assessment:

1. The assessment process embodies focusing.
2. Whatever comes is welcome.
3. Things take as long as they take.
4. Support to independence. The trainee sets the pace. Mentors are there to support and aid in this development in the way the trainee needs.
5. Does what we are doing serve life, the individuals in the process, and the larger life?
6. The trainee owns the assessment process, as the Focuser owns the Focusing process.
7. Each of us has an inner sense of rightness which can be trusted. In any matter of common interest, each person's inner sense is consulted. Each person agrees to be willing for their inner sense to move in response to what others say. Until all individual inner senses concur, the true decision cannot have been reached.
8. Consensus may include unanimous agreement, consensus to vote, consensus to differ, or consensus for no deal.
9. The session aims to focus on the positive, on what works, at least as much as on what might still need attention.
10. Mentors are people, too; their feelings and thoughts also deserve space and respect.