



# STAYING IN FOCUS

## THE FOCUSING INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

VOLUME IX, NUMBER 1      APPLICATIONS OF FOCUSING      JANUARY 2009

### THE FOCUSING PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM

**FOCUS ON: LORI KETOVER**, *Focusing Coordinator, New York, USA*

*An Interview with DIONIS GRIFFIN, Focusing Trainer, Georgia, USA*

**You've been coordinating the Focusing Partnership Program (FPP) for 10 years. How did your association with Focusing begin?**

LORI: I was introduced to Focusing over a decade ago by my mentor, Rhona Engels, while attending the graduate School of Social Work at New York University. Deeply touched by the Focusing process, I wanted to learn more, so I signed up for a two year Focusing Oriented Psychotherapy Training Program with Mary Hendricks-Gendlin.

Inspired by how the practice of Focusing and Focusing partnership enriched my life and my work, I was thrilled to join the Focusing Institute staff, as the Partnership Program Coordinator, to help others gain access to this valuable skill.

**Can you say something about Focusing Partnership to those who are new?**

LORI: Sure. Focusing is a simple and effective way of listening to ourselves and others that allows us to expand our knowledge base and find fresh action steps in any situation. Focusing Partnership is a rich and valuable way to practice this process. It offers a way for two people to come together either in person or by phone and exchange Focusing and listening turns. One person listens while the other focuses and then they switch. (See [Focusing.org/What is a Focusing Partnership?](http://Focusing.org/What is a Focusing Partnership?))

**Do you personally participate in Focusing Partnerships?**

LORI: Yes. I enjoy the process very much. I focus a few times weekly with different Focusing partners by phone. Along with connecting with an array of wonderful people, each session provides me with a rich opportunity to slow down, clear some space, get a sense of where and how I am in the moment and find just the right next step(s), whether it be for a creative project, work challenge, or personal endeavor. It feels great to know that in just a few minutes of a Focusing exchange, I can get clarity and movement in a place that might have felt fuzzy and stuck a moment earlier. What a gift!

**What is the Focusing Partnership Program (FPP)?**

LORI: The Focusing Partnership Program (FPP) is an internet based international program that offers a way for experienced Focusers to find Focusing partners once they



*For more information about this program, please contact [lori@focusing.org](mailto:lori@focusing.org). Lori is a licensed Social Worker, a Focusing-oriented therapist and trainer, and Director of the Long Island Focusing Center in Woodbury, New York.*

become members or donors of the Focusing Institute.

The FPP also provides fifty minute individual phone coaching sessions to newcomers as well as to those who might want to deepen their Focusing practice. Phone sessions are tailored to meet the needs of each person. They are a great way to begin a Focusing journey. Each session is provided by a certified Focusing trainer and offers a person an opportunity to experience the Focusing partnership process first hand. Once a person gains some practice and experience in the process, he/she could be eligible to join our partnership pool. Partial scholarships are available on an as needed basis. (See articles in this issue by Neil Dunaetz on the FPP coaching sessions and by Michele Wahlder on a newcomer's experience of FPP.)

### **What is the Focusing partnership pool?**

The partnership pool is a secure place on our website where FPP members have a chance to connect with each other based on interest, experience, location and more. Currently there are almost 400 members worldwide. Some of our recent sign ups include people from USA, England, S. Africa, Canada, Ireland, Hong Kong, and Australia.

### **How does the system work?**

- To get started, go to [Focusing.org](http://www.focusing.org), then click on Focusing Partnership, or go to [http://www.focusing.org/partnership/partner\\_info/partnership\\_index.htm](http://www.focusing.org/partnership/partner_info/partnership_index.htm) and sign up.
- Once your form is processed, you will receive a password and username. This will give you access to our international partnership pool.
- You might want to go to our search form and find one or more partners who might be in your field or share a similar interest with you.
- Once you find a possible partner, you need to send a partnership request via our secure technical site.
- If you have any questions, please be sure to contact us at [partnership@focusing.org](mailto:partnership@focusing.org)

### **Along with offering a partnership pool and coaching sessions by phone, does the FPP offer additional services?**

LORI: There are many strands to this work. To further support FPP members we now offer facilitated practice groups by phone for a reasonable fee. Each group is facilitated by a certified trainer, experienced in group work, and offers members a chance to practice both Focusing and listening, get their questions answered, and possibly find Focusing partners. [See article by Larry Hurst on facilitating FPP practice groups.]

### **Is this a new service?**

LORI: Yes. Recently we conducted a survey of FPP members and found that some members wanted additional support in finding Focusing partners. To meet this need, seven coaches (Joanne Stickles, Neil Dunaetz, Larry Hurst, Ruth Rosenblum, Fiona Parr, Beatrice Blake and Bebe Simon) kindly volunteered their time. They facilitated FPP practice groups by phone for free to those members who might be interested. The pilot was a big success. Pool members participated in 21 small phone groups over a two month period. Several people went on to form partnerships.

### **How does the FPP Coaching Program work?**

LORI: Currently, all Certified Focusing Trainers, experienced in partnership, can participate as a FPP partnership coach. New coaches receive individual phone support, training materials as well as technological assistance. To further support their work, coaches can also participate in a monthly Peer Coaching Support group by phone. Currently, 40 trained Focusing partnership coaches comprise our international coaching team from 12 countries including Japan, Israel, Switzerland, South Africa, Spain, Pakistan, Canada, Australia, England, and the US. If you are a certified Focusing trainer and interested in participating as a coach, please contact us so we can arrange an appointment to further discuss the program. [See article on Coaching with Support by Joanne Stickles.]

### **What do you like best about the work you do?**

LORI: It's great to share what I love with others and help them find support. Each day brings a new adventure. It's exciting to meet so many interesting people from all over the world right from my home office, whether it be coordinating a FPP coaching session for someone from Turkey, talking with a new coach from S. Africa, or facilitating a FPP practice group with someone from the USA.

It is also great to know that the FPP can support my local work, as Director of the Long Island Focusing Center, Woodbury, New York, with children, parents, and educators.

## What challenges do you sense for the program?

LORI: The need for additional community support, funding, and visibility.

## What is your felt sense right now of the whole program?

LORI: It feels like a hidden treasure, glistening with many possibilities. Through the internet and the telephone, it is truly a resource open to all, of hope, connection, and support. Partnerships are at the heart of the Focusing community, and our program supplements wherever you are in your training, with a rich variety of approaches.

For me it is a joy to contribute and share with the community in this way. I hope others will join us.

## FPP COACHING SESSIONS: IS THREE HOURS ENOUGH?

By **NEIL DUNAETZ**, *Focusing Trainer, California, USA*

I've been participating as a partnership coach for the TFI's Focusing Partnership Program for almost two years. In that time, I've worked with over seven people who purchased sessions on the TFI's website. One person, who had done Focusing in the distant past, signed up for only one session, to get back into the feel of Focusing in preparation for a Focusing workshop which they had registered for. The other six people each signed up for three sessions.

Part of my job is to assess whether or not, after our working together, the person is ready to work in a Focusing partnership and/or join the partnership pool. Here is what I look for: are they able to listen and offer supportive reflection without guiding or trying to fix or "help?" And as the Focuser, are they able to be present to their immediate felt experience, and to self-guide enough to have something fresh and meaningful come (at least sometimes)?

In most cases, I felt that at the end of the third session they were not yet ready for the partnership pool. So I explained in what area(s) they needed more development and recommended that they sign up for one or more additional sessions so we could continue working together. Which they did. Usually by the end of the fourth session I felt they were ready, but with two people we needed a 5th or even 6th session.

On the other hand, the second person I coached had an extensive history of inner work, and though he came to me without any formal Focusing training, I felt he was quite ready after just two sessions. Both his inner process and his listening responses were skillful and beautifully nuanced. Even so, we did the third session.

I do tell my clients that our goal is to achieve the minimal skills for participating in a Focusing partnership, that there is a lot more to learn about Focusing, and that there are many good teachers and workshops for continuing.

While I can't speak for other coaches, I feel that the people I have worked with have gotten a basic foundation of listening and Focusing skills, with emphasis on basics. I don't claim that they have internalized Focusing as a way of life.

Do they actually go on and form partnerships? Do they continue with Focusing? In some cases not. As coaches, and with Lori Ketover's gentle leadership, we offered a number of facilitated practice groups as a pilot last year, for no charge, to see if we could provide a supportive next step for people wanting to move into Focusing partnerships. We are now offering these small facilitated practice groups for a fee and will be evaluating them as we go.

Personally, I feel it's fine if someone just wants to check out Focusing a little and not continue. Why not? As a coach my intention is to offer a positive first experience with the process, and to help them learn listening and Focusing enough to be able to continue in a Focusing partnership should they wish to. I hope that they do continue, of course.

I don't compare what I do with a Level I. It just is what it is.



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## A NEWCOMER'S EXPERIENCE OF FPP COACHING SESSIONS

By **MICHELE WAHLDER**, *Focusing Institute Member, Texas, USA*

Having seen a Focusing therapist in Dallas, Texas, I enjoyed being on the receiving end of Focusing without knowing much about it. However, being a life and career coach, I decided to learn more in order to help my clients.

Last August I attended Level One of the Focusing Summer School. This was my first time Focusing in a classroom; it was a huge immersion in Focusing. Not wanting to lose momentum after the impact of the week, I signed up for some FPP Coaching Sessions. (There was a discount if you signed up right there.) Lori Ketover had attended Level One also (because, she said, you can always learn more). We had Focused together at Summer School and we continued to work together by phone once I returned to Dallas.

Phone Focusing was different because all non-verbal cues were lost. We had to articulate what was happening: "Right now, I'm sensing;" or "I need a few minutes." My partner couldn't see my head nod or read my body if I was with something, so I needed my best communication skills, at least initially.

I participated in a total of four sessions, in which I learned that there are different Focusing approaches. You make alterations as needed. For instance, my Dallas therapist used my felt sense to get to the past and search for the origin of an issue. But with Lori, we stayed in the present moment, with a curious wonder. I found that I like both ways.

Did I miss the physical presence of another person? Yes, having someone witness in person your entire experience brings the utmost feeling of connection. Another person's energy sensing your space is very healing. You open your eyes and are surprised to find someone is with you with all their attention.

However, in our busy world, there is the attraction of convenience. On the phone there is no need to travel, or even look presentable. You can slot in an hour somewhere. No one can see you; you can close your eyes; it is easier to sense inward, because no one else is there! And it is wonderful, for that hour, to have someone pay close attention to you and you to them.

Now, with my life coaching clients, I am showing them a different way: how to make bodily-felt decisions instead of head decisions. But it is a big step between Focusing one-on-one and teaching Focusing classroom style. I want to learn more and take Level II. Meanwhile my journey with a Focusing partner continues to bring a sense of connection, centeredness and wonder into my life.



*Email [michele@lifepossibilities.com](mailto:michele@lifepossibilities.com) to reach Michelle Wahlder.*

**Register Now!** *The 21st Focusing International Conference at Awaji Island, Japan, May 12th to May 16th (Coordinators' Meeting May 11th)*

*The very first Focusing International Conference to be held in Asia.*

*Visit Japan where Focusing has taken strong roots, where over a hundred Japanese Focusers welcome you, where spiritual traditions peacefully blend with high tech advances, where you can carry forward Focusing and your life from a different angle.*

*"(Wa) and the continuing journeys," the theme of our conference, is a peaceful blending (Wa) of the continuing journeys of our lives. Register at <http://www.focusing.jp/conf2009>*

## FACILITATING FPP PRACTICE GROUPS

By **LARRY HURST**, *Focusing Trainer, New York, USA*

The Institute has recently begun to offer facilitated practice groups as an offshoot of its Focusing Partnership Program. Who needs them? How are they facilitated? And how do you sign up? Three good questions!

The Focusing Partnership Program is an inspired creation, designed to meet a whole variety of circumstances. It is especially useful as a resource where someone wants a regular Focusing partnership but has no ready access to a "Focusing Changes Group" or other form of Focusing "hello." Along with becoming an Institute member or donor, the Institute requires some peer partnering experience/training before joining the Pool. The facilitated Practice Group is a stepping-stone or bridge. Potential user profiles are: someone unused to Focusing by phone and daunted by the prospect of making a "blind date" with an unfamiliar voice; those not yet quite ready for the transition from one-to-one phone coaching sessions to peer partnership; and those who want new Focusing partners, but are feeling rusty.

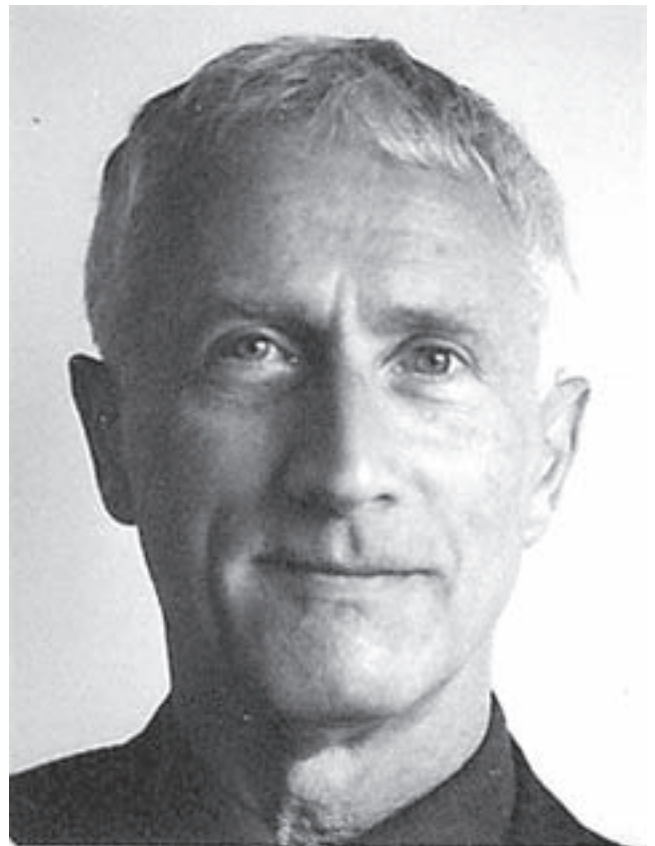
For me, taking the role of facilitator-moderator-mentor for the pilot program was both fascinating and challenging. You have to be finely tuned to whatever comes: to sense the resonance, the edges, doubts, "real" versus "role-play" and, most of all, any sign of ego-inflexion (in myself included) which can so easily rock a session. Each participant brings his or her own style of Focusing to the call. So it is rather essential for my own presence to be "guru-neutral" or, put in chemistry terms, "pH7." Engendering a relational "chemistry" in the group throughout the session is key. By sheer good fortune my own Focusing education was gained with an inspiring cross-section of teachers (Barbara McGavin, Peter Afford, Robert Lee, Kevin McEvenue), each offering their unique ways of catalyzing the process yet forever wary of students switching onto auto-pilot.

The real litmus test for the session is how comfortable and, therefore, how open, each member is during its four parts: Focusing, listening, witnessing and sharing. So what do I offer during the allotted hour? Nothing startlingly original! I introduce myself, map out the call, invite a brief "Who I am and why I am here?" and lead a short attunement into the Focusing exchanges--which consist of 10-15 minutes per process depending on numbers--with myself as timekeeper. Deciding who goes first never seems to be a problem. With a threesome, whoever is the first Focuser, next becomes a Witness, while the Listener becomes Focuser and the Witness becomes Listener, and so on. If there are just two others on the call, I take my turn as well.

I intervene in others processing only if requested. The most frequent reason is to give reassurance that pausing is all part of it: rather a strange thing at first to people who are fresh to Focusing by phone. I allow a little time after each process for clarification of any points that have emerged. We tie the session together with an "open house," at the end of which each participant is invited to sense how he or she is "right now" about entering the FPP Pool. Sometimes a potential Focusing partnership will have been struck during the session.

Group participants have remarked how different it is to partner one another, after having gained experience initially through one-on-one guided partnering with a Focusing phone coach/trainer. And I really know that these sessions are fulfilling a role as a stepping-stone when someone says, as happened at the end of the very first pilot, something like: "I'm sensing that the whole of me is almost ready for this." Sheer poetry.

It is good to see that the groups are beginning to get some publicity. How does a would-be participant sign up? Please contact the Institute at <http://www.focusing.org>, or email [partnership@focusing.org](mailto:partnership@focusing.org).



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## COACHING WITH SUPPORT

By **JOANNE STICKLEY**, *Focusing Trainer, New Jersey, USA*

I was reluctant to become a Focusing Partnership Coach back in 2005 when first recruited by Robert Lee in New York. He was expanding his domain teaching model, “The Ten Month Course,” to incorporate coaches working with students. As a Focuser with lots of training and six years of regular partnership practice, I was surprised that I didn’t have more confidence. Somehow that NOT YET READY background feeling still shadowed me as it often had since childhood. Nevertheless, since I had taught Focusing in New Jersey with Eleanor Buscher for two years, Coaching did seem like a good next step. Soon a fellow coach, Lori Ketover, was sharing her vision of a support network to include Focusing teachers and partnership coaches. My comfort level with this new role soared! (I can do anything with the right kind of support!)

With Robert’s group of students, I was a rotating coach assigned to one or two trainees for a two month cycle. We met by phone in pairs or triads and took turns Focusing and listening. We made time to discuss any special Focusing projects and also reviewed the Focusing process (never the content) of that session. My overwhelming felt sense at the end of each ninety minute call was a warm radiating gratitude. Facilitating and supporting the earnest efforts of emerging Focusers is an absolute joy!

With Eleanor in North Jersey, I would coach pairs of beginners at our Changes meetings. Similarly, students who had taken our “Introduction to Focusing” course were paired up and offered in-person coaching as often as possible. The goal was always to help new people get more and more comfortable with Focusing. We encouraged ongoing partnerships, and Eleanor became a master match-maker.

Both these avenues of coaching were validated and reinforced by our monthly Peer Coaching Support Group that began in August of 2006. This marvelously dedicated and wonderfully diverse group (including Robert Lee’s advanced training coaches as well as the FPP team) provided an open forum for hearing each other’s struggles, successes, concerns and hopes. An outgrowth of these talks was the FPP pilot program hosting small partnership practice groups on the phone. Clarifying, encouraging and the exquisite listening of Focusers helped to nurture both new and ongoing projects.

Like industrious spiders we felt we were extending the web of our Focusing community. Our coaches group is open to new members, and the model and early developmental notes are certainly available to anyone who would like to begin a similar group. Conference calling is easy and free; building support groups is priceless!

## THE COACHING PROGRAMME

By **FIONA PARR**, *Focusing Coordinator, UK*

After teaching dance in Europe, Australia, and New Zealand for many years, I became interested in Focusing in 1991. It helped me so much that I took the Practitioner training in 2000 with Barbara McGavin, and the Teacher training in 2001, again with Barbara. I am now a British Focusing Teachers' Association (BFTA) recognized Certifying Mentor, and I teach the BFTA recognized five weekend



Contact Joanne at [JRStickles@aol.com](mailto:JRStickles@aol.com) for more information.

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**[www.focusing.org](http://www.focusing.org)**

Focusing Skills Certificate course and the professional course called the Practitioner Programme, which leads to professional qualification for Focusing in the UK.

I am also a Focusing Institute Coordinator with a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE). I teach Focusing in adult and community learning provisions as well as independently run classes. I am based on Dartmoor in Devon, UK, and teach in local towns and in Bristol. I am passionately committed to facilitating people's unfolding of their inner wisdom and enjoy seeing the resulting changes in their lives.

I have been a Partnership coach since 2005. When I saw Lori's call for Focusing trainers to become coaches, I had an immediate sense of 'yes'; I wanted to do it. This comes from my personal experience; it was by joining a local peer practice group that I really began to learn what Focusing offers. I had been meeting fortnightly with my peer group for sixteen years!

I truly value the Focusing partnership, and I don't know where my life would be without it. I focus on current difficulties and always find resolution and a new way forward. For instance, I am aware that I have an enthusiastic, 'pushy' part that takes on too many commitments in my life, and another part that feels 'pushed', and wants to slow down. Yesterday, in Focusing, I found myself appreciating both parts. They each have something they want for me and through Focusing I found very practical ways to make space for both. They are no longer in conflict.

The second reason I value the Coaching Programme is because, although I have taught Focusing to many small groups, all too often, people do not set up partnerships and peer groups. I want people to have the confidence to do that. This is why I also value the new initiative of small Facilitated Practice Groups, using a conference call with the FPP. People get the chance to 'meet' each other and test the water in a safe, held space, practice a little, and perhaps find a Focusing partner.

At the moment, the Facilitated Practice Groups are in the early stages and are not yet widely known. But my sense is that they have an enormous potential for developing an awareness of Focusing, bringing it directly into people's lives, offering the richness and support that Focusing can give.

The Partnership Programme provides an opportunity for people who can't find Focusing partners locally, or for people who cannot afford the time or the money to come to a Focusing training. I come across people who read the Focusing book and try it for themselves, but realize they need a partner to be able to continue.

I am always delighted when I get a new person to coach into the Partnership pool. I am surprised by how quickly people can pick up the basics of Focusing and listening. Working on the phone allows a brief connection and sharing of our lives. I hope they later join the FPP and find new Focusing partners to continue their practice.

For me, it's not enough to teach people Focusing and let them get on with it. In my own work, I encourage the formation of groups and offer annual Focusing gatherings and retreats, plus a local contact list, as well as pointing people to the Partnership Programme. Compared to the huge planetary need we are currently facing, there are relatively few Focusing Trainers available. As the Coaching Programme grows it will support many more people in learning this wonderful process.

My hope is that the Partnership Programme will eventually reach a critical mass, when it really takes off and becomes a potent source of healing and well being for our planet.



Contact Fiona at the Dartmoor Focusing Centre, 01837 840165 or [fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk](mailto:fiona@fionaparr-focusing.co.uk).

# 25 YEARS OF WHOLEBODY FOCUSING

## A TRIBUTE TO KEVIN MCEVENUE AND CELEBRATION OF HIS 70TH BIRTHDAY

*As suggested and organized by **KAREN WHALEN**, Focusing Coordinator, Canada*

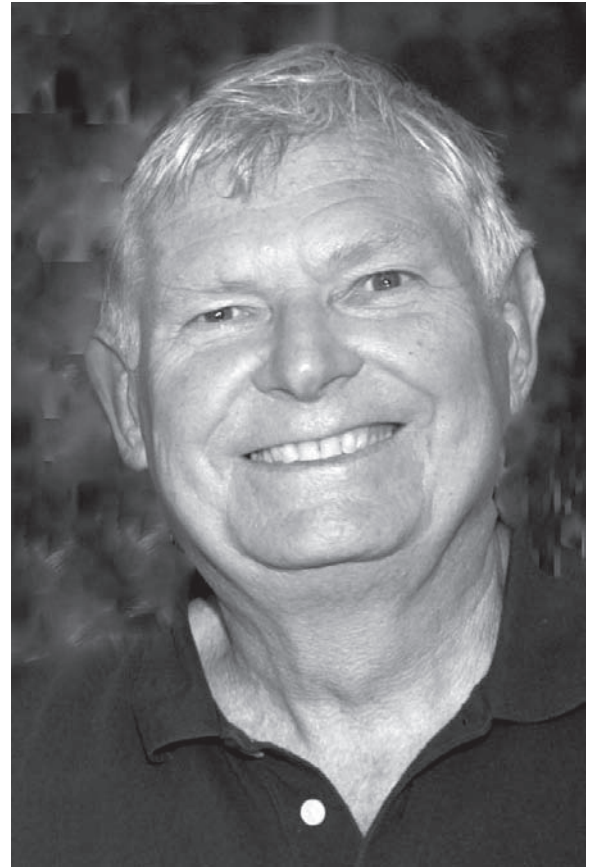
Kevin McEvenue formulated the process of Wholebody Focusing over many years out of his ongoing inner experiencing of the Alexander Technique and Focusing. A session of Wholebody Focusing can be done standing, sitting, or lying down. Although other modalities may integrate Wholebody Focusing with the use of touch, Wholebody Focusing is simply listening inwardly to the felt sense arising from the whole body.

### A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF WHOLEBODY FOCUSING

*By **KEVIN MCEVENUE**, Focusing Coordinator, Ontario, Canada*

"Wholebody Focusing (WBF) is a natural process that invites the power of conscious awareness to awaken a dynamic inner-directed knowing, a knowing that is at the heart of every one of us. I begin a session of WBF by bringing awareness to the body as a whole located in the context of its environment. I invite the body to awaken to its own sense of being alive, grounded and supported by the environment. This bodily awakening to consciousness is experienced as an inner-directed movement that is purposeful and intentional as though the body itself has a mind of its own. During the process of WBF, the parts of me that need attention come to consciousness and so find their way back to their rightful place in the whole of me. My awareness of All of Me Here, grounded and supported, together with my awareness of those parts of me that need my attention are held with equal positive regard. This creates inner space and safety from which emerges a deep inner knowing that activates the organism's natural healing process. What comes may feel new and uncomfortable at first, but is always felt as self-empowering because it moves us towards healthy bodily alignment and psychic integration. A growing sense of wholeness and fulfillment that is our birthright emerges out of the WBF process."

(Kevin McEvenue, November, 2008)



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### JOURNEY OF ALIVENESS: HOW KEVIN INSPIRES THE BODY'S PATH TO WHOLENESS

*By **GLENN FLEISCH**, Focusing Oriented Therapist, California, USA*

Joseph Campbell was once asked how to know if we are on our own "hero's journey." He remarked, "Follow your bliss!" Wholebody Focusing as developed by Kevin McEvenue follows a similar credo, "Follow your aliveness!" Kevin embodies this spirit in everything he says and does, exuding a sense of trust and confidence in the body-wisdom to come alive on its own (usually via inner-directed movement, energy and sensations that seem to have a mind of their own). Through WBF, the bodily felt sense flows forward as a whole unfolding embodied journey, rather than just a static inner object.

One aspect of WBF transmitted through Kevin's way of listening and being-with has become especially meaningful to me--what he calls giving consent, and what I prefer to call the gift of permission. I prefer the term permission both in its etymological meaning of to let through, or to let go (through). Kevin's whole way of being-with implicitly embodies this spirit of permitting, and his guiding makes this explicit. He will often say, "Your body is showing you a new possibility, a new way of being. Give that all the room and space it needs."

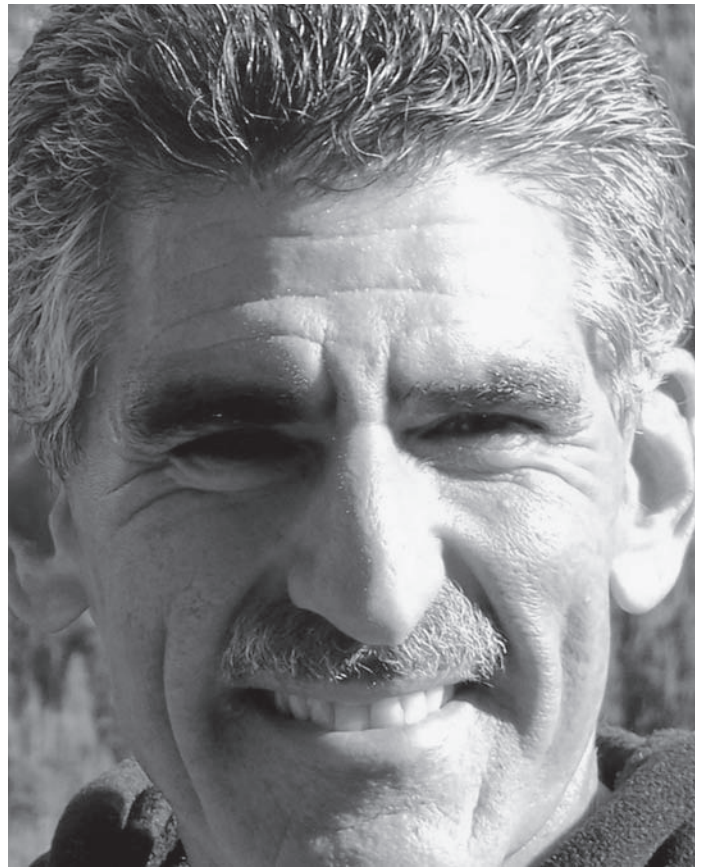
In a recent session, I began to experience chills throughout my body. When I welcomed those chills, what came



was an emergent sense of feeling a part of a larger whole, as distinct from an old place in me that tends to feel apart from the world. My arms were outstretched, hands opening wide, as if they were taking in energy from the environment and universe.

This was a rather unfamiliar way of experiencing myself that my body was showing me. So Kevin said in effect, "See if you can give consent to what is happening here--allow as much time and room as it needs." In so doing, what unfolded was something very unexpected yet beautiful. I had a sense of my body's boundaries disappearing and merging into union with the space around it. There was a vision of looking through a molecular microscope, in which I could observe that the molecules of the body were actually in motion and intermingling with those of the environment--so that the inside/outside split felt much more permeable and porous. As this experience unfolded, I noticed how my belly area distended, with a distinct sense of softening. I suddenly became aware that the place in me that has felt apart from the world learned to hold my belly very tight, like sucking it in to appear tough and braced. Kevin stated, "This place now feels your support and the support from the environment, so it is safe to soften. It didn't feel support when it originated so had to be tight, tough, on its own." The softening in the belly area felt totally right, very freeing and relaxing, yet because it was very new, also a little uneasy. Again, Kevin's presence and listening implicitly encouraged me to allow the belly to stay open and soft.

Inherent in the philosophy of Focusing is that the energy needed to transform itself is already implicit in the wounded or stuck place. The spirit of permission forms a relationship between the whole (larger) Self and the part that is emerging, providing an opportunity for the body to transform itself from familiar stuck patterns to unfamiliar, yet life-forwarding new possibilities. To me, this is the essence of WBF and embodies Kevin's gift to the world. His own physical/spiritual aliveness, his trust in something coming from a deeper resource, and his encouragement to invite all channels of the body-wisdom to open and unfold have transmitted something to me that is now an integral part of my Focusing, therapy practice and living.



*Glenn Fleisch can be reached at [Glennfleisch@aol.com](mailto:Glennfleisch@aol.com).*

## A WALK IN AN INNER LANDSCAPE

By **PHILIPPE HUNAUT**, Montreal, Canada

I have been working as an Osteopath for over twenty years. Many patients asked me the same question, "What can I do for myself?" I always gave them the same answer. "Take care of yourself until the following treatment." I didn't know how to help my patients keep the benefits of my treatment between sessions.

Searching for an answer to this question, I trained in the Alexander Technique. F. M. Alexander stated that to improve bodily functioning, people only need to stop their bad habits and allow the correct use of the body to emerge by itself. I believed this was the best response I could give my patients: that everyone has his/her own inner solution for recovering.

Unfortunately, most Alexander Technique teachers do not teach this approach: they impose a solution from outside onto their students who become dependent on their teachers just like patients are dependent on their Osteopath! I was disappointed by my Alexander training.

Some time later, I read an article written by Kevin McEvenue in which he described his evolution from the

Alexander Technique to Focusing, and how he created his own approach. I immediately felt that his approach could be what I had been seeking for many years. As soon as I could, I met with Kevin in person. My initial feeling from reading Kevin's article was confirmed during our meeting: Kevin actually embodies what he describes. He spoke to me about accessing the body wisdom directly, and I was able to feel the sensation of this wisdom inside me even while he was speaking.

I have been working with Kevin now for three years, and I continue to appreciate the wealth of his work for mainly one reason: Wholebody Focusing is accessible by everyone; it allows you to get immediately in touch with the depth of your body. This is not a theory which you have to study for a long time to get a result. Wholebody Focusing is a real life experience which offers a huge possibility for evolution to everyone, from beginners to experienced therapists. This is why Kevin's approach is universal. The whole body becomes the teacher, the inner therapist or inner healer, in a very simple way. The only required condition is that you trust what the body wants to show you.



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Osteopathy gives me the possibility to feel in my hands the power of the Natural World. When the patient remains in a state of deep rest during the treatment, the Natural World reveals an inner direction to his or her body. This manifestation appears as an involuntary movement in the body fluid which comes from an Intelligence bigger than us: The Breath of Life. But Wholebody Focusing gives me the possibility to feel the power of the Natural World inside me, all by myself. During a session with Kevin, my body doesn't need the Osteopath's hands to contact the Breath of Life. My body only needs my own presence to allow my Inner Intelligence to work.

Thanks to Kevin's teachings, I have found the best response to my patients' question. Now I can teach Wholebody presence, and my patients can easily take themselves halfway to healing. My hands become simply a tool to assist the other half of their healing journey.

Most of all, the benefits of Wholebody Focusing have been for myself. Despite my study in Osteopathy and the Alexander Technique, it is the practise of Wholebody Focusing that supports me in feeling my own body presence in an ongoing way. The ability to maintain my own Wholebody Presence has been a precious gift beyond price. 🌱

## **PARTICIPATORY SPIRITUALITY: THE ENERGETICS OF WBF**

*By KAREN WHALEN, Focusing Coordinator, Nova Scotia, Canada*

As a Clinical Therapist, I teach my clients to contact the vibrational nature of their ongoing experience. In Wholebody Focusing we observe the subtle field of fluctuating consciousness in our bodies, support contacts of floor and chair, and our environment. This fluctuating field of consciousness is a vast sea of intelligence and information, the potential storehouse of Gene Gendlin's Implicit Knowledge.

I also have the honour of sharing a Wholebody listening partnership with Kevin McEvenue. Listening from the whole body, as Kevin teaches with Wholebody Focusing, has deepened my connection to the energetic realm of my life experience. When I am listened to in a Wholebody way, I have permission to drop more deeply and directly inside my subtle field of conscious awareness to connect with the Whole of Me. My whole body supports my being even as my being enlivens my whole body. My Felt Sensing has a solid grounded home in which to emerge, includ-


ing any range of suffering it may contain.

Kevin and I have observed a subtle energetic field of shared presence between listener and Focuser that he calls "Participatory Spirituality." Listening and being Listened to in a WholeBody way illuminates the as yet unmanifested field of information (implicit knowing) lying within our shared field of consciousness. My grounded and trusting Wholebody Presence resonates with information in this shared field which amplifies both the Focuser's and Listener's range of awareness. We both access more knowing and new information than either of us can alone. Vital bio-energy is released; subtle inner shifting occurs, and more of me comes alive to engage more fully in my life.

During a shared session, I might be aware of intense pain, both physical and emotional, inside my bodily container, even as the aliveness in my whole body emerges freshly in the moment. Paradoxically, I witness my own intense suffering and my body's vitality at the same time. My felt sense of an emerging Wholebody aliveness supports my suffering through inner shifting, structural re-alignment, or tissue-based softening.

I bring this practice of Wholebody Listening to my clients. They sense my deep inner trust of their suffering and unconscious spaces. I sigh deeply and smile at them, inviting them to drop inside and listen to the wisdom of their whole body. The grounded, supportive, and solid container of Wholebody Presence generates the inner safety and trust required by the client to be with challenging material.

A new client came to me recently with advanced symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis. She practiced the direct experience of being with her painful and swollen joints in a Wholebody way. During a third session, the client contacted a deep felt sense of compassion towards her swollen hands and wrists. By the end of session, the swelling had disappeared. While the symptoms still come and go, this client can regulate them by trusting her relationship with her whole being. Wholebody Focusing offers her a self-care tool that is reliable, safe, and inexpensive.

Again and again, I observe how Wholebody Focusing initiates the body's innate healing process in subtle yet profound ways. The potential ramifications of WBF on chronic disease and challenging life problems cannot be overemphasized. The simple practice of Wholebody Presence is a daily internal resource. No special gifts or knowledge are required. My feet on the ground, my seat and body on the chair, my contact with the space I inhabit, all of me is here to witness the movement of life through my body, mind, and spirit. The challenges and suffering, the joys and sorrow, all are equally supported and contained within the container of my awareness. Wholebody Focusing is Kevin's profound gift to the Focusing community, our clients, and a gift I benefit from every day. 



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Please save the date and watch for more details to come.

## ***A BOOK REVIEW BY RICHARD C. BROWN***

### ***FOCUSING WITH CHILDREN: THE ART OF COMMUNICATING WITH CHILDREN AT SCHOOL AND AT HOME***

*BY MARTA STAPERT AND ERIK VERLIEFDE, ROSS-ON-WYE, UK.: PCCS BOOKS, 2008*

Eugene Gendlin's proteges, Stapert and Verliefde, draw from over twenty years of experience applying this body-centered technique to communication with children.

Focusing, as described in the book, is a profound method of accessing the body's wisdom and has been used successfully to enrich non-conceptual understanding and to resolve everyday obstacles. The book generously offers a wide range of situations, from a teacher who is "feeling strange and grumpy all day," to a child who has problems with math, as well as children with more troubling difficulties.

The authors dive right in by explaining Focusing in practical contexts. Readers may find the terminology in this English translation sometimes quaint, but it is easily understandable. Effective and immediately applicable examples give the reader a tangible sense of how to help children investigate inner experience. Reflections highlight and reinforce specific techniques. Indeed the book is well-organized with chapters for teachers, parents, those working with individual children, and group leaders. There is also a chapter for those who would like to try Focusing for themselves, highly recommended. But *Focusing with Children* is not just for beginners. Parts of this richly resourced book are devoted to specific refinements that offer helpful ideas for anyone who works thoughtfully with children.

In addition to being practical and accessible, *Focusing with Children* introduces an extremely subtle therapeutic art. Woven throughout are important insights for parents and teachers about the very nature of meaningful teaching and parenting relationships. At the heart of Focusing practice is the ability to stay present with inner bodily sensations, even when they are uncomfortable or seemingly unknowable. In one example, the mother of a gloomy, dejected child invites her to turn her attention inside, where the child discovers a sensation that is "as hard as a very heavy boulder." The mother asks, "Can you stay with that, with friendly attention and just receive it?" Again and again the approach conveys to the child a deep confidence and wholesome attitude toward inner experience. The authors emphasize, "The child's problem may not disappear, but he will see that it needn't get in the way of everything he tries to do."

As a deeply contemplative method of communication, Focusing negotiates the fine line between inactive attention and the creative action intended to dissolve the trouble. First there is the simple attention to the "felt sense," an inner sensation that is "not purely physical" and that often carries emotional meaning. Then comes the method of expression: "Your body will know where it wants to go." No analysis is involved. When the felt sense is expressed, there is often a "shift" or change, which is usually calming and restorative.

Considering that this is a body-based practice, more examples of gesture, movement, vocalization, and sound would be welcome additions for this reviewer. These vehicles might be particularly effective for children who are uncomfortable with artistic expression or verbal. After all, articulating non-conceptually through voice, sound, and gesture reflects the deeply holistic nature of the Focusing method. This enormously inspiring book should take its place as a landmark in contemplative practice with children.



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