



# STAYING IN FOCUS

## THE FOCUSING INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

VOLUME X, NUMBER 1      APPLICATIONS OF FOCUSING      JANUARY 2010

### ***“FEELINGS & NEEDS POKER,”* OR HOW NVC TEACHING TECHNIQUES CAN BE ADAPTED TO TEACH FOCUSING**

By **BEATRICE BLAKE**, *Focusing Trainer, Vermont, USA*

Teaching Focusing through Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a good way to “get your foot in the door” when introducing Focusing to groups that might be disinterested or not grasp what it is about. When I was working in El Salvador, it was hard to explain Focusing to the people, but when I said, “Nonviolent Communication”, they would say, “Yes, our society is very violent. We need to learn how to be more peaceful. We’re interested!”

El Salvador (population 7 million) is at a special moment in its history, because in June last year, the party which had been at war for 12 years (1980-1992) with the repressive government, won the national presidential election. It is an opening for political change that will address the cycle of poverty and fear that has characterized El Salvador for decades and caused so many of its people to seek economic opportunities abroad.

NVC has a number of engaging teaching techniques which can be used to present Focusing. For instance, by playing a game called “Feelings and Needs Poker” (originally developed by Lucy Leu to teach NVC in California prisons), participants learn about the Focusing attitude, empathic listening, felt sensing, resonating, reflection and the fact that “the process belongs to the Focuser.”

We have found very little resistance to the card game format. It is familiar, non-threatening, and not too touchy-feely. The card game allows the participants the experience of Focusing and felt shifting with minimal guiding, which develops a “we can do this” attitude. Their understanding of the intricacy of Focusing deepens in practice with an experienced coach or teacher, but the initial experience is empowering and inclusive of all those who want to participate.

Also participants learn the invaluable tools of NVC, which greatly facilitate change in interpersonal relationships.

#### **“The Heart of Change” in El Salvador**

Wendy Webber and I collaborated in developing a blend of NVC and Focusing in the Fall of 2008. The following summer, I was invited to teach this blend in a series of four 3-hour workshops given once a week to three groups of helping professionals in El Salvador. Besides this, my collaborator, Melba Jiménez, organized classes for another three groups at San Salvador’s huge Central Market, where she was an administrator. So I also gave the series to a group of rent collectors, a group of market administrators and a group of women who sold their wares in the market.

In the first three-hour session, we did felt-sensing and listening exercises, as well as acquainting people with the basics of NVC. Being present to feelings and needs in the body was introduced by reading the Rumi poem, “The Guesthouse,” and showing Nina Joy Lawrence’s simple drawings that she developed to teach Focusing in Afghanistan (<http://www.focusing.org/--Afghanistan> slide show). We also worked with the first part of NVC, learning to make non-evaluative observations. For instance, our first felt-sensing exercise involved people listening in silence while another shared. After that exercise, each participant had a chance to talk about how it felt to



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just listen or be listened to.

By the second half of the second session, the class was ready for the card game. Decks of “Feelings and Needs” cards in English or Japanese are available through the [cnvc.org](http://cnvc.org) website. I made my own cards in Spanish. “Feelings and Needs Poker” works best with groups of 2 to 5 people.

**Step 1: Five minutes** Person One speaks for 3 minutes about an experience while others in the group listen in silence. At the end, Person One notices if he or she feels any sensations inside after describing the experience.

**Step 2: Five minutes** The other people in the group choose Feelings cards that they think Person One was feeling during the situation described. Then, each listener places his or her chosen cards before Person One, naming the feelings as the cards are placed. Person One senses inside which of the cards resonate with what he or she was feeling and discards the cards that do not resonate. Then Person One goes through the remaining Feelings cards and selects any additional feelings that resonate. Once again, Person One notices if there are any sensations in the body associated with the situation.

Before the game starts, we make it clear that it is not necessary to be “right” about Person One’s feelings. Listeners are just making their best empathic guess. If they don’t choose the cards that reflect what Person One was feeling, we try to foster a sense of “Oh, THAT’S what she felt,” rather than “I didn’t get it right.” This helps to show that the Focuser, and only the Focuser, knows what he or she is feeling. It is not the listener’s job to interpret, analyze, advise, etc. This helps take the pressure off at a later stage, when people are learning to listen and reflect. It helps them see from the beginning that Focusing belongs to the Focuser.

Even when looking at written words on the cards, one is using the innate faculty of resonating with the felt sense. We ask people to notice which words elicit something that jumps up inside, or hums, versus words that fall with a dull thud. This is like using training wheels for resonating. One is learning to pay attention to something in the body that reacts to the words on the cards. It gives an experience of what resonating feels like.

Focusers learning NVC are often dismayed when NVC’ers try to guess what others are feeling, rather than allowing people the space to go inside and get the intricacy of their own felt sense. In our use of the card game, we are not trying to encourage people to guess other people’s feelings. The cards are used to show: 1. that there are feelings and needs that come up around any situation, a totally new concept for some people, and 2. that our attempts to interpret what other people are feeling are correct only part of the time at best, and it is better to listen to that person, and ask them what they are feeling and needing, rather than making assumptions. 3. As in Harbert Rice’s theory (see *Staying in Focus*, Volume VII, Number 3, September 2007), the dwelling on feelings and needs that happens in NVC provides the “holding and letting” space for felt senses to form. For this reason, we ask Person One at the end of each step to notice if there are felt sensations relating to the situation or issue. If the person feels something, it’s OK, but the idea is not to make felt-sensing the main point, so that the experience of felt sensing can develop naturally, without pressure.

**Step 3: Five minutes** Person One goes to the deck of Needs cards and lays out the needs that were producing the feelings named in Step 2, checking inside for resonance. When Person One has all his or her Needs cards laid out, one of the listeners sitting nearby reads the Needs cards that Person One chose, in a kind, empathic voice. Usually Person One will notice that it feels different inside after this.

Needs are deeper than feelings, and often bring deep felt sensing with them. We let the Focuser choose the Needs cards because the needs are intimate, and because it is a revelation for many people to learn that there are needs behind their emotional reactions. Having one’s needs reflected by someone else in a calm, empathic voice, is almost always a very moving and validating experience, showing the change that comes when one listens to one’s own needs and feels deeply reflected by another. Steps 1, 2 and 3 are repeated with each member of the group.

In the final sessions, we demonstrate the Focusing steps, practice a Focusing partnership, and also practice Nonviolent Communication, according to the needs and interests of the group. At the beginning of each class, people share experiences from their lives where they have tried to use what they have learned in the classes.

I teach this NVC-Focusing method in more depth at Focusing conferences, in private sessions and in telephone classes. My collaborators, Melba Jiménez and her daughter, Yara, continue teaching this course in El Salvador.



## *Crossing Focusing and NVC*

By *SHULAMIT DAY BERLEVTOV, Focusing Trainer, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada*

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a practice Marshall Rosenberg developed to help us to live more peacefully by creating inter- and intra-personal connections that enable consideration of everyone's needs.

In 2007, I took a year's hiatus from formal NVC practice. During this time I was taking Focusing classes and practicing Focusing partnerships at least three times a week. I then resumed formal NVC. One day I was working with my regular NVC mentor receiving empathy (silent presence along with guesses about my Feelings and Needs), and I was also focusing on what my body was feeling, related to a flare-up of a chronic illness that has accompanied me from the time my memories begin. Since the Focusing idea of checking with the direct referent was fresh in me, somehow I remembered to check inside in this context. I don't remember the details, but somehow, through that checking and resonating of the empathy I was receiving, I had the experience of moving from identifying with "chronically ill" to identifying with "vitality."

Inside, it was as if two tectonic plates--that had been pressing against one another for eons, building pressure--suddenly slipped and released that pressure, and lava (which I experienced as vitality) surged up from underneath to become free in me. I had a sense that energy and vitality had been in me all along, but held down by the friction of the plates. To this day (more than two years later) I can sense the flow of this vitality and no longer "feel" chronically ill, even when I am having flare-ups. I no longer feel desperate and hopeless in relation to my physical well-being or in sustaining the energy to do the things I want in life.

It was a thrilling and deep healing, available to me through a serendipitous combination of empathic listening from my mentor, and contact with the body-based felt-sensing I had learned from Ruth Hirsch and Ann Weiser Cornell, the Inner Relationship Focusing (IRF) process. I was consciously checking my mentor's guesses with my insides, as we do with listening responses from a Focusing partner. It was through this zig-zagging process that the need I had originally articulated as 'well being' was newly symbolized as 'vitality.' The lack relationship I had with well-being shifted as I came into contact with a surge of energy that, even as I write, springs up within me yet again.

**Zig-zagging** Since that profoundly healing moment, I have been exploring ways of crossing Focusing and NVC. I apply the zig-zagging or resonating process to feeling and need words, either as I identify them in a self-empathy process, or as they are offered in empathic reflections from a listener.

In introductory NVC trainings, we use feelings and needs lists to guide our learning about the distinctions between thoughts/feelings and strategies/needs. But the list is not the authority; it is a learning tool. I teach this kind of zig-zagging to NVC learners to help them identify and rely on a source of inner authority about what they are feeling and what needs they have, with the lists only as guides.

**Felt sensing** In the first years of learning and practicing NVC, and living from NVC consciousness, I did not experience the felt shift that trainers said resulted from the NVC Self-empathy process. I was very competent at translating judgments, evaluations and thoughts into underlying Feelings and Needs, but it remained an intellectual process until, through Focusing, I learned about felt-sensing. Now I can start with my thinking, then refer to the felt-sensing process in my body to connect with both feelings and needs as they arise. I can sense for the felt shift that comes when I find the right symbol (usually a word or phrase). My self-empathy experiences are now multi-dimensional, including thoughts and emotions as well as images and body-sensory experiencings, and much more satisfying now that I have Focusing skills to support me.

**Self-in-Presence** Another way I experience a crossing of Focusing and NVC is in accompanying the inner self-criticizing process (what we would call Jackals, to use the NVC metaphor for judging consciousness.) It has always been relatively easy for me to be aware of my judgments and evaluations about other people or external situations. But there are times when I am upset and unable to identify the source. I know that when I'm feeling a certain kind of unease in my body, that somewhere there is a litany of self-blame and self-



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hate. The empathy process depends on “mining the Jackal messages for the gold they carry,” or as we say in Focusing, “making friends with the critic.” Yet I was unable to make contact with them through the classical NVC practice of writing the judgments and evaluations down and translating them into Feelings and Needs, because I could not connect with the content, only knowing I felt bad.

In Inner Relationship Focusing (IRF) we learn to accompany our felt-sensing with Self-in-Presence. Again, in a session with my NVC mentor, I finally began to hear, ever so faintly, the howling and gnashing of jackal teeth toward a very small, sensitive part of myself. At that moment, my Self-in-Presence stepped forward to be with all of that. In that moment I recognized that my self-directed Jackals had been yearning for deep listening and company from me, like I would offer a Focusing partner. With Self-in-Presence, I have a new way of being with my Jackals. I can use all the supports I learned in IRF to be with my inner experiencing, even, and especially, when Jackals are there. Before this awareness, the totality of my experiencing was what the Jackals were saying about me and the resulting bad feelings toward myself. Now, my Jackals are there, I am with them, and there is more!

**The Beauty of Needing** Perhaps the most complex aspect of my crossing Focusing and NVC is what David Young calls the Beauty of Needing. In NVC, there is a practice of transforming the pain of an unmet need into an experience of beauty. Most of you will recognize what is it like to want something and not have it. It is an uncomfortable or even painful kind of lack. NVC teaches that contact with the need, whether it is fulfilled or not, can be an experience of Beauty (hence, Beauty of the Need).

With an awareness of processing, we Focusers can talk about needING, as an action that occurs inside when something happens outside. In NVC theory, situations stimulate needs; they put us in touch with feelings that point to a need we have inside. Needs are understood as universal and intangible (not tied to any particular circumstance or strategy for fulfilling them) and are symbolized with either one word or a series of words. NVC also teaches that needs and need words are ways of expressing a life energy that flows through us. I now use Eugene Gendlin’s term ‘living forward energy’ as a descriptor for needs because it helps me connect to something I have felt many times. Something is happening inside me when a need is stimulated: I am needING.

In my experience, there are two aspects to needING: a wanting and a yearning. NeedING is wanting as a felt-sensed experience, a body-knowing of something. When my body is wanting something, that body-wanting is a path to the very thing I’m yearning for. My body already senses (‘knows’) what it’s wanting to experience. It can sense the wanting, and it can sense the very experience even as it wants it. It’s like Rumi’s yearning for the Beloved: an experience of the Beloved is there in the yearning itself. Similarly, my body can sense the very experience it wants because somehow it knows that experience already. Otherwise, how can it want it? How could it even understand it without having, somehow, known it before?

The seed of the Beauty of Needing is in the wanting. Wanting contains the Beauty of Needing like an egg contains a chick. When we incubate that chick by sitting with the egg, eventually the beautiful experience of the Need—as it exists independently of being met or unmet—will hatch, as if the wanting gives off the aroma of the Beauty of Needing. Sensing into the Body-Wanting opens the way for experiencing the Beauty of Needing.

I am currently preparing an outline of some of the things that happen in the Beauty of Needing as I experience it, but it is a very bare map. I am working on some guiding suggestions to support this process. It is a work in progress, with a fuzzy edge that wants to be acknowledged for how it is right now, a combination of the work of so many, many people to whom I am grateful.




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## ***FOCUSING DIRECTED RETREATS***

By **Sr. RUTH MCGOLDRICK**, FOCUSING TRAINER, MASSACHUSETTS, USA

I first met Dr. Gendlin in 1977 when I was on the Board of The Institute for BioSpiritual Research or IBR. I began to practice and teach Focusing shortly thereafter, using the approach of the founders of IBR, Rev. Edwin McMahon, Ph.D., and Rev. Peter Campbell, Ph.D. They not only teach Focusing but then go further connecting Focusing and spirituality.

In the early 1980’s, an English Jesuit friend, Rev. William Hewett, SJ, and I gave a retreat in England during which we compared Focusing to the Ignatian retreat method as described in *The Spiritual Exercises of St. Ignatius Loyola*, the founder of the Jesuit order (1491-1556.) The IBR newsletter, *Kairos*, carried an article on that experimental retreat, which helped me to further develop my own format for holding what I call Focusing Directed Retreats at the Genesis Spiritual Life Center in Westfield, MA, where I work today.

Father Hewett rephrased Ignatius’ purpose for his Spiritual Exercises as follows: “The purpose of Spiritual Exercises is to release the true self, that hidden self behind the tight ego and mere emotions, that self expressed in the affectus animae (the soul’s affections or feelings).” Ignatius has what he calls the Rules of Repetition. After a time of praying, the retreatant is asked

to “repeat” or stay with places in which he or she has felt “consolation or desolation” (i.e., sadness or joy). In other words, each is encouraged, as in Focusing, to stay with the “feeling” of the image or symbol which has emerged until it unfolds further, one of the similarities between the two methods.

I limit the Focusing Directed Retreats to six persons. As in an Ignatian format, the participants spend six full days in retreat in an atmosphere of total silence. Thus on the opening evening, I gather the group to introduce themselves, providing a sense of being part of a larger group. For the next five days I meet individually with each participant for an hour or so. I usually begin by asking each for a brief history of where each is in life and then we begin a Focusing session which may be followed by Healing Listening, according to their desire or need.

The clearing of space at the beginning of the session enables the retreatants to feel deeply into their own inner processes. The feelings and symbols that arise during the daily sessions often unfold further because of the rich period of silence and solitude that the retreat provides. The retreat provides an opportunity for participants to live in a Focusing way and with a Focusing attitude, following their own bodily wisdom, like the Discernment of Spirits of which Ignatius speaks. The retreatants are encouraged to journal, rest in prayer, do art work, walk, relax, read, following the body’s lead. For many retreatants, this provides a new experience of inner freedom. I ask them to notice any changes during the day or in their dreams. We can discuss these changes as we begin their next day’s session.

Each day, in the late afternoon, an optional Catholic Liturgy or prayer service is offered. On the last day, all gather again to share the week’s journey. This final sharing is usually very rich, allowing time for the retreatants to ask questions about the Focusing process itself and to learn from each other’s sharing or questions.

I prefer that the retreatants know Focusing before they arrive. If not, I may take the first day of that individual’s session to introduce Focusing and some of its theory.

For over 25 years people of all denominations have loved these Retreats, which afford them up to five consecutive days of Focusing sessions. The cumulative effect of having several days in total silence enables them to stay deeply within, in an atmosphere of natural beauty, home-cooked meals, walking paths, etc. They are allowing, as St. Paul said, “their inward eyes to be illumined, so that they know the hope to which they are called . . . and how vast the resources of power open to those who trust.” (Eph 1:18-19)




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## FOCUS ON: *RENÉ VEUGELERS*, *Focusing Coordinator, The Netherlands*

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

### **How did you discover Focusing?**

For several years after getting my degree as a psychiatric nurse and Art Therapist, I worked under supervision. One day my supervisor said, “You need to focus on the process, rather than the result.” This phrase, “focus on the process” stuck in my mind. I “googled” it. Up popped the Focusing Center in The Hague. So I got in touch with Marta Stapert and took her Focusing With Children course in 2002. I learned quickly because I was already at home in the non-verbal area. Now I teach this same course.

### **Tell us more about this course on Focusing with Children.**

This course, developed by Marta Stapert, involves 60 hours of training over a period of nine days. We currently offer it through the Children’s Foundation, which I founded in 2007 with Jos van den Brand and Harriet Teeuw. We have offered this course in Holland for the past three years, and around 40 people so far have taken it: art therapists, day care people, parents, teachers, even one grandmother. Anyone can follow it after taking Level One in Focusing.

The training is divided into three parts which can be taken all at once or separately. The subjects of the training are diverse: non-verbal communication, different ways of symbolizing, interventions which deepen the Focusing process. Other topics include: working with vitality, spirituality, storytelling, bereavement and the grieving process.

### **I understand that you work professionally with adolescents?**

Yes, I work at a school for teenagers with all kinds of social-emotional problems. I also have my own practice. Teenagers find

it very difficult to talk about their emotions; it's even harder to be aware of them. They always have "a sense of emerging self" which they can't define. Mostly I have no problem getting teenagers to be aware of their inner feelings. Focusing with them is very helpful. Last week a teenager said to me very clearly, "You help my hands express what I feel inside, so I can understand my inner world better and in a different way." I have almost finished an article on my work.

#### **What else does the Children's Foundation do?**

We have just had our second annual "Children Focusing Day," to which we invited the general public for five workshops or demonstrations of Focusing with young people, including teenagers, babies, school-age children, etc. At the same time, the event expands the public's awareness of Focusing and also raises money for our foundation.

Jos van den Brand and Marta Stapert have written a manual for our School Program, just translated into English, which describes a ten week program, one hour per week, in which both the teacher and the children learn how to Focus in everyday situations. (Focusing trainers can order this English manual for \$37, 25 euros, from our foundation.) Schools are interested, and we have implemented our program in a few places, but schools are under-funded, so getting a new element introduced is difficult

#### **That is true in the USA, Canada, and England too.**

Yes, I have had better luck using Focusing in day-care centers. They are open to learning the Focusing attitude and using it with babies. Recently I was invited to work with a daycare center in Belgium. They have problems with babies who are damaged emotionally. Other attempts to contact the infant's feelings haven't worked, but the Focusing attitude produces changes.

Working with a day-care center in Amsterdam for the last year and a half, I am guiding and teaching them the Focusing attitude. With one half day per week, I can cover my 60 hour training with them in one school year. These caregivers don't have to be Focusing trainers in order to use Focusing skills with children. Finally, I do a lot of marketing and advertising for our Foundation through the large Focusing network here in Holland and Belgium.

#### **Holland has a lot of interest in Focusing. Why is this?**

The culture here is fast paced, hard working and competitive. People can get lost in their heads and lose connection to their inner feelings. Many of them are searching for a better balance between feeling and thinking. But we are also trying to send Focusing out into the world. I work with Simon Kilner from England and Heidi Essler from Germany, the new team on the Children's Focusing Corner, organizing international events and workshops abroad.

Last year I gave the 60 hour training in English for the first time. Four people attended, two Italian, one Swedish, and one Scottish. I gained confidence that I can teach in English. So I accepted an invitation to travel to Dublin, Ireland, last November, to give a conference on Focusing With Children under the organization of Mary Jennings. I hope this will lead to more such conferences abroad.

#### **You are a busy man!**

But it is so much fun! Maybe fun isn't the exact word. Focusing gives me energy! A lot of people are enthusiastic and want to have these skills in Focusing with Children. Their energy spurs me on. Though my English isn't always perfect, my Focusing attitude is so integral that language doesn't get in the way. I notice people can understand in a way that's beyond language.

#### **What is next?**

From September 15 to September 19, 2010, we are hosting the next International Conference on Focusing with Children in an old castle near Amsterdam. The working title is "Sparkling Energy!" We are looking for people from around the world to come and talk about their work.



*For information contact Rene at [venv@orange.nl](mailto:venv@orange.nl) or check out the website, [www.kinderfocussen.info](http://www.kinderfocussen.info)*

## Bequest Box

If you would like to include the Focusing Institute in your Will, your attorney will need our formal, legal title which is: The Focusing Institute, a not-for-profit organization incorporated in the State of Illinois, with permission to operate in New York, having its principal office at 34 East Lane, Spring Valley, NY, 10977. For more information on making a charitable bequest, contact Melinda Darer ([Melinda@focusing.org](mailto:Melinda@focusing.org))

# THE SUNFLOWER EXERCISE: FOCUSING FOR CHRISTIAN COMMUNITIES

By *JAMES KULWA SHIMBALA, Focusing Trainer, Benin Republic, Africa*

I am a Catholic Priest from Tanzania living in the Benin Republic of West Africa. I had the good fortune in 2006 to train in England with Dr. Campbell Purton and Dr. Judy Moore as a Focusing-oriented psychotherapist.

I was asking myself: How can Focusing help individuals improve the way they live in community? How can we encourage community members to develop values like empathy, forgiveness, assertiveness, and honesty? How can spirituality and religion help healthy community life?

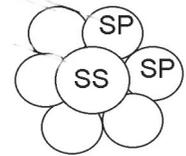
Scott Peck's *The Different Drum* (Arrow, London, 1987) addressed my questions. He suggests that community members have to "empty" themselves by being aware of, owning, and talking about their experiences and behavior within and about the community. But exactly how could I facilitate this crucial process of "emptying?"

Through Thinking at the Edge (TAE), I devised the sunflower exercise. It is based on the sunflower model of the human being, inspired in part by Letich's article, "Thoughts on the Radical Acceptance of Everything."

## The Sunflower model of the Human Being.

The Sub-Personalities (SP) are not what we essentially are but add quality to our being. Some examples of Sub-Personalities are emotions, moods, character, roles, age, skin-color, strengths, weaknesses. They wither off as the flower develops into a fruit (an allusion to carrying forward, or process flow).

The Spiritual Self (SS) is deeper in us. It is the soul, spirit, or the inner room where God dwells and waits for us to be present (Mathew 6:6). The Spiritual Self (SS) is made in the image of God and has some elements of the divine (Goodness, Authenticity, pure Being, Love, divine Beauty). Belief in God grows with belief in our Spiritual Self (SS) and that of others. Believing in the SS of another allows us to love and forgive them unconditionally. The SS is nourished by belief in God and His attributes and is kept alive by moment-by-moment awareness of itself and its SPs.



To build a healthy community, individuals need to be aware of their style of relating with others, talk about it, and carry it forward. The part in us that becomes aware is the spiritual self (SS). It becomes aware of itself and the SPs that need its attention. Below we meet a participant, Anne, whose SP, "lioness," carried forward into a richer sense of her being in community.

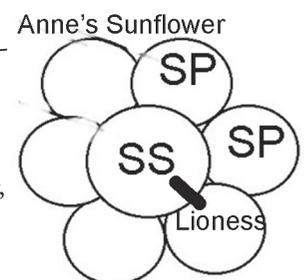
**The Sunflower Exercise** The sunflower exercise is done in three parts: individual, community, and transcendental. Each part involves drawing sunflowers and labeling petals with relationship connections. Members are encouraged to modify drawings, in order to symbolize their felt sense about the way they relate. The Focusing guidelines for clearing a space are useful here. Participants identify and keep the different relating styles in their lives at a safe distance, just as in Focusing we identify important issues that are alive in us at the moment.

**1. Individual Level** I encourage members to identify the SPs or the SS that they use in relating with themselves and others. I ask them to focus on the answers to the question, "what am I?" Participants write answers on a sheet of paper, like teacher, musician, Christian, father, husband, provider, fat, or sickly.... I have a suggested list of roles people play in the community, for those who need help. It includes descriptive words such as "street child, lost soul, robot, brain, sinner, boss..." One member identified himself through his SP of "giving out money." To be himself, he needed other people who would be there to receive his money. He didn't know how to relate with those who didn't need his money.

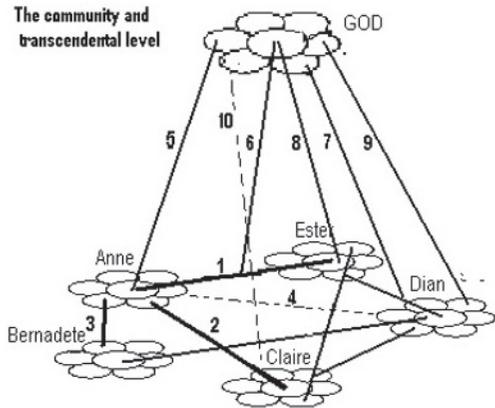
Members help each other identify their SP by completing the sentence, "in this community, I see you as....". The individual looks at what the others have told him/her and identifies SPs that match with his own felt sense. Then the individual draws his sunflower with the petals labeled with the significant SPs they have just identified. The individuals are then invited to proceed by picking out the SP that seems to need their attention at the moment, and focus on it, following Gendlin's Focusing steps.

Anne's nickname in their community, Lioness, is one she is ashamed of, but she just can't help shouting, threatening, and criticizing. She focused on her "Lioness" SP. It carried forward to "frightened mother dog defending her puppies." She accepts her fear and continues Focusing.

**2. Community Level** Each member draws the sunflowers on a plain sheet of paper for each community member. In larger communities, I use sub-groups of not more than 8 members. Then each person draws a line connecting the aspect (SP or SS) from which they relate with a certain member, to the aspect (SP or SS) in that member to which they relate. The member draws according to his/her subjective experience of the relationship. A rich relationship is the one which allows SS-to-SS relating. A less meaningful way of relating is SP-to-SP. The poorest way of being-with-the other in a community is non-relating, having no significant contact between individuals.



Anne identified the following types of relating in the community:



Type 1: SS to SS. Mutual unconditional positive regard. It is seeing beyond the SPs of the other, seeing their divine attributes. Anne relates this way with Ester.  
 Type 2: SP to SS (or SS to SP). The unconditional positive regard goes only one way. Anne loves and admires the being (aura) of Claire (older member). She is too ashamed to talk with Claire about aspects of her personal life other than prayer. She relates with Claire basically from her prayerful SP.  
 Type 3: SP to SP. Having complementary SPs and limiting the relationship to that (secretary/manager, client/seller, master/disciple, persecutor/victim...). Anne relates with Bernadette basically at this level. Bernadette presents herself as fragile, needing pity (her SP). Anne often feels guilty for persecuting Bernadette, but she doesn't know any other way of relating with her, other than aggression, hence the SP "Lioness."

Type 4: A non-relationship is where there is no significant relating between members. Anne is like this with Dian. When it is only the two of them, they don't know what to do; they both withdraw.

Up to this moment, each member has been drawing individually on his/her own sheet. If there are 8 participants, there are 8 different drawings. Now I ask the community to put together one common large drawing of the sunflowers for each individual and the relating styles between individuals, achieving one community drawing.

**3. The Transcendental (spiritual/religious) Level** On the common community drawing, the group adds another sunflower representing God. I let them label the SPs of God. The SPs of God are the non-essential attributes which people often use to describe God, but which do not represent His purely divine nature. Examples of SPs of God are a being who demands perfection, is short tempered, or judging, is Father Christmas, or who helps us pass exams... God remains God even when He is not behaving according to these SPs. The SS of God is characterised by divine attributes like pure Being, Goodness, Love, Beauty, Truth, and Authenticity.

There are six possible relationships with God which an individual may feel in the community setting.

Type 5, SS to SP. Anne related to the "demanding perfection" SP of God. She was hard on others and on herself.

Types 6 and 7 are particular to communities which come together to form a moral unity, which in turn relates with God. In Type 6, the community relates with God's SS. They for example have community meditation, say the litany of the sacred heart, have community Focusing about their experiencing of the SS of God, have prayers of praise... On Type 7, the community relates with an SP of God. For instance, if a community prays only by intercessions, they are relating to the "Father Christmas" SP of God. The way a community is relating with God influences the way individuals relate with God.

Type 8 is SS to SS relationship between a member and God. Ester likes contemplation in front of the Blessed Sacrament.

Type 9 is SP to SP relationship with God. Dian turns to the "healer" SP of God when ill. She doesn't feel like praying when she is well.

Type 10 is having no significant relationship with God. Claire has lost her faith in God; she does not pray.

A community in type 6 shares their experience of God. They are a healthy Christian community, because they collaborate and relate with assertiveness, listening, empathy, respect, empowerment, authenticity, love, and many other community values and virtues. The community is Christian because they are living the Christian message of being one in and with God.

**Conclusion** Healthy relationship with God's SS enriches our own SS so that we can expand our divine attributes (goodness, love, being/presence...), which are essential for developing social and community values. It helps us also to be aware of the SS of the other members of our community. Focusing with the sunflower exercise helps the members to carry forward their experiencing of being-with-others in community. It carries forward from unhealthy beliefs and practices toward healthy functional beliefs and practices.



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