

A Visit with Dana Ganihar

Member of the Board of Trustees

The International Focusing Institute

By Barbara J Dickinson

Imagine meeting someone for the first time. After an hour you check inside and you notice a felt sense that seems very much like the one you have in the presence of someone you've known and enjoyed for a long time. That is the sense I had after my interview with Dana Ganihar in preparation for writing this article.

Of course I know Dana's name as a member of The International Focusing Institute's Board of Trustees, and Dana knows mine. But we have never heard each other before this conversation.

How can I express my delight listening to Dana's message, some of her life stories, her admiration for the Philosophy of the Implicit, and more? I guess it will suffice to say "Thank You!" to The International Focusing Institute for giving me this opportunity to interview Dana and convey to the global Focusing community how delightful it is to come to know her.

Dana's biographical information can be [found here](#).

Dana's Vision about Focusing

Barbara: What is your vision for Focusing?

Dana: For me, the Philosophy of the Implicit and Focusing are one. I am clear inside regarding the way that unity can move in the world. I would like to articulate even a little bit of this message, which I carry inside and from which I act. Here I can articulate my inner knowing and, if someone reads it, and is a little curious, it might be an interesting edge for them. That would be a nice step!

Integrity is the word that comes, by which I mean there is a resonance at all levels, from personal decisions to larger issues. People in the Focusing community would be thinking with the implicit at all levels. It would be part of decision making and a part of going forward. There would be harmony among different levels of the Focusing movement in the world. It would not be like in some places where we focus on our individual issues, and yet in macro questions or in interaction we all of a sudden forget what we know, moving to a different kind of relating. I don't like this in my body! By "this" I mean what people "know" without pausing and sensing for the more that is there. I don't believe in things that are made from fear and worries and wanting results, and less from this wonderful practice and philosophy that we have.

How Dana came to Focusing

Barbara: Can you tell something about how you discovered Focusing? And how it came to be central to your life and livelihood?

Dana: I usually move in life in a way that what I am to do next appears before me and I follow. I don't have goals; I don't usually make plans. I find out sort of retroactively *why* I am doing *what* I am doing.

In 2002 we decided to move to the US. There was no apparent reason. It was the first time I had been there. How all of that happened seems very funny to me now. My husband and I and our two little kids just moved, and knew nothing about what we would do. It happened that we moved to New Jersey, to a town named Tenafly.

The only book I took with me was a book a friend of mine told me to read. It was kind of like magic. I asked her, 'Have you read it?' She said, "Why should I read it? It's for you!" The book was *Focusing*, translated into Hebrew. I left all my other books behind. When I started to read the book, it fascinated me, made me want to learn. At the back of the book, it said The Focusing Institute was in New York. It seemed as if this was something like "meant to be."

I took courses! The first hour I was in Ann Weiser Cornell's class, a huge road opened in front of me and I knew I would stay there my whole life. In a Changes Meeting, I heard Rob Parker reading *A Process Model*. With just the first few words I heard, I knew I would live with this book for the rest of my life.

In 2006, we moved back to Israel. For me, going abroad was to find Focusing and the Philosophy. I had to cross an ocean, I had to follow this inner urge toward the unknown to find what I was deeply looking for. Each member of the family found their own gift like that in coming to the US.

Back in Israel, everything happened in a flow. People asked me to teach Focusing, and that is what I did for five years as my fulltime job, becoming a Coordinator in the meantime. And then, Glenn Fleisch came to Israel and taught Wholebody Focusing and asked, "What is the next right step you *don't* want to take?" My answer was, "To go back to science, but now with the support of Focusing."

You see, I have a Master's Degree in Biology, from 25 years ago, but I quit science because it didn't answer my soul's search for meaning. So after Glenn's workshop I reduced very much my Focusing practice and began PhD studies in Immunology, producing 150 recorded Focusing sessions with that material. For me, science and Focusing are the two poles in my life between which I go back and forth. There is exploring science with Focusing, and there is being pushed away from science. There is not being able to breathe, back in the unit model, and then there is finding my hope again in *A Process Model*.

During my PhD I worked with several scientists. We tried to see how Focusing could help them with research. One of them wrote to me and said, "I'm flying with the science we did together!" He wanted me to go and work with his team at the lab, but that was too far from home. I did write an article, published in *The Folio*, "A Process Model Scientist" about my wish to work in the lab like a "regular" scientist, yet holding close to my heart Gendlin's principle of Interaction first.

After three years in the lab, I took a pause from science and immersed myself in studying and teaching the Philosophy of the Implicit. That is where I am in my life now.

What Dana is doing now

Barbara: Besides being a member of the Board of Trustees of The International Focusing Institute, would you talk a bit about the projects you holding your interest right now?

Dana: There are several things I am doing now that are interesting for me, all involving Focusing and the Philosophy.

First, I am a Faculty Lecturer at The Israeli Institute of Technology teaching Focusing in the Faculty of Landscape Architecture. I am teaching Focusing to the students to help them be more connected to their own inner knowing and their felt experience of places. This course is in their core syllabus, meaning they get points for it. For me it is fun and new!

Second, I developed with Dan Schachter, a friend of mine, a course called “Trails to a Living Philosophy,” where we don’t just read *A Process Model* or articles together. Instead, we want to ***put a flashlight onto a roadmap to the philosophy*** - the important concepts and ideas that run throughout Gene’s philosophy.

For this course, we also designed a lot of exercises which help to see the relevance to one’s life, because some people don’t see immediately how the philosophy is so relevant. We also read, discuss and do “felt reading” – Focusing on a paragraph and then seeing how our bodies interpret the text. [See Dana’s Article in *The Focusing Connection*, “Let your body Interpret the text.”]

I also have a course called “Reflections and Invitations in the Spirit of Gene’s Philosophy.” Here, we take concepts from *A Process Model* and see how they function in our listening in Focusing sessions. When you let the concepts function in your listening, as if they are capsules of energy, it has a lot of power.

And of course, there is more!

Being on the Board of Trustees

Barbara: Fascinating! You are living that expression I have heard, “the Focusing life.” With all that, how do you find it being a member of the Board of Trustees?

Dana: When I was asked if I would be willing to serve on the Board, I of course Focused! I didn’t answer right away. I had a Focusing session. From it, I said, “Yes.” I was not sure at all I would say yes, but from Focusing I said yes. If it is an important decision, I explore more deeply in Focusing.

Being on the Board, it is a very, very strong learning path. First of all, I was in my own country knowing only a little about what is going on in the larger Focusing community, and all of a sudden I sit at this macro level and see Focusing in the world. It’s a huge transition in perspective! Before that I wasn’t so much an institutional person, and now I have more caring and understanding for the importance of the Institute.

[Dana makes a gesture to illustrate the mind expanding.] When I am looking in this way, I have a better understanding of Focusing and the world, which was not there before. I understand much better the complexity of moving Focusing forward in different places, where the core is the same - Focusing and the

Philosophy - but the contexts differ widely. I moved from one way of understanding - locally - to something more in the leadership perspective. And I have come to know a lot of people I didn't know, which is terrific!

I feel now much more strongly the need for and the benefit of international or global connections between Focusing people around the world. I see the Earth with lights, but connected together. It's like a vibration, it's a wave, we strengthen each other, and it can encompass larger issues. Larger issues can be held by a larger group of people from different countries, backgrounds, languages. I hope, I believe it's possible. It has a strong potential.

Dana's Dream of Focusing

Barbara: You mentioned earlier that you have a dream of Focusing. Would you talk about that?

Dana: I have this dream and hope that all Focusing people will get to know basic concepts of the philosophy. It's super important, immensely important.

Philosophy gives a support - a wide support to Focusing people because it can take this movement and give it such a wider scope and better tools to handle challenges in life. I don't think Focusing should apply just to private matters. Focusing can help so much in every discipline!

The Philosophy must be there as well, because if not, Focusing stays just as a technique, a miracle, another thing that we can do. Combined with the Philosophy, it becomes a transformation ... Philosophy is a huge bird overhead in the sky and Focusing is a river flowing near the ground. These cannot be separated - the bird's view must follow the movement of the river. They know each other, and are integral to one another.

It is easier for Focusers to forget the unknown, to be thrown off of searching for that "... " - the "not yet in words" - when they are handling situations that are more than personal. The Philosophy - the huge bird overhead - has to see all situations and it doesn't matter if it's a political decision, a scientific exploration or anything else, Even if we need to decide how to raise money, innovate how to market Focusing, or some other business function, all have implicitly the next step.

Being from an area frequently in severe distress, I find that the Philosophy and the practice of Focusing helps me to have hope and resilience. The more we as a movement hold both, the more we can support ourselves and the people of the world, even at the worst of times, when they feel their world is collapsing. I hope that in my term on the Board I can contribute a little bit to the realization of this deep human potential.