

STAYING IN FOCUS

THE FOCUSING INSTITUTE NEWSLETTER

VOLUME VII, NUMBER 3 APPLICATIONS OF FOCUSING SEPTEMBER 2007

A ROLE FOR FIRST-PERSON SCIENCE IN RECREATION RESEARCH

By **HERBERT SCHROEDER**, Member, USA, excerpted from a presentation at the 2007 Northeastern Recreation Research Symposium

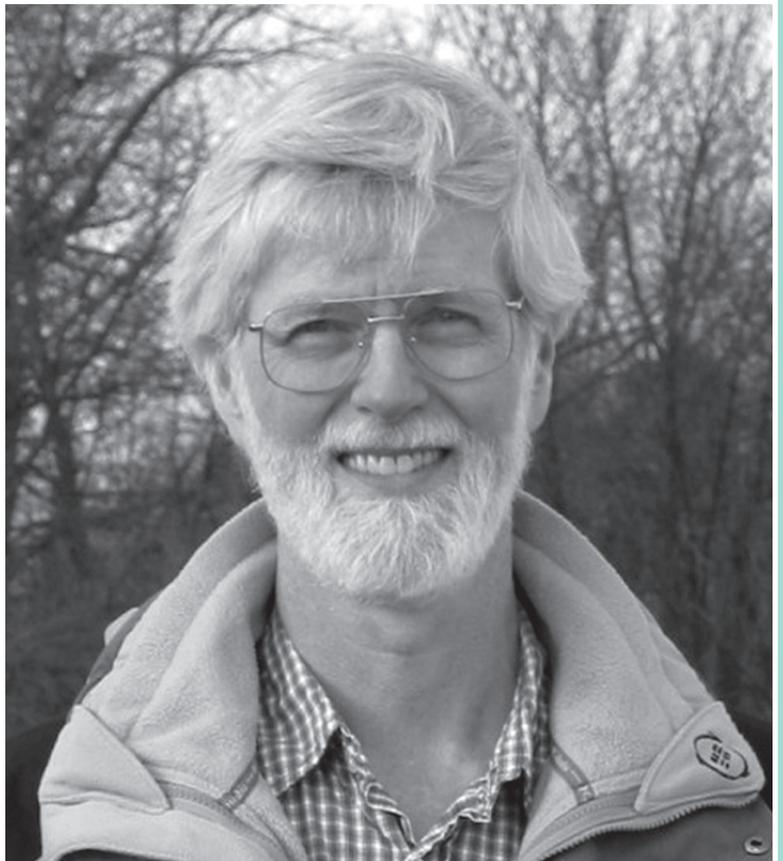
I am an environmental psychologist who does recreation research for the USDA Forest Service, Northern Research Station, in Evanston, Illinois. Most if not all recreation researchers are also recreationists. This raises an interesting question. What role does our own personal experience of the activities, environments, and issues that we study play in our research?

Most scientists say that researchers should keep their personal experiences separate from their research in order to avoid subjective bias. A scientist with a postmodern viewpoint might claim that a researcher's subjective experience inevitably plays a role in the process of doing science, and that we should openly acknowledge that fact. I would go even further by actually using my experience as the primary source for a scientific theory. I would call such a theory, "an experiential theory," and such research, "first-person research."

It is interesting to note that psychology began as a first-person science. In 1890, William James, the founder of American psychology, asserted that introspective observation was the primary tool for psychological research. First-person methods fell out of favor in psychology with the advent of behaviorism. There is, however, a renewed interest in first-person research methods in several areas today, particularly with phenomenological psychology (Shapiro 1985), and with the constructing of theories (Hendricks 2004). Others have issued a call for the development of a publicly recognized, first-person science (Gendlin and Johnson 2004).

In actual fact, social science methods fall on a continuum including first-, second-, and third-person research. All of these are valid approaches to science, and all have a useful role to play in the field of recreation research. A recent issue of the journal *Leisure Sciences* featured several articles with first-person perspectives. Recreation and leisure may be ideal topics with which to pursue first-person methods. Recreation and leisure are highly experiential phenomena; it is hard to even define what they are without making some reference to personal experience. Also, since recreation researchers often participate in the kinds of recreation that they study, they have a wealth of first-person experiences to draw on.

The actual process of doing first-person research is not as straightforward as it might appear, however. Important aspects of our experience may escape our notice, remaining in the background, on the fringe of



The full version of this paper, including the reference list, may be obtained from the author at hschroeder@fs.fed.us.

Table 1. Summary of three approaches to recreation research

Research Approach	Basis of Knowledge	Examples
First-Person	Observation and reflection upon the researcher's own first-hand experience.	Phenomenological description of the researcher's recreation experiences.
Second-Person	Interaction with other people to learn about their experiences.	Interviews or surveys about people's recreation experiences.
Third-Person	Observation of other people, things, or systems without concern for their experience.	Observation of recreation behavior. Measurement of physiological responses during recreation.

awareness. A special kind of attention brings these aspects into the foreground where we can observe them.

Even then, it might still be very difficult to express them adequately in words. First-person methods and practices developed in the fields of phenomenology and experiential psychology can be used to bring such implicit or ineffable aspects of experience into the foreground of awareness, to gain insight into their meaning, and to find ways of conveying them in language. These research methods could be especially valuable for exploring facets of recreation experience that often seem to evade our attempts at putting them into words, such as sense of place or the spiritual values of nature.

As an example: About a year ago, I was on a break from work. After a couple of days I realized that, even though I was away from the office and not working, I didn't really feel like I was on vacation. I was preoccupied with a situation I had been dealing with at work, and was unable to relax and enjoy the time I had off. It was as if my whole experience was filled by this preoccupation, and I was unable to separate myself from it. Although I could not yet put into words what would constitute an experience of "being on vacation" for me, I could feel distinctly that my preoccupation with work was preventing me from having that experience.

Using a technique from experiential psychology called Focusing (Gendlin 1981), I was finally able to detach myself a bit from this preoccupation, to get a felt sense of the whole situation, and to pose the question of what it would take for me to really feel like I was on vacation. The word that popped into my mind at that point was "freedom," and that word brought a sudden shift in my experience. The preoccupation with work seemed to shrink and withdraw; and the whole space of my experience opened up and took on a new quality of freedom, so that now I really did feel like I was on vacation.

When I reflected on what had happened, I was struck by the fact that the change in my experience corresponded closely with the etymology of the word vacation. "Vacation" comes from the verb "vacate", which means "to cease to occupy" or "to empty of occupants" (Morris 1969, p.1412). What had just happened was that my experiential space had been vacated by the preoccupation. This insight became the starting point for some playful theorizing about what vacation means.

I drew on methods developed by Shapiro (1985) in phenomenological psychology and Gendlin and Hendricks (2004) in experiential psychology. Shapiro's method, which he calls "forming," is a reflective practice for first sensing and then diagramming the structure of a phenomenon or experience. Gendlin and Hendricks' method, which they call "thinking at the edge" (TAE), is a process for finding words for one's bodily felt sense of a situation or topic. Both methods involve attending to and developing a structural description of an implicit, inward experience.

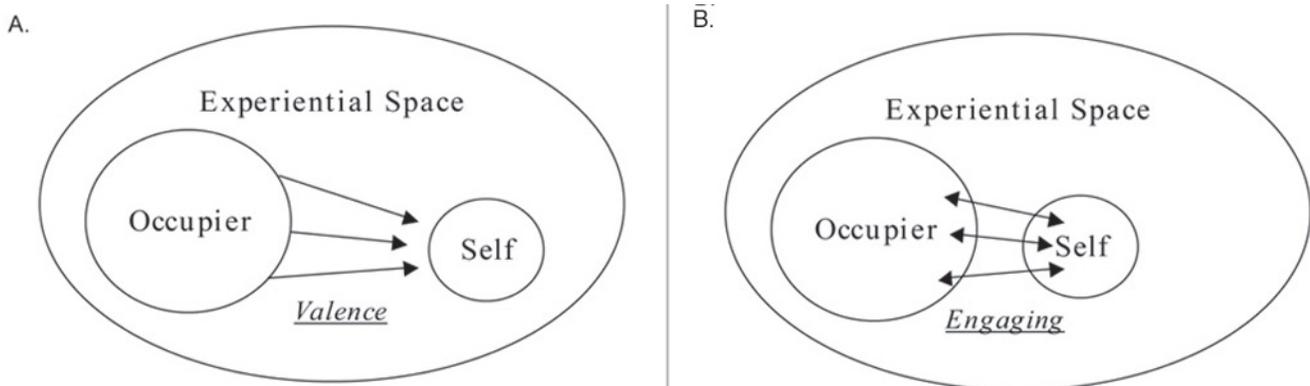


Figure 1. The valence (A) of an occupier draws the self into engaging (B) with it.

The theory that I devised begins with the observation that my sense of self at any moment is situated in a kind of virtual space that embodies how the self is able to move and act at that time. That space is usually not “empty” but is occupied by concerns, activities, or tasks, which I call “occupiers.”

An occupier lends a certain character to this felt space--it affects the way the space feels. An occupier has a “valence,” by which I mean that it has a particular way of inviting or pulling the self into engaging with it. Once the self takes up the invitation to engage with an occupier, it can do so from a relatively detached position, or it can be pulled into a more immersive engagement.

An “external form” compels or constrains the self to act in ways contrary to the self's intrinsic inclinations. When an occupier imposes an external form on the self, the experiential space feels constricted and cramped, filled with tension and resistance. To be on vacation is to be in a “vacated” space--an experiential space free of occupiers that impose any external forms. In this space the self has freedom to move in its own way, which feels open, free, and relaxed.

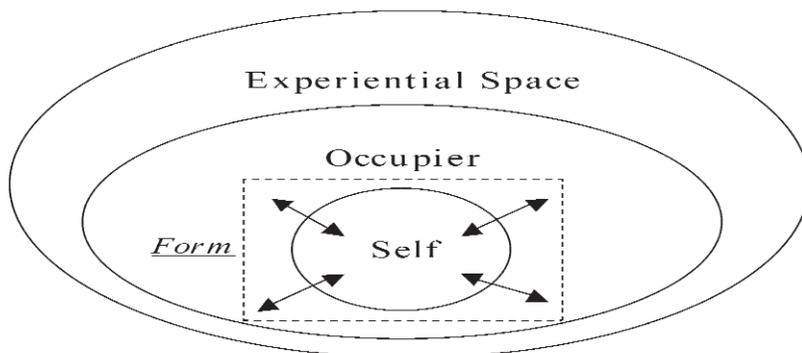


Figure 2. An occupier imposes an external form on the self.

The theory sketched above is an example of what I call an "experiential theory." This kind of theory differs from a conventional scientific theory in several important ways. The terms in an experiential theory--words like occupier, valence, and form--emerge from and refer directly to aspects of the researcher's first-person experience. They take their precise meaning from that experience, and do not necessarily carry the same meaning as they would in a more conventional context. To understand what these terms mean in the context of the theory, you have to try them on, so to speak, and sense how they function in relation to your own experience of whatever the theory is about.

An experiential theory does not just describe an experience; it also changes the experience in a particular way. After going through the process of formulating my theory of being on vacation, for example, I not only had a more precise conceptual understanding of how that experience occurs for me, but I also had a more vivid and distinct first-hand awareness of the experience itself. The way in which an experiential theory evokes, resonates with, and carries forward the experience it is about is an important indicator of the validity of the theory.

In an experiential theory, the researcher's experience changes and unfolds in response to the theory; the theory itself may then need to be developed further to speak for new aspects of the experience that have emerged. An experiential theory is therefore never a completely finished product. There will always be "edges" where the theory and the experience can continue to unfold and carry each other forward (Gendlin and Hendricks 2004). Thus, an experiential theory cannot be separated from the experience that it is about. If the terms of the theory lose their interactive contact with the actual experience, then the theory no longer functions as an experiential theory.

In addition to deepening our theoretical understanding of the nature of recreation and leisure experiences, experiential theories might also lend themselves to the development of practices to help individuals gain insights and make choices that enhance their enjoyment of recreation. My theory of being on vacation, simple as it is, proved to have just such practical value for me. On several occasions it enabled me to see why and how I was missing out on the experience of being on vacation, and helped me to find my way back into that experience.

One criticism that can be leveled against first-person research is that it is not generalizable beyond the person who developed it. Such a researcher may seem trapped within the narrowness of their own experience. But while it is true that an experiential theory starts out being about just one person's experience, it does not have to stay that way. The theory can be communicated, and other people can see what happens when they apply it to their own experience. Where it does not fit, they can modify or extend it, or come up with an alternative theory. Through a process of mutual dialog and listening, experiential theories can be shared among a group of co-researchers, leading toward a jointly-held understanding that still embraces the uniqueness of each individual. In this way, first-person research begins to merge into a second-person style of research, which can transcend and broaden the first individual's perspective.

Continued on page 11

THE CONFIDENCE CLINIC

By ANNA WILLMAN, trainer, USA, as told to DIONIS GRIFFIN

In 2003, I took a three-day TAE workshop with Kye Nelson. I had two issues I wished to work on, which seemed at the time like opposites. One was a vague discontent I felt about the lack of political action in my life, which felt disturbingly wrong to me. Political activism--the sort that aims at changing the world--had been a central focus of my life during the '70's, and a part of me was missing that life deeply--and feeling guilty about not continuing it. The second was a concern about my job and the sense that I needed to do something to prepare for my eventual retirement in a way that would guarantee the continuity of the program I work for. I had been employed since 1990 in the Confidence Clinic in Oregon, helping women in transition. The Confidence Clinic was very process-oriented; its established atmosphere was in harmony with my Focusing training and a good fit for me. In the TAE sense, helping women change their lives was something that I knew a lot about without being able to articulate exactly what it was that I knew--and I wanted to find a way to articulate it so as to find a way to pass it on.

At the workshop, Kye guided us to find the core excitement in each of our issues. In political activism, which is inherently a very judgmental, outcome-oriented activity, I was surprised to find that my joy lay in the process. I trusted that if the process were honest and healthy, the outcome would be also. As for my job, where all the focus was on gentle, nonjudgmental acceptance of the process, I found that my joy there lay in the sometimes astonishing outcomes that our women achieved. I saw that instead of opposites, my politics and my career were a synthesis. The world I had once wanted to create through political activism, a healthy environment for human development, I was actually creating at the Confidence Clinic. We were listening to each other, acting with respect and allowing choices. It was the new political vision writ small.

In Kye's course, she teaches ten pre-steps called "Finding Your Place." During these steps, I listed the many aspects of CC (Confidence Clinic) which enabled people to change their lives. Our staff needed, for example:

- to create a safe space
- to be prepared but flexible
- to create opportunities for and celebrate small successes
- to always tell the truth
- to learn from the women as well as to teach them (let the women be the teachers, too)
- to question assumptions
- to be non-judgmental
- to assume goodwill in conflict situations
- to role-model healthy behavior
- to be actively involved in their own (the staff's) personal growth
- to stay in the present moment
- to resist making decisions for the women
- and much more.

With this list came a whole new way of training our staff and volunteers. The old way, was to hand someone a curriculum and say, "Study this." Problems were dealt with as they arose. I briefed new staff concerning our process; I offered Focusing courses on the side. Now a better way unfolded.

For the last four years, my staff (especially newcomers) and I meet for an hour every week. With my list in their hands, they choose which term to discuss. Sometimes only one term is covered in the hour, sometimes three or four. Problems from the previous week come up and are

Continued on page 11



Anna Willman (MPhil, MIS) has been active in various causes in Oregon for the last 15 years. For more information about the Confidence Clinic, log on http://lucancap.org/confidence_clinic.php

USING NONVIOLENT COMMUNICATION AS A DOOR TO FELT EXPERIENCING

By *BEATRICE BLAKE*, Trainer, USA, and *HARBERT RICE*, Member, USA

Nonviolent Communication (NVC) is a model developed by Marshall Rosenberg for resolving conflicts. This paper is a collaboration by the two authors providing: (1) a TAE theory of understanding that a felt sense can (and does) form during the NVC process, and (2) an application of the theory showing that NVC exercises can be used as an introduction to forming a felt sense in Focusing. Harbert Rice developed the theory, and Beatrice Blake applied the theory in teaching a combination of NVC and Focusing workshops in El Salvador.

WHAT IS NVC?

The NVC model is taught and practiced as a four-step process of communicating observations, feelings, needs, and requests. From a speaker's standpoint, the model dialogue has the following form:

- (1) Observations: When I see (hear, remember, imagine) . . .
 When you see (hear, remember, imagine) . . .
- (2) Feelings: I feel . . .
 Do you feel . . .?
- (3) Needs: Because I need . . .
 Because you need . . .?
- (4) Requests: Would you be willing to . . .?
 Would you like me to . . .?

While the model form for the speaker is given as statements, "I feel . . ." and "Because I need . . .," in practice the speaker engages in an inward turning and self-questioning, "What am I feeling?" and "What am I needing?" in this situation. The intent in NVC is for the speaker to connect with her or his own feelings and needs. The second line in each feelings/needs pair is given (from the speaker's view) as a question, "Do you feel . . .?" and "Because you need . . .?" to solicit (and connect with) the other person's feelings and needs in the situation. When both have expressed their feelings and needs, the last step is to make a positive doable request based on the expressed needs, "Would you be willing to . . .?" or "Would you like me to . . .?" A request means a request, not a demand. A request means a willingness to accept a "No" as a response. If a "No" is encountered, the NVC practice is to cycle back and work through the process again until a resolution is found.

HARBERT'S THEORY CONSTRUCTION WITH STEPS 1-5 IN TAE

The following theory construction looks at NVC from Gendlin's *Process Model* standpoint and uses the first five steps from Thinking at the Edge (TAE). The theory utilizes the basic concept of "occurring into implying" from A Process Model (APM). In the context used here, "occurring" means speaking (or gesturing) "into implying."

The initial TAE work was done at a workshop on "Speaking from the Felt Sense" at a Focusing Institute Summer School. TAE begins with a felt sense of "knowing", a sense of something I know which I have not been able to say.

Step One Choose something you know and cannot yet say, which wants to be said, and write a rough sentence from your felt sense of it.

The "knowing" that I want to work with is that a felt sense and felt shift occur both in NVC and in Focusing. This knowing also includes a vague sense that I can "cross" NVC and Focusing through terms from APM in a way that will deepen our understanding of both processes. The feeling quality for this knowing is an "insistence;" it has a take-me-now quality of wanting to come out.

Write down one instance of this knowing--a situation in which it actually happened.

The instance that I used came during an empathy session in an NVC workshop. The form for an NVC empathy session is quite similar to a Focusing session. Participants pair up and offer empathy (listening, reflecting, and gentle questioning) to one another as each, in turn, works through a conflict situation using the NVC model to make an observation of the situation, sense and express his or her feelings and needs, and makes a request based on the expressed need. This situation was the first instance in which I had a "knowing" that feelings and needs are bodily sensed and that a felt sense and a felt shift occur in the NVC process.



Beatrice Blake works at the intersection of conservation and community development with her ecotourism business, CONSERVacations and her guidebook, *The New Key to Costa Rica* (now in its 18th edition, www.keytocostarica.com). She has been a Certified Focusing Trainer since 2000. You can find out more about her project in El Salvador at www.focusing.org/blog. She welcomes your comments: beatriceblake@earthlink.net.

Write down one short sentence. Underline the key word or phrase in the sentence.

In NVC, understanding that feelings/needs are an aspect of the implicit allows a felt sense of the situation to form.

In this sentence on NVC “understanding” means my sense of and my understanding of NVC now allow me to facilitate/guide/see feelings and needs as aspects of letting a felt sense form. “Allowing” is the key word.

What allows the felt sense to form? A felt sense forms as it can form. What is new here is an understanding that a felt sense can (and does) form in the NVC process. This change in viewing NVC as a felt experiencing process leads to the understanding that feelings/needs are “handles” of a felt sense forming. Sensing and expressing feelings and needs perform the same function in NVC as in Focusing. They are aspects of symbolizing (making explicit) an implying in the situation. The formed felt sense carries forward as a next step in the situation. In a conflict situation, a formed felt sense is what can change and resolve the conflict.

Step Two Find out what is more than logical in the felt sense. Write an illogical sentence or paradox.

What is more than logical in the felt sense:

Forming/Unfolding, and Seeking/Allowing.

Step Three Notice that you don’t intend the standard definition of the words. Write dictionary definitions of the key words. Use a . . . for the felt sense and let a second word come, again finding dictionary references for the second word. Repeat this process for the second, third and fourth words.

Allows	Facilitates	Makes More Open	Makes Expressible
lets do or happen permits permits the presence of permits to have makes provision for assigns	makes easy or easier makes less difficult assists the progress of helps bring about the likelihood, strength, or effectiveness of is of use	permits passage has no means of barring renders interior immediately accessible frees obstructions without cover or enclosure accessible	puts thought into words shows, manifests, reveals sets forth the feelings, opinions represents explicates

When I worked through each set of dictionary definitions by trying each definition as a “fit” with my felt sense, almost all the definitions “glanced off” my felt sense. They didn’t “fit;” they felt “not quite right.” One or two words, like “explicit” and “accessible” came close to fitting, and I had a sense of “maybe” for these words.

Step Four Return to your felt sense and say what you wanted each of the words to mean. Underline the words that best fit your felt sense.

Step Five Write a new expanded sentence using the key words or phrases from Step Four.

To understand that feelings/needs are aspects of interacting with an implying allows a felt sense to form more easily/accessibly/simplely/openly/expressibly . . . in the NVC process.

In this new expanded sentence, the “allowing” in the initial sentence has opened up to say more explicitly how our understanding helps us in our own experiencing or in facilitating the NVC process. This understanding lets a felt sense form: more easily/accessibly/simplely/openly/expressibly.

Allows

- lets more easily
- lets more awareingly
- lets more freely
- lets do its own thing
- lets do

Facilitates

- makes easier
- greases
- smoothes the way
- makes more accessible
- makes alive
- makes human
- simplifies

Makes More Open

- frees up
- expands the opening
- helps unfolding
- opens to possibilities
- makes for trusting
- renders more accessible

Makes Expressible

- makes comprehensible
- makes teachable
- makes shareable
- makes connectable
- is more heartfelt
- is more explicit

FURTHER THEORY – HOLDING AND LETTING

The Step Five sentence (above) also brought forth the words “interacting with an implying.” What does “interacting with an implying mean?” How can we further conceptualize forming a felt sense in the NVC process?

To make the theory more explicit, we can conceptualize “interacting” as “holding and letting.” Holding and letting is one activity. In the context of the NVC process, holding and letting means our intent is to hold the conflict (the pattern of words and actions) and to let a felt sense form from our implying in the situation. We form a felt sense by bodily sensing our feelings and needs in the situation and expressing those feelings and needs. In a conflict situation, a formed felt sense will include a sense of the other person and his or her needs. A formed felt sense is a sense of the situation, and the next step forward (a request) to fulfill the expressed needs. In NVC, the forming of the felt sense already includes care for the other person.

Understanding that a felt sense can (and does) form in the NVC process enables us to cross the NVC and Focusing processes. We can experiment with (and experience) how one practice may enhance the other. An obvious application of the theory is that we can use NVC exercises to help teach and facilitate experiencing a felt sense and a felt shift. Our collaboration in this paper came about as Beatrice Blake proposed using NVC exercises as an introduction to Focusing in her workshops in El Salvador. We passed the theory back and forth (see below) by saying that the basic movement for change in NVC was a “holding and letting,” holding a space for the conflict and letting a felt sense form. Holding means pausing the conflicted pattern of words and actions and letting a resolution come with a felt sense formed by sensing and expressing feelings and needs.

BEATRICE APPLIES THE TAE THEORY IN EL SALVADOR

I had been invited to teach Focusing to several community organizations in El Salvador from January through May, 2007. In several initial workshops I noticed that it was very difficult for people to get an appropriate distance from their feelings. Going inside could lead to overwhelming emotions that made felt sensing impossible and incomprehensible. In other groups, it was also hard for me to convey what Focusing is in a way they could relate to. Later in my stay, I was asked to teach a two and a half day workshop to a grassroots healthcare NGO. A psychologist who was familiar with the staff recommended that I teach conflict resolution first, because there were a lot of conflicts in the organization. I had taken a course in Nonviolent Communication and had brought NVC teaching aids with me.

The previous summer, I had met Harbert Rice in Nada Lou’s TAE class at the Focusing Summer School. I remembered that he was working with TAE on how Focusing and NVC mutually enhance each other. I called him from El Salvador to ask how Focusing and NVC could be combined.



Harbert Rice is a Quaker, a member of the Reno Friends Meeting. For the last five years he has facilitated Alternatives to Violence Project (AVP) workshops in the Nevada prison system. The AVP work is described at www.renofriends.org/avp.html. He too welcomes your comments. You can reach him at hvrice@gbis.com.

He told me that taking the time to explore feelings and needs, as is done in NVC, provides the “holding and letting” space in which a felt sense can form. In addition, he said that bringing the felt sense into NVC allowed change to happen more easily.

TEACHING NVC BEFORE FOCUSING

So I decided to teach NVC first in a one-day workshop to ten health workers. They really seemed to grasp what NVC was all about and embraced it enthusiastically. In NVC a jackal puppet is used to show judgmental “jackal” language, and a giraffe puppet is used to show empathic “giraffe” language. The participants were able to readily see the differences between “jackal” and “giraffe” language, and the puppets made the workshop presentation light and engaging.

A week went by, and they all came back with stories of how they had tried to use giraffe language and listening during the week. It had helped them feel more peaceful and hopeful about finding solutions to their problems.

In the second workshop with the same group, I presented more information about the felt sense and the Focusing attitude. By the end of the second workshop, I had done successful one-on-one Focusing sessions with all ten participants. All had experienced the felt sense and a felt shift. The introduction to the importance of sensing one’s feelings and needs, emphasized in the NVC workshop, seemed to provide a safe container in which participants could experience felt sense formation without getting overwhelmed.

AN NVC CARD GAME EXERCISE

One key exercise in the NVC workshop, and one of my favorite NVC teaching aids, is called “Feelings and Needs Poker.” It is played in pairs or small groups. One person talks for five minutes about an experience they have had. His or her partner listens empathically in silence. After five minutes, the listener silently looks through a deck of cards that have “feeling words” printed on them. The listener selects cards that seem to reflect the feelings of the speaker. The speaker looks at the selected cards, discards ones that are not relevant to his or her feelings, and searches through the deck for relevant feelings that were not selected by the listener. There are also blank cards for feelings that are not mentioned in the deck. The listener then looks through another deck with “need words” written on it, like the need for clarity, for community, for grieving, for relaxation, etc. The speaker discards the selected cards that are not relevant to his or her needs and chooses ones that are.

If the partner selects cards that accurately reflect the speaker’s feelings and needs, it illustrates the beneficial effects of empathic listening. If the partner selects irrelevant cards, it is the equivalent of Robert Lee’s “bad guessing” avenue to felt sense formation. By noticing inside what doesn’t feel right, the speaker gets in touch with what does feel right.

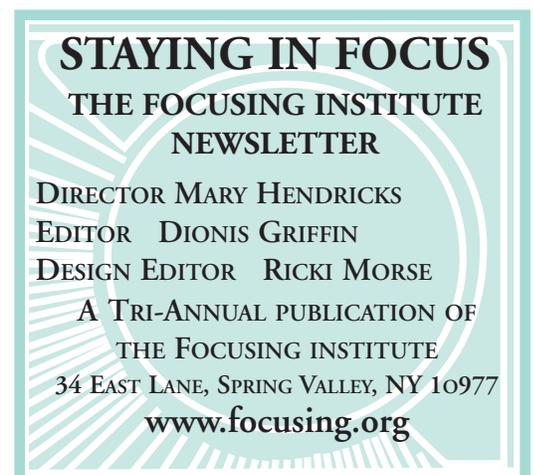
The atmosphere in the room when people were playing Feelings and Needs Poker was one of calmness, empathy and engagement. Salvadorans are culturally familiar with card games. When I attended the wake of a friend’s husband, decks of cards were handed out along with the coffee and sweet bread, as a way of keeping people entertained and awake so that they could accompany the bereaved family late into the night.

The card game creates a natural “holding and letting” space for people to discover the process of felt sensing and the process of empathic listening. Participants were often surprised at the intricacy of feelings and needs that arose from the situations they talked about.

NVC IS A DOOR TO FOCUSING

After experiencing the ease with which NVC was assimilated and the ease with which I had successful Focusing sessions after starting with NVC, I have come to think of Nonviolent Communication as a door to teaching Focusing in El Salvador. **Provida**, the health organization that I worked with, felt so too.

TFI invites you to join an on-line group of people who have been using TAE to develop their own theories in a safe and welcoming interaction. It is not a discussion list about TAE; it is a work group to support participants in actually doing a TAE Process. To subscribe go to <http://www.focusing.org/subscribe-list.html>



STAYING IN FOCUS
THE FOCUSING INSTITUTE
NEWSLETTER
DIRECTOR MARY HENDRICKS
EDITOR DIONIS GRIFFIN
DESIGN EDITOR RICKI MORSE
A TRI-ANNUAL PUBLICATION OF
THE FOCUSING INSTITUTE
34 EAST LANE, SPRING VALLEY, NY 10977
www.focusing.org

Focus On: *Nada Lou*

By *DIONIS GRIFFIN, Trainer, USA*

DG: You are a long-time Focuser. What brought you to TAE (Thinking at the Edge)?

NL: I still use Focusing to resolve stuck places or be gentle with myself. However for a long time I sensed that Focusing could do something more.

I was video-taping Gene when he first presented the 9 steps of TAE at Stony Brook in 1996. That was his first introduction of TAE to the world. Now it is taught in 14 steps. I was excited by the fact that TAE led to creative and generative work. It helped a person articulate something inside that wanted to be born. It helped to communicate from a deeper self.

DG: Can you talk more about the relationship between TAE and Focusing?

NL: Each person needs to be comfortable with self-sensing before he or she can do TAE. I often need to do a few preliminary sessions with a beginner, over the phone if necessary, to demonstrate how inward attention to the body's felt sense is different from other things, before they can learn TAE.

Surprisingly, long time Focusers can have trouble initially learning TAE. They are used to sensing inside themselves to see what needs their attention, but it is usually something negative, or at least something that comes between themselves and feeling fine.

In TAE the first thing you do is try to sense something positive in your life, an experience where you did feel fine in the past, or when some happenstance created a sense of excitement inside you. In other words, in both Focusing and TAE, you start by finding a felt sense, but you find a different type for a different purpose, the one to help deal with problems, the other to stimulate your creativity.

DG: What sorts of people come to your workshops?

NL: More men come than women, mostly young professionals. The addition of a thinking component makes the Focusing process more appealing and less intimidating to these people. We get people from all walks of life.

Most of them are looking for help in writing and presenting their ideas. They find TAE useful for connecting public language with their private experience or knowing.

Teaching TAE is very new and still developing. We have recently decided that one weekend is not enough to teach something so experiential. We are now presenting five levels, as outlined on my website. We are in the process of creating some sort of certification as well, and about a dozen people are keenly interested in teaching it.

DG: You mentioned that you get people from all walks of life.

NL: Yes, the word "grassroots" is very important to me. I am in a unique position. I have been videotaping Gene's talks and colloquiums for years. I have transcribed and edited hours of his lectures. My understanding of his



A teacher by profession, Nada Lou is one of the well known teachers and Coordinators for the Focusing Institute. With a double specialty in Focusing and Thinking at the Edge (TAE) Nada also developed many varied programs in BioSpiritual Focusing, Focusing and Dreams, Focusing for Negotiation, Listening and Communicating for everyday life. Nada is recognized in the Focusing world through her videos that have brought the teaching of Gene Gendlin and other Focusing luminaries into our homes and offices. Nada can be reached at nadalou@nadalou.com 450-692 9339 www.nadalou.com

thought processes goes very deep; I carry it in my body.

But my command of the language is limited. My native tongue is Croatian, not English. When I talk about Gene's concepts, I put it into simple language. This enables me to fulfill a specific role, which is to bring these teachings to people from all walks of life.

DG: You have a book called the *Grassroots Manual*?

NL: Yes, I brought together the handouts, worksheets and articles which I had been using in my classes. I use it as a companion to Gene Gendlin's books.

I also made two video tapes which teach TAE: *TAE in 14 Steps* which teaches the basic methodology and presents a different person using each step, and *Thinking Freshly from Experiencing* which shows Gene doing the whole process, accompanied by my simplified narration and explanation. People find this tape particularly illuminating!

Please note: I do not recommend learning TAE from books and tapes alone. As with Focusing, the feedback from another person or partner is crucial to making progress. However a group of psychologists and philosophy professors in Chile began learning TAE with books and tapes alone, before inviting me to give a workshop there.

DG: You've been involved with several countries, Australia, Holland, Canada of course. Can you talk about your involvement in Chile?

NL: I use an interpreter. I even used one in my own country, when I taught a workshop in French-speaking Montreal.

I got involved in Chile in 2006 through some previous participants in my New York workshop. When I went back again in 2007, I had 18 participants in my Level I workshop, 10 in Level II, and I also taught a course in Bio-Spirituality. That is a very quick development of interest in a new country. They are some of my most advanced students.

DG: Can you mention something about the process of teaching TAE?

NL: Learning the first step is hardest. In this step, we ask participants to come up with something fresh and exciting they want to work on, but which is not articulated. I work with each individual one on one to help them find a felt sense of something they know and want to express, but which they cannot say in words yet. Usually they prefer this process to be done in front of the whole class. They see how it works and ask many questions.

I did the first step in this way with each one of my 18 beginners in Chile, and it took all day, but they loved it. They learned so much from it that the subsequent steps were easy.

DG: How do you use TAE in your everyday life?

NL: I serve on various committees. Before I send out an Email containing my opinion on any topic, I go through the TAE process, beginning with clumsy language, then checking it with my experience, etc. It takes time. But once you have learned how to communicate from your felt sense, you never want to go back. I use it all the time to some degree.

DG: What are your next projects with TAE?

NL: In August, I will teach TAE at the second annual week-long gathering in Garrison New York. This was my brainchild, to bring several well-known Focusing leaders together and let them teach beginners and advanced students alike. Our seven-member committee is proud of the success of the first year and proud of the teachers who donate their time free of charge. All proceeds benefit the Focusing Institute.

In September I will offer for the first time a TAE course by means of the group conference call. It will consist of five sessions each 2 and 1/2 hours long.

In April, I will offer for the first time a week-end course in TAE (Level I) in Garrison, New York, the same beautiful setting as FISS (the Focusing Institute Summer School). My website (nadalou.com) has details of the above two offerings.

DG: Is there anything else you would like to add?

NL: I don't think I have conveyed the great enthusiasm I have for TAE. I am very excited about it. There is a wonderful excitement about it in the participants too. TAE can bring so much good into the world. Every person has something unique to offer which the world does not have. Maybe it isn't earthshaking, but nevertheless it is important in its own way. Each person has some treasure, some insight, some story to give, and TAE provides them with the means to put it out for others to share.

HERBERT SCHROEDER, *First-Person Science*, continued from page 3

There are other ways in which first-person approaches interface with other methods. An experiential theory can become a basis for testing by standard second- or third-person methods. It is not a question of choosing one method over another as the "right" way to do research. First-, second-, and third-person research methods together can interact in a variety of ways creating an understanding richer than any one approach could achieve by itself.



ANNA WILLMAN, *Confidence Clinic*, continued from page 4

reviewed in light of the chosen principle. Everyone, including the part-time volunteers who answer the phone (and especially myself), has her understanding deepened.

Human Resources recently told me that the job description I had filed with them was too intensive. The job duties added up to 300% of an eight-hour day. I explained that figure was correct, because the job was on three levels; 100% of it was creating a safe space for the clients, 100% was role-modeling healthy behaviors, and 100% was what the staff member actually did.

Along with the excitement here about staff training, I have felt a tremendous sense of personal enrichment since Kye's class in TAE. Now I have hope that after me, this work can carry on. After I retire in a year or so, I plan to articulate both the theoretical base (TAE) and the practical applications into a how-to guide for people who want to replicate our work. Gloria Steinem mentioned our work in her book *Revolution from Within—a Book of Self Esteem*. Since then, we have received many inquiries about how to run a similar organization, so I know such a guidebook is needed.

The federal government under Clinton used many of our ideas in their Welfare Jobs Program, but they left out a key element, which I call the "OR NOT" principle. In order to teach women--or anyone--responsibility for their lives, we must allow them to make real choices. For example, suppose our staff spends long hours finding housing for a client, working out a budget with her, taking her to see apartments, and after all this she decides to continue sleeping on her mother's couch. Our staff needs to be genuinely okay with that. She can choose the apartment OR NOT. Her choice, her recognition of possibilities, is her empowerment, not the apartment itself.

In other words, the best process for a motivational organization is to be detached from specific outcomes. In line with that goal, we keep paperwork to a minimum. Part of creating a safe environment is that we don't write everything up. The outcome is in their hands, not ours, and we need to celebrate their choices, whatever those choices are.

Our 35th anniversary last year sparked an interest in creating an oral history of CC, which will also help our process make a footprint. CC was founded in 1971 by women on welfare, who saw that they needed help to go back to school, move ahead with their lives, etc. The oral history will let them, and all the women who have gone through the program, tell their stories, and also the staff and the many people who helped this program grow into what it is today.



KYE NELSON, *Thinking Change*, continued from page 12

thing kids died--some of them people I knew.

I felt a sense of lost presences in the world. All those lives had been lost not just to themselves but also to the world. And, I felt the loss of each person's knowing of their own being and what they might be in the world to do. Somehow this knowing itself was something sacred.

I came away from Austin with a sense of urgency about finding and following whatever path had heart for me. Over time I discovered that helping others touch that sacred knowing and speak and live from it was a part of my own path.

TAE is a beautiful tool to speak from the heart's knowing. It can help a person step into what they know at their core of cores and live it more fully. Later it also makes it possible for that knowing, having been lived out, to be articulated as a legacy which can live on in the world.



Thinking Change

By KYE NELSON, in dialogue with DIONIS GRIFFIN

DG: I have been inspired by our conversation about TAE. I suddenly see that we are talking about something that could change the world, which is living from your core and helping others do the same. And that TAE provides some tools to do that. Now how did you first get interested in social change? Where did that begin?

KN: It was in my first year of high school. I remember sitting in those awful plastic chairs that made my back hurt and my legs fall asleep, noticing how those chairs really weren't made for us at all. Same with the rooms, windowless, lit by fluorescent lights which sucked the life right out of everything. We were never asked what we wanted to know, and bells interrupted any train of thought that might have gotten started.

Hardly anything about that place supported real learning. What we learned there, mostly, was how to endure. I knew that things should be different, and could be different.

DG: What made you think things could be different?

KN: At the core was an instinctive bodily protest against the ill-fittingness of the whole thing. But there was more that had to do with past experiences.

I'd just spent the previous year in a very different sort of school. That was in Austin, which was a friendly place for radical ideas. My history teacher there had us grading ourselves, and that was just the beginning of his innovations. It was exhilarating to see his mind at work, creating a new kind of situation for us.

We lived with my uncle that year. He was a school principal and was on fire with new ideas. Supper table conversations revolved around what was wrong with the schools, what was behind it, and what needed to be done about it.

During that time my mother, a Rogerian psychologist, was writing materials for kids with learning problems. She felt people with learning disabilities could have better lives if they were offered ways to be in control of their own learning. As part of that project she was reading about how to write curriculum that helped people design their own curriculum, and she shared that reading with me.

DG: So you had just experienced social change taking place!

KN: Yes, I'd experienced it happening, and also I'd experienced the thinking happening "behind the scenes" that drove the change itself. I'd been exposed to some concepts which I could use to think about what was different when I found myself in that awful school the next year. I'd seen that when people like my teacher and uncle and mother had concepts like those ready to hand, things changed.

For me, one of the great things about TAE is how it lets people think change. It lets you make concepts where maybe there were none before. Then you and others have them ready at hand in situations where social change is desired, the same way that those new educational ones were available to my teacher and family.

DG: What about thinking that comes "from the heart" and captures an inner spark? How did that become important to you?

KN: I'd been watching these passionate people, and it was obvious that what each was doing sprang out of something inside. A couple of other things happened that year in Austin which gave me a way to think about what that something might be, and its importance. First, I read Carlos Castaneda and encountered the idea of "a path with heart." Second, there was a tragedy: a school bus went off an icy bridge and twenty some-

Continued on page 11



Kye offers phone sessions, & trains TAE and Focusing teachers. Reach her at 210-829-5177 or kyenelson@antheosophia.org. Website: www.antheosophia.org