

Being What We Are About

Message to the International Focusing Conference, 2012

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The other night I went to a Shakespeare-in-the-Park performance of Othello. People of all ages and every walk of life were there. We all sat on the grass in the summer heat, chatting with friends, eating hot dogs and fruit cups and buying paletas (frozen smoothies on a popsicle stick, part of the culture in San Antonio where I live) from a little cart passing through.

But when the performance began, it got totally quiet. Even little kids were riveted. This playwright who wrote hundreds of years ago was telling it like it still is: our universal failings, and the tragedies which explode out of them.

We human beings get carried along by events, sometimes doing terrible things we never would have meant to do. Watching it unfold on stage, we're reminded that we want something better than this.

Many of us found Focusing *because* we want something better. It enables us to act from where we are more than our failings. There is something shining in us all. We want to express more of that shining quality, and cause less pain and tragedy. Focusing helps us to come more from the rightness underneath.

Sometimes things go wrong between one person and another. When that has happened here in the Focusing community, people feel double betrayed, because we all feel that especially, it isn't supposed to happen here.

We're not always able to use what we know. So we have to forgive ourselves and circle back around. It takes a while to get better at remembering what we've got and using it, and the learning is never done. We get better but it's never done. We have to forgive each other, too. Because we're all in the same boat.

We are beginning a new project on Focusing and conflict resolution. You'll be hearing more from me about this soon.

Our Focusing way is a way to pause the ongoing situation and come back to our own body and person. As a next step on from there, we might be able to tolerate feeling where the other person really is.

The pause means making room. This includes making room for our scared, hurt, angry places without immediately acting from them. The Afghan man first went to get his weapons and then said, "wait, maybe I have a guest," and then sat down to Focus. So pausing can help to create peace: in us, in our families and communities, in the world.

We are embarking on a new project centered on the pause. For the last couple of years, Mary Hendricks Gendlin has been working on a project called *felt sense literacy* (that is, taught to everyone like reading and writing) in collaboration with William Hernandez. The project is being

funded by his organization FECD.

By stopping and visibly pausing in an interaction, we can communicate to the people we are in interaction with, that this is possible for anyone to do. By making it part of our interactions, we teach it to everyone. I think this felt sense literacy project is a beautiful thing.

We can also insist on a pause in an interaction, whenever we need something not to go on. When we use the pause, it helps us to keep our own deep places alive.

When we listen in our listening way, our care for the *person* there in the other, comes through. We make room for them to come back to *their* own person, too.

The objective mindset which has dominated the world has given us much, but we have also lost much, because of it. The world feels depersonalized. I think it doesn't have to be this way. I hope that we can have the power of objectivity *and* a world where people can be really people, where you can be really *you*.

Each human being is participating in creating the world. When we pause and come from our own body and person, then the bit of world we create is a place we *can* be that deeper us which we touch in the pause.

In another new project, Gene Gendlin and a group have been working on what they call "**bridging.**" The project is to build a conscious new society within the larger society, by connecting to each other some of the many groups that offer new processes which are in our spirit. We would be a new society if we 'neighbors' were connected to each other--and some of us were learning each other's exact process details.

There are countless independent Focusing projects going on all over, including of course what *you* are doing.

Each of these projects, each a little differently, is making a little more world where a person can breathe and stretch a little, where we can *turn* and *be with* ourselves.