

VISION STATEMENT FOR FOCUSING ACTION STEPS AND PROJECTS

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In this overview I propose actions that any of us could undertake, and I present some of the possibilities that are asking to be done. I hope readers might want to pursue some of them.

First I try to say what it is that enables Focusing to make a vital contribution to so many very different fields. Then I urge you to form small groups of people working on a project, or on similar projects. I discuss the need to contact and collaborate with other organizations. Finally, I sketch a range of projects that are ready and waiting for someone who wants to get them rolling.

1. THE CENTRAL FACTOR IN APPLYING FOCUSING IN MANY FIELDS

In many fields there are constructive organizations that aim to create beneficial change in people. Such change usually happens only at a deeper level of inward attention. Most organizations don't know how to contact that level in people. Their main aim is often defeated because of this lack. Focusing reaches "there" in people, where what each field aims at can actually happen. That is why Focusing is a crucial addition in so many fields.

Because Focusing comes from a new philosophy, it enables a fundamentally different way of doing almost any activity. Focusing provides access to the experiential intricacy of one's situation, which generates new possibilities for carrying life forward. It also makes for empathic attitudes towards oneself and others and all forms of life. So it makes the world a better place. But here I want to emphasize how Focusing leads to developing a precise way for achieving the purpose inherent in many fields. I can formulate this best with examples.

For example: Everyone who works with schools would like the children to discover the excitement of thinking, learning and curiosity, but it hasn't been known "where" that discovery happens in a child, and how to enable a child to attend *there*. We have specific researched instructions for reaching that level in a child.

Everyone would like the jails to rehabilitate people, but it has not been known how to bring a person's attention *there* where that desire and ability can come. We have careful quantitative research showing that when violent prisoners have learned Focusing, recidivism decreases. As one domestic violence inmate said, "I have become a person who does care about the damage I have done." The prisoners report that now, when they get angry, rather than blowing up and acting out always in the same way, they go inside to see what exactly it is that is making them angry. And, they say, "Each time it's different!" (Bierman, http://www.focusing.org/rwv/alt_versions/Relating-Without-Violence.pdf .)

Stress reduction (widely used in business) is more effective when problems are found one by one, and finding where they are carried in the body. We set each problem "at the right distance" (where we can still feel it but it doesn't overwhelm us), and check in the body

whether the physical tension-relief has really happened there, or not. If not, there are more steps that can be taken. This is what we call “Clearing A Space,” the first step in Focusing. It happens to be a much more effective mode of stress reduction than the usual way of shifting one’s attention away from everything at once, and without finding where problems are carried in the body.

With cancer patients we have several research findings showing that “Clearing A Space” significantly decreases depression and generates a better relationship to one’s body. A clear space provides some hours of a physical well being which these patients have usually not experienced since they fell ill. Focusing reaches where such a life forward process can be found.

A recent book on sports tells athletes to “leave your problems in the locker room.” It’s clear that you will perform much better if you do. But the sports field knows nothing further about how to do that, let alone specific instructions.

These examples are intended to pinpoint the central factor: To reach the place in the person where *the organization’s purpose can actually happen*.

2. PROJECT GROUPS: A NEXT STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT

The Focusing Community is quite widespread. We have 1400 members and 4000 interested people in our database, about half in the U.S. and half all over the world. Many of them are therapists, but many others are working with applications of Focusing in various fields.

People who apply Focusing in a field are typically the only ones in their organization who know Focusing. They tend to remain the only one because it is difficult to instruct one’s colleagues, and to explain Focusing without creating the experience of it. So they each remain an isolated individual in their organization. Each has developed an application of Focusing to deepen the main activity in their field, but by themselves they are usually not training others and creating a model that can be widely used.

Many are working in the same field but don’t know each other and are unaware of what other field-specific techniques focusers in their field have created. There is some exciting group activity and people are sharing what they are doing in some fields, but not yet in most.

We can also hope that out of the work will come a model, a program that is actually adopted by one agency or in one school, church, or hospital — which if successful, would be adopted by many others.

Dear reader, you can bring two or three of our people together either in one location or internationally. If you like, the Focusing Institute can offer web channels, resources, and collaboration in designing a project.

We now offer a monthly channel through which you can ask our 4000 who among them might want to work, communicate with you on a project. These connections provide a way for those working in some one field to find each other, and consider working together.

We don't promise to send every message, but we will try to do so. (Send us up to four lines.)

Forming many small groups to work together is clearly a next development we need. In most cases this is just now developing.

3. CONTACTING NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS

In every field there are national organizations to which local organizations belong. Our people tend not to communicate with these organizations and do not present their innovation there. At most they tell the Focusing Institute about it. As lone individuals they do not have the channels, the energy, and the confidence to make contact with national organizations that would want to hear about an innovation. Conversely, they would hear of the latest developments in that field.

In many fields we have major Focusing contributions and new books (here and in other countries). Some of those we know are listed on our web page. But our diverse contributions in the same field have not been connected. There is also as yet, no way to call national attention to these contributions. Major results could be achieved with a little coordination.

We have a great deal of serious quantitative research (see our web page: www.focusing.org) and do not need more to show the effectiveness of Focusing. We have a uniquely developed quantitative methodology for measuring first person processes by third person observational indices. What is lacking is attention to the research results by the relevant agencies in the various fields.

If some focusers in a field will work in a group, they will also become able to contact the national organizations.

4. OUR NEIGHBORS

There are now a great many organizations featuring processes that further develop human beings in various ways. I call these organizations "our neighbors." What they teach would be done more effectively in a Focusing way.

But we also need what they teach. We need to develop our bodies, our somatic energy network, our action skills, our interpersonal relations, our ways of handling conflict, how we are being in this amazing universe, to name just a few of the many human dimensions some of which we lack.

Without the other dimensions, Focusing can become a pitfall. The process is so powerful and does so much that one can easily believe it can do everything. I have argued for thirty years, "Look, it can't do everything. It can't open cans. You need a can opener." Focusing doesn't develop action skills. If you have those already, Focusing will vastly improve them, but it can't do that if you don't easily take action. If you know about energy, Focusing will guide it in an irreplaceable way, but Focusing can't do that if you don't know about energy. And so on!

The best way to contact our neighbors is with an interest in what *they* teach. Each group works hard to teach their discovery — and avoids being swamped by everything else that is being taught. So they don't want to hear from us. But if some of us want to *learn from them*, they will take time to work with us.

When we know more than one method, then what we know doesn't remain separate. Anything one knows modifies how one does everything else. If we consider a method experientially, the organism doesn't drop what it already knows. It takes only new recognitions. We develop a more effective version of every method we use. And yes, Focusing does make for an especially more effective version of every other method, because of where Focusing reaches in people.

As an individual, one cannot easily teach Focusing to one's own organization. If there is a sub-group who knows both methods, that group can make itself known to the others, and can teach their more effective version to those who want to see, learn, understand it. That would be a way to bring Focusing to our neighbors.

But there are already many Focusing people in these organizations. The problem is that they don't know each other as focusers. We always "wear the hat" that is appropriate to the place we are in. So you might have to ask our 4000 people data base to find the other focusers in an organization to which you already belong. But that can be done.

There is an enormously exciting development of the human being happening in the world. We can provide a deeper level at its very center, but only if we get together with our neighbors.

Currently each discovery is separate and isolated. The development is not yet conscious of itself. The world will change when we all become aware of ourselves as a new social development, like the towns that developed during the middle ages and brought the modern world.

5. OUR COLLABORATIVE MODEL

The collaboration:

We have an effective model of collaboration with other agencies. We provide Focusing Training for some of their staff. The project is carried out by that agency.

Each field has its own culture and known ways. The work need never be attempted by people who are unfamiliar with a setting. The Focusing Institute by itself cannot develop specialized teachers for schools, trauma workers in foreign countries, medical counselors, nurses, or people knowledgeable about business. The specialized trainings are created when we teach Focusing to some staff members of an organization in that field. They know the field in which they work. They are experienced in that setting. And, they are not lone individuals but staff members of an organization in that field — and now they are also Focusing trainers.

For example, our Afghanistan project is a collaboration with the American Friends Service. Some portions of the project were funded by UNIFEM. Dr. Omidian, the head of the team, is a staff member of AFSC who was trained in Focusing by our Ann Weiser and Nina Joy Lawrence. Now she is jointly a Focusing Trainer and the field representative for the Quakers. She is a medical anthropologist. AFSC provides the physical space, a salary for Dr. Omidian, and contacts.

Our team trains indigenous people — aid workers, student interns — who in turn teach Focusing in the villages. To date, some thousands of Afghans have learned, and in turn are teaching Focusing. Some of those particularly good at teaching Focusing are now Certified Focusing Trainers and participate in an International community of other Focusing Trainers. A similar project is going on in El Salvador.

Two members of the Afghanistan training team presented at an international conference in Jordan, and have now been invited to design programs in Pakistan, Indonesia, Rwanda, Lebanon, Gaza Strip, and Northern Iraq. Now we will look for funding to build on these promising possibilities.

A team of our trainers has been coming to Romania and Hungary for many years. They teach psychologists, care givers in orphanages, and others. The head of the team, Marta Stapert, from the Netherlands, has been awarded the Knight's Cross of Merit by the President of Hungary, and was specifically lauded for "not just coming in and leaving, but staying with the program to really train Hungarians so that the team is no longer needed." Again a number of gifted Hungarian Focusing teachers have been certified by the Focusing Institute and participate in the International community of Focusing teachers.

In this collaborative model we contribute just what **only** we can do: a) focusing training, b) designing the projects, c) providing resource and training materials, and d) helping projects stay on course.

Our functions:

- a) We have hundreds of Certified Trainers all over the world. Our Focusing Training can also include the partnership process and TAE for articulating and innovative thinking.
- b) The project design aims at integrating Focusing into the most advanced work in a field. We regularly find that this involves working with characteristic detail of that field on a level of great specificity.
- c) Of course we have a great deal of Focusing material. In some fields we have also accumulated applications that a person working in that field would profit from seeing.
- d) Maintaining continuous contact between the individuals and with us, as well as with the other agency, is not easy as long as working together is not a habitual mode.

Eventually a project group would have its own director.

Funding for individual projects:

Once a pilot project succeeds, funding can be applied for jointly, by the Focusing Institute and the collaborating agency. We need not convince a funding source on the basis of our voice alone. The joint approach should make funding for individual projects more likely.

Project design and redesign:

We design the project together with people from the given field. This is a sensitive process that takes time. We keep close tabs on the project, provide resources, and meet difficulties together. If a first pilot project fails, we and those who carried it out redesign it together.

Each of our projects is a model. If it fails in the pilot stage, we redesign it, but if it is successful at that stage then the design and results can be widely distributed and adopted. The projects we design have the effect of centrally recreating how the main process in that field is understood and done.

In each case the “central” spot is how to reach “there” in a person where the desired result can actually happen. Although the philosophy and basic training are the same across fields, each project has to be a collaborative product between us and people in the field. The result will be a precise new Focusing-identified process in that field.

Returning to my opening theme, why can so many different activities be done in new more effective ways with Focusing? I hope many people will articulate this. I think it is because we don't have to stay with separate items, give them artificial connections, then try to impose the result on ourselves. The implicit, murky at first, soon opens into so much more, all already interrelated from underneath, genuinely — even embarrassingly real. The implicit ranges down into the universe where life flows up, and moves forward into little steps of “Oh...” and “Hmm...” which have the person's unique intricacy and flavor. The steps come from directly sensing the edge of what is right there but implicit.

Please don't spend years under the impression that Focusing is all one needs. We need to learn many methods for developing ourselves along many dimensions. Instructions for these methods succeed when we carry them out at that edge, “there.” Then we soon have new specifications to contribute to that method.

The cultures seem to know nothing about the unique person and this level of sensing into any large or small thing. But now a world is forming in which so much of the human person will no longer be left unseen, in which we treat each other and ourselves so much better because we feel-understand the implicit sense we make, and we will be understood when we undertake things from there.

This isn't something one person can state. If you feel something of this sort, please work to think and say it more and more.

Thank you.

POSSIBLE PROJECTS

Just a few. Vastly more is being done than I could ever keep track of, and that makes me very happy. I can't possibly mention all the promising work that is going on. (See www.focusing.org.) These are just samples. We assume you will do in your own way precisely what you find most valuable.

A great range of promising projects are begging to be carried further. They would almost certainly be funded individually, once they are more developed.

VARIOUS SERVICES FOR USE BY ANY ORGANIZATION

Authentic entry:

Many "Changes Groups" have continued for years, but only in a few countries have they been used as a model. We know how to improve any kind of meeting by providing Focusing instructions.

Break-out groups service:

Providing a structured hour for breaking into small groups for Focusing and Listening.

INSTITUTIONS WHERE FOCUSING COULD BE BUILT IN

Churches

Hospitals

Jails

Schools

... many others

APPLICATIONS TO SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Adolescents:

We observe (although we have no research, yet) that Focusing can often be immediately used by populations generally considered to be difficult (and also not very verbal). This includes inner city children.

No lengthy instructions are required for them, just point at the chest and stomach and ask, "What comes for you in here when you say that?"

Elderly:

A method combining Focusing and Caring Touch has worked well in old age homes. We have a training manual for aides. There is a research finding that Focusing increases longevity.

Alcoholics (AA):

Many individuals report that several of the 12 steps are enhanced with Focusing. Some have integrated Focusing into the specific 12 steps.

“Borderline”:

So-called “borderline” patients have been “difficult” to work with, but we find that many of them can immediately use Focusing and Listening. This is the case also with inner city children and adolescents.

Cancer patients:

“Clearing a Space” with cancer patients significantly lowers depression (and may have significant medical effects).

Children:

In class the children pay better attention when they have a clear sensorium gotten from Clearing A Space. That includes the “Focusing Attitude,” being friendly with one’s feelings about each problem. One child said, “I wrapped my problem in a blanket.” Some teachers use Clearing A Space to start the class. The kids look forward to it. It may improve grades and reduce disruptive behavior. (See The Children’s Corner on the web page, which lists three international conferences, books, and articles.)

Dialogue groups:

Bohm’s “Dialogue” groups (and others) tell people to consult their “kinaesthetic” sense before speaking, so that discussions will not stay on the surface. But it has not been known what this really means or how to reach “there.” The head of one such group tells me, “They just stay in their heads.”

Doctors:

A recent book by Barry Bub presents Focusing and Listening for use by physicians for themselves.

Hospices:

For many years, Focusing and Listening have been very helpful to the dying.

Infants:

Zack Boukydis has articles and films dealing with this area.

Trauma:

A network of aboriginal people in Canada for victims of early abuse.

APPLICATIONS TO VARIOUS FIELDS

Art:

An architect in Austria writes: “Today art is individualists but people don’t know what a human individual is. To design a building they take little motifs from other buildings and combine them. I ask students to get a felt sense of one of their favorite buildings, then design a totally new building from that felt sense.”

Bodywork:

Better results have been observed when people do Focusing *inside* during the hands-on work on the *outside*. Alternatively, some workers have found that after a pause for Focusing, the body work goes deeper. (We have no research on this as yet.) Focusing has been integrated into a number of methods. (A group and several individuals, relating to the Alexander Technique, Hakomi, and many others; two international conferences).

Business:

Focusing has been employed for creativity, decision-making, more productive meetings, better workplace relations, discovering new possibilities.

Dialogue:

Several “dialogue” movements emphasize “tapping into tacit knowledge” and “kinesthetic sensing” before speaking, so that meetings can consist of more than surface arguments. The originator of one of these says, “but most people stay in their heads.” We have specific instructions for what is intended.

Dreams:

See “Let Your Body Interpret Your Dreams” on our web page. Also dream groups.

Energy work:

The relation between Focusing and various energy procedures is currently being explored by a number of people.

Community and psychosocial work:

Our Afghanistan project, now also in Pakistan and El Salvador.

Medicine:

Focusing helps reach psychosomatic effects in a person and the place where holistic healing can happen. Among many research findings, Focusing improves the immune system.

In Europe some HMO’s provide Focusing training as prevention. It costs little and saves them a lot of money and time.

Our pattern of Focusing partnerships is also promising in this regard.

Medical schools are widely reexamining their training to relieve the terrible pressure, but the “Clearing a Space” way of relieving it isn’t yet known there.

Meditation:

We have a long line of successive writings showing that Focusing deepens meditation and prevents various unintended pitfalls of meditation.

Psychotherapy:

Referrals to Focusing-Oriented therapists. Gendlin, E., *Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapy*, Chapter 11 deals with integrating the different avenues of therapy.

Reproductive rights:

Enabling women to articulate their voice in this field

Spirituality:

Buddhist, Catholic Biospirituality, Jewish Renewal, Quakers, Sufis

Sports:

A major recent book on “psychological skills” in sports tells players to “leave your problems in the locker room.” It is known that this idea helps, but no specific instructions for how to actually do it are provided. We have them. There is a great demand, but it is not yet well known that specific and tested training for this exists.

Stress reduction:

The first step in Focusing, “Clearing a Space” (or “making a space”) sorts, one by one, the problems the body is carrying (each time sensing whether something has released in the body, and what to do if it has not.) This process has superior results when added to the usual stress reduction methods.

Thinking:

TAE “Thinking at the Edge”: Specific steps for articulating what cannot currently be said in the existing public language. A little-known use of language directly from Focusing comes with new phrases that can say (the meaning) differently. Sometimes these phrases can also become precise, logically connected new theoretical concepts.

Writing:

See Sondra Perl’s book *Felt Sense: Writing with the Body*, with precise instructions and a CD.