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**Title:** Focusing on Poems to Change Your Life and Your Clinical Practice

**Format:** Experiential practice with Focusing on poems and a discussion of integrating poetry with Focusing oriented psychotherapy

**Equipment:** None. The instructor will provide poems to be Focused on during the workshop.

**Description:** Poetry with its richly layered language invites Focusing. As Robert Frost writes, *Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found its words.* Through accessible poems, we will practice Focusing's distinctive process that invites gentle awareness of what echoes inside. We will share poems with intention to listen and respond with our body-self. We will consider how a poem can invite clients to recognize their felt sense as a compass for their unfolding life path. We will discuss how poetry can deepen Focusing-oriented psychotherapy. Poems chosen include those by Mary Oliver, Wendell Berry, Pablo Neruda, and David Whyte. No prior reading of poetry is necessary. The instructor will provide poems; we will provide each other interactive Focusing and rich discussion.

**Summary:** Poetry with its vivid imagery, metaphors, and concise language offers clients an accessible avenue to recognize their felt sense. Practice listening to a poem as a bridge to the body-self and its forward momentum. Consider ways poetry may enhance Focusing-oriented psychotherapy. Experience how poetry deepens connection with one's inner life and the interaction with another.

**Learning objectives:** Attendees will be able to:

1. Describe specific ways a poem can be integrated within Focusing Oriented psychotherapy. Attendees will discuss how the heart of a poem can be a bridge toward effective clinical treatment focused on the heart of a clients' concerns.
2. Apply Focusing invitations after reading a relevant poem that guide clients to access underlying feelings, thoughts, and behavioral patterns about a core therapeutic issue..

3. Explain how integrating a poem into clinical work can be a catalyst for a clients' forward shift and behavioral change.

**Citations:**

Holmes, Jeremy (2008). Mentalisation and metaphor in poetry and psychotherapy *Advances in Psychiatric Treatment*, Apr 2008, 14 (3) 167-171; DOI: 10.1192/apt.bp.107.005025

Mazza, Nicholas (2016). *Poetry Therapy: Theory and Practice (2nd ed.)* New York: Routledge.

Rosen, Kim (2009) *Saved by a Poem: The Transformative Power of Words*, Hay House, Inc.

**Bio:** Sharon Heermance, PhD is a psychologist with a private practice in Arlington, MA. She has studied Focusing with Joan Klagsbrun, PhD and integrates this into her clinical practice. Higher education includes a doctorate in counseling psychology from Boston College and a Master of Arts in Teaching from Brown University. She has led community education workshops in Massachusetts that integrate poetry with mindfulness and Focusing.

**Continuing Education**

If attended in its entirety, this course qualifies for:



The International Focusing Institute is approved by the **American Psychological Association** to sponsor continuing education for psychologists. **CE Hours/Credits 1.75**. The International Focusing Institute maintains responsibility for this program and its content.

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