



Presencing

JACK BLACKBURN'S NEWSLETTER

Focusing and Presencing – Part II

Presencing Exercises

Presencing While Listening to Another Person

"Then, [at those times] whatever I do seems to be full of healing, then simply my presence is releasing and helpful... When I can relax and be close to the transcendent core of me... at these moments... it seems that my inner spirit has reached out and touched the inner spirit of the other. Carl Rogers, "Client-Centered, Person-Centered, Approach to Therapy" 1986

Presencing while listening to another person: Perhaps the most difficult time to remain present inside is when you're having a conversation with another person. Especially if it is a work associate, a spouse, or a person with whom you have had past disagreements. It is usually important to practice presencing on your own many times so that your controlling, thinking mind does not try to place its agenda into the conversation.

There are some ways you can learn to presence while you are in the midst of the conversation. The first is to check into your body and notice the sensations you are feeling right now. You will find that as you feel into different parts of your own body you will notice more of the facial expressions and other non-verbal body signals of the other person.

Ask yourself "Now, am I really listening to this person or am I listening to myself?" If you find that you have been listening mainly to yourself, kindly ask the other person to repeat what he/she has been saying. Do not interrupt the person or give other non-verbal cues of boredom or impatience like looking at your watch or staring off at a distance. When the other person seems to be finished with what he/she is saying, pause in presence before responding. Listen into the silence of no-words until you are sure that the other person is through. Get used to listening to the silence; it is a sign of presence. It will become more and more comfortable.

Ask a clarifying question if you are still not sure of what he/she has said like: "Did you say...or did I get it wrong." Let your own words come from the felt sense in your body. You will not be disappointed. Regard all conversations as opportunities to grow in presence. That growth and the gifts it brings to you and the world are far more important than the content of any conversation. You are teaching yourself to presence another person by truly listening. You will find yourself relaxing by letting go of the tension of interacting while listening.

Why Focusing and presence?

Our bodies do our living... Our bodies don't lurk in isolation behind the five peepholes of perception... we act from the bodily sense of each situation. Without the bodily sense of the situation we would not know where we are, or what we are doing. Eugene Gendlin, Man and World 1992

Focusing: In a similar approach to body-centered presencing. Psychologist and philosopher, Eugene Gendlin discovered that one way to help clients grow beyond their psychological patterns is to teach them to listen to their own internal environment. He named the effects of this listening *felt sense*. He found that when clients could listen to their felt sense, responses would surface that seemed to be coming from a deeper place than the usual mental and emotional responses. When the client was assisted in monitoring and being curious about

usual mental and emotional responses. When the client was assisted in monitoring and being curious about their felt sense, this internal listening would produce therapeutic breakthroughs. By listening, by learning to observe their body's datum dispassionately, clients would become aware that the body is giving them access to insights and new understandings.

Self-Presencing, Self-Focusing: I would argue that Focusing is one form of presencing. One of the trickiest areas of Focusing and presencing, but one of the most helpful to practice, is self-presencing or self-focusing. It is so easy to become distracted when we are witnessing for ourself! There is so much more that we can access inside than personal history and private thoughts. When we become absorbed with self-presencing, we establish this continuous moment as an entry point - in space and time that connects us with all of creation. Carl Jung described our unconscious mind as a direct connection to universal mind! Self-presencing is not the same as self-centeredness. In self-centeredness we are absorbed in our usual forms of thinking and patterns of bodily reaction; they may include judgments and self-doubt, they may include fantasies and random thoughts. They often include guilt, shame and fear.

Going Deeper: Presencing has a way of addressing these patterns and moving us into other levels of understanding. We can practice something that allows us to remain present no matter what is occurring in the mind. If we establish presence as a constant, we shift our center of awareness deeper, as it were. We notice that parallel phenomena arise even while habitual patterns of mind are playing themselves out. The body, which only exists in the present moment, becomes our touchstone. With self-presencing we learn to be good listeners and observers of ourselves. And we can listen to others without judging or modifying what we are hearing.

Body-Centered: There are always many systemic phenomena occurring inside the body. We can learn to observe the sensations through the body's internal signal system. We can also keep track of the sensations that accompany our thoughts and perceptions. We learn to monitor subjective experiences, while recording them objectively. We can observe our own internal environment with curiosity, as if we were observing a new species of animal and taking notes. These observations require a discipline of attention that is sharpened with practice. This discipline brings us closer and closer to a continuous state of presence.

In-Forming: Internal sensory phenomena produced by the body, like the feeling of breathing, accompany everything that occurs in the moment, whether it be an outside smell, sound, contact, or an internal event like: a taste, an image or a thought, an emotion; or an internal state like sleepiness, refreshment, resistance, ingestion, digestion, or release. When we train ourselves to pay attention to this multidimensional internal environment, we start to become aware that presence is another state of being with its own sensory phenomena. We start to become aware that our internal environment is *in-forming* us and augmenting all experience.

Felt-Sense: The *felt sense* functions as an in-the-moment open doorway to self-truth. One becomes aware that the body is continuously communicating in a pure language of feeling and sensation. Like spoken language, this sensory language of the body has a varied vocabulary, including feelings, sounds, reflexes, colors, smells, words, and images. As this language becomes more conscious and is articulated in words, we start to realize that this body-centered communication is leading us away from our habitual thought patterns and bodily tensions.

Felt-Shifts: Most importantly, when there is an undoing or releasing of our habitual thoughts and reactive patterns, this loosening can be felt as a parasympathetic shift towards comfort in the body: warmth, relaxation, softening and release of holding. And a practitioner who is using touch can feel these shifts as they are happening in a client's body. Gendlin named these bodily experiences: *felt shifts*, a bodily accompaniment that confirms the rightness of a change of mind or an insight. Like learning a new language, we achieve competency in trusting our felt-sense and felt-shifts with practice, especially self-practice.

Presence and Focusing: My argument in these pages is that what makes Focusing work is the achievement of presence as a state of awareness by the one who is focusing. When a therapist teaches a client how to Focus, whether the therapy be mental, emotional, physical or spiritual, the process opens the client up to a deeper and very powerful source of self-understanding and internal guidance. This source, which Gendlin names the

implicit, I choose to compare to the *deep self, original mind, or Being*. Because the body's internal environment plays such a key role in this process, and felt-sense in the body only occurs in the present moment, all body-centered modalities offer a perfect opportunity to help open this level of body-mind or somatic awareness for the client. I believe that it is this level of awareness that results in true client-centered healing.

Bringing it all together -The Bodywork Focusing Group (BFG)

Birth of BFG: In beautiful Puntarenas, Costa Rica in 2004 a group of body oriented practitioners gathered at the International Focusing Conference. We started with pre-conference meetings and then continued to meet each day over meals and during breaks. In the beautiful setting of breaking waves, fresh sea breezes, iguanas, tropical flowers and coconut trees, we practiced allowing new truths to emerge through bodywork, movement, dyad touch with focusing, and group focusing. We came from Costa Rica, Argentina, Panama, Switzerland, Japan, Italy, United States, England and Belgium. There were equal numbers of men and women, and our ages spanned from 30 to 88 years old. All were experienced Focusers. There seemed to be a strong sense inside each person that something new was being birthed. We even sensed into possible future presentations and conference agendas as ways of bringing our experiences to others.



Body: *All of these continents and professions have some things in common: the dweller embodied, the body as interface between dweller and outside world, the mind of the dweller as projector and experienter, the body as outward expresser of dweller, the body as receiver of the outer world and the body as home of the dweller's spirit.*

Non-Directive Exploration: There are two basic phenomena that united us: a renewed curiosity about how professional touch and movement therapy affect the Focusing process and visa versa. Secondly what is the relationship between the body and Focusing? This may seem trite to persons who do not touch professionally but it is a very significant consideration for those of us who do on a daily basis. What is central here is a reintegration of body awareness techniques with the very powerful non-directive principles of Focusing. We could feel certain truths arising from our group processes that may have large implications for how Focusing is understood, practiced, and taught.

Intrinsic Emerging: All professional Focusers have learned gentle, non-intrusive ways of accompanying their clients using verbal therapy in support of their clients' process. While the approaches may vary considerably, all are agreed that at the core lies a belief, proven over and over again, in an intrinsic wholeness that wants to emerge in the client, whether that process brings emotional, psychological, spiritual, physical or some combination of material to the surface – that intrinsic wholeness is the real architect of the process.

Soma: Focusing grew primarily out of the realm of psychology. Psychology has always maintained a connection with medicine. There can be a tendency within the conceptualization of Focusing to view the body as a useful tool for thoughts, experience, and feelings in a very pure, untainted way. To incorporate fully the true lessons of bodily mediated experience, we must be fully present with that is infused with conscious awareness. The body-centered approach is a tactile understanding the epiphenomenal connection between mind and body with the Intrinsic!



the 2004 conference in Costa Rica, the participants in the Bodywork Focusing Group decided that we would need to hold our own international conference. We decided that 2007 would give us time to keep developing our approach on our own and with one another and present our findings at the international Focusing conferences. Next year will be the time for the get-together. An Italian member of the group suggested that we hold our conference on the Island of Ischia in the Bay of Naples. The Romans used the island as a vacation spot and it is covered with hot springs. Looking east from Ischia one can see Mount Vesuvius, Pompeii and Herculaneum. There seemed to be so much energy and insights surfacing that we knew that we needed a place and a time to meet collectively with body center-ed professionals. We felt that it was important to open a forum for exploring how focusing affects body therapies and visa versa. Below you will find a formal invitation to join us on Ischia: May 14-17, 2007

Meeting at the Edge Focusing in the Body-Centered Professions
A 3-Day Residential Workshop
Ischia, Italy May 14-17, 2006
Cost \$425 US
Register at: [click here](#)
Email us at: [click here](#)

Visiting Ischia: Two members of our planning group recently visited Ischia in order to check out the Villa Spadara where we are holding the workshop. These are pictures of the resort and the island they took while they were there. As you can tell from the price of the workshop, the resort is quite inexpensive. The price also includes all meals. We wanted a place that was affordable and comfortable so that everyone can focus on the sharing and exploring. There will be tables for giving and receiving bodywork, lots of room for yoga and movement, and lots of spaces for private Focusing sessions. We promise to set up the schedule so that there is time for these activities as well as hot springs and beach. Below I have copied some of the details about getting there etc.



Finances: The \$425 cost includes the workshop as well as room and board for three nights, starting with dinner on the 14th of May and ending with lunch on the 17th. Rooms are double occupancy. The deadline for registration is December 1, 2006 and includes a non-refund-able deposit of \$120. Any remaining balance is due by January 31, 2007. The workshop is limited to 50 participants.



Travel: Ischia can be reached from two international airports: Naples and Rome. From Naples you will take a bus to the port and a ferry to the island. From Rome you can take a train to Naples (about two hours) and then to the ferry.

Organizing Board: Was formed at the Focusing International Conference in Costa Rica and grew out of the Bodywork Movement and Focusing Interest Group. Board members are from varied disciplines: Feldenkrais, Shiatsu, Trager, Reiki, Acupuncture, Esalin Massage, yoga, and dance improvisation. Members: Jack Blackburn (US); Francisca Castaldi (US/Italy); Claudia Conza (Switzerland); Nicoletta Corsetti (Italy); Mathias Dekeyser (Belgium); Ruth Hirsch (US/Israel); Larry Hurst (US/UK); Stephen

Scholle (US).

For information or to register: [click here](#)

Email us with questions: [click here](#)

OFFICIAL INVITATION: Body-centered practices and the self-discovery process known as *Focusing* have a special resonance for reaching deeply into personal process. This workshop is intended for professionals interested in integrating *Focusing* with our own body-centered therapies.

FOR WHOM: This workshop is geared to teachers and practitioners in the fields of body-work, somatic therapy, yoga, movement therapy and dance, acupuncture, and related disciplines, who also have a basic knowledge of *Focusing*.

Those seeking instruction in Focusing can find a focusing trainer or class: [click here](#)

Instruction is also available via telephone.

WHY THIS EVENT: *Focusing* is a body-anchored practice that offers a deepening connection with interior experience. It has implications for many fields as it encourages integration between sensations, feeling states and language. Many body-centered practitioners aren't trained to pay attention to these subtle relationships when they address physical complaints. Yet these same practitioners have the potential to profoundly enhance clients' healing process when they encourage in them a quiet inner listening. This kind of listening will be encouraged as we share modalities together in groups and as receivers and givers in partnered explorations. From that shared basis we can explore the rich differences as well as commonalities in our approaches. *Focusing* will not only be one more practice added to our repertory, but a medium through which we can communicate and learn from each other.

WHERE: We will lodge at the Villa Spadara, which we will have all to ourselves, including its garden and lemon-orchard, a beautiful terrace, and a pool with hot thermal water. The Villa is located on the island of Ischia, with its hot springs, gorgeous seacoast and ancient history. It is close to several tourist destinations: the island of Capri, the picturesque Amalfi coast, and the ancient sites of Pompeii and Herculaneum.

WORKSHOP STRUCTURE: We are inviting participants to actively engage us all in your work, through experiential demonstrations, hands-on interchanges and discussions. In order to accomplish this inclusively and organically we will gather each morning as a group to develop a consensus agenda for a block of time. Within that agenda we can organize into smaller interest areas if so decided. We will come together again at a later point in the day to share what we've learned and determine where to go next.

MEETING AT THE EDGE REGISTRATION FORM

Make checks out to: The Focusing Institute, 34 East Lane, Spring Valley, NY 10977, USA

NAME _____

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