



Introduction to Experiential Listening & Focusing ~ May 22nd 2018

Tom Binns

Hello everyone . . .

we will have 4 hours working together in Coatbridge, which is certainly long enough to explore the basics of 'Experiential Focusing & Listening' and of 'Being in Contact'. Self & peer assessment happily generates bucket loads of internal activity so I doubt we will need to fish for very long before finding *something* to Focus on.

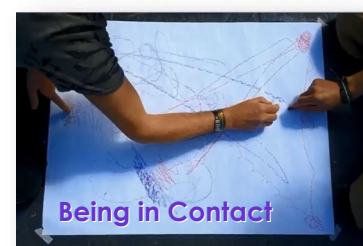
I will bring all the good stuff from training in Focusing, a background in Architecture, music & Sweat Lodge Ceremony as well as an interest in Neuroplasticity, Qi-kung, Feldenkrais, EFT and Mindfulness. I ask you to bring playfulness, curiosity & 2 objects that carry a strong sense of meaning for you, small enough to hold in your hand. *They need not be solid: images, music & poetry are fine.* We will likely be integrating therapeutic art making into the session so please wear clothes that let you move freely and will survive **a splash of colour !**

After initial Focusing training in Glasgow around 1999, I discovered how art making was being woven into 'Focusing with Children' in the Netherlands. I trained there intermittently from 2009-2015, learning their gentle, playful way of *Being in Contact* and you can watch a short video of one such exercise on my website homepage. In 2014 I fell into the role of running a piano project & put my therapeutic practice to bed for a while, exploring how to bring a wider '*permission to play*' to the fabric of the city as a whole. So far so good.

By clicking the Persona logo on the lower right hand corner of the 'About LSP' page on my website you will find links to MP3, PDF & Video files I have uploaded for you. I trust you will enjoy listening to the voices of Gene Gendlin, D. Bohm & Krishnamurti and I look forward to meeting you all soon.

Tom

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Thomas Binns'.



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F O C U S I N G

An introduction to **Experiential Listening & Focusing**

flow

rightness

the landscape

introduction ~ E.Gendlin

the original six focusing steps

instructions for not following instructions

the whole process is more natural

the philosophy of the implicit

the six steps short form

being good enough

talking heads

fishing

3 questions

the Guesthouse ~ Rumi

doing *something*

affection

to a listener

F O C U S I N G

*‘ there is a way between voice and presence
where information flows ‘*

RUMI

We all have our way
of attending.

I aim to share all the good stuff
from the last 20 years learning about listening,
with less *do as I say* or *do as I do* and more ~ **do as you do**.

My aim is to be with you and keep you company
while you find your own way.

We are all standing on the shoulders of others.
Some have managed to capture the quality of attention
found at the heart of any listening skills practice.

I will add a few notes to their voices,
in recognition of kindness.

*‘ If you’ve nothing good to say, say nothing.
If you’re lost for words, be lost.
Leave me be, just be with me and there’ll no be any cost.
Maybe then, we’ll aye be keeping
the company of meaning.’*

T. Binns

F O C U S I N G

This day will draw on recent developments in sharing Focusing skills,
integrating art making into the practice of **Listening through the Body**.

We will explore:

our own way of *fishing inside*.

deepening our practice of listening.

the body as a reference point for this practice.

expanding our connection with ourselves as a whole.

how Mindfulness *and* Focusing support each other.

when the body disagrees with our words.

mapping our internal landscape.

a few specific moments:

when openings form naturally.

negotiating endings and good stopping places.

how helpful it can be to get it wrong.

R i g h t n e s s

and the difference between

listening *to* somebody ~ listening *for* somebody

or

listening *with* somebody.

there will be experiential exercises & space to explore
how listening *through* the body ~ supports a state of energetic *flow*.
If we can gather our attention to simply **pause . . .** in the midst of life,
then, a little **kindness**, natural **curiosity** and sincere **playfulness**
can help us keep company with whatever we may notice
while simply **being with** ourselves and each other.

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F O C U S I N G

How can we support a process of growth & integration without trying to fix, save or change ourselves and others ? That question will never lose its relevance in the person centred tradition & remains alive throughout our therapeutic life, inviting us to ask it freshly, moment to moment, while resisting the urge for quick answers. So, what can we do to affect substantial change and how to best go about it ? We can act, engaging in open '*dialogue*' without agenda . . . and we can listen.

The map is not the territory.

Any words about listening fall woefully short of an accurate representation of our *bodily felt experience* of listening. Attending freshly, gently, to *the formation of our felt senses* and to 'what is' here, now ~ requires *listening with more than our ears*. It is necessary to carry a clear understanding that any words describing Focusing, or any concept or idea formed in your mind about it, are certainly not 'it' at all. Focusing is practised by sensing freshly, through the body, and after only a year since his death, it seems more appropriate to share how Gene describes Focusing rather than offer too much of how I have made it my own. (*a necessary process for any Focusing teacher*) Through his words and voice I am curious to hear . . .

- What is your sense of the man ?
 - Where do you feel any *resistance* to the method ?
- and*
- When do you blend 'experiential listening' into your life & work ?
 - How do you carry the 'situation' of your final assessment . . . *as a whole* ?

We will expand our connection with *the non-verbal world* and explore how we negotiate transitions & endings in the context of your work on the Persona course.

**Please follow your innate sense of 'rightness' at all times
and take a 'time out' whenever you need one.**

The 'experiential' world rests just out of reach of our thinking mind's limited ability to perceive & create everyday life experience and is, at least a little, mysterious. It is in this subjective landscape, before words are fully formed, where Gendlin built his *Philosophy of the Implicit, Thinking at the Edge, A Process Model and Experiential Focusing & Listening* and it is in this vague, unclear place, sensed through the body, that we find a starting place for . . . *Focusing*.



F O C U S I N G

The next 5 pages are from the Focusing Institute website, where you will find more articles, perspectives, and variations on language for Focusing. (www.focusing.org/sixsteps.html)



You can also read more at the British Focusing Association website:
(<http://www.focusing.org.uk/>)

Eugene. T. Gendlin (1926 ~ 2017)

Introduction

Most people find it easier to learn focusing through individual instruction than through simply reading about it. The actual process of focusing, experienced from the inside, is fluid and open, allowing great room for individual differences and ways of working. Yet to introduce the concepts & flavour of the technique, some structure can be useful.

We offer one approach here: six steps. Although these steps may provide a window into focusing, it is important to remember that they are not THE six steps. Focusing has no rigid, fixed agenda for the inner world; many focusing sessions bear little resemblance to the mechanical process that we define here. Still, every Focusing Trainer is deeply familiar with these six steps, and uses them as needed throughout a focusing session. And many people have had success getting in touch with the heart of the process just by following these simple instructions. There are other ways of describing the focusing process. Indeed, *every Focusing Trainer has his or her own way of approaching it.* So, with the caveat that what follows is a simple scaffolding for you to use as long as it's useful and then to move beyond, we offer to you six steps, as a taste of the process.

What follows is a lightly edited excerpt from The Focusing Manual, chapter 4 of Focusing.

The inner act of focusing can be broken down into six main sub-acts or movements. As you gain more practice, you won't need to think of these as six separate parts of the process. To think of them as separate movements makes the process seem more mechanical than it is – or will be, for you, later. I have subdivided the process in this way because I've learned from years of experimenting that this is one of the effective ways to teach focusing to people who have never tried it before.

Think of this as only the basics. As you progress and learn more about focusing you will add to these basic instructions, clarify them and approach them from other angles. Eventually – perhaps not the first time you go through it – you will have the experience of something shifting inside.

On the next page are the focusing instructions in a brief form, manual style. If you want to try them out, do so easily, gently. If you find difficulty in one step or another, don't push too hard, just move on to the next one. You can always come back.

F O C U S I N G

Clearing a space

What I will ask you to do will be silent, just to yourself. Take a moment just to relax . . . All right, now, inside you, I would like you to pay attention inwardly, in your body, perhaps in your stomach or chest. Now see what comes *there* as you ask, "How is my life going? What is the main thing for me right now?" Sense within your body. Let the answers come slowly from this sensing. When some concern comes, DO NOT GO INSIDE IT. Stand back, say "Yes, that's there. I can feel that, there." Let there be a little space between you and that. Then ask what else you feel. Wait again, and sense. Usually there are several things.

Felt Sense

From among what came, select one personal problem to focus on. DO NOT GO INSIDE IT. Stand back from it. Of course, there are many parts to that one thing you are thinking about, too many to think of each one alone. But you can *feel* all of these things together. Pay attention there where you usually feel things, and in there you can get a sense of what *all of the problem* feels like. Let yourself feel the unclear sense of *all of that*.

Handle

What is the quality of this unclear felt sense? Let a word, a phrase, or an image come up from the felt sense itself. It might be a quality-word, like *tight, sticky, scary, stuck, heavy, jumpy* or a phrase, or an image. Stay with the quality of the felt sense till something fits it just right.

Resonating

Go back and forth between the felt sense and the word (phrase, or image). Check how they resonate with each other. See if there is a little bodily signal that lets you know there is a fit. To do it, you have to have the felt sense there again, as well as the word. Let the felt sense change, if it does, and also the word or picture, until they feel just right in capturing the quality of the felt sense.

Asking

Now ask: what is it, about this whole problem, that makes this quality (which you have just named or pictured)? Make sure the quality is sensed again, freshly, vividly (not just remembered from before). When it is here again, tap it, touch it, be with it, asking: "What makes the whole problem so _____?" Or you ask, "What is in *this* sense?"

If you get a quick answer without a shift in the felt sense, just let that kind of answer go by. Return your attention to your body and freshly find the felt sense again. Then ask it again. Be with the felt sense till something comes along with a shift, a slight "give" or release.

Receiving

Receive whatever comes with a shift in a friendly way. Stay with it a while, even if it is only a slight release. Whatever comes, this is only 1 shift; there will be others. You will probably continue after a little while, but stay here for a few moments.

IF DURING THESE INSTRUCTIONS SOMEWHERE YOU SPENT A WHILE SENSING AND TOUCHING AN UNCLEAR HOLISTIC BODY SENSE OF THIS PROBLEM . . . THEN YOU HAVE FOCUSED.

It doesn't matter if the body-shift came or not. It comes on its own. We don't control that.

F O C U S I N G

Instructions for not following instructions

Isn't it wrong to publish instructions for inward personal process?

One danger with a set of instructions is that people may use them to close off other ways. Anything human involves more than one method. Please notice, we don't say that this method is all you need or might find valuable. Had we said that, we hope you would have thought us stupid. Anything you learn here can go well with anything else you may find helpful. If there seems to be a contradiction, go easy. Let your own steps find the way to reconcile the contradiction. There are other reasons one may not like specifics, such as these steps. Instructions may seem to diminish mystery and openness, although that is not so. Also, written instructions cannot avoid misunderstandings. No formula fits every person. Anyway, one must find one's own path. These problems occur with all types of knowledge about humans.

Adopt a "split-level" approach to all instructions: On the one hand follow them exactly, so that you can discover the experiences to which they point. On the other, be sensitive to yourself & your own body. Assume that only sound expansive experiences are worth having. *The moment doing it feels wrong in your body, stop following the instruction, and back up slightly. Stay there with your attention until you can sense exactly what is going wrong.* These are very exact instructions for how not to follow instructions! And, of course, they apply to themselves, as well. In this way you will find your own body's steps, either through the instructions, or through what is wrong with them.

Focusing is always like that: You don't push on if it doesn't feel right, *but you don't run away either.* You go no further, but you back up only a little, so that *you stay until what is in the way becomes clear.*

Focusing is quite safe. It may not work but it is not negative. So, if you sense something that does not feel life-forwarding & sound in your body, sense what that is until it opens.

But isn't it the height of self-contradiction to give exact steps for how not to follow instructions?

Indeed. One often needs several attitudes at once.

In a society increasingly skilled at human processes, of course we share the specifics we learn. Shall we teach the specifics of driving a car and not the specifics of finding and opening the bodily felt sense? But, human processes give rise to more different specifics than can be logically consistent. Human nature is not fixed and not knowable in a single system. That is fortunate. No knowledge can push you out of the driver's seat of your life. Especially not our knowledge here, which is to be about finding *your own process!*

Therefore this knowledge, here, must arrange for itself to be superseded by you, as you sense for what feels sound, inside you. Instructions for not following instructions are the essence of focusing ~ one's own inwardly opening steps.

If you stop and sense what's wrong at any point, and if you wait there until that opens and reveals itself, you can make good use of all sorts of methods and instructions. You do any method better than its authors can arrange.

Gendlin, E.T. (1981). **The whole process is more natural than the divided pieces.** *The Focusing Folio*, 1(3), 18-23. (http://www.focusing.org/gendlin/docs/gol_2132.html)

"Now I wish to say that I am no longer interested in that kind of research question! For example: focusing. I do not wish to know when only focusing works and when it doesn't, or with which population, nor do I care whether it alone is more effective than another process-piece alone. The reason I don't want to know the answers to these questions is because I am more interested in how we can put focusing together with other effective process-pieces. I already know focusing alone is not enough for a human growth process. I don't need to find that out. Rather than knowing exactly with whom and when focusing alone works well, I want to know how to fashion a process that works better. Just focusing and nothing else doesn't work best for anyone. So, for example, a recent study showed that the two chair method worked best, focusing was next effective, and empathy alone least. That is what I didn't care to know. But the same study is also described by its author this way: "When I do the two-chair method I use focusing & empathy. So really the results show that all three worked most effectively, only two next well, and one alone least well." Now that is the kind of finding I care about and not just the finding!! I value that two-chair process that includes focusing and empathy!

You might think that such a process is a three-way eclectic pasting-together. I don't think it could have been, since it isn't possible to do it that way. One cannot be Carl Rogers and Fritz Perls alternatingly, the attitudes and manner ~ everything is different. If the study I refer to was possible at all, then it was along the lines I propose: a natural whole was achieved because the author knew all three modalities & therefore they became one in him, used naturally and as was needed. The three happen to be modes I also practice as one. Far from pasting three things together, I would say it is foolish to practice Gestalt in an ineffective way! Of course you want the person to focus in letting something well up from a deep level in the body. And why would anyone want to relate ineffectively to a person for whom something just now emerged. Of course one would respond empathically most of the time. Suppose the Gestaltist knows focusing - could we demand that the two-chair method be done without focusing - it would be asking for less effective Gestalt than this therapist would normally do. (That's why the above mentioned study was as it really was.

Could we ask a focusing therapist who knows the two-chair method not to use it when it seems just what is needed? If this were for research purposes, it would be dooming research never to test the most effective therapy one knows. Some procedures fit only sometimes, others concern every bit of any therapy. Focusing fits almost always, because any thought, image, feeling, interaction, or action-step can be used to lead to the implicitly sensed edge, and from that edge any of these kinds of human experience can arise. Every bit of therapy of any type involves interpersonal interaction. There has long been an attempt to abstract "the relationship" from what actually goes on, as if "the relationship" were some general attitude or abstractable factor. But that isn't so! "The relationship" is the interactional character of every bit of happening, it is the empathy of one's responses, it is the willingness to be corrected, it is the manner in which one works on behavioral steps, and it is implicitly happening in some specific way in everything the two people do. One cannot do therapy by just relating or just exuding an abstract attitude. One must do something every few moments and the interpersonal character of what one does needs to be specified. Did it make the patient passive, lectured, imposed upon, caught, put on the spot, or did it enable the patient to become expansive, active, forward-moving, challenging and making sense? Was the patient received just now, in this attempt to come forward?

These questions toward specifying interaction apply in every method, whether interaction is discussed in that method or not."

The Philosophy of the Implicit

(<http://www.lifeforward.org/id2.html>)

An Introduction to the Work of Gene Gendlin

Robert Parker, PhD

Beginnings

The Philosophy of the Implicit is a new way of thinking that reunites science & spirituality, carrying each forward in new & exciting ways. Although the core concepts are simple, they are difficult to explain, because the old ways of thinking are implicit in the words we use to describe the new thinking. Perhaps the best way to describe the philosophy is to describe its beginning, with the experience of a 12 year old boy who just had been placed in the first grade.

The boy was Gene Gendlin. His family had just moved from Austria to North America, the young boy needed to learn English fast. Although his new school did not have classes in English as a second language, they did have a first grade teacher who was supposed to be very good, and who might also have extra time to teach Gene the language of his new country. So at age 12, he entered a class of 6yr olds and began learning English.

One day, the teacher noticed that Gene was experiencing the world in German, and then translating into English. For example, he would see a "stuhl" and then say "chair". She taught him a simple lesson: that he didn't need to translate, that what he was looking at could be a "chair" right from the beginning. And when he tried to think in English, Gene became aware that he had always known what the thing was, independent of the words. In the place of "das stuhl" there was a familiar "feel" that he had taken for granted until then. He had always known what it was and how to use it, in a way that didn't depend on words. As Gendlin grew older, he noticed this implicit knowing more often, and he began to think more articulately about it. Thus a first grade teacher launched a 12-year-old boy onto a life-long study of the relationship between language, experiencing, and meaning.

The Implicit

The story of how a young boy learned English illustrates something very basic about the relationship between language and experiencing. Language is not a self-contained symbol system. Language functions in a larger context of living interaction with the world. Because this interaction is us, we "know" it in a very basic way; we "know" what we are doing and how things are going, without necessarily using words. This preverbal "knowing" is implicit in everything we do. We don't usually notice it, because we are busy doing other things; but if we look for it, this preverbal "knowing" can form as a kind of "feel" for what we are doing. (*continued*)

The key to this problem lies in the lesson Gendlin learned from his first grade teacher. There is an intricate experiencing, not only behind words like "chair" or "stuhl," but also behind concepts & conceptual systems. Models are just models; they are not reality, even when they work extremely well. Good models make everything seem very precise, but there is always a great deal more in experiencing that remains implicit. **It is easy to accept concepts as more real than experiencing; the history of science is filled with examples of smart people who ignored phenomena that didn't fit their preconceptions.** We can't afford to do this with the unit model any longer, because what the unit model leaves out is too important. We need a new way of thinking. We need to think about the full intricacy of life, including ourselves, in ways that are not reductionistic. But this is not easy. Because the intricacy of living is greater than concepts, any conceptual model would leave out some aspect of the intricacy of life. For this reason, we need more than just a new set of concepts. We need a new way of thinking that somehow includes what concepts leave out. **In other words, we need to think in a way that includes the Implicit. That alone would be hard enough; it's difficult to even think of implying as an entity. But as we think with the Implicit, we also need to keep the precision of the unit model, because vague concepts do not advance understanding.** There were good reasons to think this was impossible. It was always assumed that whatever doesn't fit our concepts is necessarily too vague or chaotic for conceptual analysis. For example, we use words like *emotion*, *intuition*, or *inspiration* to describe writing a poem or falling in love. No one has been able to conceptualize such experiences without being reductionistic, and because they couldn't be conceptualized, such experiences were considered off limits for systematic inquiry. But this is just one aspect of an even deeper problem. As we saw, it is the nature of living things that they imply a next step; so if we are going to think about living, we're going to have to think about implying. **But unlike love or poetry, implying isn't even a thing we can point to; it is a kind of movement toward something unspecified. Because implying is implicit, it appeared to be out of bounds for clear, explicit thinking. In short, it had always been assumed that precisely cut and defined entities are the basis for precise thinking. This assumption has been very costly,** because it has meant the most important aspects of human existence: values, purpose in life, love, spirituality, even living itself - were too vague and 'subjective' for precise thinking. **But the assumption turned out to be wrong.**

As a philosopher, Gendlin understood *kinds* of concepts in the same way that architects understand *kinds* of buildings. Knowing the strengths and limitations of different kinds of concepts, Gendlin designed a new way of thinking, new concepts, and a new model.

The Philosophy of the Implicit

Gendlin described his new way of thinking in **Experiencing & the Creation of Meaning** (Paperback, 1977). Among other things, he showed that concepts have a structure derived from implying, and that there is an orderly but more-than-logical relationship between concepts and the Implicit. This made it possible to develop a method for concepts to interact with the Implicit, so that concepts can retain and even increase their precision, while changing in a systematic way to include aspects of the Intricacy that had been left out.

Then, in **A Process Model**, Gendlin (1997) showed how this new method can be used, by creating an alternative to the unit model. *A Process Model* develops a single coherent set of concepts derived from the experience of living, instead of from mathematics. Radically different from the unit model, the *Process Model* develops concepts to think about life; the new concepts are very precise yet widely applicable, offering useful and researchable insights into problems such as: the evolution of life, the nature of language, incompatibility of relativity theory & quantum physics & the nature of spiritual experience. Like any seminal model, *A Process Model* invites a new kind of experiencing. In the words of one reader, "It is no exaggeration to say that my sense of who and what I am, and what the universe is, has radically changed in a beautiful and exciting way."

But Gendlin believes that his most important contribution is not the concepts themselves, but how they were derived. He advises readers not to accept *A Process Model* as truth. He intends this book as a demonstration of his new method of thinking, and he predicts that better models will be developed in the future.

Because Gendlin's method and the resulting concepts really are new, Western readers find them difficult to grasp (although it is interesting that Gendlin has a large following in Japan, where his method and concepts seem to be more in tune with the traditional culture and philosophy. Gendlin asks us to make a shift comparable to the shift from the medieval to the scientific world-view (c.f. Kuhn, 1970). But although it is hard work, making the shift is enormously rewarding because it enables us to think in new and productive ways about science, spirituality, and life. More importantly, it enables us to use concepts in a new way. We don't have to think with just one model, and be trapped by its limitations. Because there is an orderly relationship between concepts and the Implicit, we can use concepts in a precise and systematic way that includes the Implicit. By including the Implicit, we can use different models, taking what is useful in each, without being bound by its limitations. As Gendlin learned when he was 12, everything doesn't have to be just a "stuhl" or just a "chair." We don't have to translate anymore.

Practical Applications

Gendlin has published over 240 professional articles and books. His philosophy cannot be described easily, but some of its applications can.

1: Focusing is a teachable procedure that anyone can use to access the deeper, implicit knowing that comes with having lived with a problem or situation. Originally intended to help clients do better in psychotherapy, it is now used by thousands of non-therapists around the world.

2: Spirituality: Gendlin invites us to explore beyond our usual concepts, whether they be concepts of religious belief or of atheism. He wants to evoke in his readers the actual basis for spiritual experience, the Implicit itself. We may use spiritual language here if we want, but it isn't necessary. We point to the experience with whatever words work best.

Focusing, in particular, has helped many people discover or deepen a spiritual dimension in their lives. By its nature, Focusing invites people to live their spirituality in very immediate and practical ways; for example, as spiritual awareness deepens, words and rituals that had seemed completely empty for many years, suddenly open up into whole new worlds of meaning.

Focusing is being used in a number of religious traditions, including: [Judaism](#), [Christianity](#), [Buddhism](#), [Zen Buddhism](#) & [Islam](#). For example, Focusing is now being used in [Pakistan](#) and [Afghanistan](#) to help aid workers and trauma survivors; practitioners find that it integrates beautifully with their practice of [Islam](#). Additional information is available on the Focusing Institute's [Spirituality web page](#).

3: Thinking at the Edge (TAE) is a way of developing implicit knowing into an articulate theory. For example, a professional might have an inchoate felt sense about a technical problem. Using TAE, one can articulate this implicit knowledge and use it to generate explicit concepts, or even a formal theory, that others can use. TAE is currently being taught and applied in a variety of settings ranging from business to psychotherapy.

1: Research: In addition to research already completed in fields like psychotherapy ([Hendricks, 2002](#)) and education ([Zimring 1983, 1985; Zimring & Katz, 1988](#)), Gendlin's philosophy presents profound and researchable challenges to conventional thinking in fields as diverse as genetics ([Gendlin, 1997, pp. 882-3](#)), physics ([Gendlin, E.T. & J. Lemke, 1983](#)), linguistics and anthropology ([Gendlin, 1997, pp. 122-215](#)).

2: Changing the materialistic world-view: Materialistic science pervades our thinking, with negative effects. Gendlin's philosophy challenges this at all levels. In [A Process Model](#), Gendlin criticized the neo-Darwinian theory of evolution by showing that life could not have evolved only passively and mechanistically, and he predicted that other specific processes must be involved. When the first edition of [A Process Model](#) came out in 1981, Gendlin's claim seemed outrageous. Today, **Gendlin's view is beginning to receive more empirical support, as researchers discover that under stressful conditions, organisms appear to participate actively in their own evolution** (e.g., [Ben-Jacob, E., 1998; Lolle et al., 2005](#)).

F O C U S I N G

Below are Gene's ' Six Steps' in short form ~ with the important addition of a 7th **Action** step.

Short Form by Eugene T. Gendlin, Ph.D. (http://www.focusing.org/short_gendlin.html)

1. Clear a space

How are you? What's between you and feeling fine?
Don't answer; let what comes in your body do the answering.
Don't go into anything.
Greet each concern that comes. Put each aside for a while, next to you.
Except for that, are you fine?

2. Felt Sense

Pick one problem to focus on.
Don't go into the problem.
What do you sense in your body when you sense the whole of that problem?
Sense all of that, the sense of the whole thing, the murky discomfort or unclear body-sense of it.

3. Get a handle

What is the quality of the felt sense?
What one word, phrase, or image comes out of this felt sense?
What quality-word would fit it best?

4. Resonate

Go back and forth between word (or image) and the felt sense.
Is that right?
If they match, have the sensation of matching several times.
If the felt sense changes, follow it with your attention.
When you get a perfect match, the words (images) being just right for this feeling,
let yourself feel that for a minute.

5. Ask

What is it, about the whole problem, that makes me so _____?
When stuck, ask questions:
What is the worst of this feeling?
What's really so bad about this?
What does it need? What should happen?
Don't answer; wait for the feeling to stir and give you an answer.
What would it feel like if it was all OK?
Let the body answer
What is in the way of that?

6. Receive

Welcome what came. Be glad it spoke.
It is only one step on this problem, not the last.
Now that you know where it is, you can leave it and come back to it later.
Protect it from critical voices that interrupt.
Does your body want another round of focusing, or is this a good stopping place?

7. Action

What are you going to do?
Let the body answer

F O C U S I N G

Gendlin's original guidelines, state that Focusing is: not 'a method in itself', best 'added in' to whatever we are already doing, and that the 'six steps' are best seen as temporary 'scaffolding' or self-dissolving *structure*. In the last 20 years, revising his original steps, he confirmed the importance of a 7th 'action' step saying: "**the Focusing process without an action step is like a car with its motor running, but not moving**". I welcome that revision and would go further, encouraging the practice of 'Clearing a Space' in its own right. Gene once said: " *if I manage to clear a space . . . why would I want to do Focusing?* ".

I agree and sense there is need for additional 'bias control', directed towards our use of (and intention towards using) the method itself, We need to be able to 'clear a space' from how our thinking mind would 'Focus' and allow the uncovered emptiness to lead the unfolding process, otherwise the subtle undercurrents of our thoughts and personality may distract us with an illusion of things appearing different and *new* when, in truth, nothing may actually be substantially changing. This remains tough to prove conclusively.

Gendlin says we don't need to be anything special to do Focusing . . . however, if we engage in Focusing without first embodying a clear understanding that the thinking mind and our consciousness itself is actively resisting our path to wholeness we risk believing that substantial change will arrive in our lives simply through this new sensitised contact with our *felt senses* and that Focusing is enough. It is not and Gene was clear about that.

Walking this process *without trying to do so* also seems vital, as it helps undermine what J. Krishnamurti would describe as our tendency to be caught in 'becoming' ~ anything other than *just as we are* right now. So, we also need to nurture a clear sense of any quiet leftovers, within our intention, of the desire to be *better than*. **We are good enough.**

There are practices that help me to *listen through the body*, to be more in tune with my senses and more at ease with emptiness (Mindfulness & Qi-Kung). Other techniques combining 'cognitive re-framing' with a state of 'energetic flow' are even more helpful (Feldenkrais & EFT). We need more than one single method. *Adding in* all the good stuff from 'Experiential Listening & Focusing' to these forms can bring an invaluable layer of competence & confidence to allowing the voice of our body to lead the process of gently shifting ourselves out of 'stuckness'. How much I embrace substantial growth, change and integration seems inevitably tied to wholeheartedly welcoming the unknown and whatever is still unclear or unknown is surely somewhere Gene would recognise as home.

F O C U S I N G

There are obvious parallels between David Bohm's work on 'The Implicate Order' and Eugene Gendlin's 'Philosophy of the Implicit'. It helps my slowly growing understanding to consider them both 'in dialogue', alongside J.Krishnamurti and others, all contributing to any move towards wholeness: away from simply being a 'talking head', held in our own wee illusory 'reality' bubble, separated from 'the body' and distanced from whatever and wherever the 'actuality' of universal 'truth' may be. Throughout my interest, learning and training in Focusing, in Scotland and the Netherlands (1999 - 2016) there has remained a distinct *niggle* of resistance in me (an appropriately vague, unclear, *Gendlin-like* sense) that something is not quite right, sorely missing or left unspoken at the heart of Focusing. This has bugged me for 20 years and I have attempted to articulate it freshly many times. Taking Gendlin in context with Bohm & J.Kirshnamurti helps me clarify it more precisely . . . If we want to be less '**talking heads**' & more 'in' the body, we need to be more aware of 'the illusory reality' our thinking mind creates, and *actively* protects, resisting change continuously, while also demanding constant newness. Confusing? Well, that seems to be the nature of consciousness. Creating paradoxical situations that only serve to generate 'stuckness' and sap our energy, while simultaneously abdicating responsibility and asking "how did that happen?". I need clarity on how mind & body are one 'material process' and how the 'observer & the observed' are one perspective. Anything else serves only to diminish my sense of 'wholeness' and to further cement my consciousness in the 'fragmented' reality that we all, mostly, inhabit these days. Easier said than done, right? If I am interested in the ground of 'truth', underpinning our individual & collective reality, then I can't trust my thoughts, feelings and emotions, or for that matter any beliefs, ideas, concepts, memories, experiences or accumulated knowledge I carry. That doesn't sound like it leaves much leftover, does it? The apparent smidge of 'clear space' remaining is, in fact, vast . . . and consistently available to us through the immediacy of direct 'insight'. It turns out to be the starting point for a process of growth towards wholeness and the source of energy and creativity. I encourage both quick & elaborate 'clearing a space'.

I am in tune with Gendlin when he speaks of trusting 'no one thing' or 'no one step' in any process and also when he says "*I trust people to be who they are*". If you ask me "what do you trust ?", these days I would reply . . . **an accumulation of emptiness, maybe.** Any method that helps me sensitise myself to this landscape is always welcome if it can pull off the trick of cleanly removing itself from 'the centre', while embracing the context.

Fishing is a pretty good metaphor for this way of listening through the body. We all have our own way of *fishing* around inside, already, or maybe not. Pablo Neruda writes beautifully ~ to describe one way of listening inside ourselves:

If each day falls
inside each night
there exists a well
where clarity is imprisoned.

We need to sit on the rim
of the well of darkness
and fish for fallen light
with patience.

NERUDA

There are many other examples of prose and poetry that serve as fine metaphors. The Guesthouse, by Rumi, describes meeting everything in life without judgment. In a community wellness project in Afghanistan this was used to share Focusing with local people to help support each other, while living in a war zone.

We could read this and imagine we are the host of a party welcoming everyone. If we put ourselves in the picture imagining instead, **that we are the house itself**, then something can shift. We are closer to sensing the right distance that allows everything to pass on through our house, without so much attachment or bias. Then we may pause . . . before reacting in anger ~ to ask “ Do I have a guest ? “

The *guest* is not our anger, as we would usually describe being angry. It is wider. The metaphor of the guest is a way of encapsulating *everything* about the anger. More than the raw emotion: every thread of information ~ the whole shebang. This is a defining element of Focusing: to sense what is more than just the emotion. Here, we cast our net wider and deeper than our thoughts, feelings and emotions or words, wishes, desires and dreams: the waters edge, before things form fully. This is the place inside ourselves where we can allow what is splintered to reform.

Maybe we can take a further step, identifying with the attitude of ‘welcome’ itself: closer to embodying the understanding ~ we are also the space between things.

This is an uncomplicated place where we do not try so much to control outcomes or quietly wish for someone to change. Just for a few moments, can we let go of trying to be a *professional person* and be the human being we are underneath ?

3 Wee Questions at the heart of Marta Staperts' book 'Focusing with Children' articulate how she condensed, beautifully, the essence of this way of attending.

Can I sense something in my body ?

Where do I sense it ?

What is it like ?

This is a deceptively straight forward starting point for anyone ~ adult or child. I love the lack of therapeutic gobbledegook in her writing and was inspired to go to the Netherlands a few years ago to complete training in her way of working. Marta's emphasis on creativity and playfulness breathes much needed life into the method and has helped me share this skill with more confidence in Scotland.

I would recommend her book, particularly if you are familiar with Gendlin's writing. It brings to the foreground something easily forgotten. How we were as children: naturally curious, playful and still so closely connected to the newness of sensing that we didn't know it all ~ just yet.

If we spend time around young children may know they may be best described as not so much *feeling* happy, sad, angry, anxious, excited, shaky or whatever. It is more like they just *are* happiness or anger, totally embodying their experience. If we sense something inside, a little vague or unclear, then we have options. We can stand back a little and let it stay fuzzy, if we start labelling in our mind.

Then it can lose its sharpness, just enough to let us remain close to not knowing. We can *zoom in* to the image, emotion, sensation or story and just be with it.

***What's it like ?* can lead us into deeper contact with the quality of our sensations.**

Is it *red*, cloudy, tight, shiny, spongy, spiky, like a stone, or are we not sure yet ?

In preparation for working together, if you don't already, I would recommend gently turning your attention inside with a wee half-smile. *That's not obligatory !* Just notice whatever you notice going on inside your body throughout the day and see if you can catch the edge of what is happening ~ while it is happening. I may well be trying to teach my granny to suck eggs, in which case I will shut up.

The Guesthouse

This being human is a guesthouse.

Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,

*Some momentary awareness
comes as an unexpected visitor.*

Welcome and entertain them all !

Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,

who violently sweep your house

empty of its furniture, still,

treat each guest honourably.

*He may be clearing you out
for some new delight.*

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,

meet them at the door laughing

and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,

because each has been sent

as a guide from beyond.

Rumi

D. Bohm, E. Gendlin & J. Krishnamurti certainly met and also knew each others work. Below is a transcript of Gene's response to a question on the subject, at a public talk.

Audience member: I was wondering if you've looked at Bohm's concepts of implicit and explicit meaning and thought about it in relation to what you're talking about?

It certainly sounds right, explicit and implicit meaning, but whose concept?

Audience member: Bohm's . . .

Oh sure, sure.

Audience member: Because it sounds like implicit meaning, what he calls implicit meaning is what like we know what should be.

David Bohm was this lovely man who in a sense did this, and first let me tell this story. He was presenting one time with Krishnamurti & I had the privilege to be invited there. I think by you, maybe or maybe not or by David Chambers. I got all upset because he said the implicit was like a spot of ink that a machine spreads into an endless stripe finally invisible, and if you roll the machine backwards, you get back to the same spot. For me that doesn't break out of the old "was there/was not there" concept, right? And I got all upset about it and argued about it, and then finally, Arthur at lunch said to me, look this whole thing that he's presenting - this whole thing is a meditation, too. So then I dropped it and I realized it was silly to burden David Bohm.

Audience member: I'm glad you straightened that out. For twenty years I thought you were upset about Krishnamurti.

Oh no. No, no, not at all.

Audience member: That David Bohm was the meditation.

No, no, but this Nobel prize winning physicist, David Bohm, had given up working on physics after having gone far enough, and was devoting his life to trying to tell people, devoting his life and his prestige, because that meant he could invite people who would otherwise not come, to hear that sort of thing. No seriously, he was quite conscious of this. And I talked to some of the physicists who came, and they said, you know it's David Bohm. How could I not come, he invited me. What is this all about? He was able to communicate to a lot of people, you know, and it was clear to me what he was doing. It wasn't until lunch time, but it's been clear to me ever since. I was on a panel with him somewhere else, and after the discussion people wanted so much to talk to him. All the questions were directed to him. It was very nice.

Audience member: [inaudible]

Yes. I was hoping you would give me things to use as examples. So this can be one. You're in the orthodox model, when you assume the reason we can communicate is we already share what we're communicating. But you see, with a little philosophy, you notice that, oh yeah, that's the atomic model. It says there are exactly one trillion unit meanings in the world and we can communicate only if we share some already. Which you've all heard. That's what we were taught. It's totally absurd. We would only communicate what the other person already knows? We could never show someone anything new. Communication would be totally useless, right?

All you could ever say is 56 plus 1 instead of 57. Big deal. It'd be like the people in jail with the joke numbers, you know? One of them says 13 and they all laugh. If you don't already know what I mean, you can never know it. Okay, now Marcus took that old assumption and he put the felt sense under it. Right away he could say, so it's not hopeless when we don't quite have the same thing because you could be doing something a little new and I could be doing something a little new, right?

(Audience member: [inaudible])

You're trapped in that machinery that I was trying to point to. You see, he says it's got to be because of all those shared meanings. That's why we can communicate because we all know trees and water. . . *(Audience member: [inaudible].)*

We operate those meanings he says. Now I'm not denying that we all know trees and water and sky and so on. But you see I want to break him out of there. And now let's see if I can do it. See, as a philosopher, the way I would do it isn't going to work. But I'll show you. I would say, this is that model where you have these meanings and you have to account for everything by rearranging the same units. You never get anything new with that model. Right? Way back to the Greeks it's like that. You can't get anything new because everything has to come from these shared meanings. But think from one momentary example of actually communicating. Take this moment or any moment. You don't have to tell us what it is. Just pick a moment & don't say it, when communication happened. Doesn't have to be big and dramatic or any kind of communication. *Audience member: [inaudible]*

Yeah. And then take a look at that and decide that communication is that. It might be other things too but it's at least that. *Audience member: [inaudible]*

So now we're talking about connectedness. And he's done that. He's taking what he actually found for communication. Now do the next thing for me and don't let it be connectedness as one thing, but look at what that's actually like there, that you call "connectedness" and you'll find the spider web there. *Audience member: [inaudible].*

Okay, well those three, that does lovely for me. Okay, so let's take those three now. Acknowledged, empathy. He feels acknowledged. He feels some empathy for the other person, and he feels or he sees there is something we are facing, that, whatever that is we're talking about together.

Audience member: Well more like we're standing together. . .

Standing together, yeah. Standing together with that. Now I think right there that that's a more intricate more sophisticated and better model for communication than the one that everybody is using. Because you've got the two people, you've got one acknowledged and the other empathized with. That means more than just the message, right? And there's we are standing together in relation to whatever that outside thing is. And we've got the people in it now instead of just these message-unit meanings with no people. I would right away take that little three-way model home.

Now I'm saying you have to be strong because you're not going to believe that what he and I could make up in three minutes with all these people here waiting, could really be serious, that it could be better than what we have in the library, but it is.

And if you got no further than that, you'd be doing something.



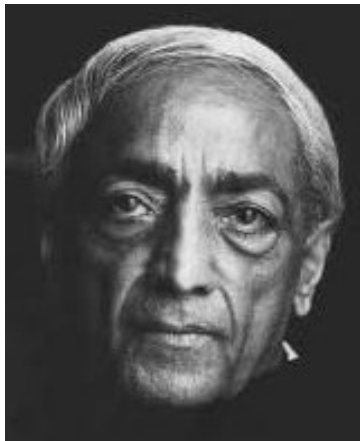
"What is true is already so. Owning up to it doesn't make it worse. Not being open about it doesn't make it go away. And because it's true, it is what is there to be interacted with. Anything untrue isn't there to be lived. People can stand what is true, for they are already enduring it."

Eugene T. Gendlin (1926 ~ 2017)



"We could say practically all the problems of the human race are due to the fact that thought is not proprioceptive"

David Bohm (1917 - 1992)



" Yes. That is affection ~ that is love. When you talk to my waking consciousness, it is hard, clever, subtle, brittle. And you penetrate that, penetrate it with your look, with your affection, with all the feeling you have. That operates, not anything else."

J.Krishnamurti (1895 - 1986)

Feel free to contact me with any questions or if you would like a taster session.

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Address to the Unco Concerned or, the overly interested and rigidly re-assuring.

To a Listener

Your gift is growth ~ a blood red rose
that bleeds into our ears.
So gently, with a cultured nose
be wary
O' yer ain fears and foibles,
man or mouse,
I welcome clean attention.
Though, dinnae 'magine that my house
will suffer long yer watchin.
If you see nothing o' yersel
while gazing at another,
you'll no be any use tae me
whoever,
sister, brother.

No scientist or soldier,
priest or politician,
no guru, guide or teacher
can hope to share
a vision ~ of a future
formed in lead.

Rigid,
drowning in opinion.

We all stake empty claims,
to wear
the uniforms of freedom.

It is the listener in ourselves,
the body's music, bare,
that sings ~ of spacious sub atomic
wells and clear infinite
springs, of understanding
not as we may think, for
that is aye beyond our grasping. No.
A common sense beneath
our thirst,
we may tak' a cup an' drink from .
So friend take heed
O' how ye' form the very definition
of such a term as friendship.
I urge some room in yer description.
Respect a healthy dis-interest
in whatever may be brewing.
Mind yer business, keep yer counsel
an' ye'll stop yer heid fae stewing.

Still, you'll aye be welcome
roon' ma hoose
Wi' a' yer truth sae gentle, if
for some small, simple, time
ye loose . . . what binds yer look,
sae mental.

If not . . . there's the door.

Thomas Binns

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