



Focusing in Ireland

AUTUMN 2003

ISSUE 16

REPORT FROM THE 15TH INTERNATIONAL FOCUSING CONFERENCE

by Pat Duffy

Germany was the host country this year and not for the first time. The last time Germany hosted the Conference was in 2000. The Conference was held in the Hohenwart Conference Centre just outside Pforzheim on the edge of the Black Forest, ninety miles from Frankfurt. The Conference Centre is situated in an ideal setting, the view of the forest with the fresh green leaves of early spring was really beautiful.

The co-ordinators meeting began the day before the Conference on the 29th April with over forty present. In her opening address Mary Gendlin, the Director of the Institute, commented on how Focusing is spreading through the availability of the basic materials, almost 1000 Trainers, and about one million Focusers worldwide.

The continuing development of the Institutes' website is making the basic materials more available, how to find a teacher and or Focusing partner more accessible.

On the opening session of the Conference itself there were over one hundred and sixty participants from twenty countries. Participants from each country were invited to introduce themselves each in their own language. It was an amazing and moving experience. There were many interesting workshops being presented.

I enjoyed Elfie Hinterkopf's workshop on Spirituality. Elfie used symbols in the form of postcards depicting various images. Each participant chose one that was attractive and focused with it and then shared with a partner and in the large group. It brought out the richness of spirituality that was in the group.



Nancy Falls and Janet Winehall presented a very comprehensive and thorough workshop on Focusing Oriented Psychotherapy and Trauma Treatment. The workshop covered areas such as trauma and the mind/body connection and facilitating healing through Focusing Oriented Psychotherapy. Using FOP interventions, the impact of trauma in affective, behavioural and cognitive disruptions to self-regulation, can be addressed.

Nada Lou in her workshop, Thinking at the Edge explained how the felt sense is crucial in TAE. It is personal too, you have something in you, a knowing inside you and you can't articulate it yet. Using the first five steps of the fourteen step process Nada introduced us to how we can articulate "that something you know and cannot yet say, that wants to be said".

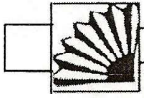
In her keynote address Mary Gendlin spoke about how Focusing can be a force for peace. It can free people from self-oppression and from the oppression that exists in cultures and ideologies. It gives ability to Pause! Stop! Wait! A space in which I can form my own felt sense of the whole situation. It gives a sense of my own particularness, not as a member of a group, but *that being*, not a content or membership in a category. The radicalness of the Pause breaks culturally expected behaviour separating the self from the situation. When I Pause to get a bodily felt sense of the whole of it, a deep knowing not yet articulated, I am less vulnerable to manipulation.

During Mary's address Rob Foxcroft shared an internet communication with a lady who was interested in being a "Moslim Focuser". She was going on a lifetime pilgrimage to Mecca. Rob led her through the steps of her pilgrimage in a very moving and gentle Focusing process. The lady responded saying how she and her husband were touched in a very profound and beautiful way and how he had given them a new spiritual dimension to the ritual they were about to undertake.

These were some of the highlights of the Conference for me, many thanks to Dieter, Heijo, Karin and team for a wonderful Conference.

Pat Duffy

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:	Report from the 15th International Focusing Conference	Page 1
	by Pat Duffy	
	Introducing Focusing in a Prison	Page 2
	by Fiona Pryle	
	Anne Kelly R.I.P.	Page 3
	Check out the Institute's Web site.	Page 3
	Your Focusing Calendar	Page 4
	Focusing Facilitators in Ireland	Page 4



INTRODUCING FOCUSING IN A PRISON

Fiona Pryle

A prisoner, let's call him Tom, last year approached the prison officer in charge, requesting that he contact me and ask if I would come and visit him. I was happy to accede to this request as I had known Tom during his childhood years in an Institution. Tom had now spent 23 of his 30 years in Institutions, his offending career having spanned 16 years and several prison sentences.

Tom was happy to see me and in the midst of the loud, noisy and harsh prison environment offered me the coffee which he had taken the trouble to prepare. He told me about his life since I had known him, a sorry tale by any standard, told in an impersonal way with lots of rationalizing, trivializing and blaming. It was clear that as yet Tom was unable to own any of it, while at the same time insisting that he wanted to change and wanted me to assist him in the process.

I agreed to do this and began by setting some boundaries. I needed a guarantee, I said, that Tom would continue to attend the weekly therapy sessions offered in the prison for alcohol and drug abusers. While not enthusiastic about this, he agreed. I explained that our sessions would not be social and that we would be talking about his life. This was o.k. with Tom and we agreed that we would begin, as we had done, with the cup of coffee which he was anxious to continue to provide.

My desire for Tom as I started to accompany him was that he would become able to take care of himself emotionally and eventually assume responsibility for his life. I was aware that this was a long term goal and I would have to begin where Tom was - out of touch with feelings, sensations and any level of ownership of his life.

Over several sessions, as Tom told his story, I began to illustrate it on sheets of coloured paper laid out on the floor. Standing with him in the open friendly way of focusing, I began to invite the beginnings of a sense of ownership, a sense of "that is how my life has been". This was difficult for Tom and I was aware that it would have been impossible without my presence and the unconditional climate I tried to create. With time it did become possible for him and I was able gradually to invite an emotional and body response to the map of his life. And a key moment came when Tom began to have a sense of being "more than" what he could see laid out before him on the floor.

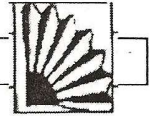
You will have recognized that what I was doing with Tom during those sessions was "clearing a space", enabling Tom to own and be in relationship with his life while maintaining a right distance from it and avoiding the danger of being overwhelmed.

As the sessions went on Tom began to be able to notice his inner experience in the moment and to stay present to it, briefly, as I guided him. At this point I extended the art work on the floor to include a crossroads and

the notion of choice among possible options, options that had to do with his present daily routine in the prison and how he might choose to try to be in it. With practice he was able to get a body sense of the options and to notice which one brought energy, - a "life-forward" feel. On one occasion, for example, he chose to notice in the following week, the fear he would feel when he saw a particularly hostile and abusive inmate arrive into the prison yard during exercise time. Prior to then his pattern had been to "run for cover" behind other inmates.

The challenge of relating to prison inmates, prison authorities, family members visiting and the participants at the therapy sessions proved to be indeed very difficult. We had many reminders during those weeks that old ingrained patterns die hard and that beginning to live in a focusing way in a prison could well be termed "the hero's journey".

If all goes well for Tom he will be due for release in two years. Early on in our sessions, the prison officer and prison psychologist remarked on positive changes they had observed in his behaviour. My experience of trying to introduce him to the focusing process, irrespective of the final outcome, has indeed been a valuable one for me. I would not have been without it.



Anne Kelly, RIP

Anne Kelly, Focusing Coordinator and Teacher, died during the summer after a long illness. Anne was involved in and committed to the development of Focusing in Ireland from its beginning in 1990. Her dream included the setting up of a training programme for teachers, and her series of leaflets containing the content of workshops was a valuable contribution to this. Maintaining our connection to the Focusing Institute was important to Anne as was the Bio-Spiritual dimension of Focusing. Her dream also included the setting up of a support group for teachers – a teachers' Association and she was involved in the Association for several years.

Focusing was a valuable support in her own life, especially during her illness and preparation for death. Below is an extract from Anne's introduction to her second collection of poems, *Dream Journey* and her poem *Thanksgiving*.

"As every day could be my last it gave me a precious opportunity to reflect on my decisions and to spend quality time with the people I loved and who loved me..... I began to welcome those golden moments alone or with others when I felt connected to the spontaneous joy and energy which wells up from within and gives meaning and sacredness to life..."

Thanksgiving

For complete healing of mind, body
soul, spirit and heart.

For 'The Cure at Troy'
the restored sense of well being.

For the road ahead in 2001
whatever turn it takes.

For snakes and dream symbols
and a self capable of the journey.

For the soft, golden, light
the presence
and my fumbling response.

For every fence and secure boundary
every inner step of choice and
confusion
every voice of sincere love and care.

For the gift of time
precious, fragile
fleeting and human.

Anne Kelly
Christmas 2001

May Anne rest in peace.

Check out the Institute's Web site

Next time you have an hour or three to spare, spend it browsing the website of the Focusing Institute www.focusing.org. The site has been very well developed over the past number of years and was a wealth of information on a range of topics. There are just some of the topics that you can delve into:

- Spirituality
- Research
- Children's Corner
- Philosophy
- Medicine
- Creative Process
- Thinking at the Edge
- Find a Focusing Partner
- Find a Focusing Trainer
- What's New
- Bookshop
- Links

You can download articles for free and print them off for yourself. In the Children's Corner, there are currently seven articles, including the intriguing, "I have Ears Inside My Stomach" – a chapter from Janet Klein's book on teaching focusing to children.

There is an e-mail discussion list that you can join – always lively and informative and open to all.

It's easy to go between one section of the site and the next. There are no fancy graphics to distract you and the text is well written in plain English. There's an extract from the section on Find a Focusing Partner to whet your appetite. Happy browsing!

Do I have what it takes to be someone's partner?

Two things are required -- but every human being has them. One requirement is the capacity to shut up -- to keep quiet and to be unintrusive company. When the other person is talking, we control any urge to impose something. It means letting go of our many excellent ideas, interpretations, suggestions, and our desire to give friendly reassurances, or to tell what we did in a similar situation. And when the other person is quiet, it means keeping our attention on the person without hearing anything interesting.

The second requirement is to provide the company of a human being. You cannot fail to have this capacity, since you are a human being. It does not require a good human being, or a wise one, or any special quality. It does not require some special way of being or showing one's humanness. Just you, there. (Extract from Focusing Institute web site www.focusing.org)