

RESILIENCE INITIATIVES

A JOURNAL OF FOCUSING INITIATIVES INTERNATIONAL



**FOCUSING
INITIATIVES**
INTERNATIONAL

JUNE 2018 | VOLUME 1, ISSUE 1

ABOUT THIS JOURNAL

This journal has emerged as a result of producing our workbook *Reaching Resilience: A Training Manual for Community Wellness Focusing*. We realized that many people are doing wonderful, healing work in communities around the world and developing practical, life-transforming activities. We created this journal to provide a forum for them to share these experiences and activities for others to use in their own communities and life situations.

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SHORT SESSIONS CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE

by Abdul Mateen Omary

I have volunteered to work with Afghan refugees for three years now. One of my clients came to me, three years after I first worked with him, and said, "I'm OK now. I have a good relationship with my family members. I'm enjoying my work. I help my wife and children in their activities, and also go to the gatherings of our relatives. I feel better. Coming here to you and getting your good advice has given me a new life, especially Focusing." Then he added that he wanted to continue our relationship and continue Focusing with my guidance. He said, "Focusing gives me more confidence and shows me the way of a happy life."

I became a Focusing Trainer in 2006 and was taught by Dr. Pat Omidian when we were both working for the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) in Afghanistan. When I came to England in 2015, myself a refugee, I began volunteering for Paiwand Afghan Association one night per week. I work one-on-one with two or three clients per night and usually see each one only four or five times. Yet even this small amount can make a difference.

For instance, one client said, in effect, "I was in a bad situation and felt I was dying. I lost everything because of my digestive and psychological problems. I couldn't find anyone to help me, not to give me money, but to give emotional support. When I find you, you are a good listener to my problems and you feel my sense from inside. Now I'm able to tell my problems and share with you. The practice you did with me, especially Focusing, helps me know the reality of life. Now I can speak with all my inner guests. All things happening with me are part of my life and my body."

I find that all my clients need the ability to communicate better, especially with their families. I tell them that in order to communicate well with their families, they need to communicate well with themselves. Most Afghans have memories of violence, war and fighting from back home. They may be good fighters, but they are not good at listening and speaking nicely with each other. I start out my session by having them listen to what they've said, listen to their whole body from inside themselves. I tell them that everything coming to them, all the feelings and emotions, are part their lives and their bodies. "They need your attention and they want to help you if you can accept them," I say. Then I ask them to listen to how they are feeling inside. I teach them to pause before they speak.

Most of my clients are adults with jobs and families. They are busy and don't have much time. Most come once a week, or every two weeks. So, I make short lessons for them. I connect the Focusing practice I am doing to their Islamic faith. Then they understand easily.

Most Afghans are quite religious, so they like the idea of taking time to be with themselves in order to listen to themselves and to God. I usually bring in Rumi's poem about each person being a 'guest house' where everyday new guests are coming and the old are leaving. Rumi was Sufi, which means he believed in spiritual connecting. I teach them Guest House Focusing (See *Reaching Resilience*, Activity 6), and explain that Rumi also believed that all parts of a human being make one body and if one part of the body is ill or uncomfortable, then the whole body will be ill or uncomfortable.

I use the exercise of Green Stick and Dry Stick to show resilience (See *Reaching Resilience*, Activity 9A). People who are like the Green Stick have the ability to return to normal life; people who are like the Dry Stick don't accept feelings and emotions as guests or as part of their lives. They can't return to normal. They will be broken and lose everything. I show them these two sticks and ask them to give some examples in their own lives.

I also do Pat's activity on Balancing your Blessings and being grateful for what you have. (see *Reaching Resilience*, Activity 10A)

ACTIVITY: DRAWING YOURSELF

This activity is used in the clients' first session. It helps me get to know them quickly and starts them talking about themselves. At the start, most of them say their life is full of problems and sadness, but after the activity they feel much happier. They sometimes say, "We didn't know we had this much happiness in our lives and our bodies, and God (Allah) has given us a divine blessing."

Goal: To get to know my client and bring his attention to his inner self as quickly as possible

Time: 20 minutes or the whole session

Materials: Paper and pencil

After the client and I have introduced ourselves and talked a bit, I get out paper and pencil and ask him to draw himself and also write three things he likes about himself and three things that he doesn't like.

Then I ask him to talk about the picture and the qualities. I tell him, "I am going to let you listen to yourself," and I slowly repeat back each of his important phrases. I say, "Check inside to see if that's right, or if there's something more."

Then I ask which part of the exercise was difficult for him, the drawing or the writing? the three things he likes or the three things he doesn't like? Most of my clients say that drawing was easy, but writing was hard, because they didn't know about themselves, what to change or what to improve. One client said that the practice (of self-drawing) was the first time in his life that he drew and

wrote about himself. Another client mentioned that in the Islamic way, it was important for him to understand himself and know about his personality in order to have a good relationship with God. A third observed that finding his positive points was difficult because he hadn't understood the importance of knowing himself -- "so I can improve the positive and decry the negative or change it to a positive."

This activity is a variation of one by Pat. It adds three things the client does *not like* about himself. I find this balances the client's self view. Most Afghans are unable to describe their positives and don't accept the negatives in their nature. This creates problems in their life, but in this activity, they go inside and find themselves. In group work, participants make comments about each other, positive and negative, if they know each other.

This activity helps me understand my clients. For example, in Afghanistan in 2008 we gave a psychosocial and Focusing training for school students -- young boys 16 to 20 years old. Some of them drew themselves with guns and other fighting equipment. It showed me that I needed to address the bad effects of war in our country.

NOTES

There are many kinds of Focusing practice. This article refers to an adaptation of Inner Relationship Focusing (Ann Weiser Cornell and Barbara McGavin) which Nina Joy Lawrence and Pat Omidian named Guesthouse Focusing. For more information, see *Reaching Resilience: A Training Manual for Community Wellness*, Chap. 6.

Reaching Resilience is published by Focusing Initiatives International, and is available at www.tinyurl.com/Reaching-Resilience-at-Amazon

AUTHOR

Abdul Mateen Omary grew up in Afghanistan, where he received a BA in psychology and worked with Dr. Pat Omidian. It was through a student internship program with the American Friends Service Committee that he was trained as a Certified Focusing Trainer and became a Coordinator through The International Focusing Institute. He currently lives and works in the UK. He can be contacted at m.omary@yahoo.com.

TEACHING THE PAUSE

by Derek McDonnell

It all began in 2014 when the Principal and a teacher were worried about a particularly rowdy class in a Primary School with students age 11-12. Could I teach them what I had been teaching individual pupils in my Emotional Well-being work? That's what they wanted to know.

I have been working as a Social Care worker for 26 years within the Social Services and have integrated Focusing as a way of being and interacting with my clients and their families since 2000. I trained in Children's Focusing and incorporated that into my practice as well.

A colleague and I discussed the school's request over a cup of coffee. Could we teach the children Focusing? Maybe a ten-week programme? My colleague wondered if the project could be the thesis for his Master's Program. Why not? And so we started.

Several weeks later, the Vice Principal [who is responsible for the management of discipline in the school] opened the door and looked in on the class. He couldn't understand why the students were so quiet – the same students who had so often been sent to him with discipline concerns. I don't remember what we were doing. Maybe I was explaining about the head brain listening to the body brain. Or maybe the students were actors, and sitting in three chairs as Mr. Pause, Mr. Listen and Mr. Notice, while three other students came forward as a small felt sense, a medium felt sense, and a large felt sense.

At the end of the ten weeks, the students felt they had learned a useful skill.

One boy said, "It's a great idea. I used to get really angry and be short tempered. Now I'm able to control it. It's helped our class big time. We used to be split up into two groups to play in the yard. The two groups could get angry at each other and attack. Now we're all friendly and can play out in the yard together. If I get pressurized, I kind of feel it in my throat and head. I just stop and breathe. Then I feel calm in my stomach and my chest."

Another boy said, "When my sister did something, I used to hit and shove her. Now I don't really care. Sometimes I get angry, I say, OK Benny, calm down. I have a weird feeling in my tummy, and then I know to pause... Last year I used to argue a lot with a teacher when he tried to get us [kids] together to talk so we could be good friends. Mr. McDonnell put it all into place."

A third student said, "I used to have a short fuse. Now I count from 1 to 10. I haven't gotten in trouble lately... If I didn't know the pause, everybody would be fighting with me."

Now we are teaching this program in six schools.

The Irish eduis a certiculum is a state mandated programme called **“The Stay Safe Programme”** implemented in all schools. I was able to propose to several principals the inclusion of Focusing as the medium through which these state-created lessons are taught. These lessons cover a broad area [Feeling Safe and knowing when I feel unsafe, Friendships and Bullying, Safe Touches and our Safety Bubble, all about Secrets, how to manage Strangers]. I teach the children to use the “felt sense” as a compass to guide them towards safety.

In order for this instruction to work, children need frequent opportunities to practice pausing and noticing what they are feeling inside.

Since I could not be there every day to help them do this, our first class suggested that I use their Radio Studio to create five to six minute podcasts, each one inviting them to pause and go inside. Now their teacher plays one of these at least once a day between my visits - first thing in the morning, after lunch, or at the end of the teaching day.

Here is an example of a podcast. This one is to be played before a morning test.

I’d like to invite you now to take a few moments just to be quiet. You might have had a busy morning. Now that you’ve arrived, just take time to notice your physical body right now sitting there, just getting a sense of your physical body for a few moments.

You might notice the rhythm of your breath as you breathe in and as you breathe out. Just follow it for a few moments. Now just look inside like shining a torch or flashlight down inside through your throat, chest, and tummy.

Take a moment to notice how you’re feeling in this moment, now that it’s the morning of your tests. Maybe you’re nervous, maybe you’re a little bit anxious, or maybe you sense a tightness or a knot in your chest or tummy. Just notice whatever is there freshly in this moment, ‘all about your tests’ just giving it its own space to be and breathe for a few moments.

Now I’d like to invite you to place ‘all about that’ outside yourself right now. Maybe on the floor beside you, maybe in your schoolbag, maybe even outside the door. Just take a few moments to do that now for yourself. You might notice, as you do that, that you have a sense of more space inside, now that ‘all about that’ has been placed to the side.

Just noticing.

Now notice if there’s a part of you that’s really looking forward to your test, a part that knows you’ve put in a lot of work and effort this week, maybe here in

the classroom, maybe at home in the evenings. Just pause to notice what comes with that part of 'all about your test' in your inside place. Maybe there's a calmness, maybe there's an eagerness to get on with your test.

Just noticing.

And now I'd like to invite you to place 'all about that' aside too, just for now.

You might like to place it on the floor beside you, in your schoolbag, outside the classroom door, or in any space that fits for you. Now with all of that aside, just notice if there's more space inside right now. The part that's been nervous or jumpy or tight or anxious about the test has been placed aside, and the part that's maybe looking forward to the test and has worked hard and is eager to do it has been placed aside, too.

Just noticing if you can give attention to that clear space inside.

You might see if you can place a bubble around that clear space so that you can bring that clear space in that bubble with you, inviting that space to be there as you take your test this morning.

Just gently and slowly, bring your awareness back into the room, and take a few moments just to grow quiet and sit gently with a sense of your physical body and your clear space in the bubble.

Our teaching Focusing to children has led to our bringing it to their teachers as well. Ireland has mandatory Continuing Professional Development courses for teachers, involving a week in the summer accredited by the Department of Education. We have been able to offer Focusing Training for teachers in this manner. We call it *Focusing Through Interactive Pausing*.

What is exciting is the way the teaching process evolves each year. Gene said, when dealing with the felt sense, you are always evolving, and what you teach will always come out freshly, as if for the first time. There are always new ways forward, and finding them is like finding gold dust. You want to create a net to catch every part.

ACTIVITY: BOTTLE OF COKE

Note: This activity is usually done in the first session in a ten-week class.

Goal: To explain the interactive Focusing pause to students age 9 – 15

Time: 10 – 15 minutes

Materials: Two large bottles of coke, one smaller bottle of coke, and a small basin to catch the fizz.

Children are sitting around a circle of letters which they have colored and which spell 'Practicing the Pause.'

The teacher says something like: Today we're going to connect with the place inside that can guide us. To start off, (hold up a large bottle of coke) What is this? Yes, it's a bottle of coke.

(Shake it) Now what's happening to the bottle of coke?

(Reflect the answers) It's fizzing up. It's like a volcano. It doesn't want to be shaken. It's like anger.

(Start to twist off the top while holding bottle over a basin) Let's see what happens. (The coke fizzes up. People nearby may flinch or withdraw.)

(Point to the coke that's spilled over) That's what comes from my inside place, when something happens from the outside, and I get shaken and I fizzle. If I *don't* pause, I explode with anger.

(Show basin to students) Look. It's the anger. And what's on the floor? More anger. It spreads everywhere.

Now when we first started to work together, were there lots of bottles of coke in this room? Were there lots of explosions? The anger fizzed up so much inside you that you couldn't hold it in, and it exploded all the way out.

Now let's look at this bottle. (Give them a turn to shake the second large bottle. Pass it around the room.) Do we notice inside when the shaking starts?

(After all have had a turn) Take a moment to just grow quiet, and let's watch what happens.

(Untwist the cap for a moment, then twist it on again and pause, doing this several times so the fizz slowly comes out.) What's happening? I'm twisting the cap back and forth. What does twisting represent? Having a pause. Look, is the bottle still fizzy? When I remember to pause and just wait a moment with my fizzy place inside, what happens? It calms down.

(Point to the two bottles) Notice the difference. When I forget to pause, and I don't notice my inside place, what happens? The anger explodes and spreads everywhere. When I pause and notice I'm getting 'fizzy', and I keep company with my inside place, what happens? It calms down.

Can you remember when we started shaking the first bottle of coke today? Was there a reaction? (Some people may have flinched or drawn back.) Yes, they didn't want to get blasted with coke. Sometimes when we let the anger out, we explode out onto other people and hurt them. We also hurt ourselves. Fear comes, people get scared and they run away and it affects our friendships.

(Hold up small bottle of coke) What's this? Yes, a small bottle of coke. Sometimes inside myself – we have to use our imagination for this – imagine the little bottle inside the big bottle. That is a part of myself that might be upset when someone says something hurtful or someone picks on you, or a comment is made that irritates this small part of you. That part gets upset, and it affects your whole self. What can help?

(Reflect the answers: writing can help, drawing can help, counting can help) Yes, they all help us pause. When you pause it helps you calm down so the anger can come out slowly and not hurt you or other people.

Are we learning how to be fizzy, pause, get calm, and to manage our feelings in a different way? Raise your hands if you think you are learning this. Did we think it was possible when we started? Now everyone has calmed down, how is that for you in the class?

(Reflect the answers.)

NOTES

When the class and I did this activity, it was recorded by Nada Lou, and can be viewed at www.youtu.be/mI8Dfb2-Flg

I submit a proposal for every programme for my administration's approval, and issue a summary after the programme is completed. I would be happy to send the proposal to anyone who is interested.

AUTHOR

Derek McDonnell has worked in the Social Care Profession for the past 26 years, in settings such as residential care, child and adolescent mental health and community-based social work services. He is a Certifying Coordinator with The International Focusing Institute, with extensive experience in running *Focusing through Interactive Pausing* skill-based Intervention for professional, young people, parents and professionals from social work, social care and within community-based settings. Currently, Derek is teaching this in six schools, as an accredited CPD training for Primary School Teachers with the Department of Education and Science.

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PERSONALIZE YOUR TEACHING

By Nasser Ben Hassen

I was sitting in a café with one of my students and we were talking about my English class. She reported the students all agreed they felt extra comfortable and safe with me. I was pleased, because that is my goal in my classroom.

Focusing has caused a major shift in my life. It has taught me to listen to my inner self. My teachers taught me how to care about people and how to be grateful. Focusing is a life practice, not something to use and then put in a drawer. I can listen to my felt sense in all facets of my life, with my children, my wife, when teaching Akido, when studying, and in time of turbulence. At university, I used to be stuck with two parts: The first wanted to learn and study while the second didn't, but I have been able to bring them out and reconcile them, and now I have many certificates from Cambridge. My children are proud to have such a hard working Dad, and they want to become the same.

I live in Tunis, the capital of Tunisia. I teach adult students over 15 years old, who are well motivated to learn English; I don't have many discipline problems. But by using Focusing, I lower their affective filter, meaning that I allay their fears and mine. Fear is a major obstacle to learning and teaching. As a teacher you teach and interact from your mind, trying to apply the theories and techniques, but Focusing brings in the humanistic side. It reminds you that there is also space for you and the people to live, express themselves, and feel safe.

I treat my students as Guests in my Guest House. I open my hands and arms, metaphorically speaking. I accept latecomers and make them feel welcome. I listen to them even when they don't know I'm listening. I accept what they say or write, without judgment or criticism. I usually don't correct anyone directly (except on a test). I write incorrect sentences on the board, and ask the class to correct them. I remember that "students do not care how much you know until they know how much you care about them."

Because my teaching is interactive, it's different in every class. Each session is a new contact, different from the others. I listen to each student and converse naturally. I never say, "Do you understand what I said?" I just continue to converse, giving them context and eliciting a response, and so making my students responsible for their learning.

Because I talk to them, I can adapt my teaching to meet their needs. For instance, many of my students tell me they want to travel. So we might read texts about travel, have 'conversations' with customs officials, learn to ask directions, etc.

I have my students for 4 hours a week and do the following personalized activity once or twice a week. It helps me know them and makes their needs the center of my lessons. It really touches me when, four or five months in, I look around the room as they are talking to each other, and note their progress. I don't see a blank wall of faces; I see a garden where every flower is blooming. I share my observation with my students. 'Do you see how you are progressing?' There's a tear of happiness in my eye.

By the way, I have been taught Focusing for free all these years, which makes me grateful to the community and especially to my teacher, Dr. Patricia Omidian, for her great effort to help me learn. Also, I have been doing Focusing regularly for many years with my two American partners: Camille and Tina. I am now a certified ELT Methodology Teacher and a Trainer and have delivered a number of workshops to practicing TESOL* teachers and students across the country.

Focusing can help teachers everywhere to humanize their classes without sacrificing learning time. It changes a teacher's attitude and that changes so much. Any teacher, sport instructor, team leader, etc.e., can refer to Gene's sentence: "Focusing is like a cream that cures everything." By checking inside, a person (or teacher) can become aware of what feels right in terms of their "wanting" and/or "not wanting." It's also simple and easy to ask learners to bring their awareness inside their physical body and check what the next step is, then invite them to give it a voice if that feels right for them. This process can offer a peaceful atmosphere of love, curiosity, and enthusiasm for experiencing the act of learning and carrying it forward positively.

ACTIVITY: PERSONALIZATION OF LANGUAGE LEARNING

Goal: To become comfortable and motivated to speak another language

Time: 20 – 30 min

Materials: blackboard or other device to write on

First, I tell my students a simple story about myself in English. I might tell about the time in my childhood when a dog bit me, and I ran and hid, because I was afraid to tell my mother. I gear my sentences to the level of the class.

Then, I divide the students into pairs. Each is to share with the other a simple story about themselves, in the target language. They can ask me for a vocabulary word. If I hear an incorrect sentence, I write it on the board. At the end of their sharing with each other, I have the class correct those sentences. That way, no one is singled out for correction. Furthermore, I write some of their accurate sentences on the board, to let them know that they can form good sentences as well.

Next, I ask, who would like to share? I don't call on anyone specifically; I let them volunteer. I let them choose whether to tell their own story or the story of their partner. I let them talk without judgment or criticism.

Sometimes, a student may become emotional when they are telling a story. If so, I ask them to close their eyes and check inside to see if there's more. Occasionally, a student will ask, what are you doing? I tell them, I'm borrowing from something called Focusing. I don't define it, I just try to exemplify it.

NOTES

See a video of Dr. Omidian interviewing me on Focusing Initiatives's YouTube Channel. It's called "Focusing and Teaching and Learning" and lasts about 7 minutes.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=OVchs9X5qDc&t=16s

* TESOL: Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages

AUTHOR

Nasser Ben Hassen is 46 years old, married with three children. He lives with his family in Tunis, the capital of Tunisia. He has been working as an ESOL teacher for many years now. He has held many different jobs but teaching is what he loves the most. In late 2008, he came across "*The Power of Focusing*" and started learning it under Dr. Patricia Omidian. Since then, Nasser has been involved in several workshops and webinars such as *Treasure Maps to the Soul and Community Wellness* online meetings. He has been practising Focusing regularly with two partners, Camille and Tina since 2010. Focusing has been Nasser's source of inspiration for all aspects of his life and a safe resort at moments of hardship.

He also teaches English as a foreign language to adults, as well as Akido in Tunis, Tunisia.

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THE WEB OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

By Diane J. Goodman

Gene Gendlin said, in his "Vision Statement for Focusing: Action Steps and Progress" (Focusing.org/Focusing and /A Better World: Community Wellness): "Focusing can reach the place in the person where the organization's purpose can actually happen" but it alone "does not develop action skills." This article describes workshops that do develop action skills.

* * * * *

I was attending a school committee meeting on racism led by the Superintendent and attended mostly by school personnel. The focus shifted from racial disparities in the school, to a discussion of the need to accept all cultures. I was uncomfortable with this shift away from topic. I had seen this shift many times before in other contexts. It feels easier to talk about cultural differences than about systemic inequities. Should I say something? I did not work in the school and was invited as a parent and community member. I debated what to do and ultimately I felt it was my responsibility to speak up, so I took a deep breath. Surely my years studying and teaching about social justice had provided me with the tools to handle this.

I said, "I notice the conversation has shifted away from racism. I feel we are missing the chance to look at power inequities and discrimination." Luckily several people agreed with me, and we were able to come back to topic.

Frequently, my workshop participants have told me that what we discuss helps them initiate conversations about racial and social justice issues in the workplace and with friends. In addition, they gain more awareness and skills to address inequities in their organizations or communities. In these educational sessions, participants are often able to have authentic communication with other human beings across race or culture that are hard to have in other contexts. This provides a sense of possibility of what we can achieve more widely.

People often ask how I became interested in social justice. It was not from a particular experience or relationship. I have long felt a deep inner calling to correct social injustices whether I was a recipient of the oppression (e.g., as a female with sexism) or in the dominant group (e.g., as a white person with racism.) In college, I majored in education and psychology with a bent towards feminism. In graduate school (at the University of Massachusetts Amherst), I pursued a Masters and then a Doctorate focused on counseling and Social Justice Education. This program gave me the resources to start my career and to concentrate my life on educating others about social justice.

Now, for over 30 years, I have been giving talks, consulting, teaching, and facilitating workshops with a variety of organizations and groups from New York to California and even in Japan. I have partnered with Focusing Initiatives International to offer workshops for white people wanting to "Do Our Own Work: Unlearning Racism and Fostering Racial Justice" as well as for multiracial groups on "Developing a Racial Justice Lens: Moving our Intentions into Effective Action." *

How does this relate to Community Wellness? The more we can recognize our distorted lenses and our prejudices, the more we can work to change them, and the better we can connect to our own and each person's genuine humanity. Ultimately, our collective liberation is intertwined. As we can better address systemic inequities that exist in our organizations and societies, we can work to create a community where each person feels safe, included and treated fairly.

I use visualizations and self-reflective exercises in my workshops, sometimes asking participants to close their eyes, go inward and reflect on particular questions. At times, I have them discuss their findings in pairs or trios. This isn't exactly Focusing, but it's similar. In some workshops, I do a stream-of-consciousness activity with participants reflecting on their first thoughts about different social identity groups to uncover assumptions and stereotypes. People then reflect on what was revealed. I also help people develop the consciousness, competence, and confidence to respond to biased comments, to notice and speak up about inequities, and to work with others to foster greater social justice.

The following exercise demonstrates how society can weave a web of injustice through institutional policies and practices. Or, conversely, a web of justice. It can be used to illustrate a broad range of social inequities as described below, or to focus on just one type of inequity, such as racism.

ACTIVITY: WEB OF INJUSTICE

Goal: To visualize how different institutions contribute to interconnected injustice

Time: 20 minutes

Number of participants: approximately 8-24

Materials: Index cards and ball of yarn

Have participants stand in a circle. Hand each participant an index card. Ask each person to identify an institution in their community and write it on an index card. Have each person choose a different institution. (Or the facilitator can identify institutions that are relevant to a particular community beforehand) Have them think of employment, education, religion, banking, police and criminal justice system, health care, military, or favorite media. If there are more participants than cards, people can form teams of two or three for this step.

Hand the ball of yarn to one participant. Ask the first person to describe some type of inequity in their institution. It could be based on race, gender, religion, socio-economic class, (dis)ability, sexuality, age, citizenship or other social identity relevant to the community. Then have the person hold onto the loose end and throw the ball of yarn to someone else. The next person provides an example of an inequity in one of their institutions, and keeping hold of the yarn, tosses the ball to another person in the circle. Continue to throw the yarn until everyone has had at least one turn. In a small group, allow them two or three turns.

As people throw the ball of yarn back and forth, a web will form. To make it more challenging, people can identify how these inequalities are connected. For example, racism in access to good education is connected to the greater difficulty in finding jobs and the racial bias in employment. This illustrates the interconnectedness among different forms of oppression and institutions and shows how people can get caught in this web. A physical way to illustrate the interconnectedness is to ask just one person in the circle to raise and lower his or her piece of the yarn. The whole web quivers. Discuss how people can get caught in the web.

The activity can be done in reverse, by naming some *social justice actions or policies* that could be done or are being done to redress social inequities. In this way, your group makes a graphic illustration of a community's Wellness, or lack thereof.

(I learned this activity from another workshop I attended, but its creator is unknown to me.)

NOTES

A video of Diane Goodman, along with Tanya Williams, discussing "Racial Equity and Liberation" can be viewed at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZDT79t-hFg8

AUTHOR

Diane J. Goodman, Ed.D, has been a trainer and consultant on social justice issues for over 30 years. She has worked with a wide range of organizations, community groups, and educational institutions and regularly presents at conferences, nationally and internationally. She is the author of *Promoting Diversity and Social Justice: Educating People from Privileged Groups* (2nd ed. 2011) and other publications. She can be contacted as follows: www.dianegoodman.com , drdianegoodman@gmail.com or (845) 358-9181

MY STORY: COMMUNITY HEALING DIALOGUE

By Darren Domah

In a small town in Liberia, two families had a land dispute. They lived as enemies for 15 years, until our Community Healing Dialogue ended the problem. In the dialogue, the first man said, "We have all agreed to say whatever we don't feel good about. What is hurting my heart is not about Ebola, but about my neighbor who is in this group. This lady lives on a portion of my land. Each time I see her, I get angry and want to harm her." The team leader asked if the lady wished to respond. She replied she had long waited for an opportunity to talk to her neighbor but he would not give her an audience. "I want you all to please join me to say sorry to my neighbor. . . I was not in favor of what my husband did, but as a woman I did not have a voice at that time." At this point they both burst into tears and cried bitterly.

Although the Community Healing Dialogue has wide applications for resolving disputes and other rifts within a community, initially it was developed to help deal with the Ebola (EVD) crisis. My own story begins with the first breakout of the disease. I was asked to head a team of 12 social workers to deliver health messages to the people. Our message was not to touch (shake hands or kiss) those who were sick. It appears this instruction did not resonate because Liberia was soon overwhelmed with sick people. My role then changed to leading a team of 40 in the Montserrado's MHPSS Ebola Response Team. My key function was to ensure that anyone who came in contact with, or was infected by EVD, was treated with dignity and received psychosocial intervention.

Montserrado County has a population of little over one million, the most populated county in Liberia. We divided the county into four sectors and commenced immediate trainings for the staff, who there then deployed to various communities and to Ebola Treatment Units (ETU).

By this time, unattended sick people could be found in most communities. Many hospitals and health centers rejected the sick through fear or overcrowding. Dead bodies were visible on street corners. People were panicking. The capital was crowded with health workers. Official vehicles with their emergency lights created fear. The sound of ambulances was traumatic. Some people even became angry at the health workers for causing such fear and confusion.

My training in Mental Health Services had not prepared me for this situation. For my first supervisory visit, I dressed myself in a personal protective suit, summoned my courage, and entered the door of the large Ebola Treatment Unit. I immediately saw a lot of sick people -- some on the floor, others on hospital beds, still others wherever they could find a spot. I could not distinguish between the dead and the living. It was like a horror movie. I had gone as a helper, but my spirit became broken and I too, needed help.

In spite of my grief, I acted. My first issue was with a 6-year-old girl whose mother had died. She asked, "Uncle, am I going to die too?" For a moment, the question remained unanswered. I took a

deep breath, looked her in the eyes and smiled, although she could not see my face through my mask. I said, "You'll be OK. You will not die, honey."

I got a call from Dr. Omidian on this fateful day and she introduced herself as "Pat." She asked me whether it was possible for us to meet and that she had come to listen and learn from the work I was doing. We met briefly for about 20 minutes and since that meeting, I had a shift in how I responded to Ebola. For one thing, she encouraged me to breathe in and out slowly so I could remain calm. Her first question was, "Do you have any local way to calm people in your communities?" I said we did. And she softly asked further, "Why can't you make use of that, Darren?" So I explained to her about the palava hut dispute management.

Liberia has a tradition of settling disputes under a palava hut. Prior to Pat's arrival, we had been strategizing on holding palava hut meetings, but were skeptical as to whether they would work, since by now many communities were suspicious of outsiders. There is a debate about who introduced the palava hut dispute management, renamed Community Healing Dialogue (CHD). Some report that it was used in Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo (Jansen et al. 2015, Richters, Rutayisire, and Sleggh 2013) and adapted for Liberia by Dr. Florence Baingana, but it is also a major traditional way to resolve disputes in Liberia. (*Culture and Mental Health in Liberia: Primer 2007*)

Pat coached us on some skills to use while facilitating a CHD. Not only did she teach our staff to listen, she also taught us how to encourage people to listen to each other. She taught us to learn from the local people, and to look for any unusual ways they helped their sick. We learned to find the Positive Deviant (see **NOTES** below for a link to read about this online).

Next, we targeted high risk communities and conducted more than 40 CHDs in all four sectors.

An external evaluator for the WHO conducted an evaluation of the Community Healing Dialogue in 2015 and found that CHD helped decrease the stigma of Ebola and increased supportive relationships. The same report noted that although Community Healing Dialogues targeted Ebola-affected communities, other communities want a similar service for "a wide range of psychosocial issues: conflict, gender violence, and other stressors . Despite the acceptability and feasibility of CHD programs, such programs confront difficulties in being scaled to wider populations." (*Culture and Mental Health in Liberia: Primer 2007*)

To date the Ebola war has not ended. There are many survivors but they face continued medical conditions that need the world's attention. With limited resources, I continue to organize small groups of people in some communities to provide them with an opportunity to be listened to and to share their feelings. Even though this manages issues like stigma and discrimination, it does not cure their medical conditions. "For survivors of Ebola, the crisis isn't over" (Dr. Soka Moses).

Here are two stories from our experiences:

In Zuba Town, a community volunteer had called the emergency response team for a sick individual. The response team took him to the Emergency Treatment Unit (ETU) where he died. The death made the bereaved family angry with the volunteer. The situation festered, and the result was an attack on other community volunteers. My staff and I initiated a Community Healing Dialogue (CHD) in Zuba and at the end of the session, the entire community reconciled with handshakes and tears.

In the Banjor community, another community volunteer assisted a sick woman, who was sent to the ETU. The lady lived, but the young man and his entire family contracted the virus, and they all died. The lady became one of the participants in the CHD. She told us she was living with grief, feeling guilty to have been the reason for the death of an entire family. She said she wished she could have died instead of the young man. Since the incident, she told us, there had been no space to tell anyone how sorry she was for what had happened. During the CHD, relatives of that family forgave the lady with hugs all around.

ACTIVITY: THE COMMUNITY HEALING DIALOGUE

Goal: To visualize how different institutions contribute to interconnected injustice

Time: Participants must commit to 12 meetings, one per week

People: 2 facilitators from outside the community for each group of 10-15 participants

Materials: Index cards and ball of yarn

Preparatory Week

- Two or three facilitators (like Pat or myself) meet with authorities in the community to select 10 – 15 candidates. These authorities consist of leaders in local social institutions.
- Authorities need to know the social life of their community so they can pinpoint those who need healing. In our case, the target group was EVD victims, family and friends.
- Once candidates are selected, facilitators register the names and contact information, and a time, date and place are arranged for the first meeting. This can be anywhere -- on a playground, under a tree, in a church or a classroom.
- When this has been set, the group candidates are invited for the first session.

1st Session

Welcome the members and ask what the normal procedure is regarding prayers

Describe the general problem. (In our case, group members were often “Survivors” dealing with stigma in their communities.)

Explain the five principles of the Community Healing Dialogue (CHD) which are:

- (1) sharing responsibility for problems (i.e. your neighbour’s problem becomes your problem. Thus, in order to help yourself, you help your neighbour),
- (2) having a genuine interest and care for the others,
- (3) respecting each member of the group, irrespective of their social status, money, age, sex, or education,
- (4) remembering what is shared from week to week, and
- (5) coming on time each week.

Explain that the facilitator will NOT give lessons. Instead, everyone will share problems and work together to find solutions.

While one Facilitator observes and writes down what is said, the other Facilitator guides group discussions. They can alternate roles each session:

- Choose the rules for the next twelve to fifteen weeks.
- Decide on the best day and hour to meet.
- Make sure the group members understand the issue. Encourage questions, but not too many.
- Ask whether anyone has an experience with the issue or problem they want to share. Sharing is on a volunteer basis only.
- After the person has fully shared their issue or problem, ask for suggestions on how this person could resolve it.
- Reflect or sum up the suggestions and then ask the person who shared what they think, and if there are any suggestions that they will try in the coming week. The person who shared gives feedback.
- As time allows, others may volunteer to share, and the process continues as before.

- When the duration agreed upon is over, the Facilitator finds a way to close the discussion. (Our sessions were normally three hours long.)
- The Facilitator then reminds them of the need to attend faithfully. Have prayer at this point, if agreed upon earlier.

2nd Session

The Facilitators should be sure to arrive on time!

Begin with a word of prayer, if that is what the group decided.

The Facilitator can then request one of the members to go over the five principles and the ground rules. Where possible, print these and hang them on the wall.

The Facilitator asks those who shared last time how they are getting along. This should be a brief inquiry, and follow up is only done if there is a new problem or the last solutions did not work

New people share their issues, following the same process as in the first meeting.

Middle (3rd to 9th session)

The facilitators' role during this time is to make sure the meetings run smoothly and all principles of a Community Healing Dialogue are being respected. Some possibilities are:

- Repeat the principles at the beginning of each session.
- Encourage shy members to share their experiences also.
- Control discussions so they do not become arguments.

As the sessions continue and members become more comfortable, the Facilitator will notice that the group is leading itself and a pattern of relationships develops. Members quickly understand the process; they will start conversations about problems on their own, they will provide coping strategies and take the advice of others in forming solutions.

Some groups may choose to sing and dance together as part of their regular meeting; some choose to do crafts together.

Ending (10th to last session)

From the beginning, the Facilitators should make clear that the group meets for a given period (We usually did 12 weeks.) In the ninth session it is the facilitators' responsibility to remind participants that the group will end soon. In the last three meetings, the Facilitators count down. At the end of the meeting they can say, "This is our third to last meeting, we need to tell you early, that

even if you agree to continue meeting, we will not be able to join you.” At the next meeting, say, “This is our second to last meeting....”

From this point, facilitators let group members lead the discussions. The natural leaders in the group will have emerged.

The Facilitator can also guide a discussion in which members share how the Community Healing Dialogue (CHD) has helped. They can recall how they were when they began and how they are feeling now. There may have been initial issues of fatigue, lack of motivation, or fear of sharing.

Final discussions need to include issues that have not been solved. More time can be given to these, to understand what the barriers are or if any new coping strategies can be found.

The group may spontaneously decide to continue meeting on their own, begin a susu savings club (community fund), or something else. These can be encouraged, but expectations must not be built about support. In these last meetings, CHD members may also decide to do something special to mark the ending. In one group, they walked through the village, holding hands, visiting others, to show that survivors do not infect others. Other groups chose to bring food and eat together after the last meeting is over. Even if the CHD members decide to continue meeting, it’s good to mark the last time the Facilitators are present.

The last meeting can be an emotional event. Facilitators will also have to prepare.

Being part of a group for 12 weeks is a long time and attachments are made. Yet the Facilitators have to maintain professional relationships, and all professional relationships end.

Dealing with Problem Behaviours

Facilitators need to block any activities which prevent the group from staying true to the principles of CHD. The skill here is to block negative behaviours without attacking the person behind them. This needs both sensitivity and directness. The following are examples:

- **Bombarding others with questions.** Ask members to make statements of the thoughts and feelings behind these questions.
- **Gossiping.** If a member talks about another member in the room, the facilitator can ask that person to speak directly to person being spoken about.
- **Storytelling.** If a lengthy story is taking up group time, the leader can intervene and ask the person to tell how their story relates to the present feelings and to the issue being discussed.

- Breaking confidences. Discuss the consequences of breaking confidences, and how there is a loss of trust. Help members share experiences in such a way that they maintain the confidences of their friends and neighbours.
 - Big Boss syndrome: Someone who is a boss in the Emergency Treatment Unit (or elsewhere) may feel like their contributions are the only ones that people should listen to. They may also be authoritative, give instructions and not participate as if equal to others. As this can damage trust within the group, it is important to take the person aside and help them find ways to be more inclusive.
 - Attacking another member's contribution, such as saying "How can you suggest he walk away? A man has to face his problems. But you have always been a coward anyway." If this happens remind the speaker of the CHD principles #2 and #3, caring for and having respect for each other.
-

NOTES

To read about finding the Positive Deviant:

www.latimes.com/world/africa/la-fg-in-liberia-woman-fight-ebola-20141005-story.html

For additional information, see the article about a woman once featured in Time magazine as "Person of the Year" (in 2014).

www.foxnews.com/health/2017/03/01/liberian-ebola-fighter-dies-during-childbirth-family-blames-virus-stigma.html

AUTHOR

Darren Domah comes from a very underprivileged family and was the first to obtain a University Degree, and the only one in his generation to acquire a postgraduate degree. He earned a BA in Sociology in 2011 from the University of Liberia, and a LLB Degree in Law in 2017. He has worked as a social worker for more than 9 years and currently serves as the Psychosocial Focal Person assigned to the Monsterrado County Health Team for the Ministry of Health of Liberia. He dreams of becoming a Human Rights Lawyer in the years to come.

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WORLD DAY OF LISTENING -- October 21, 2018

By Greg Madison

As I was driving home with my Focusing partner after the 2015 Focusing Conference in Cambridge (UK), our conversation turned to our experience of the 'Focusing and Activism' morning study group. We were inspired by the discussion about how Focusing and Social Action could energize each other.

My mind wandered back to the deep connections that develop from Listening. It's hard to dislike someone you've really listened to. It made me think of the recent Brexit vote that had divided the UK, where both sides thought the others were "idiots".

To my surprise, I found myself saying, "Maybe we could offer Listening around the country so each side could understand why they voted how they did", and then... "We should hold a World Day of Listening!" There's a day for everything else, why not for the one thing that our divided societies really need? By the time I got home, the idea had taken root and soon after our Facebook group was up and running.

About myself: I learned Focusing in 1981 as a research method during my undergraduate degree in Canada. Later, I was able to incorporate Focusing into my practice as an Existential Psychologist. Over the past 25 years, I've written books and articles on the subject and I travel the world to teach therapists how to incorporate Focusing into therapy. For me Focusing has always been about life itself, how to live more deeply, how to question authority and defy convention.

It seemed to me that to link the general public to the practice of Listening was to offer a kind of self-empowerment that was potentially subversive and liberating. I want that kind of world. The idea quickly gathered interest; eventually over 1000 people joined the Facebook group and we set about planning the first World Day of Listening.

The irony is that while organizing it, our group had some difficulty listening to each other! Especially the Focusing people! The problem was that in their enthusiasm for Focusing, some people wanted everyone to listen as they did. They wanted rules, guidelines, and instructions. Some wanted to teach Focusing. I wanted a world day that could welcome many approaches, not just for Focusing people but for anyone who wanted to listen to their communities. It took diplomacy to hold a space for such a diverse international group, but eventually we made that first World Day of Listening a success.

My hope is that having an annual World Day of Listening will heighten people's awareness of Focusing and, more important, bring an appreciation of the power of listening into our societies. Isn't good listening the essence of a democratic society? For those who want a democracy to work, the ability to listen well is more important than voting. We could even say that a person *is* a

democracy when she/he can openly listen to (not necessarily agree with or automatically act upon) all parts of her/himself with equality and compassion. Can't this attitude in the inner world roll out in a continuous expansion to the largest human gatherings?

Careful listening slows down decision-making so that the whole being of each person has the potential to be involved. This process becomes a kind of 'slow democracy'. Decisions are arrived at with a feeling of rightness; action can have a felt continuity with the group as a whole, making the action grounded in experience, with a sense of "I can stand behind this", so the agreed action is actually carried out and does not have to be constantly revisited or half-resisted.

We can go days, weeks, years, maybe even a lifetime without ever really being listened to. But when we experience the connection of listening and being listened to, it feels like a basic human right. We believe the world would be a better place if listening were more highly valued. Listening is about receiving how another person is struggling, without editing it or spinning it, trying to fix it, or arguing and mixing in other views. Truly listening to someone allows them to understand themselves more deeply. Often when something in the person has been deeply heard, they can then open up to new possibilities.

The World Day of Listening is the result of many Listeners from around the world, representing many traditions and approaches or none, working together. I say 'none' because some people have no training in listening apart from our guidelines. They have no named approach nor are they aligned with any method or movement. We devise no overarching rules about how to do things or how to prepare. Each event is its own self-organizing group and in fact, many listeners were not confident, but tried anyway using trial and error. The day is open to anyone, even a husband sitting across the table at breakfast. We want to get away from any quasi-professional assumptions. We do not promote any doctrine, political or religious view. we are not pushing for any outcome, and we are not marketing any product.

The World Day of Listening welcomes all kinds of listening events. The following activity is one event which was used around the world with some moving results.

ACTIVITY: STREET LISTENING

Allow people to approach you and your group. Smile and be open and approachable, however you don't need to solicit people to participate. Don't stand together in groups of more than three as this can be intimidating. You can sit with an empty chair across from you. Have a simple sign that announces 'Free Listening' or 'World Day of Listening'. Have a few leaflets that explain the event (See our template below for an example).

Check that you have permission to hold the event at this location. If it turns out to be private property and you are asked to move on, simply do so politely. The event is promoting an atmosphere of 'grace' and gentleness.

Time: Listen as long as people need to talk, typically 10 – 15 minutes. The listeners usually stayed out on the streets for 3-4 hours.

Materials: Chairs or park benches for people to sit together. Have flyers ready to hand out explaining what you are offering, and a few large signs saying 'Free Listening'.

What NOT to do - do not offer advice, take sides, or argue, judge or interpret. Just actively Listen, respecting silence, saying back some of what the speaker is telling you. If someone is saying something you disagree with, try to just Listen honestly, hear how it is for that person, how his/her perspective makes sense to him/her. It is not your job to change minds. Acknowledge her/his feeling of conviction.

At the end, it is usually good to ask: "How has it felt to have this chat with me today?" This offers an explicit opportunity for the speaker to check what the experience has been like.

After a listening turn, you may want to be listened to by someone in your group. If there is someone who would like to take part as a Listener but feels shy about listening to the public, this person could be a support during the day to listen to the Listeners when they need it.

SAFETY

- Stay in groups of three or more if you are doing 'street listening'. But don't all stand together as that makes approach difficult.
- Because men are apt to come directly to female listeners, make sure everyone is in eye contact of each other.
- Dress casual.
- Don't bring bags or any personal things to the event.
- If you feel uncomfortable with someone, politely suggest that you include another listener.
- You can always say NO to someone if they ask you to do something.

After the event it is good to meet to have a **group debrief** - a chance to listen to each other.

Personal

stories can evoke a lot in each of us and we also need to be listened to.

WHAT WE SAY TO THE PUBLIC in our flyer:

**THE THIRD ANNUAL WORLD DAY OF LISTENING IS HAPPENING ALL OVER THE WORLD
TODAY, OCTOBER 21, 2018.**

We are ordinary people offering our time and our attention for you.

TALK TO US - How are you feeling about your life today? About your community? The world?

We are peaceful and non-confrontational, listening within an atmosphere of gentleness

We are JUST LISTENING.

We are not selling anything, not trying to get your money or your vote.

We are not trying to convince you of anything.

We are not offering counselling but we have a list of places where you can find that.

We seek constructive responses to a world in trouble.

A World Day of Listening is the result of many Listeners from around the world, representing many traditions, professions, and walks of life, working together. We do not promote any doctrine, political or religious view, we are not pushing for any outcome, and we are not marketing any product. We are here to listen to YOU! Let's see what happens.

How we Listen:

The most basic requirement in Listening is for us to be present to you, giving you our full attention.

We keep silent as long as you need so that you can find what you really want to say.

We may reflect what you say, repeating your words so you can check to see if we have understood you and that your words still fit what you most want to say. We may ask you a few questions for clarification but remember, you are in charge of the conversation and nothing special has to happen.

We honestly want to just Listen to you, to hear how life is for you, today.

NOTES

List of local contacts for Listening groups or Mental Health support: www.worlddayoflistening.org

AUTHOR

Greg Madison, PhD, is a Certifying Coordinator for the Focusing Institute, founder of The London Focusing Institute (a team of teachers working according to democratic and transparent principles) and co-editor of Existential Analysis. Greg lives in Brighton and southern Spain. He can be contacted at info@gregmadison.net.

THE MYSTERY AND CHALLENGE OF THE OTHER

A workshop presented by Lynn Preston, MA, MS, LP and Charlotte Howorth, LCSW

By Kristine Tenace

Love is not a victory march. It's a cold and it's a broken Hallelujah.
Leonard Cohen

"Love isn't the sum of its parts. You don't love someone because of this and this; you love someone from the bigger, larger realm in yourself. And from this connection, then you notice this and this about them. Something wakes up in you when you have that connection and that love. And then you notice their intelligence and smile. It's not the individual qualities you're loving. The qualities come when you're open in that larger way."
Eugene Gendlin

In 2007 I (Kristine) was a thirty-eight-year-old waitress in search of a different gig. "What am I good at?" I asked myself. Taking care of others was the first thing that came to mind, so I logged on to Craigslist to look for an "assistant" job. I responded to an ad posted by a psychotherapist in the West Village.

Days later, I arrived for my interview on the 2nd floor of a loft. I was buzzed in and greeted with a smile by a woman who introduced herself as Lynn. She invited me to have a seat on her fluffy green couch served me a cup of lukewarm decaf and sat in her therapist's chair across from me.

Then, silence.

She was taking me in, I sensed. I felt every long second of it. I wondered if I was acceptable, what she was looking for. I worried that I might have been caught grimacing when I swallowed that first coldish sip.

I, too, observed. Lynn's skin was fair and her hair a sunny yellow with soft spikes, like the top of a lemon meringue pie. All her vibes were warm and sweet.

After a few routine interview questions, Lynn scheduled me to work with her the following week and handed me her keys. *Her keys?* How could this woman feel comfortable giving me, a stranger, instant access to her life? What was it that allowed her to trust me so quickly?

Eleven years later, Lynn and I still work together, in the same room where she and longtime colleague Charlotte Howorth conducted their workshop entitled **The Mystery and Challenge of the Other**. The result of that workshop was two videos: one just of faces and another of the workshop itself. Because I didn't have the chance to attend, I watched the Faces Video at home, alone. By this time, I had learned something of Focusing and felt senses.

I paused at the picture of Lynn's cat that died. I recalled the uncharacteristic heaviness of my boss and the emptiness of her loft on the days following his death.

I saw the faces of Charlotte's children and remembered when I saw Charlotte, very pregnant, walking across the street from Lynn's late one evening. I admired her so much, especially in that moment, thinking she must be exhausted, yet still devoted to her work.

I paused at the pictures of Lynn and Charlotte's mothers, who had both passed away recently. I felt a weight on my chest, which I could only interpret as empathy for their profound love and loss.

Then I studied the picture of myself, in Lynn's loft, holding her new cat, Little Guy. First, I noticed my wedding ring and recalled the day, around the time my marriage was disintegrating, that I walked into work and said nothing - maybe hello - and Lynn stretched out her arms. I cried and she held me until I was okay.

Second, I noticed Little Guy was in my *arms*, which was rare, since from kitten-hood, he always made my back a bed. He did that only to me and every time he did, Lynn would *have* to take a picture. She always made space for play.

Finally, I saw myself as a woman in transition, growing, moving from being a waitress to a freelance personal assistant who, according to Lynn, "can do anything." And for her, I have been able to do anything, due to the trust she had placed in me from that initial encounter.

Lynn and Charlotte's workshop, **The Mystery and Challenge of the Other**, focuses on "You" as part of a trilogy of workshops covering the "I, You, Us" relationships. The Other, as Lynn describes it, is a huge, awesome subject that people have been puzzling over and writing about for millennia. The

question of *How do we encounter the Other?* is alive in our individual lives and as a community and a country. Theologians, historians, political scientists and poets have all written about this issue.

Often we find ourselves ashamed and humiliated at the struggle it is to be with the Other, to open ourselves up to difference; to the almost infinite need and longing for the Other; to the suspicious-ousness and intense threat of the Other. Our lives depend, literally and metaphorically, on making a place for the Other. Although it's often the struggle of a lifetime, we need to keep allowing our-selves to have the circumference of our small identities broken into and overturned by the Other. We need to be challenged in such a way that we become different and transformed in this encounter. We also become inspired, renewed, larger, stretched and wiser in our encounters.

ACTIVITY: THE MYSTERY OF THE OTHER

Goal: to begin to explore our relationship to “the other” - the enlivening surprises, fears and dread. Seeing through the eyes of open curiosity, we hope to make space for all of the feelings that arise in us when we encounter otherness and difference. A video of the workshop, which is partly transcribed below, can be viewed at www.youtu.be/WFADH12tjH8 .

Time: 30 minutes (4-minute slideshow, 8-minute Focusing, 18-minute discussion)

Materials: All participants are asked to bring a picture of themselves

First, Lynn lovingly created the Faces Video: people of all ethnicities and ages, faces depicted through art and different types of animals. The participants are asked to look at the pictures with eyes of wonder and allow themselves to be impacted and changed by them. You can watch it with or without music, and with or without pauses at www.youtu.be/IN9KsVgQQPM

After the slideshow Charlotte, in her soothing British accent, invites participants to join her in a Focusing experience. With frequent pauses, she says:

“Take a moment to sense into your chest and your belly...notice what’s being evoked there, what the response is to all these beings. Notice if there are any feeling qualities, textures or emotions, maybe even an image. Maybe the sense of a gesture, even a memory, pops up. Sensing and resonating with the words and images that are coming, you might want to write a couple of notes or make a mental note of what comes here. Sensing inside isn’t just sensing inside our skin envelope. It’s the palpable feeling level in ourselves. Just noticing what’s there.

“Then in your own time, maybe take out the picture you have of yourself when you feel ready for that shift. As you spend some time with that picture of yourself, see if you can connect with yourself in this way of the Otherness, the mystery of the Other, to the self that you are. That self beyond categories and time.

“What is it to have this self? To really be with and relate with this self...the one looking from behind the eyes. In the moment, letting yourself be claimed by your own being, your own face, your own sense of you. Then maybe just notice what that evokes inside at the feeling level.

What’s the sense of connecting with this mystery of you? Again, there may be words or images that come, maybe a metaphor, a sense of movement or vibration. In your own time, maybe just come back and share anything that came, with the taking in of your own or the other faces. How was that, being touched by the mystery of the Other? Was it easy? Was it hard? Something surprising? Were there any particular faces that struck you?”

For the discussion, three participants shared their experiences.

Participant #1:

“I had three responses. When I saw Obama’s face, I said, ‘Hello, I know you.’ There was a real resonance that drew me in. But the two art paintings were lifeless to me. They didn’t have that energy. Finally, looking at my own face, I tried to see my children’s faces in mine. That’s where it took me. It was very powerful. Thank you.”

“Trying to see your children’s faces, how was that?” Charlotte asked.

“That was part of the mystery. The passing on of life...I saw aspects...saw my coloring in them...very profound. My felt sense took me there. It was not an intellectual thing.”

“That inter-generational place and connection,” Charlotte added.

“The magic of life...the mystery.”

Participant #2:

“I had a sense of warm, gentle and soft. I felt something open up. I wanted to hug or touch the animals and people. I’m a touchy person. I suddenly thought of my boyfriend, because when he sees cute or warm, he makes an ‘Ooooooh’ sound. I feel like inside I’m making that sound and that he is watching those pictures through me. It’s interesting. When I look at my own face, my immediate reaction is criticizing. ‘Oh, your posture is not good. Your leg is too fat.’ Wow, totally different thing. When I heard the suggestion to see some mystery of the Other inside of myself, something woke up, and I felt almost teary. Wow, how I treat that person! Surprised too. Then a similar softness comes to me, and I can see myself in a more relating way and drop that criticizing voice.”

Charlotte responded: “It kind of woke you up and you were able to relate to yourself in the same way you related to the others. It was like your boyfriend was looking and experiencing the pictures with you or through you.”

Participant #3:

“When I was looking at the faces, what surfaced for me was loving kindness. A meditation where I felt everything was loving. I felt a deep connection to every face. I sensed an open compassionate feeling in me. I loved that there was so much diversity. It was nice to see animals there too, and to see their spirit. To transfer that loving kindness to my own picture, which my husband took of me a long time ago, I traveled to that period in time with the same loving compassion that I had for the others, but for myself. My young self is always taking care of me, doing things for my future. I always go back and I thank her for everything she did, for all the struggles she went through.”

“In that recognition of *you*,” Charlotte responded, “and also of the other faces - of animals or people - it’s like we know ourselves through connecting with one another: It’s that familiarity, recognition, and a waking up of a part of ourselves. That’s what so attracts me to this work, that we know ourselves through relationships with the Other.”

AUTHORS

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KOL-BE: Transforming Felt Senses into Visual Steps of Healing

By Atsmaout Perlstein Ph.D.

KOL-BE is a flat one-and-a-half meter outline of a human figure, printed white on a blue background. It has no gender or facial characteristics. It is made from untearable plastic, so that one can draw, erase or add different objects to it repeatedly. Its purpose is to provide a way to work with one's inner world. KOL-BE is a therapeutic tool, integrating Art characteristics and Focusing. It is a friendly and powerful "express highway" for quickly transforming what is sensed in the body into what can be seen, or what is unclear and unrevealed into something with form and color.

The name KOL-BE is Hebrew for "Everything that is in me" or "The voice within me." The therapeutic work which it inspires is based on Gendlin's classic teaching method of Focusing combined with principles of his philosophy and Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapy. The figure, first developed by Etty Katz, has been used by her for 20 years in the Israeli Public School system to help children with cognitive, emotional and behavioral issues.

We are all familiar with X-ray procedures which give us a picture of our internal body unseen by the naked eye. KOL-BE provides a procedure that allows us to "see" our inner experience, our feelings and emotions. KOL-BE acts as a mirror, creating a reflection of our internal world. A spontaneous interaction takes place between the implicit experience felt inside and how it is projected onto the figure, using colors, symbols, location, movement and voice. The person changes the image on KOL-BE to fit the shifts he is experiencing inside, thus allowing new awareness and new small steps toward healing.

The first step of Focusing with KOL-BE calls for locating the problem on the KOL-BE image. For instance, if the problem feels heavy, one might represent this with a well-placed dark and heavy stone, and well into the process one might exchange the stone for a smaller light colored one. This placement of the stone creates a new perspective as one sees a physical manifestation that the problem is only a part of one's person and not the whole. As one experiences each change visually, one develops self compassion toward oneself. At the end of a Focusing process with KOL-BE the person can draw or take a photo of the image and resonate with it during the week to allow more steps to come.

ACTIVITY

Goal: To make felt senses visible, creating shifts and new steps toward healing.

Who can use it: children, adolescents, adults, couples, families and groups. In individual sessions and especially with couples, families or groups, the companion/ facilitator may choose to work with more than one KOL-BE.

Time: 30 minutes minimum for a short process; up to an hour for a full process.

Procedure:

Materials: Washable markers of different colors, a box of baby wipes to erase, sticky notes to write on, and a variety of objects symbolizing different qualities such as: hard, soft, round, thick, pointy, flat, rough, sticky, etc. These objects can be collected from nature and from an art store. They consist of stones in different sizes and colors, cotton balls, pieces of yarn and string, beads, blocks, feathers, colored shapes, such as hearts birds, flowers, butterflies, leaves, sticks, and Play-Doh.

KOL-BE should be spread out on the floor for children, allowing for space to move freely around it. For adults, KOL-BE can be placed on a table, or hung on the wall like a mirror. All positions of KOL-BE allow a good process. The materials should be arranged for easy access and separated by categories. It is important that participants have a variety of objects and colors available to them.

In the first session the facilitator/companion explains about KOL-BE, such as in the following dialogue:

"I would like to introduce to you KOL-BE. It is a human body with no gender, facial characteristics or clothes. Therefore, you are asked not to add these to the figure. KOL-BE is like a "mirror" reflecting your thoughts, feelings, experiences and bodily sensations. KOL-BE has its own language of lines, spots, colors, images and symbols. You do not have to know how to draw, but you are invited to pick up markers of different colors and draw on KOL-BE your frustrations, anger, sadness, happiness, and more. You can also write on it, words and sentences representing your thoughts. When you are doing the process, I will write everything you do until you tell me you are finished. Then, I will read my observations to you and reflect what I saw you doing.

Example of introducing a child to KOL-BE:

"I brought you a game. It's a figure that helps us learn more about the stories that you want to tell me. I understand that today you had a big fight at school. Let's imagine that another child in another place or school had the same experience as yours. Can you show me on KOL-BE what he would feel inside? Can you imagine how he would react to the situation? You can pick up colors, objects or symbols to describe it on KOL-BE.

The Process on KOL-BE has five phases:

Phase I and II: Creative Expression and Reflecting. *Presenting and symbolizing the felt sense on the figure without interpretations. The companion uses only reflections.*

Phase I - Creative Expression: While the focuser expresses her inner experience on the figure, the companion sits to one side and follows intently the focuser's process, writing down each choice that is made without comment.

Phase II - Reflecting: When the focuser states the work is complete, the companion describes or reflects step by step the process on the KOL-BE image. The companion can read it straight from his notes while pointing to the objects placed on the body image. He allows time for the focuser to change objects if a new step appears. All the descriptions and reflections need to carry the qualities of the Focusing Attitude, being accepting, non-judgmental, objective, interested and curious. The descriptive words should include the colors used, the weight, rhythm, thickness of lines and spots and the location for each one. For example: "Your line is strong, green and wiggly." When an object is used the same rule applies. For example: "I see a medium size, dark, and smooth stone placed in the middle of the chest area." Remember that each change on KOL-BE calls for a reflection.

The companion also makes sure to point out any specific patterns that appear on the figure, (e.g. using only one color, or using only the head area but nothing on the body, etc.). The companion points out the patterns on KOL-BE and the white spaces that are free with life energy flowing forward.

The companion takes many silent pauses in this process, so that the felt senses inside the person have a chance to correct, add or erase something on KOL-BE that does not resonate with the inner experience.

Phase III, IV, and V: Accessing Meaning, Giving New Perspective, Self-Empathy & Self-Compassion. *In these phases the companion stands side to side (shoulder to shoulder) with the focuser.*

Phase III- Accessing Meaning through dialoguing: The companion explores with the focuser the potential meanings on the KOL-BE using some Dialogue questions such as in Gendlin's original Focusing book (Focusing, 1981). Examples: "If the figure could speak, what would it say?" "What would it take to make it all fine?" During this part, the person may experience something new inside and may be allowed to change parts of the image on KOL-BE. Both the focuser and his companion can expect some small steps toward healing and solving the problem in the first session.

Phase IV- Giving New Perspective through 'I-It' relationship: The companion invites the person to stand and observe KOL-BE from the feet up, then observe it from the side 3-5 meters away (at an emotionally safe distance), finally from the head down from 3-5 meters away. These positions give the focuser some perspective on the problem, so the person (**'I'**) is in one place and the problem (**'It'**) is in another. This new perspective often results in a new integration of the process.

Phase V- Self-Empathy and Self-Compassion: While still standing in the third perspective, ask the person to imagine that a good friend has just told him all this and to take a moment to find a short sentence or phrase in his heart that he would say to support his friend. The person would then practice this sentence daily to himself to facilitate self-empathy and self-compassion.

Applications: KOL-BE has been used with youth from five years old through adolescence, also with adults presenting a wide range problems; fears, anxiety, anger, low body image and multiple

trauma and dissociative states. It has been used in individual sessions, with couples, families and group work, as well as by focusers for self-Focusing and in partnerships.

NOTES

For more information: The KOL-BE manual, edited by Barbara Power Peretz, contains 18 pages of pictures and guidelines and is obtainable either separately or combined with the KOL-BE figure. The manual and its laminated figure will soon become available at the International Focusing Institute Store.

AUTHOR

Dr. Atsmaout Perlstein has been a Focusing-Oriented clinical psychologist for the past 35 years. She first trained and worked in Chicago, then moved to Tel Aviv in 2000 where she became the first Israeli Focusing coordinator and also cofounder of the country's first Focusing Center. She has lectured and led FOT workshops and trainings to professionals around the world. She is currently involved in integrating KOL-BE into therapeutic and educational use and is open to giving KOL-BE workshops and trainings around the world.

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THE NORTHWEST FOCUSING GATHERING:

A Model for Creating Community

by Anna Willman and Nina Joy Lawrence

When the 11th Annual Northwest (NW) Focusing Gathering met last month, we had to turn people away! We accepted people on a first come-first served basis, and ten people, many of them long time members of our community, were unable to attend because the facility we had been using for years simply wasn't large enough to accommodate everyone. This was the first time in eleven years that we were overbooked.

This sudden surge in interest was due in part to people coming from outside our geographical area - from California, Chicago and the East coast - wanting to learn how we do what we do.

Of course, our immediate response has been to begin a search for a new and larger venue for future gatherings. This detail is not new to growing groups, but it does illustrate the process of how the NW Gathering itself emerged. It grew as a result of listening to needs and recognizing opportunities as they arose. This year, the need is for a larger facility, and the opportunity is recognizing we have something people want: a successful Focusing gathering. We can show others how to create a vibrant, annual event that consistently draws at least 35 Focusers together to share ideas, activities, listening turns, and a strong sense of ongoing community. We have assembled a group of people, many of whom see each other only this one time a year, yet each time they meet, they feel as if they saw each other only yesterday. They pick up conversations and connections right where they left off. And they do it in a way that somehow makes newcomers feel welcome and quickly included in those same conversations and connections.

At the NW Focusing Gathering, we have found that community wellness is not only about bringing hope and resiliency to communities in distress, it is also about *creating* healthy communities. And it begins with healthy listening.

The roots of our Gathering lie in a time when there were just three certified Focusing Trainers in Oregon listed in the Focusing Institute's directory of Focusing professionals.

In 2004, two of us, along with another local, long-time focuser got together. We lived in three different cities within a radius of about 150 miles. Nina Joy Lawrence was the major instigator, but we were all three motivated by what we saw as a need for something more for the scattering of Focusers throughout our state (Oregon). There was one small Changes Group in the city of Eugene - a legacy of Kathy McGuire's sojourn in the area - and a larger number of people who had been introduced to Focusing by Kathy, Nina Joy, myself and others, but who had no consistent opportunity to meet and partner with other Focusers.

We listened to them and we listened to ourselves and knew we wanted something more.

So we sent out invitations to all the Focusers we knew, inviting them to participate. This began a series of quarterly meetings held at a central location. Some of us traveled two hours each way but we made sure that all could attend and get home within a day. We usually had ten or more people at these quarterly meetings, representing a variety of Focusing traditions and experiences. This meant we could learn a great deal from each other, so we took turns presenting some aspect from our various traditions (at least one such sharing at each meeting), and then we broke up into dyads and triads to exchange Focusing turns.

We began to hear from people farther away, from as far north as Seattle – another listening. One focuser offered the use of her small beachfront resort in Washington- an opportunity.

Use of this space for the first NW Focusing Gathering expanded our territory to a half circle extending to twelve hours of driving time north, south and east from the coast. This required expanding the length of the meeting to a weekend event and brought in a larger number of Focusers (eighteen at that first Gathering), again with a great diversity of skills and interests.

We saw from the beginning that such a Gathering needed to be both simple to plan and affordable for people from all income brackets. We wanted everyone to participate fully in all aspects of the event.

Simple: We were not planning a great event. We didn't need a printed program, or big name speakers. We just wanted to connect and share as we had been doing in our smaller group. Jane Nelson, from Washington state, had learned about an Open Space system of organizing events on the spot, and we adapted that to our needs. (See activity below)

Affordable: We charged only the cost of room and board, with a tad extra to cover incidental expenses and possible scholarships for those who could not otherwise afford to attend.

Participation: We recruited people at the end of each Gathering to serve on the organizing team for the following year.

The planning process quickly became a simple and almost routine exercise needing five or six people.

We alternate our annual meetings between the states of Oregon and Washington and soon settled on two specific sites, which we always book two years in advance, at the conclusion of each Gathering. Once that detail is settled, all the planning team has to do is meet a few times (at first by telephone and later on Zoom), send out a "save the date" notice and then, closer to the event, an invitational email with a registration form and travel directions to the facility.

Our registration form asks people for food requirements and other special needs. It asks them to let us know if they think they might want to present something or lead a discussion or activity, and assures them that they can decide to do so later on as well. We also ask if there is a Focusing-related topic they hope to learn about, so that we can let potential presenters know there is interest.

The most time-consuming job is that of the registrar, which requires acknowledging receipt of money (and banking it), making a list of attendees' interests and needs, and purchasing name tags. (We use the plastic envelope type so they can be handed in at the end of the weekend and reused from one year to the next.)

To make the event hospitable to non-Focusers, usually one of us will teach an intensive Level One course at a discounted rate. The trainees miss the workshops, but share meals and our Saturday night Focusing Follies.

At the end of the weekend, all participants meet for an hour soon after lunch to discuss what went well and what could be improved. Careful notes are taken and handed on to next year's planning team, which hopefully has already recruited one or two new members.

ACTIVITY: OPEN SPACE: Creating the Weekend Schedule

Goal: To bring the group together and create the weekend schedule

Time: Friday afternoon about 4:00 or 4:30 (at least an hour before our first meal – dinner – but late enough to reasonably expect most participants to have arrived).

Materials:

- Two wall charts showing available meeting rooms and time slots for Saturday and Sunday. Meal times are blocked off, as are times set aside for individual focusing partnerships (could be an hour before lunch and dinner). The rest of the time is divided into one and two hour time blocks, with perhaps a half-hour before breakfast for things such as Yoga exercises, meditation, shared Focusing turns, or an early morning walk.
- Large sized sticky notes and markers.

Process:

We gather in a circle and begin with a guided attunement, gently setting aside the hassle and nervous energy associated with travel and arrival, and bringing our attention to this space, this room, this moment. We ask people to sense what they are wanting for this weekend – what they want to share and what they'd like to receive – and how they might make that happen. We remind them that expertise is not required. A participant can offer to initiate a discussion on a topic he/she knows little about but wants to learn from others.

Then people introduce themselves and say how they want to participate. If they want to make a presentation or lead an activity, they can give a brief description of that project. People can pass if they like. Once everyone has spoken, we open it up to those who have had a new idea, inspired perhaps by others' proposals or wantings.

Next the wall chart is explained and the various rooms described:

- large and empty, suitable for activities involving lots of movement
- lots of tables for arts and crafts
- small and cozy for a discussion group
- near running water and soap for a messy activity

People are then invited to write their ideas on a sticky note and place it on the wall chart in their preferred room and time slot. There is likely to be a bit of bargaining and horse trading, as people find their activity in the same time slot as a presentation that they especially don't want to miss. Sometimes participants see they are offering similar topics and decide to combine their workshops into one. It's surprising how fast this bargaining part of the exercise is accomplished, and always with good cheer and lots of effort going into accommodating each other's needs.

Once this is completed, the charts are then moved to a central location, ideally near the dining area. Participants are encouraged to photograph the charts so they will remember when and where they want to go.

Participants who want to add another activity later can do so in any remaining open time (and room) slot. Presenters who need to change their space or time slot can simply move their sticky note to another spot on the chart. However, any additions or changes made after the schedule is completed need to be announced at the next meal time, so as to minimize confusion and delays.

To review, all participants at the Gathering:

- Listen to one another as they share their wanting and their ideas for activities and presentations
- Seek opportunities to share and learn from each other
- Participate in creating the program for the Gathering in a way that promotes community and at the same time simplifies the planning process
- ... which makes the Gathering more affordable, simple and easily repeated year after year.

AUTHORS

Anna Willman served fourteen years as director of the Confidence Clinic, a Focusing-oriented Community Wellness program for women. Since retirement she has written extensively about the program. She has also published five novels, one of which is specifically about Focusing-oriented Therapy. She is currently chair of the board of Focusing Initiatives International. She can be reached at vawillman@gmail.com .

Nina Joy Lawrence is a Certifying Coordinator for The International Focusing Institute. A co-founder of Community Wellness Focusing with Patricia Omidian, she supports others working in this manner by organizing a discussion list and monthly phone conferences. Her email is ninajoy@mac.com .

Focusing Initiatives International

Our mission is to provide a resource for communities suffering from the stresses of war, natural disasters, endemic poverty, epidemics, and all forms of violence or social injustice. Focusing Initiatives International recognizes that it is essential to adapt and infuse the life-forward practice of Focusing and other approaches into the local culture.

We work to ensure cultural relevance and to support local leadership through a process of deep listening and learning from members of the community. Then we develop trainings, mentoring, and follow-up measures based on local needs and conditions.

Focusing Initiatives International bases its work on the following discoveries:

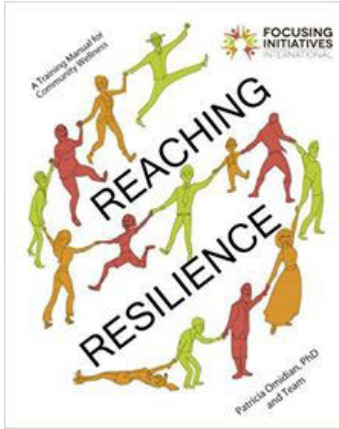
- An individual's health is directly connected to and impacted by the health of the community
- Solutions to local problems already exist locally
- People can be creative when their culture is honored
- When Focusing is introduced in a culturally appropriate context, it not only helps traumatized people find their way forward, but also promotes resiliency in the community as a whole.



Please visit our website and/or contact us for more information:

- www.focusinginternational.org
- Melinda Darer: Melinda@focusinginternational.org
- Patricia Omidian: Pat@focusinginternational.org

Reaching Resilience: A Training Manual for Community Wellness Focusing



In 1986 medical anthropologist Pat Omidian worked with Afghan refugees in San Francisco and first realized that people and communities in severe distress can find their own solutions when resilience is supported in culturally relevant ways. Since then, her practice has taken her to places and situations such as Afghanistan under the Taliban, earthquake-torn Pakistan, post-tsunami Japan, and Ebola-threatened Liberia.

Reaching Resilience offers activities Pat has developed, as well as lessons she has learned from others, in an easy-to-use psychosocial health approach called Community Wellness Focusing (CWF). Each chapter explains a basic principle and gives examples of activities that support inner sensing, group learning.

This book represents the combined work of many dedicated community activists and healers.

Reaching Resilience is available at www.tinyurl.com/FII-Reaching-Resilience. You can also contact Melinda Darer: melinda@focusinginternational.org.

Here is what readers have said about ***Reaching Resilience***:

- *It is inspiring and helpful in equal measure, with great clarity about concepts that I can absorb and use. It gives me hope to read how Omidian has been able to help people even in inhumane conditions. It gives me optimism to read how much people can do on their own, when they are shown how to tap into the resources they already have within themselves.*

- *... a fantastic resource based on lived experiences of community focusing intervention in such a wholistic and interactive way.*
- *... extremely well done, the language clear and accessible, the exercises precise and easy to follow. A way of doing community development that emphasizes the ability of disadvantaged and traumatized communities to empower themselves, drawing on the resources of their own culture.*
- *... what I love most about this manual is the way it combines clear and detailed instructions, with the gentle tone and spirit that we need, when doing trauma healing work. Dr. Omidian has developed this work in partnership with communities who have endured and survived significant amounts of trauma, from both war and structural violence. So the gentleness, warmth, and healing spirit of the simple yet powerful activities that she describes, are particularly significant in these contexts... may this work find its way into the hands of those who can apply it wherever it is most needed!*
- **Reaching Resilience** *provides an eminently accessible model for restoring the spirits of traumatized people successfully. I give it extra credit for building a model that ordinary people can replicate without requiring excessive supervision by experts.*