

# An Interview with Florentina Sassoli

## by Beatrice Blake

*Beatrice Blake recently spoke with Florentina Sassoli about her experiences with Focusing and her goals as a member of the TIFI Board. Their conversation follows.*

**Beatrice:** It's always good to start with the question, how did you come to Focusing?

**Florentina:** I found Focusing because I'm a counselor and as you know, Gendlin and Rogers worked together for many years, so it's impossible to separate the Rogerian influence from Focusing. That's how I met Elena Frezza, with whom I studied in Argentina. I have had other teachers, but she was the first and the one who certified me. When you attend the Escuela de Counseling in Argentina, you keep hearing about Focusing. I first heard about Focusing while studying counseling.

**B:** So, in the counseling world in Argentina, you hear about Focusing.

**F:** Yes, then it starts to sound familiar.

**B:** What did Focusing bring to your life?

**F:** It brought something that no other discipline had brought to me. I had always been a seeker since I was a little girl. So although my path towards my personal development included many things, I never found any resource that could equal Focusing. For me, Focusing is unique in its ability to empower people. It is deep, and at the same time can bring changes very quickly. It's also very, very loving, respectful and organic.

**B:** What is one of the most meaningful changes that you have experienced through Focusing?

**F:** One of the most significant moments in my personal life with Focusing was when I was diagnosed with cancer. I remember that a close friend asked me, "How is it that you are not scared to death?" She was surprised by my attitude. "Of course I'm scared," I told her. But fear did not overtake me. I could make a loving relationship with my fear. Then, Focusing made it possible for me to be open and receptive to love. Love overcame the fear. I could receive the love because I remained open. So my fear didn't have power over me. That's the Focusing way.

**B:** There is a lot of participation of people from Argentina in the international Focusing community. You are president of the recently-formed Focusing Association of Argentina, right?

**F:** Yes, the Association gives our members a space to get to know each other and spread information about the Focusing activities they offer. It's like a hub for Focusing in Argentina.

**B:** Are most of your members counselors?

**F:** Yes, and there are other professionals too, as well as Focusing Trainers.

**B:** You and your colleague Alejandro Juroczko offer a free monthly open space Focusing group online, right?

**F:** Yes and now, due to the online options, there is so much more openness to include the international community so people come from many different countries, including Spain. Now there are so many more possibilities for finding each other. There is a didactic aspect that I introduce in that space, and there are also students from our Focusing school and the public too. “Focusing para Todos” (Focusing for All) is our Focusing school where any questions, doubts or challenges after practicing are answered. It’s free, so anyone who wants to can come. There is also space for Focusing partnership.

**B:** So, I imagine that when someone says, “I’m a Certified Focusing Trainer,” it really means something in Argentina.

**F:** Yes, it does.

**B:** This is something that you bring to the Board. You come from a country where Focusing is more recognized than in many other countries. There is a national association, various schools provide training, and Focusing is recognized in national schools of Counseling. It’s good for the Board to understand the reality of Focusing in different countries.

**F:** Diversity is one of the goals of the Institute, so it’s important to the Board that its members represent different countries, different cultures, different economies. TIFI is very congruent — its commitment to diversity is backed up with action. The Board’s actions support our attitude of inclusion. For example, no one is left out of TIFI or from a TIFI event because of economic difficulties. The Institute recently adjusted its membership fees to acknowledge the different economic realities of different countries.

**B:** Yes, that’s a great example of action that supports diversity and inclusion. For example, this year 10 people are signed up for a Trainer Certification class in El Salvador. The fact that the membership fees are substantially lower makes a big difference in a country like El Salvador.

**F:** Yes, and this has the added value of bringing people closer to TIFI. We Coordinators and Trainers have a responsibility to make our students aware of what it means to participate in TIFI because of what it stands for, and also to give them access to all the learning that TIFI makes possible. For example, this past March was the Children’s Focusing Conference. It was truly enriching to hear from so many people from so many countries who are doing so many things to spread Focusing with children. We have to let our students know that membership in TIFI adds to our training programs and opens up a whole world of opportunities for excellence in Focusing. After all, it was founded by Gene Gendlin. It’s so accessible, and we all need that sense of belonging. TIFI is our mothership.

**B:** I know that a lot of people have seen you at our conferences and workshops because you have given so much of your time as a translator. This service over many years has done a lot to help the Spanish speaking community grow.

**F:** It’s good to hear you say that because I myself forget about this aspect. I remember meeting with you and others many years ago to discuss how to reach out to the Focusers of Latin America. At Coordinators meetings and when I belonged to The Membership Committee, the challenge and our wish was to make them feel part of the international Focusing community, to give them access and a sense of belonging. So, it was important to do more activities in Spanish and translation helped with that. It provided more “bridging” in some way.

**B:** It's good for me too to see the progress that's been made in the last decade. All that is in motion, and you are now on the Board!

**F:** Yes, it's good to look back and see that we have achieved something and are continuing in that direction. I have a very strong commitment to Focusing and to TIFI, and I feel a strong sense of gratitude. By being on the Board, I want to acknowledge and give back all that I've received from Focusing, from Gendlin, from the community. I value and celebrate it, and I want to make it possible for others to receive what I received. I want this to continue on and on. It is so important, so generous, and so relevant. Serving on the Board is a way to make sure that we support and keep finding ways in which Gendlin's work reaches more and more people.



Beatrice Blake specializes in Thinking at the Edge (TAE), and teaches Focusing in a way that makes TAE accessible. She loves to accompany experienced Focusers in the process of Trainer Certification with the international online programs. She is a member of the Facilitation team at the Focusing Weeklong (October 16-21, 2022). Find out more at: <https://possibility-space.com>