

# Cultivating Compassion for Self and Others through Focusing-Oriented Expressive Arts (FOAT®)

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Focusing Highlights

August 11, 2022

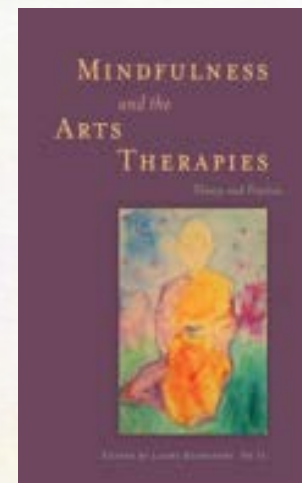
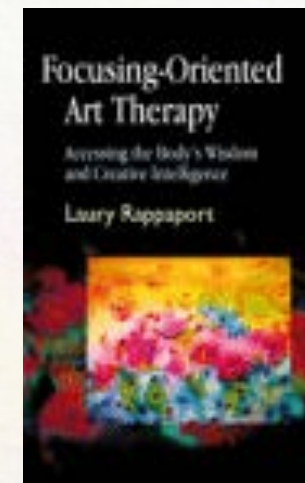
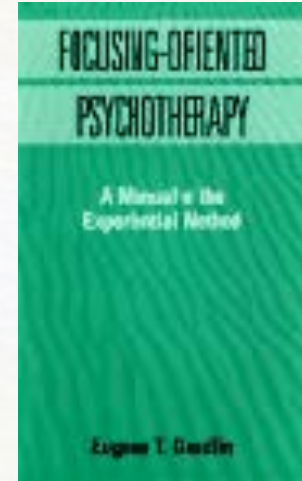
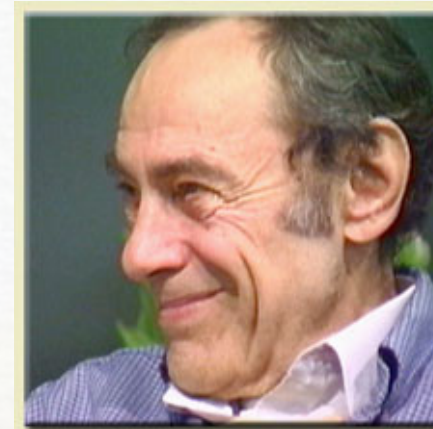
# Workshop Overview

- **Overview of FOAT<sup>®</sup> and Focusing**
  - Experiential Focusing Process
- **FOAT<sup>®</sup> Foundational Principles**
- **Main Approaches of FOAT<sup>®</sup>**
  - Experiential: Theme-Directed FOAT<sup>®</sup> on Focusing Attitude
- **Closure and Carrying Forward**



# Focusing-Oriented Expressive Arts

- Integrates Eugene Gendlin's Focusing with expressive arts
- Developed over 30 years with variety of clinical populations:
  - Adults, children teens, couples, and families
  - Trauma, depression, anxiety, chronic illness, etc.
- **Applications:** psychotherapy, coaching, wellness, spirituality, education, self-care, etc.



# Focusing



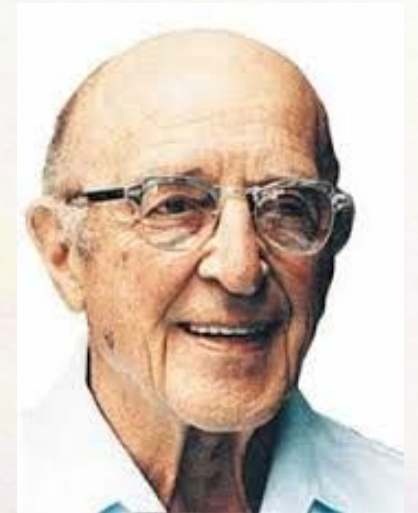
**Eugene Gendlin**

The International Focusing Institute

[www.focusing.org](http://www.focusing.org)

# Focusing: Evidence-Based Method

- Focusing was developed out of research that Eugene Gendlin did with Carl Rogers in the 1960's.
- **They asked 3 questions:**
  - Why doesn't psychotherapy succeed more often?
  - Why does it often fail to make a difference in peoples' lives?
  - When it does succeed, what is it that those patients and therapists do?



# Research Results

## Gendlin and Rogers' research found:

- The theoretical approach did not make a difference.
- The crucial factor was how the client spoke...
- Gendlin created Focusing to teach clients how to access this inner place— that he termed **felt sense**.

# Focusing

- A process of bringing mindful awareness...
- With a “friendly” or welcoming attitude towards our inner experience (happiness, pain, fear, excitement, etc.)
- Accessing your inner knowing and wisdom

# Pause... for Focusing





# Nature

Write down something that you enjoy or love about nature



# Felt Sense-Symbol: Nature

- Take a few gentle breaths into your body...
- Be aware of something from NATURE that you enjoy or love
- Be "*friendly*" or *welcoming* to whatever is there...
- See if there's a **word, phrase, image, gesture,** or **sound** that matches the inner felt sense
- Check it for a sense of rightness
- Receive what comes...



# Main Concepts of Focusing

Focusing Attitude: "being friendly"; curious

Felt  
Sense

"Handle"-  
Symbol

Word  
Phrase  
Image  
Gesture  
Sound

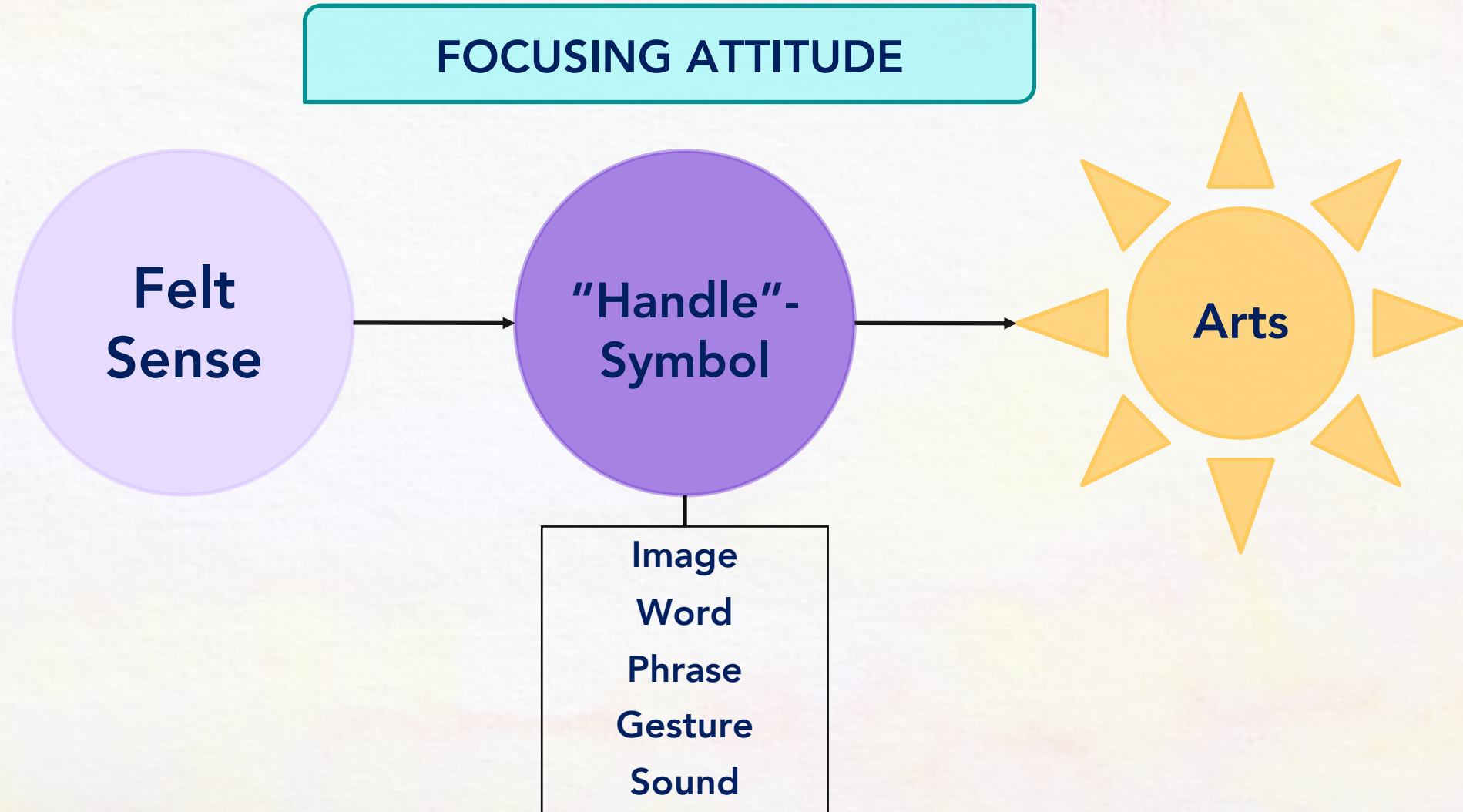


Focusing brings  
something  
new... fresh...  
not yet fully known

# Felt Sense is the **Doorway** to the Expressive Arts

- **Word or phrase:** poem or creative writing
- **Image:** visual art
- **Gesture:** movement and dance
- **Sound:** music or sound exploration

# Focusing-Oriented Expressive Arts (FOAT<sup>®</sup>)



# FOAT® Foundational Principles

- **Safety comes first**
- **Presence**
- **Reflection:**
  - Compassionate listening
  - Arts: gesture, art, sound-mirroring reflections
- **Clinical Sensitivity**
- **Focusing Attitude: Toward felt sense and arts**

# FOAT<sup>®</sup> Approaches

- **Theme-Directed FOAT<sup>®</sup>:** Resilience; themes related to group/individual issues
- **Clearing a Space with Arts:** Setting stressors aside and finding a sense of wellbeing
- **FOAT<sup>®</sup> Check-in:** “How am I now?”
- **Working on an Issue:** FOAT<sup>®</sup> Check-in with added questions and unfolding felt sense

# Theme-Directed FOAT®

- **Choose a topic relevant to group or individual**
- **Focusing: Get a felt sense**
- **Symbol: Image**
- **Express in arts**



# Exercise: The Focusing Attitude

Being “friendly” and  
curious to whatever is  
there...

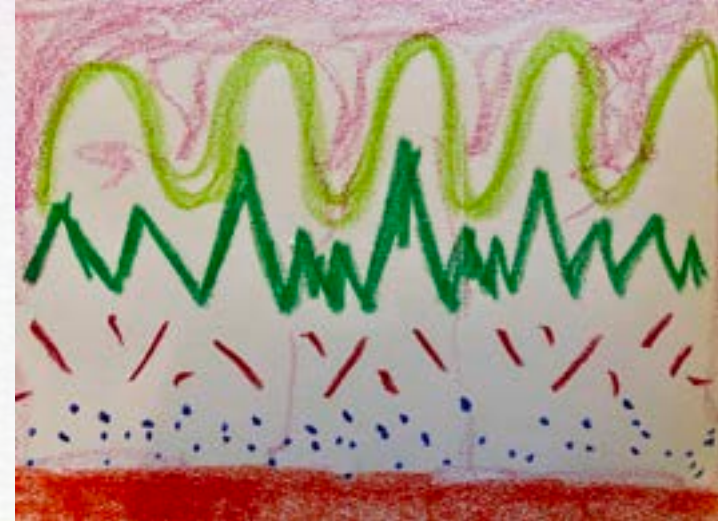


# Tips: Expressive Arts and FOAT®

**Expressive arts:** Not about final product; capturing energy, a quality...a felt sense...

## Express through:

- Color, shape, line
- Gesture-movement
- Word or phrase
- Sound



# Gingerbread Figures for Felt Sense



# Exercise: Focusing Attitude for YOU

- Take a few gentle breaths... become aware of how you usually treat yourself on the inside... or how you talk inside toward yourself on the inside. Notice how that feels.
- Now imagine treating yourself the way you would like to be treated... maybe kind, or friendly inside, caring, compassionate.
- Sense how that feels when you imagine treating yourself that way. Notice what happens in your body in response.
- See if there's an **image, gesture, word, phrase, or sound** that matches that inner felt sense. Check it for a sense of rightness.
- Express in arts

# Writing Reflections

- Take a moment to reflect on arts expression...
- Listen inside to your felt sense...

## Writing Prompts

Speak as a part... a color, shape, the whole...

Start with one or more of:

- I am...
- My...
- "I am the one who..."



# Examples of Themes to Enhance Resilience

- Peaceful Place
- Source of Strength
- Protector
- Safe Place
- Gratitude
- Compassion
- Stress Reduction
- Self-care
- Appreciations
- Mindfulness Practices

## Benefits:

- Themes to enhance resilience
- Safety and strength to work on challenging issues
- Trauma-informed approach

# Felt Shift

After getting a felt sense, there is often a felt shift...  
a **change**... which can be as subtle as a slight change in the  
breath or a more dramatic experience **in the body**.

In FOAT<sup>®</sup>, the felt shift can be observed through the body...  
and can be seen in the **arts expression**.

# Clearing a Space with Arts

- Identifying stressors in the way of feeling “All Fine” or “present” or “Safe”, etc.
- Symbolizing stressors through an expressive arts modality...setting them at a distance
- Create the “All Fine Place” in expressive arts modality





# FOAT<sup>®</sup> Check-in

## What Does it Need?

### I: Check-in

- Bring awareness into the body
- Being “friendly” and curious to how it is now...
- See if there’s a word, phrase, image, gesture or sound that matches the inner felt sense
- Check it for a sense of rightness.
- Express through ARTS

### II. Sitting down next to it

Ask it: “What does it need?”

Add to ARTS if you’d like.

# Working on an Issue

## FOAT<sup>®</sup> Check-in +

### Useful questions ("Ask and Receive")

- What does it need?
- What makes it so \_\_\_\_?
- Imagine the issue all resolved
- What's in the way?
- What's needed?
- What's a good small step in the right direction?

# Life Forward Direction

*“Your body knows the direction of healing and life...  
If you take the time to listen to it,  
it will give you the steps in the right direction.”*

(Gendlin, 1981, p. 78)



Focusing and Expressive Arts access the felt sense and carry it forward

# Benefits of FOAT®

- Externalizes and concretizes the felt sense
- Cultivates self-compassion and compassion towards others
- Teaches how to access one's own inner wisdom and steps toward healing and change
- Helps to regulate emotions
- Increases empathy (Focuser/partner; therapist-client can "see" the same thing)
- Accesses life affirming properties (creativity) even with painful issues.
- Accesses implicit knowing
- Integrates mind, body, spirit



# Carrying Forward

**Focusing:** What have I received today that I would like to carry forward into my life?

Felt sense: Word, phrase, image, gesture, or sound



# Upcoming Presentations

See [focusingarts.com/upcoming](https://focusingarts.com/upcoming)

**August 11, 2022:** Laury Rappaport, Ph.D., MFT, REAT, ATR-BC

**Cultivating Compassion for Self and Others through FOAT®**

**September 19, 2022:** Laury Rappaport, Ph.D., MFT, REAT, ATR-BC

**Cultivating Self-Compassion through FOAT® for Self-Care**

**October 7, 14, 21, and 28, 2022:** FOAT® Tools II: Working with Challenges and

**Accessing Our Body's Creative Wisdom**

**November 7, 2022:** Mitchell Kossak, Ph.D., LMHC, REAT

**Rhythmic Attunement in Expressive Arts: Attachment, Embodied Empathy, and Interpersonal Neurobiology**

**January 2023:** FOAT Levels 1-6 Certification Training begins

# Thank you... and Resources!

**Focusing and Expressive Arts Institute:** [focusingarts.com](http://focusingarts.com)

Email: [office@focusingarts.com](mailto:office@focusingarts.com)

**The International Focusing Institute:** [focusing.org](http://focusing.org)

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