



THE INTERNATIONAL FOCUSING INSTITUTE

Building on the work of Eugene T. Gendlin since 1979

Procedure for addressing concerns regarding individuals

The International Leadership Council
October 2018

The International Focusing Institute (TIFI) has always operated in a system of trusting its Coordinators, Coordinators in Training (CiTs/CNTs), Certified Focusing Professionals (CFPs/Trainers), the International Leadership Council (ILC), Board, staff and others in leadership roles in the Institute. This remains the case as we recognize our responsibility to listen and respond appropriately if a member of the Institute has a concern about an individual and asks us to take action. Those certified or in leadership at TIFI represent the Institute in the world, and it is therefore important that we be confident in them. They equally must have confidence in the way that the Institute will deal with any concern about them that might arise. It is our hope that this policy will provide a process that treats all individuals in a Focusing way by honoring the humanity and rights of all, by looking for ways forward which protect individuals and groups, and by maintaining freedom and high ethical standards, all in keeping with applicable laws.

This is the working policy on how The International Focusing Institute will respond when individuals who are members of TIFI contact us with concerns about a Certified Focusing Professional (CFP/Trainer), Coordinator, Coordinator in Training, TIFI staff person, or a member of the Board or ILC.*

Important note: *We recognize the importance of process and interaction above all rules. We know that process and interaction is first, and so this is not to be understood as a rigid set of rules, but a handle: "one way of carrying forward." We also recommend that those wishing further clarity about our approach read Gendlin's article "Process Ethics and the Political Question." We don't have a "Code of Ethics"; instead we have a process.*

Terms used in this document:

ED: Executive Director

ILC: International Leadership Council

TIFI: The International Focusing Institute

TIFI Person: A person in a leadership role at TIFI, about whom another person communicates a concern. This person could be a Certified Focusing Trainer,* Coordinator, Coordinator in Training, Board or ILC member, or Staff person at TIFI

The Concerned: The person who has communicated the concern and requested that TIFI take action

TIFI Contact Person: The person to whom the Concerned first communicates their concern

Step 1: Someone communicates a concern to TIFI

Someone (the "Concerned") chooses to contact one member of the International Leadership Council (ILC) or the Executive Director (ED), with a concern about a TIFI Person and indicates that they would like the Institute to take some action about their concern. The ED or ILC member will be referred to as the "TIFI Contact Person." Note that if the concern is about a member of the ILC then that member of the ILC will

* Only if the CFP/Trainer is certified through TIFI and has maintained their membership.

recuse himself or herself, and if the concern is about the ED she will recuse herself.

Step 2: The TIFI Contact Person will respond to the Concerned within a week to acknowledge that the concern has been received and perhaps to have an initial conversation. We anticipate that the complaints will fall within the following three categories, each requiring a different response.

A) Personal Conflict which calls for mediation:

If the TIFI Contact Person deems that it is primarily a personal conflict between two individuals and does *not* warrant an institutional response, then the TIFI Contact Person will make reasonable efforts to help the individual to find an appropriate mediator.

B) Issue which calls for an institutional response:

This process happens if the concern is judged to be serious enough to warrant an institutional response, but is not so serious as to require a crisis response. This determination might be made because of the strength of the Concerned's feelings, or because of the nature of the concern, or for any other reason. In this case, we will proceed as follows:

The TIFI Contact Person will explain the situation to the ILC

The need for confidentiality will be balanced with the need for details. The ILC will determine which of its members can act as a "Listening Resource" by having a "Listening Conversation," usually on Skype or Zoom, with the Concerned. In close cooperation with the Concerned, it will be decided whether it is appropriate for the ED to be present, and/or to invite another trusted member of the Focusing community to take part. The TIFI Contact Person will check with the Concerned to be sure that this will feel to them like a wise and supportive group. The Concerned might wish to include a friend in the conversation as a support person.

During this process, the members of the ILC and the ED will be conscious that the TIFI Person is not necessarily at fault. The greatest care will be given to being mindful of the rights of the TIFI Person as well as the rights of the Concerned. Normally, at this point in the process, the Institute is simply giving the Concerned a chance to be heard. It is not necessary at this early stage to tell the TIFI Person that there is a concern about them, as it is still possible that the Concerned will be satisfied with simply being heard. It is possible that their concern need go no further than the Listening Conversation.

Note that if TIFI offers a Listening Conversation and doesn't hear back from the Concerned within two weeks, the TIFI Contact Person will reach out again. If the Concerned has not followed up to schedule the Listening Conversation with us within one month of the initial offer to meet, we will conclude that they have re-thought their concern and we will consider the matter closed.

If the Concerned *does* respond within a month, then within a week the TIFI Contact Person will arrange a mutually acceptable time for the Listening Conversation. Normally, the TIFI Person is not a part of the Listening Conversation, but could be if it is determined by all to be the best course of action.

A Listening Conversation

Those chosen to participate in the Listening Conversation will listen to the Concerned in a Focusing way, and seek a next right step. Normally, the Institute will encourage the Concerned to try to resolve the concern directly with the TIFI Person. For this reason, it will often be suggested that one or two representatives of TIFI can meet together with the Concerned and the TIFI Person.

If agreed upon during the Listening Conversation, the appropriate person (decided upon during the Listening Conversation) reaches out to the TIFI Person, in order to engage in a mediated

conversation. The TIFI Person might also want or need a Listening Conversation, and if so, one will be arranged.

Further steps as warranted:

After the listening process, the next steps will depend on the whole of the situation. The goal will be to act at all times in an ethical, compassionate and Focusing manner, within the requirements of law.

At any point, if it is determined that there is reason for grave concern, the matter will be brought to the attention of the Board.

C) Issue which calls for a crisis response:

If the TIFI Contact Person determines that this is a very serious issue which requires immediate action (normally because it is a credible concern about very unethical or even criminal behavior), the Contact Person will speak with the ED, the Board and/or the International Leadership Council (as appropriate), and a crisis response will ensue. Since the Board has the legal responsibility for the Institute, it is the Board and not the ILC which should address this category of issue.