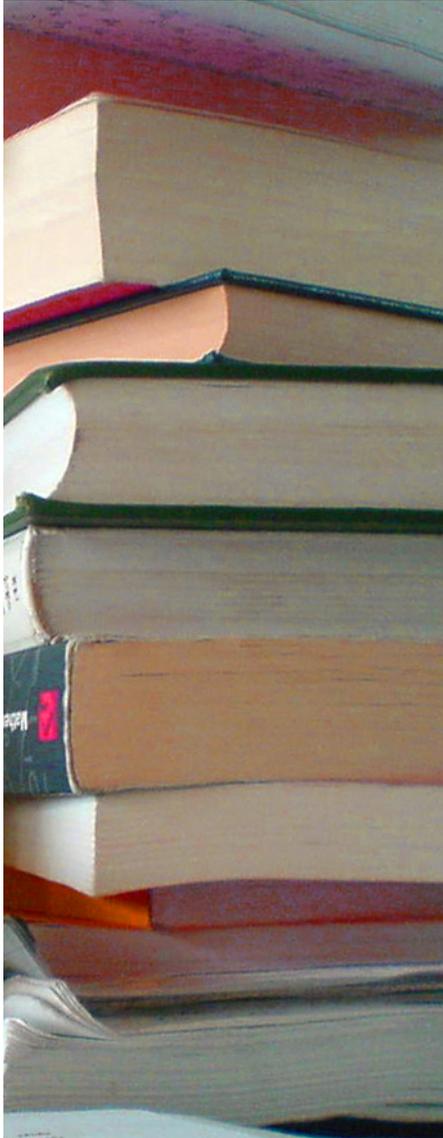


Carrying Forward

Bringing focusing to new areas

Serge Prengel

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Introduction

When we discover the world of focusing, and as we get deeper into it, many of us feel a great sense of satisfaction and want to share it with others.

Often, however, we experience some difficulty translating our enthusiasm into an effective way of communicating the benefits of focusing.

It is a little easier when we're dealing with people who have come to us because they're already interested in focusing. In this case, we have plenty of models to follow: There are books and tapes, and we have the example of how we ourselves were taught focusing.

It's more difficult when we want to communicate with people who, at first, have no special interest in focusing per se. We don't have a model to follow, and we have to improvise.

So what do we usually do? We're all excited about focusing, our frame of reference is focusing, and so we tend to use concepts and words that other focusers would understand and relate to. But these concepts are much less meaningful to the people we are trying to communicate with.

The task at hand is
to find a way to relate to them
in ways that are meaningful to them.



To transmit our experience,
not necessarily the words we use for it.

To make this clear, I'm going to use a little story I am making up.



The hero of the story is a fireman. He has discovered focusing, and is so happy about this discovery that he wants to share it with other firefighters.

At first, he mostly gets polite interest, if any interest at all, because his colleagues don't really understand all of this gobbledygook about "fuzzy stuff" and "felt senses".

However, as he thinks more about it, he starts talking to them about *not just the process of focusing, but the effects that focusing has had on him.*

Specifically, he tells them how he's able to become more present and poised in the middle of a fire.



This is something that they can relate to, and want to understand.

From there, our hero is able to segue into explaining how to "clear a space" and "focus".

Now, as I've said before, this is a made-up example. I would like to believe that focusing can help firefighters, but I really have no data whatsoever about that. So, please, don't go around saying that you've read how focusing helps firefighters in the line of fire!

How, then, could you get people interested in what you have to say about focusing, when at first they don't have much interest in focusing per se?

The following pages outline some simple steps to help you translate your experience of focusing in a way that would feel relevant to the people you want to communicate with.



Note the word “translate”. The words we normally use among focusers are a language. Below the language, there is the experience of focusing.

The process outlined here is about going below the language we normally use for focusing, in order to find a way to relate to people about the experience of focusing in a way that is meaningful to them.

1. UN-clearing a space



In this step, you're going to use a procedure that all focusers are familiar with: "clearing a space", but you're going to use it slightly differently.



Instead of letting issues or preoccupations come up to the surface only to file them away into a folder, a drawer or a box, you're going to invite some ideas to come up in order to place them all on a desk or table.

What are you inviting to come up? Well, the question you'll use to prime the pump is:

"What is it that I particularly appreciate about focusing?"



Let's go back to the story of the fireman.
Let's have him do this exercise. He's asking himself:

"What is it that I particularly appreciate about focusing?"

What comes up at first are things like:

*"It's so different from the other things I do",
"It opens up new worlds and new ways of thinking for me",
"It makes me feel much closer to my girlfriend who
introduced me to focusing in the first place"...*

All of these ideas feel very nice.

As these ideas come up, he spends a little time each of them, but not too much time, and places them on the "desk", ready for another such idea to come up.

At some point, what comes up is how focusing has helped him keep a cooler head while in the middle of a fire.

He has a vague sense that there is something especially interesting in this idea, something that his colleagues would probably be better able to relate to than the other things.

But he doesn't dig deeper into the idea at this point, and he releases the idea to place it on the desk with the other ideas.

After a while, he finds that he has pretty much uncovered all the ideas, so he stops looking for more, and he lets himself contemplate what is metaphorically on the desk.



That is, he lets himself review the various ideas in his mind's eye. As he comes back to the idea of "being cool under fire", he experiences a sense of being pulled to it, and so he stays with it and lets himself "unpack" it.

It starts to make sense to him that this would be a good way to describe his colleagues how focusing has been helpful to him, in a way that they can be interested in.

Please note that, while the fireman is doing this "un-clearing" all by himself in the story as I describe it, this is something he could very well be doing with the help of a fellow focuser.

Needless to say, this fellow focuser need not be a fireman and need not know anything about firefighters: At this stage, the listener is just helping our hero's process, just the same way as any listener can help another focuser's process without knowing much about the content itself.

2. Getting a handle on the scope of the project

What is the scope of your project?

For instance, in our example:



- Does the fireman want to share his excitement about focusing with people he knows - - friends, family, colleagues?
- Or does he want to share his insights about how focusing improves his ability to be a fireman with his colleagues at the station house?
- Or does he want to spread this knowledge to the whole Fire Department?
- Or, maybe even all firefighters around the world?

At this stage, you can use focusing to get a sense of what your motivation is. And you can do this with any focusing partner, no need for the listener to know anything about your project or the field.

This is standard focusing, so I won't discuss how to do it.

Next:

If what you want to do is share your knowledge of focusing with a few family members or friends, then what you need to do is essentially... just do it.



Skip directly to step 4.

If, on the other hand, your goals are more ambitious than that, then it makes sense to stop and plan how to proceed further.

3. Planning

Why plan?

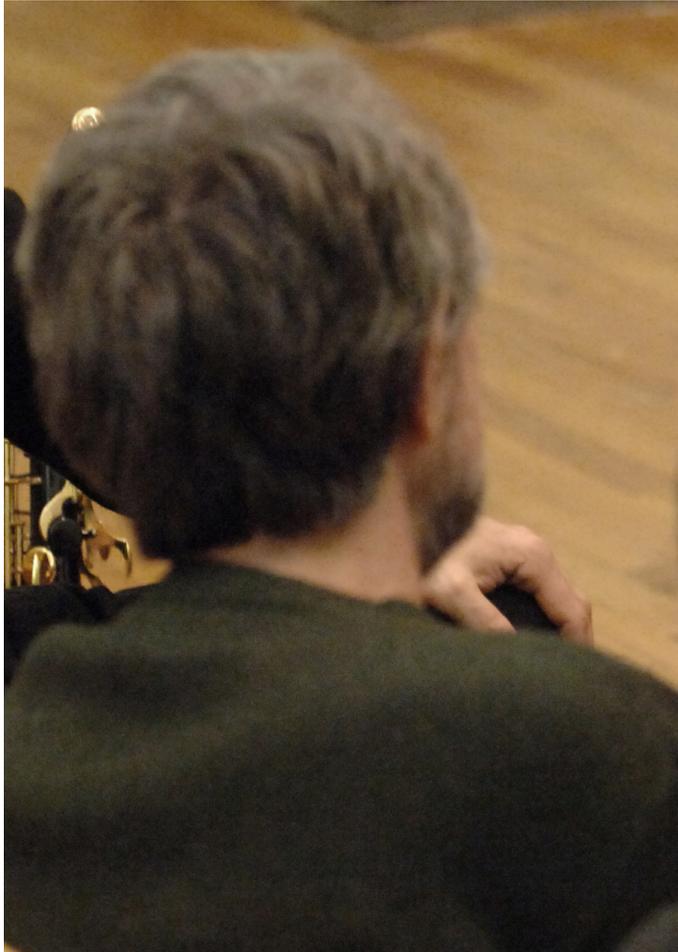
One option would be to talk to one person at a time, without worrying too much about the larger goal, and let things happen in their own time, in an organic way. This may not be the most effective way to go about it... But you are free to proceed at your own pace, and to derive as much enjoyment of this process as you can. There is no reason to make effectiveness the key criteria.



On the other hand, if you don't plan, there is a danger that, at some point, you may become discouraged by the immensity of the task and the realization of how little you have achieved.

Planning means that you make a conscious decision on how you want to proceed. You let yourself face how big the task is, instead of staying in denial at the risk of later being painfully surprised and burnt out.

How will you plan?



Well, as a focuser, you could do worse than starting with some focusing sessions. For these, you can get help from a focusing partner, and it is absolutely not necessary that the listener be somebody who knows anything about the field you are working in.

This focusing is about taking the measure of the project you are embarking on. The goal is to have a gut feeling of the general way you're going about it.

The kind of questions you're going to be contemplating at this stage are familiar focusing questions.

A. What is your sense of the project as a whole?



Let yourself feel the shape and texture and size and color of the project...

Let yourself see whether you feel you're inside the project, or outside, or at its periphery...

Let yourself experience the emotional dimension of dealing with this project...

B. What is your sense of the project as it is completed?

What images come up for you?

What is the sense of accomplishment inside your body?

C. What stands between you and this project being completed?



Focusing cannot give you impartial, objective information about the outside world. What you get from this process is information about yourself, your perceptions and your fears.

We are not talking about confusing this internal information with the reality of the situation. But being aware of your perceptions and fears

is a good way to start the planning process. Now that you know your fears, you can do a reality check on them, and this will help pull the project from the realm of fantasy to reality.

***Let yourself sense obstacles
real and perceived,
fears rational and irrational...***

D. Who could be your allies in this process?

If your project is ambitious, chances are you will be more successful if you have allies.

It makes sense to think about this from the beginning on.

If what comes up for you is a sense of how overwhelming it is to even conceive of allies in this field, this is an indication that you might have to lower your goals and expectations, at least in a first stage.

You may want to “lower the bar”. Start focusing again on where to look for people who might not be incredibly helpful, but who could at

least be *somewhat helpful* at the beginning stage.

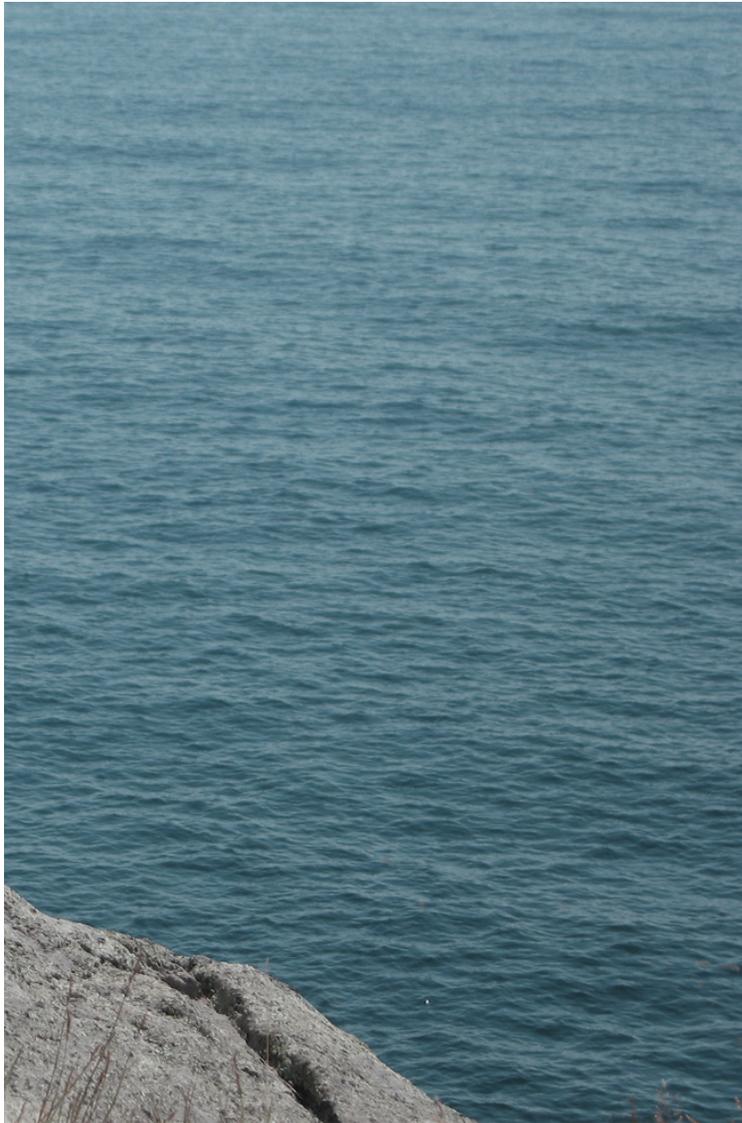
This is something that you can start to address through regular focusing. The allies you need may have to be firefighters... But if you need help figuring out why you’re having trouble finding allies among firefighters, you can focus on this with regular focusers.



E. Last but not least, what is your sense of what the next step could be?



Let yourself hang out at the edge of the unknown,
sensing what might be coming next.



4. Communicating at the edge

How can we start a dialogue about focusing with non-focusers? Especially with people who are not eager to find out what a *felt sense* is, or what steps it might take to get to one?

Ordinary words are imperfect at capturing the richness and depth of the experience of focusing. As focusers, we know that, so we don't even try to capture the complexity of a felt sense and of the focusing process in logical words.

Instead of just talking about focusing, it is a good idea to give people a sense of what focusing is -- a personal experience of it. But it's hard to do this without actually doing focusing.

What you can do is help people experience the sense of *attunement* that comes with the focusing relationship.



Resonance and attunement

Attunement with another person, and attunement within oneself, come together within the context of focusing. This is an important part of the process.

How do we get to the attunement without actually doing a focusing session?

In ordinary conversation:

- the person talking acts as if they make sense,
- the listener assumes that what they perceive is what was meant.

In a focusing session:

- the person talking doesn't try to make sense
- the listener doesn't assume that what they hear makes any logical sense (only that it makes some sort of sense to the focuser)
- the goal is not for both people to agree on something, but for the focuser to experience resonance, both internally and in contact with the listener.

In other words, focusing is not guided by the logic of language, but by the process of resonating. Part of what happens in focusing is that the listener gets to a place of *not-knowing* what the focuser says (not assuming to know, and not trying so hard to know).

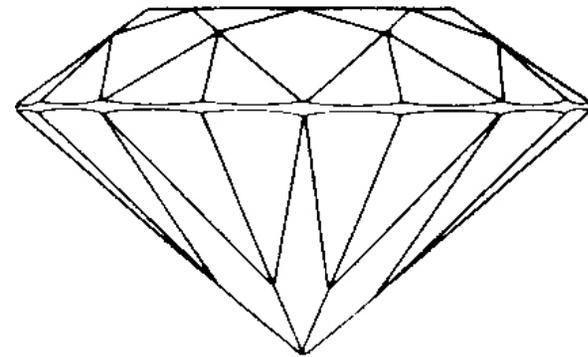
Not knowing what words mean

As a focuser, you are accustomed to *not* take for granted that we understand the meaning of the words we hear, and to make space for the implicit.

For instance, when you hear "diamond":



You know better than to immediately assume that "diamond" is referring to some iconic ideal of the cut diamond: well-defined surfaces, the epitome of what is hard, sharp and clear.

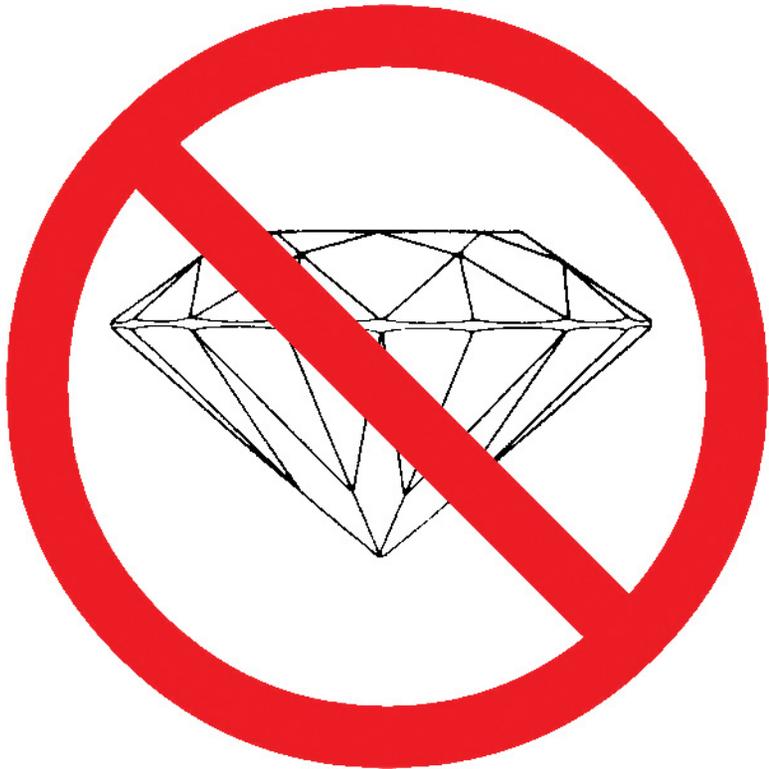


You know that there may be a lot of other "stuff" in what the focuser calls "diamond"... so much other stuff that the "diamond" might as well be called a fluffy cloud!

These ordinary words are just some kind of a "handle" that is a step (*only* a step) in the process of communicating meaning.



Conversation is an opportunity to resonate



You're going to conduct this conversation from the perspective of *resonating*.

You're not assuming that words are clear and well-defined, with sharp edges so to speak... You're dealing with the conversation as if it were a focusing "handle", i.e. something fuzzy and changeable.

Most importantly, you are not attempting to resonate with the words themselves, but *with the person* behind the words.

To an outsider, it would seem as if you were having an ordinary conversation... except you know that these apparently normal words don't have much more meaning than the gibberish we can use while focusing.

What happens in the conversation:

- You say something, but you don't expect this something to really communicate all of what you mean, as one often does in ordinary conversation.
- You say something, and you listen to what the other person is "getting". This gives you a sense of what they are resonating with.
- You resonate with their resonance, and, from that place, you say something else.
- Here again, you don't expect that this something else is going to explain it all to them. So you listen to how they resonate with it. You resonate with that, and then you say something that comes from that.

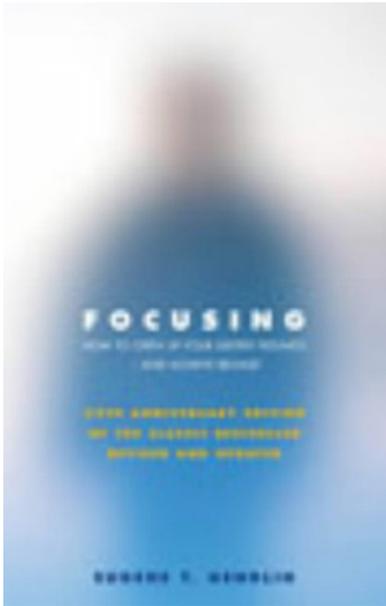
Little by little, there is a sense of attunement. You may not have communicated all of what you wanted to communicate, or thought that you should be able to communicate... but you have probably communicated more than you would have through a *normal* process of exchanging logical, "convincing" words.



Besides, how could you, in just a few moments and a few sentences, share an outlook that is based on so much experience of yours? So, it's more realistic to actually think of this exercise as

building bridges, beginning to communicate *part of* your experience...

Is that it?



No. What you've been doing is just an introduction to *part of* the focusing experience: The sense of attunement that comes from being listened to in a focusing way.

This is also an introduction to *sensing the internal attunement* that develops as one responds to being listened to in this way. This sensing is a gateway to focusing - - a *direct access to a bodily knowing*.

Now is the time to tell this person (or these people) that what you've been doing is part of what's called *focusing*. You may wonder: "*Didn't you just say, earlier, that these people are not especially interested in focusing per se?*" Yes, but that was before they had an experience of it.

It's not really *focusing* unless you call it *focusing*. Now, they have more of a sense of what you're talking about. So it's OK to tell them more about *focusing*.

It's not just OK, it's the right thing to do. You are letting them know that you have introduced them to something that has a lot of depth to it, as well as a vibrant community, a large pool of resources... and this, too, is what you're sharing with them.

Where do you start? Where people are!



Let's go back to the story of the fireman (please remember this is a fictional example, not a real case).

The fireman starts by finding some common ground with his colleagues. Maybe they're having a beer together?

In any case, this conversation happens in a context where there is some sense of community. It doesn't work if he's perceived as an outsider who is trying very hard to "sell" something that is alien to the firemen's world.

At some point, our hero may be saying something like *"There's something I've been doing that seems to help me deal better with this work"*.

As the conversation goes on, the fireman may be saying: *"It's something I do before, something that helps me clear my mind"*. The focusing process is introduced organically, as the conversation flows.

By then, it is information that relates to the needs and curiosity of the other firemen.

Carrying forward

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About the author

Serge Prengel is a focusing-oriented therapist in New York City. Part 4 of this document is adapted from his "*Resonant Body: A Deeper Level Of Communication*".

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