

## **A RECORD OF THE 2014 COORDINATORS ASSEMBLY**

**The Focusing Institute**

**Location: Stony Point, New York**

**Dates: May 18 - 21, 2014**

### **SUMMARY: Nada's report on Coordinators Assembly 2014.**

Dear friends, here is a bit of review and impressions from - me (Nada) about the Coordinators Assembly at Stony Point May 2014.

First evening we were met in the Conference room by the group of 8 who prepared a very effective agenda.

40 Focusing Institute Coordinators were present at the Assembly. Executive Director Catherine Torpey, also joined us. The group was a real manifestation of multicultural and multilingual membership; US 14, Spanish speaking countries 12 (Argentina, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Guatemala, Mexico, Spain, ), Canada 5, Germany 3, Israel 3, Japan 2, UK 1, Netherlands 1,

The atmosphere was friendly and eager. It was moving indeed to meet face to face so many CCs, who took the time, money and energy to come to this pivotal meeting. Many of us agreed that face to face meeting is so much better than any other way of communicating.

We were briefed by the team of 8 about the plan how to carry this gathering forward. Meetings were planned to be with the whole group and sometimes in smaller groups.

Every morning we started with one hour of Focusing partnership. Indeed a meaningful way to be in touch with oneself in this extraordinary event.

First morning we split into 5 groups of 8 with one of the “8 leaders”. The purpose of this meeting was to:

- listen without interrupting
- to give people a chance to lay out their concerns and goals for conference
- to come up with possible topics for interest groups in the afternoon
- to feel heard and connect to each other

For me it was such a fertile meeting. We started to share very deeply and very safely all those concerns that we brought with us from the past couple of years. Being listened and heard without any interruption was indeed very beneficial.

After lunch we met as the whole group to form interest-based discussion groups. There were different numbers of participants in these groups, based on common interest on the topics.

We were also introduced how to use colour cards which helped discussions and decisions to be very well regulated. Each person had 5 cards:

Pink “I have a proposal”, Orange “This needs more discussion”, Blue “I need someone to listen to me” , Green “I agree”, Red “I am not willing for this to go ahead”. The use of these cards proved to be simple, helped to organize issues and useful so everyone could be heard. In her capable manner, Ann was coordinating questions, answers and card requests throughout the Assembly. Each of the members of the organizing team - Jim, Beverly, Heijo, Monica, Marine also shared their perspectives and ideas.

Each group had couple of hours to discuss the topic of common interest. Later in the afternoon we met again as the whole group and listened to reports and some proposals. Coloured cards came very handy to discover consensus, disagreements, need to be listened to and stopping some issues to be tabled at that time. During that time we made several proposals which helped to form interest groups for the next day.

The following day after breakfast and Focusing partnership, we met in different subgroups according to similarities of issues that were discussed the previous day. Reports from these groups were shared with the whole group and it was proposed that these reports will be collected and eventually be reported on the Discussion lists all together.

There was time assigned for several regional groups to bring messages and proposals from their local associations. Spanish speaking CCs presented a PowerPoint proposal from their groups, Aaffien brought news from The Netherlands and Marine from French Quebec Canada group.

Catherine Torpey introduced herself and her work as Executive Director. Robert Lee and Nina Joy shared some of their experiences, struggles and difficulties of the job they accepted few months ago and is now coming to an end. The proposal to form NOMINATING COMMITTEE for the new Board of Directors and Leadership Council – was discussed and action step followed.

I hope this will give you a bit of a feel of the CC Assembly 2014. It is regretful that only 40 Coordinators out of almost 200 were able to be present. It is very gratifying that 108 sent their Introduction for the beautiful booklet "Coordinators 2014" (still available in digital form). To give those who were not with us a full picture of feelings, transitions and transformations is just about impossible. For me, I feel encouraged,

hopeful and excited about the new steps ready for us to be taken.

Thank you to all who shared themselves at this meeting and I hope we do it again and again.

Best regards Nada

## **PART I      SUMMARY NOTES**

**(Submitted by Kevin Krycka)**

[Perhaps someone could add a few sentences about why this assembly now and its intended purpose, including why/how a 'group of eight' was constituted and with what it was charged to do]

May 18, 2014

SUNDAY

The assembly convened this evening with 40 coordinators and coordinators-in-training present from several countries; Argentina, Chile, Ecuador, Israel, United States, Netherlands, Canada, United Kingdom, Germany, ... At the start, each of the Group of 8 offered the group their own thoughts or wishes for the assembly. Care was taken to allow for simultaneous translation of this and all that followed. Each of those assembled shared their name and some words about what they were experiencing regarding the upcoming meetings; words such as hopeful, open, undecided, unsure, and cautious came from the group.

We broke into groups of four and spent several minutes with each other sensing into what came for us in that moment that wanted to be shared. After a pause, we were invited to hold in our consciousness what we imagined or hoped we could feel inside by the end of the conference. Again, many different things were shared in the groups of four, which were not shared to the larger group. These were kept private. After this we convened once more in the larger group of the assembly. We were invited to consider having daily notes/summaries of those days meetings sent out to the community. Several immediately volunteered to create notes for their home countries, including those who were not coordinators. No consensus was reached regarding to whom these summaries would be sent. We left it to be decided upon during the next day, where there would be an opportunity for this issue to be raised and discussed at greater length. We concluded by self-selecting into one of five working groups who would be meeting to determine which issues should be raised in our remaining time together.

May 19

MONDAY

We had a very full day. Focusing partners met for one hour before the morning general assembly meeting.

We went to small groups, usually of eight, where we all took time to listen closely to each other, to discuss what ever came up as important and spend time with each issue or concern. Groups made notes of the issues raised. These were put around the room when we reconvened, but not discussed. Some felt we should have made small reports to the entire assembly.

After lunch, a group process used by the British Focusing coordinators was introduced by Barbara (UK). The process uses color-coded cards to indicate where one felt regarding the discussion. Agreement (green card) and strong disagreement (red card) were among the cards used. There were other colors as well. It became clear that most wanted at least some small check-in from the morning groups. Soon after we started the afternoon assembly, a proposal was made to switch the order of the day so that we could first get a better sense of the work being done by the Temporary Board and the new Executive Director. Green cards all around. We decided to shift the order of the day to hear from Catherine, the new TFI Executive Director, on her activities, the Temporary Board, and simply to get to know her and her vision for TFI. A big discussion developed over the role of the Temporary Board; sometimes misunderstandings were cleared up, sometimes confusion over what certain words meant persisted for quite a while until we understood each other, or at least to the point of agreeing to move on. The issue of power (who has it- legally, ethically, and how do CC's get it) was a big issue. Catherine explained how US legal requirements for Non-Profits work and that the Board is the constituted legal authority. The buck stops with them. Until the By Laws are changed, if they are, this is the system in place. The one Temporary Board member present, Robert Lee, was joined by former Board member, Nina Joy Lawrence, to talk more about how they worked toward choosing the nominating committee.

From the morning working groups, seven new groups were made based on interest areas discussed and agreed to by the assembly. They were: Participation mode/value, Role of coordinator, Coordinators' responsibilities, Communication, Hot Potato, Organizational structure, and What difference TFI makes.

May 20

TUESDAY MORNING AND AFTERNOON

Opening hour: One on one Focusing

Morning program: Seven "Interest Groups" convened to discuss challenges and possible solutions of their chosen topic. Each group prepared a list of top concerns/interests to report back to the whole meeting in the afternoon.

Afternoon program: Based on Monday's master list of "Interest Groups," 10 minute reports/ comments/questions are given. They are

Participation mode/value: circular v hierarchical consensus based/ inclusion model/ regional groups/ Leadership group/ executive director's duties

Role of coordinator: issues with current membership/ needs of community and needs of coordinators/ what is a coordinator/ how to become one

Coordinators' responsibilities: speaking your truth/ standing in yourself while making room for another/ helping the culture to grow as community

Communication: how is information share/ alternative methods of communication/ issues of translation/

Hot Potato: sharing certain kinds of information/ intense feels about past/ need to be just

What difference TFI makes: what are we about/ who are we/ what is our purpose/ what do we want to have happen in the world/ external v internal information

Structure: models for decision making and power/ imagining new models

Following that, Catherine made a report on her vision of the future of the Institute, including her history with the temporary Board. She answered many questions from the group.

Robert Lee, the only member of the temporary Board present, presented the roster of the temporary Nominating Committee to seek members for the Board of Directors and the Leadership Council. Their task is to solicit possible names from the community, select the most appropriate from those names, ascertain whether these people would be able and willing to serve in the duties, and finally announce the names. The temporary Board selected members of the Nominating Committee from regional districts in order to have a world-wide representation. CC's from the Ibero-American countries had a strong sense that one of the selected Nominating Committee members was not appropriate in their opinion. Robert Lee recognized that the Temporary Board may have made an error in this case and offered to meet with this group later that evening, which they did.

## WEDNESDAY MORNING

The agenda for the morning was to develop Action Steps (task, person responsible, completion date, etc) but instead there was a series of proposals advanced and discussed which took up the morning meeting. The outcome of the meeting with the Ibero-American group was

announced. It was decided that there would be an addition to the Nominating Committee and that the Ibero-American group would offer suggestions to the Temporary Board for this person. It will remain the decision of the Temporary Board to appoint.

[Ann said she'd fill-in this part]

**PART II      REPORTS FROM OPEN SPACE GROUPS**

There were 8 groups:

1. Hot Potato (Robert Lee) -- NOT YET INCLUDED
2. Articulating Our Purpose (Barbara McGavin)
3. Participation mode/Values (Nina Joy Lawrence)
4. Roles and Responsibilities of Coordinators (Ruth Hirsch)
5. Responsibility (Bev Shoenberger)
6. Communication (Isabel Gascon)
7. Our Success-- NOT YET INCLUDED
8. Structure (Hejo Feuerstein)-- NOT YET INCLUDED

#### 4. Coordinator

What is a CC: Definition, Responsibilities, Values

(submitted by Ruth Hirsch)

Group members: Ruth Hirsch, Ann Weiser Cornell, Elena Frezza, Jeff Morrison, Larry Letich, Bebe Simon

Goals of group to address the following issues/questions:

What is a Coordinator?

Are there different types of CCs?

Who are we as a group?

What is our natural power?

What are our roles- as CCs? As TFI?

What support for each other and TFI/Board- CCs? Support for international/regional conferences?

Results:

A Coordinator is responsible to:

Spread Focusing in the world; speak for Focusing; represent Focusing; model Focusing

Have a voice and take a leadership role inside and outside of the Focusing community

Work collaboratively

With other CCs, with TFI/Board, with other Focusing trainers

To stay informed, to stay connected, and pass along information to our trainers and to our communities.

Trains people to certification and continues to support them.

Attention to excellence in the training during and after certification

When appropriate, organize international conferences

Questions that remain:

How do CCs relate to TFI/Board? Leadership Council?

How do CCs have input into TFI actions, decisions?

How can we improve communication from TFI to CCs? And communication between CCs?

What is the responsibility of TFI to CCs? What we'd like to receive from Board/TFI:

Attractive, informative materials for presenting Focusing to new audiences

Information about what is going on. Perhaps a way of knowing what is key information

Possibility of a Coordinators Communication Committee?

A clear means for having input/being involved

Support for our training programs, and our gatherings/conferences

Make membership in TFI attractive enough that people want to belong

How do people become CCs?

Can this be enforced?

Might we have a requirement for what is needed to continue as Trainer or CC?

Interest Group: Nina Joy Lawrence and Carolyn Worthing

### 3. Participation mode/Values

(submitted by Nina Joy Lawrence)

#### OUR COMMON GROUND

Our common Ground informs how we are together. From this we find how to carry forward together. Some pieces of our common ground are here, with instances of them at the organizational level.

1. Clearness comes when all aspects of the whole are heard. Disturbances need to be heard. Example: In the British Focusing Association there was much conflict as individual Focusers worked to create an organization. People got very angry, felt hurt, yelled, left the room. Then they found the process of using colored cards to show their response to what was under discussion. Using the cards helped them listen and not leave out any minority. With any discomfort people could relax into knowing they would be heard, not overridden. The group is now moving forward well.
2. A stopped process is a step not yet found. The larger process carries the stopped process forward, implying ongoing attention. Example: In TFI there are stopped processes being carried forward by the living organization. When the transitional board accepted the job of shepherding TFI from leadership by the Gendlins to leadership by the Focusing Community, the group thought all they absolutely needed to do was rewrite the By-Laws and come up with a way to involve the community in choosing the next board. They found a large pile of stopped process in their lap, that took so much attention they had 3 hour meetings at least once a week for 6 months.
3. Acknowledging we are part of a greater whole means we ARE interaction. Example: The new non-profit, Focusing International and TFI do affect each other. A number of Focusing people have asked Focusing International to change their name because they feel the name creates confusion about The Focusing Institute and its place in the world. It has even been suggested that TFI be given the power to make Focusing International change their name. Consider how it would affect the whole Focusing world if TFI were invested with that kind of power over another independent Focusing organization. We are interaction.

4. The way we interact can create safety around discomfort so the discomfort can inform our process. Lack of safety can shut down our process. Example: Gene and Mary wanted to create The Focusing Institute as a new sort of organization, not following the standard, traditional structures. In the process TFI stretched further from the standard than will continue to work. Gene and Mary handed it off to the transitional board as representatives of the Focusing community, in order that it could go on living. TFI has to return to just enough structure, or the organization won't be safe enough to carry forward with its creative growing edge.

## 5. Responsibility

Open Space Interest Group:

Topic: HOW CAN COORDINATORS HAVE RESPONSIBILITY IN OUR ORGANIZATION, AND TO THE WORLD?

Spaceholder: Aaffien de Vries      Members: Carlos Aceituno Godoy and Beverly Shoenberger

As we three gathered together under the trees at Stoney Point, we quietly took the concept “responsibility” inside, and waited to see what arose. What does it MEAN to each of us to “take responsibility?”

Responsibility means being willing to wait until something becomes clear.  
... checking inside, and behaving with integrity, and respect for self & other  
... standing up . . . standing in myself . . .  
... being honest with myself, and then with the other person

Speaking our Truth leads to growing, a sense of expanding energy

We each have responsibility for making and for protecting space for the truth to emerge, both our own and someone else’s.

The truth doesn’t always come in a “politically correct” way. It is not about being perfect, or even about trying to become “closer to perfect”, or saying things “the right way.” We can get so caught in trying to say things “right” that we abandon what is true for us. We also need to take responsibility for the impact of our words and actions afterwards. All of us can learn from our interactions.

To take responsibility for our own state of being - to care for ourselves, knowing that what is good for us is good for the whole. Not pointing the finger of blame to make somebody else the black sheep

Living with the untruth is not good for the soul.

We found that Focusing on this value together helped it grow roots in our bodies and become more clear. We felt there was great value in this simple exercise. We found ourselves asking “How can we water the roots of responsibility in our Coordinators’ group?” and “How do we develop of culture that supports this value and other values that we share?”

We propose doing this simple Focusing on responsibility and on other shared values at our large gatherings, or even at the Weeklong, when new trainers are gathering. How do we encourage “walking the talk” so that we continue to live our Focusing values as we are doing in this Assembly?

This meeting was only the beginning. How do we explore further what the responsibilities of a Coordinator are? What behaviors might arise out of the sense of personal responsibility we describe above?

We mentioned concrete ideas such as asking every Coordinator to volunteer for one year out of every three, in some form of service to our Coordinators’ community - whether working on a Functional Whole, serving as a translator, planning a Conference, etc. Also, we mentioned the possibility of requiring new Coordinators to serve on a Functional Whole for their first year as a Coordinator.

We did not have time to explore these or other ideas, and look forward to continuing Focusing/ discussion as a teleconference group. Beverly will be hosting this call, and we will be inviting other interested people from our large CC group to join in.

## 6. Communication

(submitted by Catherine Torpey)

Present: Edgardo Riveros Aedo, Isabel Gascón Juste, Naomi Horio, Mako Hikasa, Kevin Krycka,

### AREAS TO CONSIDER:

- Different languages
- Other academic areas
- Other membership

### INTERNAL

- Coordinators to Executive Director
- Coordinators to Coordinators
- Leadership Council and Board of Directors to Executive Director and Coordinators
- Coordinators to the larger Focusing community
- Culture / language to culture / language

The Coordinator to coordinator communication has been more about the past than the future

Website should be a home for Focusers

### EXTERNAL

We should be communicating our successes

- training models
- research
- articles
- books

The website should be our face to the world

Principle: We will honor diversity of language and culture and find ways to communicate.

MORE THOUGHTS ABOUT THE WEBSITE (most discussion around website was around language)

Very few Japanese speak English, for instance. The website needs a Japanese page.

The website should communicate to people from other languages and cultures: **"You belong here."**

Website front page should be inviting to many languages - right at the top, not where you have to search for it (does exist along the side, but that isn't a strong enough message that "you belong here")

Dues are paid but we who speak other languages don't have access to basic documents/ information.

Integrate not only languages but cultures

Perhaps an interactive map -- you click to go to photos of people from that country who are Focusers, for instance.

Starting with translation of the homepage would be important.

Website has to be a projection of our heart

Show Mary and Gene's faces -- our lineage. We have a common beginning. Honor our founders.

Starting with making sure the homepage is translated in many languages would be an important beginning

There should be links to the Japanese homepage, the Spanish homepage, etc.

How do we decide which languages have the highest priority, since we can't do all languages?

Start with Japanese, Spanish and Chinese – have a plan for more and more inclusion.

Policy suggestion: If there are 4 people who speak a certain language, then a fifth person could be sponsored to give translation. (It turns out that the policy for the Weeklong is: "Translation may be provided for groups of five or more participants from one country/language." )

## COORDINATOR to COORDINATOR COMMUNICATION

In the last few months, the Coordinators' list has been destructive/ overwhelming/ full of bad feeling

Especially if English is not your first language, it is difficult to know which e-mails on the discussion list are important – would there be a way to flag important ones?  
(Catherine mentioned that no official announcements from TFI will go to the discussion list unless they also are sent to all coordinators' individual e-mails, so that no one has to be on the discussion list in order to receive any important e-mails from TFI.)

A NEW ERA FOR TFI AND FOR HOW WE RELATE TO ONE ANOTHER  
We need to communicate that something new is coming.

We want to reach out to everyone, including those who have pulled away.

It's important to keep the tradition with key communications, that documents be sent out in several languages at the same time.

How can we make the communication among us more Focusing-like?

We are being re-born and our communication must be new, too.

We want to bring the alienated back into the fold.

Small efforts can change the dynamic.

I have not been heard.

We are in a very special time.

Hearing from people who are doing things – not just hearing from Catherine.

What is happening after this meeting? Timely information from the Executive Director, from the Board

CC's are oxygen-givers to the community; beacons of light.

We have not seen our full potential.