

August 6, 2011

Dear Fellow Coordinators,

The following information describes the FOT training program I offered in New England from 2003 to 2006. I have not been teaching since our move to California, and thus the information has not been updated since 2006.

As I am sitting with what to share with you, I am imagining the following might be helpful:

1. **STRUCTURE & CONTENTS**
2. **TWO FOUNDATIONAL VALUES & EXAMPLES OF HOW THEY INFLUENCED MY CLASS STRUCTURE**
3. **REQUIREMENTS FOR CERTIFICATION**
4. **BROCHURE**

**NAME OF PROGRAM: Focusing for Psychotherapists: A Way to Access Your Body's Wisdom** – This was a three year program for seven psychotherapists, most of whom were already trained in Gestalt.

**1. STRUCTURE & CONTENTS:**

- **FINDING YOUR INNER COMPASS** (one full weekend, and one follow-up three hour class two weeks later) – Participants were assigned partners for weekly Focusing exchanges after the 3 hour follow up class. They changed partners every two months. Reading: Either Ann's Power of Focusing or Gene's Focusing, Ann's paper "Three Rules for Safety in Partnerships", and the article on partnership on the Institute's website.
- **FOCUSING FUNDAMENTALS** (10 Saturdays from 10 am to 3 pm for one year.) Even though this was year one of an FOT program, the emphasis in this first year is not on working with clients, but on deepening their ability to be with another in Focusing sensitive conversation during class discussion and exploring Focusing through dyad exchange. Both of these are primary foundations for practicing as an FOT. The former because they learn to sense those moments of Focusing that happen during a therapy session, and how to support their unfolding. And they learn how to track their own felt sensing while listening.

The following are the topics we cover in this first year – one a month. Readings are from my training manual, with additional articles as noted. Every month we look at Focusing from a different vantage point, but we aren't actually adding a lot of new material.

1. Three Chairs: Run-Along mind, Pausing/focusing, Inner Relationship - a very helpful way for students to get a clear visual and kinesthetic understanding of how Focusing is different from emotions, thoughts, stories, sensations, intuitions and the importance of the Focusing Attitude to the process (inspired by Rbt Lee, Suzanne Noel and Ann W-C.)
2. YOU and IT - Reading: Ann's article: *How to Tell if You Are Focusing*

3. Recognizing inner critical voices – I have a useful chart developed from Bala and Elfie’s work
  4. Relating to Self-Critical Patterns: Keeping things safe for your process to unfold – developed from Gene, Mary McGuire and Ann W-C’s work
  5. Focusing and your life: Clarifying the Issue – Chair 1, Robert Lee’s Domain Method
  6. Some ways to start a session – using Rob Foxcroft’s article in the Focusing Connection
  7. Recognizing Focusing in Daily Life: Deepening connection with your experience – developed from Biospiritual Focusing
  8. Back to Basics: waiting at the edge, symbolizing and receiving the felt shift
  9. Focusing Alone – Reading: The 1992 Focusing Connection devoted to this topic
  10. Being with the end of year one
- **YEARS TWO AND THREE** (11 Saturdays a year, from 10 to 3 pm) During the mornings, we have an attunement, brief check-in, and about an hour of Focusing-sensitive conversation as described below. After that, we have dyads or a round robin, and then a brief lunch break. We watch 20 minutes or so of a video of Gene or another Coordinator, and then end with either a circle discussion, round robin or dyad focusing – whichever feels right to us.

In the first 5 classes of year two, I present briefly on various topics in FOT during the morning conversation period., such as levels of experiencing, and writings of Jim Iberg and Doralee on FOT. During the remaining 17 classes, we use this hour to discuss what comes up for us from assigned reading in Gene’s FOT book. This brings in many FOT topics, such as dreamwork (where we spend 2 weeks), catharsis, gestalt chair work, solution focused therapy, etc. We continue to have our discussions in a Focusing-sensitive way – using our classroom as a laboratory to develop this skill which is the basis of FOT. See discussion below under STUDENT AS TEACHER.

## **2. VALUES AND EXAMPLES OF HOW THEY MANIFEST:**

### **VALUE - CLASS AS LABORATORY:**

Although I do teach the steps, I feel I’m not so much offering a technique in class, as much as offering everyone a laboratory in which to learn and practice a way of relating to ourselves and others that is founded on:

*respect*  
*deep listening*  
*reflection that supports felt-sensing*  
*offering questions that arise naturally from body sensed interaction*  
 receiving and mutually appreciating felt-shifts

Focusing and Focusing-sensitive conversation are structures that provide a way to develop our interactive experiential awareness – like providing the right temperature and cleanliness for a yogurt culture to grow.

It's fun and challenging for me to find ways to bring the technique in as a helpful tool -- a menu but not the meal, so that it stays alive in present moment experience for people - a finger pointing to the moon, but not the moon itself.

**EXAMPLE:** Each time we gather, and each time we break, I ring a resonant bell and we have a moment of silence to allow for transitioning into a more experientially-aware space/time together, where our conversations are intentionally Focusing-sensitive. I feel this is one of the best ways to train for FOT. It helps keep us from getting caught in Focusing as a method of steps or rigid concepts – or a technique/method that we can fail at or get right.

We start this right from the first morning of the opening weekend. As they talk about what has brought them to the weekend and what they hope to get out of it, I reflect, help them pause and resonate, describe a little if it feels right, and notice and welcome any shifts.

I like to let the discussion of steps arise out of observation of the felt-sensing/Focusing that often happens when we are received with the Focusing attitude from an (at least somewhat) embodied Listener. This helps develop the culture so we learn how to be with clients in FOT. When we break for lunch or end the day – we go back to regular conversation/discussion.

After the first month of Year One, therapists were saying things like: “This is what has been missing for me.” “This is the missing link.” “It felt so different being with my clients today.” “I’m getting glimmerings of a whole new world, a new way of relating to myself and others.” This wasn’t so much in response to the conceptual technique, but rather to the focusing way of experiencing that was opening for them as they practiced the method and relating with others in class.

**VALUE – STUDENT AS TEACHER:** Another foundational value for me is that the wisdom is within each student. Just as Mary and Janet used the “Focuser as Teacher” model, I am using the “Student as Teacher” model.

Over and over, I have to remember that the wisdom they need to hear is within them . It is my job to recognize, make room for, trust in and support their own spontaneous felt sensing and VALUE what comes from that. Something magical happens (for me and them) when I can do that. Whenever I get feeling smart, or like I have a lot of important knowledge to get across, the energy in the class begins to feel stuck or resistant somehow. When I remember to give small servings – and then let them digest and come up with their own inner knowing – the magic returns.

**EXAMPLE:** Each person brings in a quote from their reading that seemed somehow rich with meaning for them. They read the quotes aloud to the group.

Two or three students choose to take turns going more deeply into their quote in front of the group. The student then begins to Focus on the “more” that comes as they sit freshly with the quote. Other

students reflect until the student feels they have received the treasure. Then the floor is open for questions –again, asked in a Focusing sensitive way, as you might ask a client. When the presenter feels ready, other students may then Focus with that same quote for a bit, seeing where it takes them. It is very alive for everyone – and far better than ANYTHING I could have presented in “teacher” mode.

### **Guidelines for Certification as a Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapist**

Beverly Shoenberger, LPC, PT, CMC – Certifying Coordinator

Note to Coordinators: At this point in time, I can't remember all the sources for the following. Much of it was from the Guidelines used at that time by Neil Friedman, PhD and Joan Klagsbrun, PhD, Certifying Coordinators in the Boston area. I may have also taken things from the Focusing.org website and Ann Weiser-Cornell's site. I wish I could give proper credit!

- **Classes:** Participate in the in-person training program, usually for three years. I have not yet worked with people independently of my training program, or people at a distance.
- **Supervision:** 5 personal meetings during the last two years, where we can be with whatever you'd like to bring to our meeting. The last of the meetings will be regarding the Assessment for Certification if you would like.
- **Focusing Partnership:** Weekly partnership exchanges are a major part of the training. Most people need a partnership of at least two years duration to allow the focusing and listening skills to take root and begin to integrate with one's daily life.
- **Changes Group:** Take part in at least two community Changes groups each year. (I hope that after certification, Trainers and FOTS will consider continuing to be an active part in the Focusing community, both locally, nationally and internationally, if it feels right to you.)
- **Readings:** Carefully read Gendlin's *Focusing* and *Focusing Oriented Psychotherapy*, Ann Weiser-Cornell's *Power of Focusing*, as well as the following papers available on the Focusing.org site: *The Client's Client* and *A Theory of Personality Change*, my training manual and various articles given out during the training.
- **Papers:** Write two response papers during each year (minimum of 2 pages each.) These give you an opportunity to respond in writing to something that's stirring from class discussions, your own Focusing, you reading, etc. They will not be graded – they are to support you in integrating Focusing and making it your own.
- **Additional Focusing Trainers:** Meet at least one time with another Focusing Coordinator, and review selected videos of other Focusing Coordinators.

- **Combining Focusing with Other Methods:** You are encouraged to combine Focusing with other ways that you are interested in working (e.g. other therapeutic modalities, the arts, writing, meditation, spiritual practices, etc.).
- **Online Resources for Focusing:** Familiarize yourself with various Focusing resources. These may include: the Focusing Institute's website ([www.focusing.org](http://www.focusing.org)), including articles, links to books, journals, newsletters, CDs and DVDs; [www.biospiritual.org](http://www.biospiritual.org); Ann Weiser Cornell's website, [www.focusingresources.com](http://www.focusingresources.com), through which you can subscribe to the Focusing Newsletter and the site for focusing-oriented therapists at <http://www.focusing.org/iafots.asp>. The discussion list for therapists is [iafots@lists.focusinglists.org](mailto:iafots@lists.focusinglists.org). Other resources are The Folio (a journal) that you will receive as part of your membership with the Institute, the focusing discussion list, the focusing partnership program

### **Training Completion:**

Completion of your training is determined by your having achieved competence in the list of Focusing and listening skills at the end of your Training Manual. It is not automatic upon completion of the three years.

We look for a consensus between you and me, as Certifying Coordinator. "Consensus" means that the felt senses of both of us are respected and heard, and trusted, until a shared sense of readiness emerges.

### **Administrative aspects to becoming certified:**

- At the beginning of your training, you will need to join [The Focusing Institute](http://www.focusing.org) as a Trainer-in-Training, which costs \$75 per year. If you have not yet done this, please do so right away.
- At the completion of your training, you are invited to complete a final culminating certification course, which is offered by The Focusing Institute in New York. This is a cross-cultural weeklong training that costs around \$1300, depending on the location and kind of room you choose. Please check for updates on fee, as this may have changed since my writing this.

By doing your culminating training at The Focusing Institute, you will be among Trainers-in-Training drawn from many countries (often around 15.) Please check the [www.focusing.org](http://www.focusing.org) website to see the latest on charges, location and who will be present. If you do not go to the Focusing Institute course, you will need to pay \$500 to the Focusing Institute in order to be certified by them.

### **What Certification Means**

When this process is complete, you may call yourself a Certified Focusing Trainer or a Focusing-Oriented Therapist (FOT), whichever title fits your training and license, if

needed in your state. You will be listed in the Directory published by the Focusing Institute, as long as you remain a member in good standing.

The Focusing Institute offers trainers the opportunity to have a simple pre-structured website for a small additional expense. Membership in The Focusing Institute also entitles you to quarterly newsletters, and on-line copies of the occasional journal, The Folio.

The non-profit Institute supports projects which bring focusing to Third World countries, prisons, people with cancer, and other populations that may not yet be receiving the benefit of Focusing.

To remain a member of The Focusing Institute in good standing, you must maintain your certification on an annual basis at the Trainer rate, which is currently \$125/year, and attend one International Conference at least every three years.