

Teaching Focusing and Focusing Communities: Our Way of Teaching Which Resulted in 17 Communities¹

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Introduction

Teruyuki Chikada and I, with the help of other Focusing trainers and trainers-in-training, have been teaching Focusing for the last 4 years, which resulted in the formation of 17 Focusing communities (Changes) around Tokyo. We would like to share what we are doing when we teach in our introductory Focusing workshops and how we help maintain those communities, even though we believe that our style of teaching is not the only contributing factor in this achievement. The outline of my talk will be:

How I came to know Focusing: Brief history

Brief history of our communities and Focusing Network in Tokyo.

The teachers from whom we learn how to teach

Our workshop Programs

Tips to help students form Focusing communities

The meaning of having their own Focusing community

Tips to help Focusing communities continue

Focusing Network in Tokyo: networking to maintain the communities

Cultural and social factors which promote Focusing communities in Japan

The Japan Focusing Association and other activities in Japan (ap.700)

1. How I came to know Focusing: Brief history

I would like to start with the story how I came to know and was fascinated by Focusing.

I first heard the word "Focusing" in 1992 when I started to work as a counselor at a university near Tokyo. The job was a challenge for me, because I had been trained as a developmental

¹ This paper was presented at the 11th International Focusing Conference at Toronto, May 1999, and all the numbers appear here are as of 1999. Now in May 2001, the number of communities is 27 and the members roughly 320. Also the Japan Focusing Association has grown to have more than 1000 members.

psychologist, not a psychotherapist or a counselor. During and after graduate school, I worked with handicapped children and their families. Even though I had learned from necessity how to listen to people, especially the mothers of handicapped children, working with students who visit the counseling room was new and challenging. I felt that I did not have sufficient training and I enrolled in a program for counseling skills run by NCCP, the Nisseiken Center for Clinical Psychology, a "person-centered" counseling center which has re-education programs for helping professionals. By the way, the Center now manages many of our Focusing workshops.

In that program, I heard the word "Focusing" for the first time. My teacher in the program mentioned Focusing as an effective technique for her clients with somatic problems to get the meaning out of the symptom. I was half impressed by and half doubtful about her story. But I was eager to learn anything which could be helpful. So I bought a copy of Gene's "Focusing" book, translated in Japanese by Takao Murase and others. I tried to focus by myself following the instruction in the book, and found it rather difficult to do so. But when I had a row with someone and felt hurt, the clearing-a-space worked quite well. So I started to instruct the clearing-a-space step also to students who visited the counseling room overwhelmed by their problems. It seemed to work well for them, too. So I wanted to learn about Focusing more and applied for a 4-day-workshop taught by Murase, who eventually became my mentor for 5 years since then, until his death last year.

It was 1993. Professor Murase had recovered from a fatal illness two years before and started to teach Focusing very enthusiastically. He rediscovered the power of Focusing through his own experience during his critical period and started to put most of his limited energy to teach and spread Focusing. He said that he became a lot better Focusing guide after the illness.

In the workshop, after he lectured and did some demonstrations, he just made us pair up to practice Focusing. It was just like being thrown in a river with bare knowledge of how to swim. I witnessed others having good Focusing process and understood it intellectually but did not know what it was from my own experience. So on the last day, I asked him to guide me to Focus. That was a totally new and powerful experience for me, and it drew me into Focusing world.

Also at the workshop, Murase showed us books on Focusing. Among them, there was a copy of Ann Weiser Cornell's Focusing Guide Manual, which attracted me with its funny and illustrative cartoons with rabbits and strange animals. I borrowed the book and read it through in the evenings at home. While reading it, I felt like I was being nurtured and cared for by those guiding

phrases and attitudes that Ann described in the book. It is possible to say that I, as a beginning Focuser, was vicariously guided by the book. When I returned the book to Murase with appraising comments, he casually offered me the chance to translate the manual. At that time, he and Mieko Osawa were planning Ann's first workshop in Tokyo the following year, and started to translate her manuals for the workshop. So I took the offer and started the translation, which I enjoyed and learned a lot from it.

That's the overture of my Focusing adventures. I say adventures because I am a basically private person and usually do not commit to group activities much or any extrovert things like attending an international conference or giving a talk at a conference. So my activities on Focusing for these five or six years seem to be outrageous for me. I took an initiative to form a Focusing community, asked to be an assistant for Murase's workshop, and attended workshops in English by myself and attended the International, and invited and managed Ann and Elfie's workshops in and visits to Japan, and started teaching Focusing to the life-line volunteer workers and finally at NCCP, Nisseiken center for clinical psychology. I am not a religious person but I felt that something bigger than I was working to make me involved in all these things around Focusing. It seems to be a calling.

I was very lucky to meet nice people both in Japan and in the worldwide Focusing community. First of all I have to mention Takao Murase, and Teruyuki Chikada who are at the first workshop I attended. There are also other friends in our community, Yamatomura. And the teachers of the workshops I attended and the participants of the Internationals, all the Focusers are very nice to me. At the first big focusing session with Murase, I found myself wanting to have fellow members, which I seemed to gain through Focusing. So, the content of my first Focusing session seemed to be a sort of prophecy. I do not like sounding mystical, but it feels like that now in retrospect.

2. Brief history of our communities and Focusing Network in Tokyo.

There have been several Focusing communities before ours in Tokyo, which started more than 15 years ago after Gene's visit to Japan and the translation of his book. Compared with those groups, our communities and activities started very recently. The start of our history is after Murase's illness and his reenergized zeal for Focusing. Our first Focusing community started in 1992 after Murase's annual workshop. He prompted us to have a on-going study group and offered his

house for the meeting. And after the next year's workshop which I attended, we also formed a group with the help of Chikada, who was an assistant of the workshop. He offered the counseling center at his University for our meetings on Sundays. This group became a most active community. But at the end of the first year, the number of active members decreased to only 6, less than half of the original members. So we invited the next year's (1994) participants to our group. The number of members has been about 14 since then. We meet once a month to practice Focusing in pairs and sharing.

We decided to call this kind of group a Focusing community. I know that here you call it Changes, but we felt that the word "community" fit more to our Focusing group. Since there are several communities, we decided that each group has a name of their own to identify and introduce to the other communities. The name of our group is YAMATO-MURA, which came from the name of the neighborhood of Murase's house. In 1995, two more groups formed, one from Murase's workshop, and one from a workshop for life-line volunteers, which Chikada and I taught without Murase for the first time.

In 1996, Murase retired from teaching introductory courses because of his health condition. Chikada and I were asked to replace Murase for teaching in Nisseiken Center for Clinical Psychology. Our workshops have been received very well, and we now have three introductory and two advanced courses each year. What we are proud of is that every introductory course has produced a new Focusing community.

In 1995 and 1996, Chikada and I attended the newly formed communities to support and supervise their activity. But after 4 communities came we found that it was impossible to keep going like this because we ran out of our Saturdays and Sundays because most groups meet on Saturday and Sunday. It is where the idea of FOCUSING NETWORK IN TOKYO came in. Network meets three times a year for one-day gathering open for all members of the communities. Some meetings are one-day workshop with a guest teacher. In some meetings, there is a presentation or talk in the morning and Focusing exchange with members from the other community in the afternoon. Since the Network started to operate as an institution for new learning, exchange and source of support, we stopped going to the community meetings for support.

Of course when a new community starts, one of the trainers of the workshop goes to the meeting about half a year or so. But when things go well for them, we retire.

The Network meeting started in fall 1996 with the guest teacher Elfie Hinterkopf. Since then, we have regular meetings in September, January, and May. The May meetings tend to be a report on the International. Our guest teachers have been Ann Weiser Cornell, Mary Hendricks, and Elfie.

We now have 17 communities, with more than 200 people, not only in Tokyo and suburbs, but also in other areas where we were invited to teach. We expect the number will reach 20 at the end of this year. Usually we have about 50 people in a meeting.

So this is the brief history of our activity. Brief both in description and the duration of the history itself. The pre-history started with Murase in 1992, and actual history of our own style of teaching started in 1995, and the Network started in 1996. So our active teaching and activity have only a 4-year history, but it have been a very exciting one.

Now I would like to turn to my main subject, how we teach Focusing.

3.. The teachers from whom we learned how to teach

We are actually not at all innovative. That is, we have learned how to teach from many experienced teachers. Just to mention a few whom we had personal encounter, first of all, Takao Murase, Ann Weiser Cornell, Bebe Simon, Elfie Hinterkopf. And we also had been influenced by Janet Klein's work through Bebe's level II workshop in Chicago and her books.

It is very difficult to say in words what we learned from Takao, because his influence on us is very basic and pervasive and also his system of teaching was not systematic at all. But he introduced us to Ann Weiser Cornell's systematic way of guiding and teaching. He deeply understood Gene's philosophy and his theory of personal changes and he was one of the translators of Gene's Focusing book. But he used to say that he became a lot better guide or teacher of Focusing after he came to know Ann's guide manual. Actually, he guided a session with beautiful shifts in the demonstration, but I should say that his way of running a workshop was not programmed too well.

After the workshop I came to know Ann, through 1994 Tokyo workshop and her article in FOLIO (*How I Teach People to Focus with Each Other*, Vol. 9, No. 4, pp. 146-162). From her workshop and her books, we learned many practical tips, which are too many to mention here. But I would like to touch just at least some of them, which seems to be most important in promoting the formation of Focusing communities.

- 1) to have a private session before the workshop

- 2) to have less than 5 people per class
- 3) to introduce self-guiding in the early stage
- 4) to teach listening as early as possible
- 5) 10 minutes focusing and listening practice in a round robin format
- 6) the right to pass

We take most of these methods in our workshops, except 2). We modify 2) to have 20 students and 4 teachers. We keep 5 to 1 student/trainer ratio but we made the class bigger so that the participants can form a lasting community, on which I will talk later.

There are many more things we learned from Ann, including the concept of Inner-relationship, but here I would like to talk only about the mechanics of how to teach.

The second (in the order of time, not importance) big influence on our teaching is the level II workshop I attended in Chicago with Bebe Simon and the models by Janet Klein, which I learned mostly through her books. I will just point out the important points: safety, small step program, experiential learning, focuser-as-teacher model (which we introduce in the level II). We are trying to incorporate these things which I found very helpful to our teaching.

Third influence is this International conference itself. I first attended the 8th conference in 1996, and since then I was hooked to it and keep coming. The atmosphere of the community feels so good and I wished to have it at home too. This is a big motive behind the formation of Focusing Network in Tokyo. In the Boston conference, I was assigned to Kathy McGuire's group. Her presence and her way of managing the group, and also her book, *Building Supportive Community* helped us to form and maintain our and the other community.

The fourth influence is Elfie Hinterkopf. She was the first guest for the Network meeting and regular presenter since then. Her contribution and influence is more on Focusing itself and not on how to teach it. But I like to refer and thank her as one of our favorite teachers.

I still miss many people from whom I learn a lot like Mary Hendricks, Neil Friedman, Reva, Gendlin. But I would like to go on to explain what we do in our introductory workshop.

4. Our workshop Programs

Now, I would like to give an overview of our way of teaching, according to the way as a program proceeds, although I have already mentioned some of the principles of our workshop. Our

regular and most complete course is managed by NCCP. The course is a three day (not retreat but three consecutive days) program with one private session prior to the workshop with one of the trainers.

We also run different kinds of workshops, one kind is that requested by Inochi-no-Denwa (life-line calling service) as a re-education program and the other is for professional associations. In two days we can teach most of the things, but everything remains somewhat unsatisfactory. It turned out to be possible, though, for the life-line volunteers to learn enough to start a community, because the participants have been trained in empathic listening and some bonding between them are there before the Focusing workshop.

Anyway, today I would like to share what and how we teach specifically in NCCP's "Focusing seminar: Basic Course".

We also teach an "Advanced course" which is equivalent to level II and III, which is mostly based on Janet Klein's way of teaching, emphasizing "Focuser-as-teacher model" and "Coach model". But in this presentation, I would like to concentrate on our Basic course.

1)Preparation

As I mentioned before, our Basic course is based on what we learned from Ann Weiser Cornell, and one of the most effective tips is inviting each participant to have an individual Focusing session with one of the trainers before the workshop starts. This serves for the participants to have their first Focusing experience in a safe and individualized setting and also have a bonding with at least one trainer in the workshop. To the trainers, this procedure gives a chance to see if the person can get a felt-sense and if the person can keep him/herself safe in a group setting and will not disturb safety of the whole group.

Before the workshop starts, we divide the participants into 4 groups of 5 people, which become the base groups for the focusing sessions and practice. We try to make each group consisting of various people in their age, sex, occupation, background, and their familiarity with Focusing. The participants to NCCP program consists of psychotherapists, lay counselors, helping professionals, teachers, students majoring in psychology, and also someone who needs psychological help. So we try to make each group contain different populations. The diversity of the group helps to appreciate the full range of Focusing process and makes it possible to get connected with various

people.

The group members stay together for the first two days, while the trainers rotate. In this way, the participants can have a stable home base, and also can experience the different trainers.

2) Outline of our three day program

The individual session before the workshop has proven to help enormously. It makes a whole difference in the first morning of the workshop, both in the atmosphere and the understanding of the lectures and the whole group exercise.

The number of the participants are limited to 20. It might be thought as too big for the beginners. And at the first day I always feel that there are too many people in a room. But we decided to have 20 people for the sake of forming a community afterward. Our teaching staff is 4 trainers including Chikada and/or me as main teachers. Mutsue Katayama sitting there is a very supportive regular trainer. When we have Focusing sessions or practice time in a small group, one trainer and 5 of the participants form a group.

We try to combine the short lecturing and Q&A, whole group exercise and sharing, and sessions and practice in small groups, and we have all three modes in every day, which gives change and flow.

The following table is the rough translation of the schedule we give to the participants. We are not strict on the plan and explain so to the participants. Also the schedule has been modified each time, but is getting rather stabilized for these three or four workshops.

Schedule for the Focusing seminar: Basic course

date	Content	type
the first day		
9:30~	Introduction from the felt sense	whole group exercise
11:00~	Lecture and exercise on Focusing	whole group
12:15~13:30	lunch	
13:30~	Guided Focusing session	in small groups
16:45~17:00	sharing	whole group
the second day		
9:30~	Clearing a space	whole group exercise
11:00~12:30	Guided Focusing session	in small groups
12:30~13:45	lunch	
13:45~	Lecture on self-guiding and listening	whole group
14:30~	Focusing and listening practice	in small groups
16:45~17:00	sharing	whole group
the third day		
9:30~	Demonstration of self-guided Focusing	whole group
11:00~	Focusing and listening practice	in small groups
12:30~13:45	lunch	
13:45~	Anything you need to do	in various forms
16:00~17:00	Focusing and sharing on the three days	whole group

Each day of the workshop has a goal. The first day is devoted to the Focusing experience and learning the process and the attitude. Each participant is guided to have a Focusing process by trainers in a small group. On the second day, we introduce self-guided Focusing and listening. And on the third and last day, they practice what they have learned in the previous days with a different group of people. We reserve the last afternoon in which each participant can do whatever they need to do, Focusing or listening practice in pairs, full guided session again with a trainer, or observing someone else's session.

During the workshop, on the second or third day, we introduce the possibility to have their

own Focusing community. Then at the end of the workshop, usually someone voices their wish to continue to practice Focusing in this group of people and volunteers to organize a next meeting.

3) The first day

After a short announcement from the management and introduction of the stuff, we first emphasize that this workshop is to learn a new skill called Focusing. People sometimes expect the experience in the workshop would cure all of their problems, or the workshop experience is something extraordinary and special. So we emphasize the skill learning and practice aspects of Focusing workshop, using a metaphor of swimming, or ski, or driving school, which might help the student to have the idea that Focusing is a skill that you can keep learning and keep using in daily life.

Then we explain three guidelines in the workshop and make it a promise for the whole workshop. Those are 1) safety for yourself, 2) safety for the group, 3) to talk from the experience.

For the *safety for yourself*, we say like this: "Only you can feel and know that you are safe or unsafe. Even though we do not intend to harm you, we the staff cannot tell how you feel. So it is your right and responsibility to protect yourself in this workshop. And in order to do so, we promise to give each of you an infinite number of Pass-pass, which means you do not have to do anything you do not like to do." These are what I learned from Ann and also from Bebe. The idea that you can refuse anything YOU feel unsafe liberated me from the pressure and difficulty I felt at the first workshop in English. So I happily took it into our workshop.

In Japanese culture, people tend to be shy and try to do the same things as the other people even if they do not feel like doing it. So it is good to let them know explicitly that they can be different from the others and do not have to do the things that they are asked to do. It is a kind of new step that they usually find both very empowering and relaxing. Noticing if you feel safe or not is also a Focusing kind of checking and promotes the Focusing attitude for the whole workshop. In Japan, caretakers, teachers or the responsible persons are supposed to take care of the safety and comfort of the subordinate people. It is thought to be their responsibility. So in the workshop setting, the leaders, not the individual participants, have to be responsible for the whole group of people. But of course it is not possible. So the idea of keeping you safe by yourself seems to be a little surprise for the people, but usually they take the promise well. And of course it is a big relief for us the workshop leaders, too.

For the *safety for the group*, we tell the participants not to tell the others' experience outside the original setting, not to talk about the content of other people's session, not to criticize the other people. The criticism is prohibited not only on the Focusing process but also anything because it is a natural thing for the beginners to make mistakes and criticisms do not help learning.

Talking from the experience means that we do not like to take much time of the workshop for discussions about the clinical application or philosophy. We like to learn from the experience, so we encourage them to talk from their own experience.

We just talk for a short time about this, and make them promise on these things. Some of these are just precautions, that is, if you promise this, you can stop the critical comment just by saying that we are not supposed to criticize when it happens.

Then we guide the whole group to Focus, to get in touch with inside. And we invite the participants to share whatever they feel like sharing. The pass to say "I pass" is most needed for this first exercise. And we make sure that they remember and use the right. If you do not feel like going inside or you do not feel safe to do so in the whole group, it is OK not to do what is asked to do. And also you do not have to share your experience with the group, in that case just saying the name and "I pass" is enough. It takes quite a time, but it is worthwhile to let the whole group know each other in a Focusing way, and we the trainers know the states of the participants' mood, problems, and readiness for the Focusing experiences.

(experiential exercise)

After a short break, we talk on the history and essences of Focusing shortly. And then we introduce the Focusing attitude with the metaphor of an animal in the forest, which is again something we learned from Ann. We love the exercise, which allows the participants to develop the caring, patient, and curious attitude using metaphors. They can feel those attitudes from inside and, by sharing it in a group, the whole group can take those essential Focusing attitudes inside as a form of image. In that way, it is easier to bring that attitude to their Focusing session than just being explained with words.

I am wondering if you are familiar with the "animal in the forest" exercise. (experiential exercise)

The Shy Animal at the Edge of the Woods

- > Imagine that you are standing by the edge of the woods.
- > Inside the woods you see a small animal.
- > You can only see its eyes and a vague shape, you don't know what it is.
- > You know you are safe, the animal is not dangerous.
- > However, the animal is afraid of you.
- > Notice: how would you behave so the animal might feel more safe?
- > How would you feel?
- > What feelings would you want to communicate to the animal?
- >
- > Now imagine that you can see the animal better, and you realize that it is a pet, a small dog or cat which you recognize.
- > Also, you see that it is wounded.
- > How would you feel now?

Then we introduce the outline of the process briefly.

In the afternoon, we break up in 4 small groups, and the trainers guide the participants one by one, letting the other members observe the process. The observers are given the task to follow the process and see what kinds of attitudes and guidings are helpful. At the end of the first day, more than half of the participants have a second Focusing experience of their own. We have a short whole group sharing and Q&A time at the end of the day.

4) The second day

The second day's goal is the self-guided Focusing and listening practice.

But as the first exercise for the day, we introduce Clearing-a-space, with the brief explanation saying that it is not necessary for everyone, but it is useful when there are many troubles to cope with, or for the people who tend to be overwhelmed by a problem. We introduce the clearing-a-space as a kind of skill to remember and practice.

And after about 10 min exercise guided in the group, we invite the participants to pair up to share what they had experienced. Usually this sharing becomes a noisy and happy one. This also

serves as the first listening practice though the Focuser is listened to after the process.

And there is a short lecture on the “close process” and “distant process” and how to deal with both. There are mainly two metaphors of how to deal with the too close or too distant process. One is the space metaphor (“clearing a space” and “finding a distance” techniques) and the other is the personal relationship with inside metaphor (saying “hello” to anything inside). We just give them both metaphors, for each of them to choose whichever works for them.

The rest of the morning after that whole group exercise and lecture, we have another guided session in the same small group with a different guide from yesterday's one. So by lunch time of the second day, all the participants have a guided Focusing session, if there is no one declining to Focus in the group. And everyone has experienced at least two of the four trainers, and often three of the trainers including the guide at the private session before the workshop.

The afternoon session starts with the explanation of self-guiding phrases and tips for the reflective listening. We teach the difference of the guide and the listener. And we emphasize that the guiding is to be done by the Focuser himself from now on and giving guiding suggestion is not included in the listener's responsibility. It is very important for the beginners to learn in small steps, so it is better to limit the job of the listener. But what they have seen are the guides who not only listen but also give Focusing suggestions, and they do not know how to behave when they are just a listener. So we emphasize Focuser's self-guiding. That is a new learning for the Focuser. Also the listener has to do a totally new thing. So we limit the time to 10 to 15 minutes and also just ask the listener to be there with the Focuser and reflect the words or phrases which seem to be the key of what the Focuser says.

At times we have two trainers demonstrate how to self-guide and how to listen by taking turns. It is good in some way, especially it works as a model, but more often the students try to imitate the listener in the demonstration, which prevent them to be fully present, be as he/she is, to the Focuser. So we more often postpone this kind of demonstration to the third day morning after everyone has had the first listening experience.

After the question and answer time, we spread into the same small groups with a different trainer and do the practice with the round robin format. One session is limited to 10 to 15 minutes which is in favor for the first time listener. In the round robin, the trainer starts as a Focuser having one of the students as a listener. That is, we model a self-guiding Focusing. Then the listener

becomes a Focuser with another student as a listener.

In this way, the students start the partnership in the afternoon of the second day. Usually most of the short sessions go very well.

5) The third day

The third day starts with the demonstration of self-guided Focusing and listening. We demonstrate how to self-guide the process with only listening responses without any guiding suggestions from the listener. At first we invite a volunteer who is confident in self-guided Focusing and comfortable with working in front of the whole group. If there is no volunteer, one of the trainers Focuses with another trainer listening. We introduce this demonstration as an example of a Focusing session in partnership or community. So this works as the model of listening and partnership.

After the demonstration, we make up new groups. And we make them practice self-guided Focusing and listening practice again using the new input from the demonstration. We allow them to be more flexible. You can have a longer session if the listener is comfortable. We find that having the listening practice twice is meaningful, because at the first occasion they are too nervous to feel any comfort being just a listener. But in the second time, many of them feel confident and comfortable enough to know that it is possible to Focus without any guiding. I think that confidence is very important to start a Focusing community.

The afternoon of the last day is a free time to do anything each participant wants to do. We prepare enough private rooms (more than 7 rooms) to pair up for the afternoon. In the three bigger rooms, three of the trainers are there. On the white board we show the rooms and the trainers' name in some of the rooms, and students write their names by whichever rooms they want to go to. One trainer remains in the biggest lecture room to provide help when any of the pairs or triads in a room without trainers have a trouble and ask for help. Typically several people want a guided session with the trainers, but about half of the group wants to have full Focusing session in partnership, which usually goes well. But the help of the trainer is also requested maybe once or twice in the whole afternoon.

At the closure, we do a short whole group Focusing on the experience of the whole three days. Hearing some of the sharing, we tell them the possibility for them to have their own community and keep their Focusing practice going by themselves. We inform on the Focusing Network, the Japan

Focusing Association, and the Focusing Institute. Usually they start to talk about a next meeting.

5. Tips to help students form Focusing communities

1) Three day long program

The most important key to succeed in forming the community seems to be, in my opinion, that we teach the course for three days (18 hours) with one hour individual session prior to the workshop. If it is for two days, people tend to remain still unconfident to do Focusing by themselves, thinking that they need guides or teachers in order to have Focusing sessions. Actually, the life line volunteers workshop is usually a two-day retreat and the whole session hours is about 12 hours, which is a little insufficient for them to be independent. Mainly because they have already had training in listening and connections between them, they start a community, but they tend to ask a trainer to come to guide and supervise them regularly. A two-day weekend program is more convenient for the participants to attend, but I think it is worthwhile to stick to the three-day program. But it is also possible that the requirement of three day participation and one private session selects only people who are very eager to learn Focusing and discourages the only casually interested people.

2) Twenty participants

I would also like to point out the effect of the number of the students. When Murase was teaching the course by himself or with the help of Chikada, the number of students was limited up to 12. It was a comfortable size for the experiential workshop and the community to start with. But, after several months, some people dropped out and only half of the original members stayed and the actual numbers of a particular meeting turned out to be 3 or 4 people. It is OK if it is as a partnership. But for a community we wanted to have more people in the meeting. So we invited the participants of the next year's workshop to our community. From then on we became very active.

So when Chikada and I took over Murase's workshop, we decided to have 20 people with 4 trainers. It seems to be too big at the beginning but at the end of the workshop it became a comfortable size. There are several participants out of the city who cannot attend the community meeting in our workshop, so possible participants to the regular meeting is about 15 people. And I think it is a reasonable size for a group.

3) Teamwork of four trainers (a model of a community)

I did not notice that the team work of us trainers has any benefit for students, even though it is very nice and comfortable for us to have someone to rely on and work with. But in a recent workshop, a participant mentioned that he was impressed by our way of being there, each of us being very diverse though very cooperative with each other respecting the differences. And I thought that it might give them the idea of a new kind of community. Our team work might be a model for the community which they will form.

4) Follow-up

As a new community starts, we usually are asked to attend the meeting to give advice to start the group and guide some of the sessions. We used to go and help for one year, but as I mentioned before we became short of Saturdays and Sundays. I did not tell you about our situation before, but Chikada, I, and most of the trainers have regular jobs in counseling centers or universities. Teaching Focusing is a kind of side job, which consumes our off days, in a way. So we could not spare much time to supervise the Focusing community. So now we promise to go and help to start the new community at least 4 times which means once for each trainer. And then in principle we stop the supervision and suggest they come to the Network meetings if they need help. Of course if they ask a special help, we will go. And in some groups, especially life-line volunteers' group, a trainer who happens to have more free time keeps going to their community, and both the trainer and the people in those groups are happy with that arrangement. Personally, I like to see the group becoming independent gradually. In my view, a Focusing community does not need a teacher any more when it starts and goes on well.

When you learn Focusing, you need someone to teach you the skill, but once you have learned it, what you need is only a good company. For example, when you learn to ski, you might enter the ski school to learn how to ski at the beginning, but once you learned, it you do not need to continue paying for the teacher. You can enjoy skiing if you have good friends to go together.

6. The meaning of having their own Focusing community

These are how we help them start Focusing communities. Now, I would like to talk about the

meaning of having their own community. As most of you know, even if you learn Focusing in a workshop, when there is no place to practice Focusing or no one who listens to you when you Focus, it is very difficult to keep learning this skill to make use in your life. The Focusing community gives an on-going learning and practicing occasion.

There are several ways to practice Focusing. You can join an already existing group. Or you can start with a partner. But we believe the best way for the students of the workshop is to start their own Focusing community. There are several advantages in forming their own group:

1) The place to practice in a safe relationship which was established in the workshop

First of all, during the workshop they become acquainted with each other and, at the end of the workshop, there is already an atmosphere of a community. They share their life problems and their struggle with empathy and compassion, even though they did not talk about the trouble much because we do not talk about the content of focusing sessions. Also they learn the new skill together, which makes them classmates. And all these are done in a safe relationship which is unusual in daily life. So they would not like to end this newly found friends and community where you can share and practice their newly acquired skill, Focusing. It is a very natural development that they just want to keep the relationship.

2) Equal relationship---everyone is new to Focusing and in the same status (vs. joining an already ongoing Changes group)

Another advantage in forming a new community is that there is no hierarchy. Compared with joining an already established community, it is more egalitarian. I do not imply that joining the on-going community is not good. In Yamatomura, the 1994 workshop participants joined us, the already established community of the 1993 people. So in a way, Yamatomura is combined in both ways. I think all the participants are equally respected and shared the responsibility. But still, especially at the beginning, there were elders and beginners. It is good in a way, because the elders can guide the newer people and the newer people can practice Focusing relying on a more experienced listener/guide. Those relationship will diminish in a year or so, but I found that there is more new and fresh energy in starting a brand-new community. The energy and shared responsibility of the new community makes the members more self-reliable. In that way, people tend

to feel the community more of their own.

3) The community works both as a learning group and as a loose pool of Focusing partners (vs. having a Focusing partner)

I also like to compare the Focusing community with Focusing partnership. But I have no exact experience of having a Focusing partner, so I do not know how the partnership actually works. I imagine that in order to work on your personal problems the partnership might be more beneficial and effective. But at the beginning you do not know who can be the best Focusing partner. It seems to be a big commitment to choose one person just from the three days' experience together. The community of 15 people could be a good pool of Focusing partners from which you can choose anyone to work with at each meeting. It may turn out that you work with some particular person in the group. Or you may like to work with everyone in turn. For me, it was nice to know that you can find an eager listener for sure at the meeting.

Also in a group setting we can learn new things, including reading new books on Focusing together or having discussion on new information or materials. Some of the communities like Yamatomura tend to be more of a learning and training group on Focusing. In the learning purpose, more than 5 people are appropriate.

These are some of the merits of having one's own Focusing community.

7. Tips to help Focusing communities go on

Now I move on to talk about how to maintain the community. We have not intentionally tried to maintain the community of our own or the others we helped to form. It just happens that all of the communities are still going on. But when I thought what might have been helpful for this achievement, the following things came up. Those are trivial things and almost nothing, but might produce good community feeling in each member:

1) Naming the group

We named our community, when Murase asked us how to introduce our group to the *Focusing Forum*, a Japanese Focusing journal in 1994 or 95. We felt attached to Murase, so we liked to use his name, but his name is already used by another group which Murase also supervised. So the

name "Yamatomura" came up, which is the name of Murase's neighborhood, which reminds us of the origin of our Focusing learning. Later we found out that the meaning of Yamatomura was a "Big Harmony-in-the-Relationship Village", which also fit our feeling of the community.

Around that time, we started to teach and help to form new communities. After that, there came two or more new groups each year, and we needed to identify those groups, so we asked them to have their names of the group. It was fun for the members to take time and talk about their name for the new group. It is just like finding a "handle" in the Focusing process.

There are many unique names, "Hoguhogu Tsukuba", "Togenuki-Mogura", "Totoro-no-mori", though it is difficult to capture the intricacy of their meaning in English translation. There are several villages, like "Fuji-mi-village", "Chidori-village." "Focusing 96" and "Community 96" keep the year when they first learn Focusing in their name. There are also, names like "Niji" (rainbow), "Rikugi-en" (name of a nice japanese garden), and "Aki" (autumn) and so on.

2) Divided responsibilities

This is a very crucial point to keep the community going without putting burden on someone. Yamatomura had a crisis recently even though we divided the responsibilities, because the person who has been providing the meeting place found the responsibility too demanding. As he got very busy in different matters he found it painful that he had to be present in every meeting. So we are taking the burden off from him and are trying to find different places to meet. This episode reminds us again of the importance of shared responsibility. It is not a good idea to put all the responsibility on one person. In our Yamatomura, we have an accountant, a provider of the meeting place, someone taking care of sweets, someone mailing the reports of the meeting, which we take turns writing. The report also includes the next month's announcement.

The system is different from group to group. In one of the newest groups, they take turns of arranging everything for a meeting.

This sharing of the responsibility of the group meeting is not only needed not to put burden on a single person too much, but also helps to make many people commit to the community and the commitment brings more fun.

3) Monthly reports to every member

As I mentioned above, our Yamato-mura and also many of the communities send letters to all members who belong to the group, even to those who cannot attend the meetings temporarily. For those who missed the meeting, the letter makes them feel to be still connected. They can go back to the meeting again without much hesitation when they know what was going on in the group. And for the people who attended the meeting the letter gives the chance to contemplate again about the meeting and the Focusing session they had then. The letter brings the Focusing attitude and atmosphere into our daily life. In that way, even though the meeting itself is just once a month, we can keep Focusing, Focusing attitude, and Focusing friends in our life.

4) Advanced course offered by NCCP

This course is offered by NCCP once or twice a year as a listener training, which Chikada and I have been teaching according to Focuser-as-Teacher Model and Coach Model by Janet Klein. We require the participants to have attended a Basic course and been participating in a community or having on-going Focusing experience. So most of the participants are from those communities. Some of the committed people in communities tend to attend the course and bring something back to the community.

5) Networking

The last and very helpful thing is that the community is not isolated but connected to the other communities and the trainers. That is the main purpose of the FOCUSING NETWORK IN TOKYO. When they have some difficulty, they can contact with the trainers or can go to the Network meeting to talk with their problem and seek some help.

On this aspect I will talk in some detail in the next section.

8. Focusing Network in Tokyo: Networking to maintain the communities

As I already said, our Focusing Network started in September 1996 and we have had 8 meetings since then. Our membership is a group membership, which means that if a newly formed community decides to take part in the Network, we ask them to pay about 15 dollars for the whole group for the initial fee. We meet 3 times a year. In between the meetings, we edit and send "Focusing Network News" to the representative of each community, who then distributes the news to

each member. That's the system.

And now we have 17 communities and more than 200 members altogether (as of 2001, 27 communities and more than 320 members). At the lunch time of each meeting, the representatives have a committee meeting. Mutsue, Chikada, and I volunteer to manage most of the activities. The three of us started the Network for fun, but we are afraid that it becomes too big for fun now. We need a new way of organization.

The Network works as an additional support for each community. Even though the actual Focusing can be practiced in each community, it would be better to have a connection with the trainers or other communities to get help if it is needed. So this system is both to support the community and to promote the independence. Without the Network, each community needs someone to rely on, maybe a trainer who has more experiences and can teach and support them. Then it might be possible that the teacher-student structure become fixed. With the Network, the trainers can withdraw from the community practice earlier and let them manage by themselves, which seems to make the communities owned by themselves, not led by the trainers.

The Network also works as a source of new information. We invited Ann, Elfie, and Mary to our network meetings. And at the meeting we talk about the new development we have learned at the Internationals. So you learn new things in the Focusing world. If you were alone or just in the community of 10 people, it would be difficult to organize a workshop with guests from abroad. But the network of 200 people makes it possible to organize a good learning opportunity.

Since we the managers of the Network were teachers of most of the workshops which lead to the beginning of the community, for the members, the Network meeting can be a kind of reunion with the teachers and the chance to ask questions. When your community has a trouble, you can also ask the other participants and get help from them. In particular, when the number of your community members is declining, you can announce that your community is open to new participants and invite people to join. It has worked well in several groups.

Those are the benefits I can think of right now, but there might be more. The Focusing Network has worked very well in order to help maintain the communities.

9. Cultural and social factors that promote Focusing communities in Japan

Up to now, I have told you our way of teaching which promoted Focusing and Focusing

communities in Japan (mostly in the Tokyo area). But to be fair, I should mention that Japanese culture and social conditions also contributed to the spreading of Focusing in Japan.

First, the Focusing way of not doing and just being with vague feelings patiently fits to the Japanese culture. Maybe it is very compatible with Buddhist philosophy. Also the Japanese are shy and more introverted than most Americans, and Focusing fits introverts. In a way, Focusing is more familiar and natural to Japanese than to Americans. So this might be one of the reasons which facilitated forming Focusing communities.

The second reason relates to the status of psychology or self-help groups in the Japanese society. That is, we do not have as many self-help groups as in the United States. So there is not so much competition.

The third reason is the quality of our friendship or attitude to groups. We Japanese seem to be more loyal to groups and friends than Americans are. When I lived in the States, I found that people are very friendly from the beginning and it was very easy to make friends, but once you left the place, they did not seem to care. Friendships in the United States seemed to be temporary. I know that the connections in the Focusing community are different, even in the States. They seem to last longer than the usual friendships. But usually in Japanese culture, we keep the relationship once it is established. That mentality might also contribute to the Focusing communities in Japan.

Another important factor for our achievement was that we are based in the highly populated Tokyo metropolitan area. Because of the population, we can easily have 20 people eager to learn Focusing for a workshop. And also it makes it possible for them to get together every month.

There are also disadvantages of the area. One is that people come to the center from diverse areas of Tokyo, so it normally takes more than one hour to come to the meeting place. That is why we usually meet only once a month and on Saturdays and Sundays. In a small town, you could meet once a week and in the evenings. Another disadvantage is the place to meet. Our housing situation in the Tokyo area is quite miserable. Our houses or apartments are too small to have a Focusing meeting or party. So finding a place where you can have several separate rooms is not easy.

Even with these disadvantages, the cultural and social atmosphere in Japan and the location favor us to promote Focusing in Tokyo area.

Finally, I would like to mention that a possible influence comes from the tradition in clinical psychology in Japan. Compared to the situation in the United States, client-centered psychotherapy

is still quite influential in Japan. You could even say that the history of counseling in Japan started with Rogers. His methods of non-directive reflective listening and his emphasis on the therapist's three attitudes, that is, genuineness, empathic understanding, and unconditional positive regard, have been and are still considered the basics for the counselor. I think that this basic concept of client-centered psychotherapy helps Japanese counselors accept Focusing as a one-step-further development of Rogers' way of working.

In this respect, I should mention again Takao Murase's effort and influence in bringing Focusing into Japan, especially to the circle of psychotherapists. He is one of the pioneers of clinical psychology in Japan and one who learned from and was influenced by Rogers. There are many Rogerians in Japan, but among them he was the first to find Gene Gendlin's work as early as the 60's. He translated and published Gendlin's main articles in Japanese. In his last few years, he put most of his energy (in spite of his frailty) into advocating Focusing to psychotherapists through producing a video on Focusing and giving an entertaining presentation to an audience of more than 400 at the conference of the Association of Clinical Psychology.

10. The Japan Focusing Association

One of Murase's last accomplishments was the establishment of the Japan Focusing Association in 1997. It started just half year before his death. He was the president of the Association. Akira Ikemi has worked very hard as a manager. In less than two years the number of members has grown to more than 700. This will be a firm base for Japanese Focusers. While the Focusing Network in Tokyo is the organization just for the communities which Murase, Chikada, I and our fellow trainers taught, the Japan Focusing Association is open to all Focusing lovers in Japan. So it is more diverse and more dynamic. Since it is a nation-wide organization, it is a little difficult to have regular meetings. But with an e-mail list, newsletter "Focuser's Focus", and once-a-year meeting, the Association also helps us Japanese Focusers to be connected with each other. The function of the Association is similar to the Focusing Institute, but, because of the language barrier, we need an association with Japanese as its language. I am chairing the International Communication Committee of the Association. I am very delighted to be a bridge between the global Focusing community and Japanese Focusing community.