

VibrantLife

Introducing Focusing
and the Felt Sense



Learn more at www.vibrantlife.nz

Introduction

If you're new to focusing, the following few pages won't make a lot of sense initially, but through practise and experience it will become clear.

Felt Sense as a Door

The felt sense is an entry point and the whole big *implicit* speaks through this small door.

1. It is anything implicit
2. It is palpable
3. You often see it in the body, a smile, sign, tearfulness, colouring up, a laugh or disgust. We can make use sensing into questions to bring it more clearly into our awareness, e.g. where does it sit in our body? What colour/shape/size, smell, taste, sound does it have?
4. Not just an emotion it's what in emotion.
5. Whole of something — it is a microcosm of the whole big one interaction.
6. The whole is often composed of strands, or parts.
7. We give the strands/parts a name and the whole thing has a name — this is the 'handle'.
8. Once we name it we can ask into it and ask shift questions e.g. What is a good working distance, What does it want?
9. It is not the content or the situation, but intricacy of experience of situation.
10. FOT is about unpacking this something — what is there. It is not problem solving, not reframing or interpreting, although we may also do these things.

Optional Guiding In

The Listener can guide the focuser into their bodies if the focuser wants them to or just sit for a moment and both people settle into their bodies experience.

May be just notice the weight of your body on the chair and your feet on the floor...(pause a few secs)...

And may be notice your hands and your feet ...(pause a few secs)... and your arms and your legs....(pause a few secs)... and then brining your awareness to your core, your throat, chest, and belly ...(pause a few secs)...

With each in breath just letting your awareness come down into your body in it's own way ... (pause a few secs)...

Just noticing if there is any vague sense of something there and it may take a minute or two to come...

And if there is nothing coming, or you feel distracted, just noticing how that experience is... (pause)... what qualities does that experience have...

Now the listener asks questions and can offer resonant reflections to show what they have heard the focuser say. Listener try to be aware of your felt sense in your body and listen for shifts rather than worry about understanding the content of what the focuser says.

A Focusing Process

Name the Issue. Say, “Think of a whole big complicated thing in your life...(pause)”

Pause and let the Felt Sense form. “Just get a sense of that whole thing ...(pause)”

Identify some Handles. Use sensing into questions to get handles/symbols which let us identify the ‘something’

- What mood does your felt sense have?
- What’s its texture
- What’s its vibration
- Where does it sit in our body?... (pause)
- What colour/shape/size, smell, taste, sound does it have?... (pause).
- Is there an image or metaphor there?... (pause)

Is there a name for that whole thing, for the something you have found?... (pause)

Resonate with the body. Ask — “Is that still the right name for the whole thing (the something)?”

Ask into and Shift Questions. “Sense its strands or parts — can you name some of them”

Now - “Choose one strand that calls for your attention or with the whole problem, ask, ‘How is it for me to have this thing?’” (If the ‘something’ is overwhelming ask the focuser what distance they would like to keep the ‘something’ at, where would be an OK place for the something right now, if the ‘something’ is too slight/weak to get hold of ask the focuser to go back inside and spend a little more time feeling and sensing into the something and describing their experience).

Once the something is at the ‘right distance’ ask the felt sense shift questions and see what happens - be respectful but also playful and curious. Invite the Focuser to ask the ‘something’ they found and listen with the ears in their belly.

- “Can I be with it in an open curious way?”
- “What is the worst of it?”
- “What is it like from its perspective if I drop into its point of view?”
- “Does it want to communicate something new to me?”
- “What does it need?”
- “Which way is fresh air — one small step what may that be?”

Receive the shift. If a shift occurs, ask “How is it to hear that? Does that fit?”
Notes of the Felt Shift

When a ‘shift question’ has an effect on the Focuser you will see it in their face and hear it in their voice. What felt shifts came up, did the listener have a felt shift? There is no right way to do this, no two focusing processes look the same, see if you can stay with what arises with curiosity and not pushing. Focusing is an experience of ‘being with’ not ‘doing to’.

The Shift may not make sense to the usual way of thinking at first, simply sit with it and let it be, receive it, there will be more to come if it is a shift. Shifts continue to change and other shifts follow. This may just be the first of many shifts. In Focusing, trauma is a ‘stuck process’ and shifts are what the mind-body wants to happen to be in flow. Focusing is very useful whenever there is a block, a dead end or a barrier or when there are two or more equally appealing or impossible alternatives. Shifts move things, but a whole problem might require multiple shifts to get unstuck.

Focusing has a spiritual edge because it puts the focuser in touch with life energy which always wants to carry forward, in a non-linear way. It isn't the way we often use to think, but maybe like when we wake from a dream spontaneously knowing more than when we fell asleep, our rational mind cannot explain where the new information came from because it came whole, all at once from the implicit, the ice-berg in the slide.

This isn't a script for doing Focusing-Oriented Therapy, but just something to give you a taster into explicit noticing the Felt Sense and listening to it. Focusing is the way of being which can be applied to all modalities and processes in all areas...wherever newness comes these kinds of shifts are happening underneath. This process is similar to 'flow' when we are absorbed in work which has meaning for us. Gendlin was a philosopher working on "the larger realm at the edge of thinking," where the great philosophers went to find their thinking. We are having an experience of explicitly thinking about the edge where implicit shifts happen in therapy and in all thinking processes.

Learning to focus

Learning to focus is a great way to get in touch with your felt sense. The best way to learn to focus is practise. You can find a focusing partner and schedule a regular call or join a focusing practise group.

I hold a regular focusing practise group every Tuesday, you can find out more at: <https://vibrantlife.nz/events/focusing-practise-group/>

I'm also accepting expressions of interest for a 2 year focusing certification, recognised by the Focusing Institute in New York, you can learn more here: <https://vibrantlife.nz/events/focusing-as-a-doorway-to-systemic-connected-relational-living/>

About Rachel

I am a Focusing Oriented Therapist (FOT) and Trainer, trained and recognised by the Focusing Institute in New York and hold a B.Sc in Psychotherapy & Counselling from The University of Strathclyde in Glasgow (among others). I've recently relocated to New Zealand and I'm a *Registered Provisional member of the New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC)*. You can find more about me at www.vibrantlife.nz/about-rachel.



Mailing List

If you've made it this far you might be interested in joining my mailing list. I don't send a lot of emails but its a good way to stay up to date with what I'm working on. You can sign up here: <https://vibrantlife.nz/contact-me/mailling-list/>