

VibrantLife

Focusing as a doorway to
systemic, connected,
relational living

Program Outline
Jan 2021 – Dec 2022



Learn more at www.vibrantlife.nz

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About Focusing

Focusing is an approach to tuning in to one's deeper implicit knowing. Gendlin's "Philosophy of the Implicit" can be used in various ways, one of which is Focusing. Focusing in practice is a way of delving deeper into your experience by becoming aware of that which is present but hasn't yet become fully conscious, something on the horizon of your awareness but that is easily skimmed over and not noticed. It's not something completely unconscious, but just out of your grasp or on the tip of your tongue and not yet expressed. It can feel like it does when you awake from a dream and you must stop to notice it, or how it is to be in a totally new place and taking in your surroundings that you have no name for yet. In Focusing we deliberately slow down and see that unknown.

When we grasp what our "inner process" is saying and really listen it is very helpful and always surprising. It also lightens our mental load, as we were already aware of the totality of the information somewhere in our bodies. After tuning-in, we now know more of what was there in the depths. We feel relief as we are clearer about our experience, we can see it head on. Now we have more choice, we can get the right distance, we can have space by separating our self from the emergent thing we were meshed in.

"Experience is a myriad richness. We think more than we can say. We feel more than we can think. We live more than we can feel. And there is much more still." - Gene Gendlin

In Focusing its like we put the lights onto our experience rather than walking around in the dark. It sounds really difficult to 'turn the lights on', but Gendlin made clear learnable steps which you can practice and teach your clients or bring to your other relationships, work or art. Perhaps you've already tried to turn the lights on with mixed success. When it's tough you feel disappointed, but you should take heart in the knowledge that we are relational beings and we can do things with other people which we can't do by ourselves. By ourselves we can't sustain a curious attitude easily, so we shut down to a part of ourselves. Maybe cultural troubles, trauma or disappointing past experience makes this hard for you. In these occasions we may find another person's encouragement helps us to be more gentle with ourselves. We cannot force it, but when we become able to pause and focus, something comes, life moves forward.

While we can do this by ourselves, Focusing within the context of a relationship is very rich and helpful. Learning to Focus with another person helps us communicate, to listen to each other, to slow down in places where we are often triggered into reactivity. It helps us to really try to hear what is going on, what the other person is saying without having to agree or change the situation. Focusing isn't another technique or an abstract philosophy but a way of being with oneself, alone or in community. The Focusing attitude is one of openness and presence. We cultivate it in relationship and by pausing and when we focus the attitude is strengthened. In this way Focusing connects to nonviolence, spiritual beliefs and as Gendlin says, 'carrying forward', natural, simple, non-dogmatic curiosity. If we are trying to develop our performance and creativity having someone guide us in a new way of approaching the problem can be a great help. We are social mammals, and find safety and stability through relationships we can trust.

Focusing for therapists

Gendlin's work has been awarded five times by the American Psychological Association, and Focusing-oriented Therapists can use their felt sense experience as a sub-process

that complements any other therapeutic process, bringing greater depth and clarity to the client about their own therapeutic process. Focusing would inform the work of not only Psychotherapists but also bodyworkers, coaches and healers who value holistic and relational approaches. It invites a fresh, curious attitude and results in creative change.

Focusing for Life Oriented Systems

As the pressures on our world mount so is people's interest in engaging with the land through animist (living) relationship. Focusing offers a direct link with noticing “life energy” which is not dependant on any special belief system or tied to any culture. This makes Focusing a useful modality for “western” people who do not have indigenous links to land reverence and don't hold the belief that other beings, ancestors or the elements and land are obvious sources of relationship. Focusing offers us a way to heal from that separation and to grow in confidence as allies of the natural world, and avoids culturally appropriating from traditions which are not our own. Some Indigenous Psychotherapists have used Focusing models to express their work and being an ally to Indigenous healers and leaders is one of the many ways Focusing can have active political and anti-racist and anti-white-supremacist outcomes.

About Me

I have lived and worked in many different cultures and enjoy working with people from all over the world. I've lived in the UK, Dubai, Singapore, India, Germany, Hong Kong and I'm now based in Auckland, New Zealand. I have an extensive career in Education and Counselling and Therapy and have studied around the world both online and in person. I am LGBTQI+ friendly and open and welcoming to everyone. You can see my background, training and memberships below and if there is something specific you would like to know, I encourage you to reach out and ask. [Contact Me](#).

Inclusivity

I work with people from many backgrounds and life experiences. I welcome people who have experiences of being differently abled, other than White, heterosexual, cis gendered and neurotypical and hope to be able to listen and make this relational experience one which responds to you, rather than you having to fit with it. This course follows the values of Ti Tiriti here in Aotearoa where the Tangata Whenua are recognised as the people with ongoing stewardship of the land and self determination for themselves and others. I am a supporter of Waka Oranga a local organisation of Indigenous Psychotherapists and wish to uphold the values of partnership and ongoing negotiation with Māori through Ti Tiriti partnership.

My Background

Education

- M.Sc — [Person-Centred Counselling and Psychotherapy, University of Strathclyde, UK](#)
- P. Grad Cert – Special Needs Education, University of Nottingham, UK
- M.Sc — Education for Sustainability, University of London
- AMI — 6-12-year-old Montessori Teacher Training, Dublin
- AMI — 2.5-6-year-old Montessori Teacher Training, Mumbai

Professional Training

- Certified Brainspotting Therapist, [Brainspotting International](#)
- Focusing-Oriented Therapist and Trainer Training, [The Focusing Institute, NYC](#)
- Level 1 & 2 Training in [Gottman Method Couples Therapy](#)
- Working with Complex Trauma — [Complex Trauma Therapist Network, UK](#)

Memberships

- The International Focusing Institute (FOT) — Registered Focusing Oriented Therapist
- Brainspotting International - Certified Brainspotting Therapist
- New Zealand Association of Counsellors (NZAC) — Registered Provisional Member
- World Association for Person-Centred and Experiential Psychotherapy and Counselling
- Waka Oranga - Associate Member

About this Programme

Introduction

This programme provides a rigorous pathway towards recognition or certification with The International Focusing Institute (TIFI). TIFI is an international, cross-cultural organisation dedicated to supporting individuals and groups world-wide who are practicing, teaching and developing Focusing and its underlying philosophy. The International Focusing Institute is committed to the promotion of Focusing and encourages a wide variety of Focusing-based applications and educational methodologies. It also serves as a catalyst for Focusing research, an information hub and custodian of Focusing-related literature, and provides physical and virtual meeting spaces for education, dialogue and interaction. In these and other ways, the International Focusing Institute is committed to sharing and advancing the work of its founder, Eugene Gendlin, and those who have built on his legacy.

The Diversity Statement, approved by the Board of Directors in 2009 is worth quoting in full as it speaks to the relational, organic nature of this course and the institute as a whole in affirming humanity, life and diversity over mechanical, technocratic and bureaucratic standardisation. This underpins our journey from the very beginning as we navigate how to work together over the coming two years.

TIFI Diversity Statement

Focusing is a practice that honours what arises freshly in the moment. Frozen structures of any kind are antithetical to the ethic of Focusing. Therefore, The International Focusing Institute takes as a core value the principle that the practice of Focusing, how it is taught by certified Focusing teachers, and its application in different fields will not be standardised. Diversity of approaches will be protected. Constructive critiques among Focusing Trainers or between the Institute and individuals presenting or applying Focusing are welcome and should be offered by means of open, respectful communication. The Institute itself will seek to honour the values of non-standardisation in its operations while recognising that tension can arise between maximum diversity and the need for effectiveness and efficiency in meeting its goals.

All of this information and more can be seen at <https://focusing.org/more/about-institute>.

Focusing as a doorway to Systemic, Connected, Relational Living

This programme has four main phases, which build on each other and interrelate;

Part 1 - Listening to ourselves

We start by developing a solid grounding in the steps of Focusing.

Using the felt sense to listening to oneself and the parts of self. Apply these skills of listening to self to resonant guiding of a partner in dyads. Practicing initial skills will be our sole task for the first part of the programme and these will continue to be developed through the mid course where we explore intermediate and the latter part where advanced skills practice coupled with the possibilities of teaching initial skills to non-focusers.

Initial Skills:

- Focuser can sense the body, be with it, from inside.
- Focuser can get a "felt sense," a physical sensation that contains meaning and pertains to a particular situation, for example, an issue with one's work, a creative project or a relationship.
- Focuser can recognise how a felt sense differs from feelings and emotions.
- Focuser can recognise when words or images have come directly from the felt sense.
- Focuser is able to notice what would feel right to say from the felt sense of a particular situation.
- Focuser knows when a decision regarding the situation "sits right" and when it does not.
- Focuser can name or describe the crux of a situation in a way that "fits" the felt sense.
- Focuser is able to recognise a distinct bodily knowing even when she/he has no words yet to describe it.

Here we will discuss the basic model of Focusing and being with the Felt Sense, readings by Gendlin, experiential practice and discussions of video clips. Models such as the Iceberg, Clearing the space, using the 12 Avenues, finding the 'crux' of the situation in a way which fits the felt sense. In our Focusing Partnerships we are primarily guiding ourselves and asking for directions we would like to receive, asking our partners to help us clear a space, try a new avenue, help us relate to our inner client as necessary and using our voice to provide feedback to our listeners. As listeners we begin to track our felt sense of listening to the speaker guide themselves and how it feels to assist.

Part 2 - Listening to Ourselves and Our Partner

In the second half of the first year we continue with the above, now also discussing readings on Focusing Supervision and the client's client will be key areas of study. The Clients Client is a gentle introduction to using 'parts models' with Focusing as they spontaneously arise without any and with a clear understanding of how 'parts work' is different from working with dissociative identity disorder (DID) which is not part of the training on this programme. We will continue to work towards clearly locating the 'crux', feeling more confident and clear and so able to be comfortable in our partnerships. As listeners we become able to differentiate strands of our felt experience and so find and maintain the 'right distance', especially when the sensation is not one which is immediately comfortable.

In our partnerships as listeners we begin to offer suggestions to the speaker based on impulses which come from our felt sense. We begin this phase by offering 1-3 word reflections, occasional suggestions, and tracking our felt sense. As speakers we become

accustomed to following our felt sense and noticing the effect of our listeners works on our process, checking how the words 'fit' with the felt sense and either asking for more or less words, and becoming more confident asking for what we want.

Part 3 - Using the 'felt sense' as a guide

In the third section we continue as above, as listeners becoming accustomed to following our felt sense to make suggestions and being ready to listen with our felt sense to its effect on the speaking focuser. We will guess into if the speaker has a friendly, curious attitude or not and help the speaker to slow down, back up, be curious with the difficulty or blank itself rather than 'push on'. As the listener we offer suggestions to our partner if we sense they are too close to an issue. We will learn about the Brainspotting technique of Gazespotting to help focusers who seem too distant, close or to be having difficulties moving from one idea to another, to help them resource and bring friendly curiosity.

Intermediate Skills

- Focuser is able to access a felt sense easily and comfortably.
- Focuser can stay with and return to a felt sense, so that it is a stable referent even as it may open and shift.
- Focuser recognises and is comfortable with the experience of not wanting to attend to a particular situation or bodily knowing.
- Focuser knows how to stay near something difficult, neither leaving it nor going further into it.
- Focuser is able to find a "right distance" from difficult or complex issues.
- Focuser is able to have self-empathy, friendly attitudes toward oneself and the bodily knowledge that arises, even when it involves suffering or seemingly "negative" things.
- Focuser can easily get a felt sense of what is in the way when friendly attitudes seem impossible.
- Focuser is able to identify the several "situations" being carried by her/his body just now, and to "place" them one at a time, gently, at some distance from the body. Each placing brings a release of tension in the body.
- Focuser is able to connect intellectual understanding with bodily knowing, and to carry on a dialogue between the two.

While we develop intermediate Focusing Partnership skills will also consider Polyvagal theory and disassociation, Brainspotting techniques, and Focusing with dreams as ideas which may inform how we listen. Focusing here is understood as a relational rather than individual practice aligned with Deep Ecological and Existential Therapy with the felt sense carrying forward 'life' energy. We will take practical readings from Gene's philosophy such as 'A Theory of Personality Change', and Preston, Talking Philosophy as well as The Complex Trauma Network UK, David Grand (Brainspotting) and Let your Body Interpret your Dreams.

In our partnerships we will see how our ability to maintain the 'right distance' can be aided the use of eye positions in a client centred way, to resource and stay with a process which has minor dissociative elements. We will begin to connect the idea of a bodily knowing with an intellectual understanding and both an internal dialogue with our own logical and felt parts and in the context of the Focusing Partnership where we begin to dip in and out and between relationally.

We begin to guide our partner, making tentative guesses about what kind of intervention might be helpful guided by our own

Part 4 - Felt sense in relationship

In the final part of the programme, which will span most of our time together we will develop the intermediate listening skills to with both living systems through the process model (which point to right brain, connected to self, relating to the earth, other than humans and ancestors) and how to bring a Focusing awareness to where the unit model has been over extended to life-oriented processes (left brain, disconnected, traumatised, producing dominating, colonialist, patriarchal and supremacist institutions and systems), searching for a new way of being.’,

- Focuser is able to attend to a felt sense and allow many aspects of it to emerge.
- Focuser often finds whole new fields or "subtexts" emerging from a felt sense.
- Focuser can let the subtexts inform a resulting decision on an issue.
- Focuser can choose to wait for subtext changes before taking action on a particular situation.
- Focuser recognises new possibilities within a situation, which were not apparent from the original "given facts." New facts can be formulated.
- Focuser can discover new questions arising from the felt sense of a situation, leading to a new gathering of information.
- Focuser is able to make better decisions based on greater bodily knowledge.
- Focuser finds an expanded bodily-sensed realm in which one can move between different "places," clusters, and attitudes.
- Focuser can choose to live from the intricacy which is now always accessible.
- Focuser experiences a sense of reliable safety inside.

We will discuss topics such as philosophy, indigenous focusing, animism and working with the ancestors. In our Partnerships we bring our attention to the felt shifts during a Focusing experience and how each one carries forward the next, pausing to notice and allow “subtexts” appear and develop clearly, using Focusing to make decisions, find new possibilities, new information to arise which is both cognitive and implicit an expanded sense of bodily knowing arises and a greater sense of intricacy and reliable safety emerges.

During this phase, candidates for certification will send in videos of them guiding non-focusers, teaching non-focusers and they will have an experience of Focusing Supervision.

Dates & Times

The exact dates and times will be arranged as a group and are therefore flexible. You can see the general schedule below.

New Zealand: 7pm - 10:30pm

[See it in your time zone here](#). Note daylight savings time will mean the time will shift a little throughout the year.

Schedule

Exact dates and times will be arranged as a group, but the general schedule will look like this:

First Year

- Before the year starts, we will meet together for a 1-1 focusing session.
- Once per month, we will meet as a whole group for 3.5-4hr call.
- Once per month, you will meet with your “small group” practise group.
- Once per week, you will have a dyad with your focusing partner. Partners will change every 6 months.

Second Year

- Before the second year starts, we will meet together for a 1-1 focusing session.
- Once per month, we will meet as a whole group for 3.5-4hr call. (10 total)
- Once per month, you will meet with your “small group” practise group.
- Once per week, you will have a dyad with your focusing partner. Partners will change every 6 months.
- Once throughout this year, you record a session with a client and submit it for assessment.
- At the end of the second year, we will meet together for a 1-1 wrap up of the program and share feedback.

There will be a 4 week break in both June and December of each year.

Assessment

Throughout the course there will be lots of naturally occurring opportunities for self reflection, to find out from your partner how well listened to they felt and to become more able to give useful feedback to your partner. Knowing what to do with this feedback, to take what is useful and discard what isn't is a big part of this.

In the second year of the course you are invited to video a session in which you lead a partner, who is not on the course, through a Focusing session, which you submit as evidence of your skills. We will also witness each other listen to someone on the course. These are opportunities for group learning and reflection as well as celebration. The plan is to have the skills built well in the first year so that these sessions are ones you will

enjoy. If you need help following your felt sense and your partners felt sense that will be addressed as early as possible in the programme.

If you want to be awarded the title of Focusing Trainer you will need to plan, carry out and evaluate a small training for a minimum of three sessions with a group of people of your choosing. The evidence can be written or recorded.

Certification

At the end of the programme there are three possible types of Certification.

1. **Certified Focusing Professional:** *Someone who has completed the course achieved certification.*
2. **Focusing Oriented Therapist:** *Someone who has achieved certification and belongs to a national counselling/psychotherapy organisation with a published code of ethics and accountability procedure.*
3. **Focusing Trainer:** *Someone who has achieved certification and has organised a teaching practise for 2+ students over 3+ sessions and provided a write-up to me for assessment.*

Attendance

Attendance is mandatory, but sometimes things happen. You can miss one session per year if absolutely necessary.

If you miss more than one session an additional individual 'catch-up' session with me is required for each absence. This will be charged at my standard hourly rate (150 NZD) and is to ensure you meet the Focusing Institutes requirements.

Fees

The fees for a 2 year program can be complicated to understand, some are mandatory and others are payable if you want to be accredited by TIFI. There are 4 separate fees:

1. **Program fees** for the organisation, facilitation and administration of the program, paid directly to me.
2. **Trainee membership fees** paid directly to TIFI (mandatory, annual).
3. **Certification fees** paid directly to the Focusing Institute (one off and optional)
4. **Supervision fees** - (optional) minimum of 6 hourly sessions of supervision with a recognised Focusing oriented Therapist. Supervision is most often recommended in the final third of the course, but you may choose to have ongoing supervision with a FoT for your client work throughout the course.

Below is a breakdown of fees.

1. Program Fees

NZ\$ 6,000.00 for the full program (including GST) and is payable in two instalments of 3,000.00 at the start of each year.

Discounts: I can offer A \$200 discount if the full program fee is paid 30 days prior to the course starting. The program is expensive and very time consuming to run, so no further discounts can be offered.

Payments: I accept bank transfers in NZD, AUD, EUR, USD, GBP and other currencies without fees.

I can accept card payments online. Card payment processing fees (2.9%) will be split evenly so we both pay half. Let me know when you register how you would like to pay.

2. Trainee Membership Fees

35 USD paid directly to TIFI annually.

This is the fee for those in Europe, New Zealand, Australia, Japan and the UAE, reduced fees are offered to people living in countries with less favourable exchange rates. [Find out more.](#)

3. Certification Fees (optional)

250 USD one off fees paid directly to TIFI upon certification.

This is the fee for those in Europe, New Zealand, Australia, Japan and the UAE. Fees are similar for other countries [Find out more.](#)

Certification is optional for participation in the programme, but necessary if you wish to be accredited by TIFI.

Certification at the Weeklong (Optional)

There is a Weeklong gathering held in different locations around the world. While it's not necessary to attend this, it's recommended as a wonderful culmination of the program and a great excuse to see a new part of the world. The Weeklong fees include the certification fee making it a good option if the weeklong is being held in a part of the world local to you. It is possible to be accredited by TIFI and not take part in the Weeklong but the USD 250.00 Certification fees must be paid.

4. Supervision Fees (optional)

A list of therapists willing to offer reduced sessions for students will be made available in the second year of the programme. Supervision is optional for participation in the programme, but necessary if you wish to be accredited by TIFI.

Refunds & Cancellation

If you cancel more than 30 days before the start of the course you will be refunded in full, minus any card processing fees incurred. Within 30 days of the start of the course, you will be refunded 50% minus any fees incurred. If you wish to cancel after the start of the course, no refund will be offered.

More information

If you have questions or would like to register please email me at rachel@vibrantlife.nz.