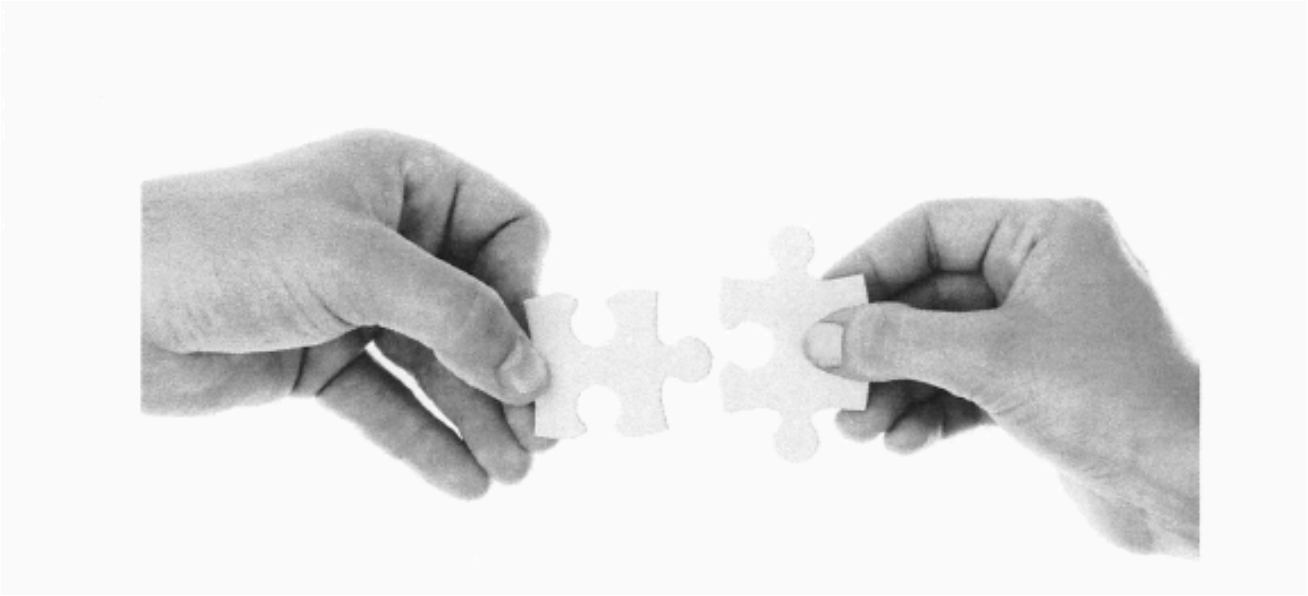
The Changes Book

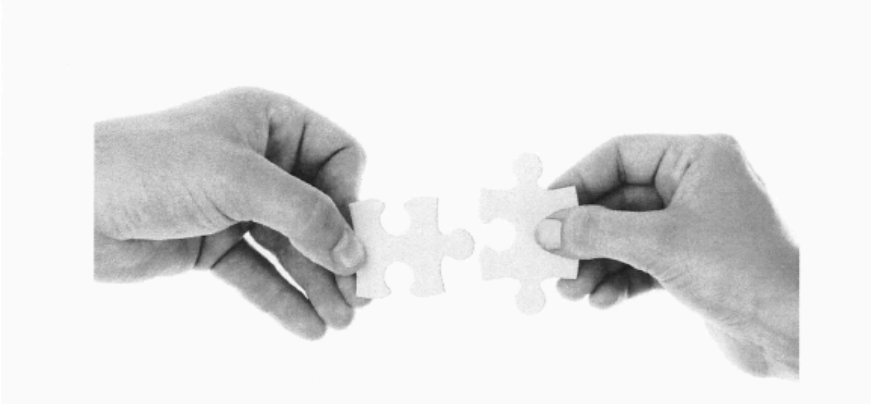


A Handbook for
Empathic Listening, Experiential Focusing,
and Therapeutic Community

Edited by Kathy McGuire, Ph.D.

The Changes Book:

A Handbook for Empathic Listening, Experiential Focusing, and Therapeutic Community



Written by many members of the original Changes Listening/Focusing Community

including

Eugene Gendlin, Mary Hendricks, Jim Iberg, Ann Weiser Cornell, Kristin Glaser, Ferdinand van der Veen and Linda Olsen

Chicago, IL, May, 1970-1978

With a new Foreword by Kathy McGuire-Bouwman, July 2017

Cover image via visualhunt.com

Table of Contents

Kathy McGuire-Bouwman, New Foreword, August 2017

"Changes" Empathy Focusing Groups: a model for bringing people together

Overcoming prejudice and stereotyping through simple skills of empathic listening and self-empathy focusing

In May 1970, National Guard troops shot to kill at students of Kent State University who were protesting the Vietnam War. Several students died, and the USA convulsed.

The 1960's and 1970's were a time of social upheaval in the US. Customs and norms were breaking down, lines were being crossed and, in reaction, rigidified. The civil rights movement, Vietnam War protests, and the rising feminist movement were all pushing the boundaries of mutual understanding and cooperation.

This book offers the wisdom and particular skills of empathy and self-empathy which grew up as one community's response to the violent divides of the 1960's – 1970's.

The 2000's are a similar time of social upheaval. Shocking shootings of innocent people convulse communities. We are confronting and questioning old lines between rich and poor, black and white, women and men, "insiders" and "outsiders."

Once again, especially at the interface between "the establishment" and marginalized people, blacks, Hispanics, Native Americans, refugees, the criminalized, women, there are huge gaps in understanding, leading to violence of many kinds.

Well-known journalist Dan Rather, President Barack Obama and many others have pointed to the "empathy deficit" in today's United States of America.

And, as different from the 1970s, the existence of cable news, the internet, and social media allows us to be aware that this convulsion, this clashing, violence, and misunderstanding are happening on a global scale. It is even possible that lack of empathy for the natural world is endangering the very existence of our planet.

The Changes group model for support groups teaching skills of empathy and self-empathy is a relevant solution to the issues of "empathy deficit" throughout our world.

In response to the Kent State Massacre, a group of graduate students in Clinical and Developmental Psychology at the University of Chicago began meeting, with

their mentor Dr. Eugene Gendlin, to find their own way of taking positive action in this cultural situation. After trying established political practices, like getting petitions signed, they decided to turn their particular skills to the needs of their local community, the Hyde Park area on the south side of Chicago.

They turned their attention to drug use and suicide; homeless and runaway youths; mental illness in the community; integration of ex-convicts into the community; interactions with the police and established agencies in meeting these needs.

Crisis phone hotlines were springing up as the culture's response to this crisis. The graduate students decided to start an alternative model of response. They had a crisis phone line, but they also invited all who called to their Sunday night Changes group meeting at a local church. They invited everyone to become equal members of their supportive, therapeutic community.

At the meeting, they taught everyone Carl Rogers' Empathic Listening skill and mentor Eugene Gendlin's Experiential Focusing skill.

Rogers' Empathic Listening, setting aside your own prejudices and stereotypes, advice, opinions, and judgments, and simply trying to "reflect," or to "say back" the words of another person, had already been widely researched and practiced as a necessary component of psychotherapy.

Rogers had invented Client-Centered Therapy, based upon "empathy," "congruence," and "unconditional positive regard," as an alternative to the more authoritarian practices of Freudian psychoanalysis. Already in the 1950s, Rogers had extended the use of Empathic Listening to conflict resolution among blacks and whites in the USA, and warring parties in places like Northern Ireland.

But the people in the original Changes group discovered the self-empathy Experiential Focusing skill as a needed partner as a way of healing our "empathy deficit" and bridging gaps between us.

Gendlin's Focusing (www.focusing.org; Focusing, Bantam, 1981) and its extension into the Inner Relationship Focusing method of Ann Weiser Cornell (www.focusingresources.com) teach the "radical acceptance" of everything INSIDE of ourself. This is self-empathy: being able to turn toward and kindly receive all of the lost and disowned and devalued parts of your own self.

Freud knew a century ago that, if people could not accept some part of themselves, they PROJECTED that unacknowledged part of themselves out onto other people in the world, often with a strength of hatred and disowning which Freud called "reaction formation." If I am afraid of any homosexual feelings inside of myself, then I may passionately hate homosexuals out in the world.

In order to develop true empathy for those different from ourselves, we also have

to be able to love ourselves whole-heartedly, unconditionally. Then we will have energy and compassion available for those outside of ourselves.

The Changes group model, teaching Empathic Listening and self-empathy Experiential Focusing skills hand-in-hand, provides the best supportive milieu for growing the capacity for empathy throughout our world as we strengthen our own individual self-awareness and capacity for self-acceptance.

The graduate students taught both Listening and Focusing skills to the mentally ill, to ex-convicts and other marginalized people, to whoever showed up at their Sunday evening meeting, as well as to a wide variety of college students and helping professionals.

They applied the Listening and Focusing skills to personal growth and community building through mutual understanding. They applied them to conflict resolution between individuals, and to collaborative decision making in groups. They developed "teams" to meet the multiple needs of some community members.

This book chapters collected in 1978 tell how this alternative model for community building came about and how it worked. There are also many chapters giving specific instructions on how to do Empathic Listening and Experiential Focusing, how to start practice groups for learning the skills, how to build teams for "heavy" situations, how to resolve interpersonal conflicts and make group decisions using empathy and self-empathy.

Mentor Eugene Gendlin went on to develop Experiential Focusing and The Philosophy of The Implicit underlying it into The International Focusing Institute (www.focusing.org). His book *Focusing* (Bantam, 1981) has been translated into many languages, and there is a network of Certified Focusing Trainers throughout the world. Changes groups have also sprung up as people going through training classes in Focusing and Listening have continued on after training in their own egalitarian, self-help Empathy Focusing groups.

This book offers you the fresh energy of those early formative days, when the Empathic Listening and Experiential Focusing skills were being developed as a way of bridging gaps and building empathic community, in the context of a proven model which has been amplified world-wide over the past 50 years.

Using this book, along with my manual, *Focusing in Community: How To Start Listening/Focusing Support Groups As A First Step In Empathy Activism*, a group of concerned individuals can come together to start their own Listening/Focusing practice group. As they learn the skills, this group will also become their supportive community, their source of support as they go out into the larger community.

They can start with just two people and build as they find others with common interest. And they can reach out to Certified Focusing Trainers for additional

training and support.

Then they can go out as disciples of empathy, bringing these skills to other audiences: schools, prisons, police forces, crisis clinics, churches, mosques, synagogues, inter-faith alliances, youth ministries, African American and Native American, Hispanic and refugee communities, Democrats and Republicans and people of conflicting political persuasions throughout the world.
Having learned to apply the Listening and Focusing skills to conflict resolution and group decision making, they can begin to bring together people from radically conflicting perspectives to hear each other empathically. They can grow in their own self-empathy, bringing that level of self-awareness into building a more peaceful and compassionate world.

Not a total solution? We have to start somewhere, and Empathy Focusing groups have the potential to provide a backbone of support for "empathy activists". They could be similar to the world-changing influence of Alcoholics Anonymous and other 12-Step groups in providing support for overcoming addictions. We provide the possibility that everyone could learn Empathic Listening and Experiential Focusing as basic tools, like reading and writing, available to everyone, for overcoming conflict and building caring community.

Kathy McGuire-Bouwman, Ph.D.
Creative Edge Focusing
www.cefocusing.com

Part One: The book and the Changes community

Ferdinand van der Veen, Why Changes and a book about Changes are important to me

Changes is important to me because I want to live more authentically, according to my real feelings, my own experienced reality, and not according to "reality" defined by impersonal social institutions or by the "shoulds" of others. I believe that change toward living more authentically requires:

- Being more aware of my feelings and inner experiences
- Clarifying their meaning for me
- Choosing courses of action consistent with them. This includes keeping options open for myself and taking risks.

I also believe it is more possible for me to be authentic when the people and groups I live and work with value authenticity for themselves and for me. As long as I can remember, I have wanted to change toward being more aware of my ongoing experience, understanding it better and living more in accord with my inner values, and I assume I will continue to want to do so as long as I live. I have also always wanted the institutions with which I have come into contact to encourage authentic relating and effective social goals.

I see Changes as working toward these ends in two ways: One is developing and teaching skills for greater understanding and awareness of oneself and others; and the other is by being an authentic community itself, one in which meetings and functions promote rather than hinder the possibility for authentic action. Originally, Changes defined itself as a therapeutic community for providing a viable self-help alternative to an ineffectual psychiatric treatment system.

I believe this focus has gradually expanded so that now there is a general concern with enhancing psychological health and group interaction through the personal, family, work, educational, and treatment settings in our society. Changes people are teaching their unique brand of therapeutic self-help skills to many different people, such as mental health professionals and paraprofessionals, high school teachers and students, dental students, families, movement groups, and at many workshops.

I think I am accurate in saying that all of us involved in this book, as well as many others, have found that the Changes community and the particular methods that it teaches have been of profound value in our lives. Changes enabled us to make changes in ourselves, in our relationships, and in our lives that we wanted to make but were at a loss to know how to bring about.

The reason that I believe this book is important is that it may help other persons and groups find ways of relating and acting that they also have been seeking but

have not known how to bring about. There are two main ways in which the book does this:

One is by describing the Changes community - how it came about, its unique qualities, and its ways of handling and thinking about organizational issues. I often feel amazed and incredulous that Changes continues to exist and function, since it has no membership requirements, no elected or otherwise designated officers (including treasurer!), no voting procedure, and no written by-laws or constitution.

And yet, since its beginning in 1970, it has provided a hot line, heavy people teams, training groups, co-counseling, and social contacts for several hundred people with an active core membership varying between perhaps twenty to forty persons at any one time. Other Changes groups have also formed, including a Changes North (Chicago), a Toronto Changes, a Vermont Changes, a Los Angeles Changes, and many more.

One of our objectives for the book, therefore, is to tell others who are struggling to build more personally honest organizations some of the special ways and ideas for doing that that have worked for us.

The other purpose of the book is to describe specific methods taught and used at Changes for living and relating more authentically. These methods have been powerful and enriching for us. They are embedded in a respect for the integrity and self-direction of the person, which is part of our client-centered heritage. In my experience, the skills foster understanding and acceptance of myself and others, in a way that makes both honesty *and* caring possible, so that one need not happen at the expense of the other. They are also valuable because they may be readily learned and used, and their usefulness in many settings is easily demonstrated.

Many persons and organizations hold values of acceptance and understanding, or would if they believed such values could work. But they are at a loss as to how to implement them. They therefore behave in more traditional role patterns, according to values of lower personal priority, and suffer frustration and alienation as a result. We hope that what we present in the book will encourage persons to learn and experiment with the skills to see if they can thereby define and implement their own values in more satisfying and effective ways.

The book is therefore intended for persons and groups who want to find out as much as possible about "how to do it." Most of the papers were originally written for ourselves, to help us conceptualize and use the skills and teach them to others. They represent the joy and excitement as well as the hard work that Changes has meant in our lives.

Kristin Glaser and Eugene Gendlin, Main themes in Changes, a therapeutic community

We want to talk about some of the themes and principles that characterize our group. It is important to emphasize that although this may sound smooth or easy, our group has struggled through many difficult phases, some of which we thought we might not survive. It is precisely because we began with the same problems which most groups have but have come up with what we feel are fairly special resolutions that we want to share our ideas. One of these resolutions is that we can accept working at good ways without being there all the way. That means that we want to make very clear that this paper describes how we function when we are at our best, which is some of the time. Also, we are still developing and these things may change.

For us, *community* is a bunch of people with whom you can carry your living forward in a growing way, and take the steps which are next in your life. We view hang-ups not so much as bad stuff inside someone, rather as messed up relations or dead relations between people and as more living that needs to happen. So there isn't a difference for us between helping people inside or outside themselves. What we need and give each other is support, not just in a general emotional way but with whatever each of us is up against, whether it is being scared of going crazy or not being able to face moving one's stuff into a new apartment. There isn't a line for us between psychological and situational troubles, either way it's about trying to live.

People come to Changes for different reasons: to be useful, to learn therapy skills, to talk about problems, to find a social group or sexual relationship. *We try to act as a resource network for each other*. Changes is where I found a friend, someone taught me to change the oil in my car, it was where I found a roommate, where I found someone to listen. Often new people don't say what they had in mind about coming *with us makes no difference whether people came for help or came to help*. We make no distinctions. Sooner or later, everybody is likely to do both and we emphasize both when we talk about Changes to new people. New people are told that everybody there might help, that we believe in asking people to listen, that you should feel free to try out several people and see who clicks.

But apart from such specific needs, most people lack a community (sometimes they even lack people altogether, let alone a community). An important part of being a community is to be a place where people can try to find new ways of being themselves. For us, community is where you can be in touch with all parts of yourself, including the inside stuff that’s not all clear, or that doesn't look good, or that's isolated or seems like nothing is there. This means needing a place that allows experimentation, that allows the old ways to go slowly, that tolerates crumminess. To let each of us live and be visibly there, it takes not being down on anything that comes out, it takes not trashing each other for our bad ways. This means that *in Changes we need great tolerance for differences*. You don't have to

be like me to come.

I may want you to be like me, but it needs to be OK that you aren't. I may give you feedback, but I won't yell and scream and say you can't be a Changes person. By trying to feel comfortable with people who aren't like me, we can allow people to be with us who may still be stuck in life styles that we don't think much of or who have a new ideology different from our own. People need support if they want to change, and everybody needs to be able to bring out their doubts and fears about where they stand - instead of always having to present what one believes as if it were airtight and doubtless.

One of the differences in people that we accept is that the drive toward community varies greatly in people. Sometimes it varies in the same person over time - wanting closeness and then retreat. Several times people in our group declared their sober intention of having a very close community and then didn't come back the next week. The way we have dealt with this is to not push for closeness, but offer opportunities for it. We accept the ebb and flow of close/apart as a natural part of our group process rather than a source of disappointment.

A difference which most groups face is on ideas of how the group should be run. Within our group there were differences on amount of structure (loose organic development vs imposed structure) and on amount and type of leadership. Initially there was a great deal of hassling and bad feelings about this, but a resolution emerged, we aren't clear just how. One historic moment, though, was realizing that a group with as many different points of view as ours was so loose that no one in a leadership position could take power and walk off. In fact, there was nothing we couldn't afford to lose. There was little money and people did what they wanted. How the group currently operates is that whoever is concerned about issue makes decisions about that which people can then participate in or not. If there is some kind of strong disagreement by the group as a whole, the decision can later be reversed. For example, people who are concerned about arranging training programs for Sunday night get together, announcing to the group at large that anyone interested should come and make plans. A small group then meets, makes the arrangements and most of the other people are glad that someone has done this for them. A few may not like the plan and won't participate. When they become concerned enough they initiate their own program suggestions. For us, structure is good if it is flexible, not mandatory, and open to change by the group.

Group housekeeping happens similarly. Whoever wants to do work does, others don't. There is a lot of noise and encouragement about doing it though. Those who want to be the organizers and doers go ahead, discuss it at an occasional "coordinators" meeting that gets called, and make brief announcements in the Sunday meeting. If someone decides that she wants to do some publicity, for instance (and it usually needs to be done), she will probably check around to see what has been done before and then go ahead and make up her own posters, news stories, whatever. Then, if someone else in the group doesn't like what came out, he can say something about it or just go ahead and put out his own publicity.

One particular happening does not seem crucial. Almost no work *has* to be done and it doesn't matter if it is done "wrong." Somehow, we aren't terribly invested in our "good name". What has happened is that with a few awful exceptions, people have pretty much gotten the hang of what we are about before they launch into any kind of independent work so that we have had little to regret from what people have taken on. (The one place where we are more structured has been about scheduling and training for the hotline, but this has been possible because more organized, structure-oriented people have volunteered to coordinate here.)

Although there have been times when this doesn't happen, a central coordinator has always seemed useful. Considered the "shitwork" coordinator, this person usually works for about three months and then retires, exhausted. On all jobs, people do what they want and quit when they've had enough. When people feel the freedom to say "no" or "enough" without feeling guilty, they also feel comfortable about coming back for more.

This means that our large Sunday meetings are where training or other ways of getting into each other happen while business is taken care of by a small group. We see this as a third model: the first might be the old autocratic one in which a small group decides everything (the board or executive committee). The second is participatory democracy where everybody has to decide everything. Our third model lets anyone participate in decisions who wants to (anyone can be a leader; planning meetings are open) but doesn't put the whole group into the interminable hassles on trivia which the second model involves. (In a way, most organizations in the world don't put their main energies into what they are supposed to be about, but instead, waste it on infighting and organizational hassles, and this seems just as true of the participatory model as it was in the old model). It has been good for us to spend our main big group time on what we're really about and separate business off but it is open to anyone who wants into it.

Although there are some problems with this division of business and training/getting into each other (like not enough rewards for workers), it worked wonders in getting us past a very bad time in Changes which seemed to be all hassling. We found that it can be very bad to mix business and getting into each other - everyone is impatient to get essential business done and nobody wants to hear anybody. Personal feelings are just in the way and aren't heard but business also doesn't get done. The division makes it possible for necessary things to be done (and most people in Changes are glad whatever way they are made to happen) and also, in the personally focused bigger meetings, the division makes it possible to enjoy each other's experiences and growth steps.

Just as the ideological differences about structure were worked through, we found that other ideological differences could survive in the group and even enhance it. Recently, we don't spend much time talking about ideological differences as a group, but when we do, no-one may trash another for any reason, particularly for

an idea. (There seems to be a craziness when principles, especially those about freedom, liberation, equality are applied with old coerciveness and one-upping.)

For us, when there is open discussion between opposite views, there can be a lively tension generated that brings energy into the group. On all our differences - whether about money, therapy, responsibility, leadership, etc. - if we talk openly, listen carefully, give the other side respect and feel that we don't have to go one way or the other, a good process seems to evolve. For instance, most of us are deeply opposed to hospitalizing anyone, but some feel that in a last resort, this could be done. When a decision had to be made about a real person, it was more important for us to listen to each other than make an abstract policy rule. Those who were afraid to let the person remain outside got to hear how those against hospitalization felt and why. The person involved was present, and although very freaky, clearly became more sane just by being talked about honestly and being cared about. This particular discussion led to a less anxious feeling on everyone's part which allowed us to "wait and see," which turned out to be the right thing.

Another part of talking about ideas is that if we stick with one person's thinking, finding out what that is for her personally (usually getting into her feelings), things become much clearer and the grimness with which the idea is held may soften. For example, in a Changes meeting where we were talking about crashing people, one woman dominated the meeting, insisting very emotionally that we should not put people up any more. We attended to her, listening to her point, asking her to say more, waiting for her to think and say what her feelings were, and we found that when she really got into herself (and that took a while), the reason she wanted us to stop crashing was that she felt like often she was the one who had to take people home when no one else would. When we supported her right to say "no," and she could feel comfortable with this, we no longer needed a group policy decision about whether we "should" or "shouldn't." This illustrates another principle, that of attending individual needs over what seems to be the group needs. The group wanted to continue its general conversation about crashing, but it was more important to get in a good listening way with this woman. Eventually, however, it was better for the general group process to have done so since we then did not have to deal with an "unreal" policy decision.

One principle that we have always had is that Changes should be an open group. This means that everyone is welcome at all times, there is no exclusivity, there is no distinction between new and old as far as participation goes. Yet, like most groups, we had the problem of then always having to start over again for the newcomers, having to explain what Changes was each meeting, having to justify our ideas. Worse, it was hard to develop steady work relationships and get any closeness. Now Changes has an open large group with closed subgroups within. What this means is that the group as a whole is completely open - anyone can come and participate at any time, but that also, there have developed some natural groupings of friends and special groups which are relatively stable and may be closed to newcomers. Currently there are phone teams, a dream study group, a "skill sharing community," three women's groups, a men's group, living

together groups, and probably others that we don't know about. Within these small groups there are intimate bonds and a sense of group development. The continual openness of the large group is fine as long as you also have the closeness of friends and a sense that work (or process or whatever) can go on without continually being flooded by newcomers. The small groups bring their style of close relating and warmth to the larger groups. We find that some people being intimate helps others of us to be intimate rather than cutting us off, as we had once feared.

How is elitism avoided when there are exclusive small groups? First of all, the groups are not secret and not completely exclusive; people can usually join if they want to make a commitment. But, if too many people want to be with that group, the old group can help a new group make their own thing. This was done by the women's group when it came to have 18 members and more wanted to come. They split into subgroups with new and old members in each subgroup and after a while it was possible to let the new members form their own group. When we are willing to share what we have, we don't feel that we are being elitists.

We had also worried that the small groups might splinter the large group. Why would they stick around once they had their small community defined? What happened, however, is that the people in the small groups still need the larger group.

People are still committed to the larger Changes idea of the therapeutic community, people still want to get the training, people still want to be helpful and they aren't getting all their varied needs met. A combination of large and small group experience seems to be the most gratifying.

When new people come to Changes, they are asked to participate in whatever ongoing Process is happening, whether it's a heavy meeting or an intimate personal conversation. For instance, if a new person wanders into a meeting, someone will come over and say "Hi" but then he will have to sit through whatever we are doing - whether it's a boring business meeting or a listening training session. Or if someone wanders into the office when two people are into a heavy rap, she will be asked to draw up a chair and sit in. This means that maybe she will say nothing for half an hour but when she does it will be intimate, since that's what is going on. She may say something of how "I've been in that bad place, too." The point of this is that we do not drop our stuff to deal with him and therefore his first response has to be at our deep level rather than at a superficial initial contact level. Afterwards, we try to get with him where he is at - either individually or by sitting down with all the new people to find out what they want for themselves.

Regardless of what is happening, the new people are a part of it by just being there, and if they come again they aren't new anymore.

Our speciality is getting with each other in a good listening way that allows the talker to get as deeply into himself as possible. This process, called “listening" and "focusing" is discussed in depth in this book, so we just want to talk about it

briefly here. Our belief is that most people are very much caught up in the top of themselves. They are tied into roles, patterns of being that control much of their action and thinking. Very rarely do we take the time to find out how we feel about what's happening, or what we are doing. In Changes, we try to encourage this and train each other to help do this. If someone is able to listen well, not putting in much of his own thing, reflecting the talker's feelings and giving him full attention, the speaker may be able to get past his immediate fast thoughts and into a slower, not so clear place that if explored gently, may bring him some kind of sense of how he feels. lf I am feeling vaguely upset but not clear what that is about I may ask someone to help me focus. I need to relax, take a deep breath and get down into myself, into some vague liberated zone that is not cut and drawn into all the pieces that I usually think are me. When I get to that place, I may get feelings, images, words that tell me what is going on. The person who is being with me helps support me, attends to me, lets me find me in the fullest sense. What this process does is to let me know how I really feel so that I can then go on to the next life action with some clarity. "I know this is going to be difficult and uncomfortable, but here I come."

Then after I am in the action, I may check inside again to find out how it goes. Usually the Sunday night program is devoted to some kind of listening training that includes practicing in small groups and pairs. There are a number of more advanced training groups which meet during the week. A large portion of people in Changes exchange listening, hour for hour, with each other.

Part of our being a therapeutic community is that we can have some pretty heavy people in the community with us. (A "heavy" person is someone who is very unhappy, far from getting his needs met, freaky, or whatever to whom at first, I get a gut reaction of "Oh, I don't think l can handle this.") Because there is so much going on, largely these people are able to be in the community and not be defined as special. However, sometimes we form teams around a heavy person so that no one needs to work alone and people can feel free to only do as much as they want. Rather than offering phony friendship or playing the doctor/therapist, each team member offers the heavy person a similar relationship to that he would any person in our community. Being a community person means offering a basic level of caring, concern and resources and if the heavy person doesn't want to be at the helped end of a relationship, she can reciprocate. It's important to emphasize that we don't feel that we have to do more for a heavy person than we would for anyone else. We do what we can but we can't accept ultimate responsibility for another person's life and needs. It’s really fine to ask for what you want, it’s fine to say no and it’s fine to back off then things got too deep. (Of course, we then try to find replacements.)

Another part of being a therapeutic community is that we don't make decisions about who can do what as far as work goes. This is particularly relevant to heavy people because by not labelling them "too crazy" to do something, they may be encouraged to act in more healthy ways. Again, because we aren't that invested in what happens to our name and because no one works alone, we can invite a heavy

person to work for us and we even encourage them to be on teams for other heavy people because they frequently know more than we do. This openness has been less true around the phones.

We don't do this enough, but we try to understand hassles in terms of what is happening between people rather than as bad stuff inside a person. We call this a heavy interaction analysis or systems analysis. So, if there is a bad process going on in a group or someone is acting weird, we try to take into account what everyone's part in the interaction is. For instance, if someone is acting strangely, I need to understand that this piece of behavior is a communication that is necessarily a two-way process. He does this and l feel that, so I do this. When I can understand my part in the process, maybe I can guess at his intent so that I can act differently. (It's always easier to change one's own behavior than someone else's.) Maybe when I check inside I may find out that what the person is doing is actually a backwards way of saying "I need to get close." If I sort this out, maybe I can get a little closer rather than going away. Of course, good listening is always the best start. (A more detailed account of working with heavy people is in a later chapter of this book.)

When Changes is functioning anything like what we have outlined, we have a group going that allows its values and principles to serve it rather than dragging it down. We value openness and find ways to allow closeness, we have structure but no one has to use it if it doesn't work, we have leadership but they can't control people, we acknowledge people's drive toward community but respect their fear of it, we acknowledge that we have crummy ways but allow them to change slowly, we tolerate and welcome differences because they don't have to affect everyone. Basically, we see a therapeutic community as one that welcomes people where they are at, not demanding change but making as much space as possible for people to change. We make that space for people by not making demands but at the same time making clear what is possible for people in terms of getting into themselves, work, relationships. We offer people a chance for in-depth communication with themselves and others. As far as our group life goes, we are willing to strike a balance between our ideals and what seems to work.
We seem to operate with a theme of acceptance of most of what comes up. We try to have a positive atmosphere, a belief that caring, trust, and being relaxed produces good things although you may have to go through a heavy struggle before you get there.

Part Two: About listening

Ferdinand van der Veen, Some thoughts about what listening is

Listening is something people do together. It is a way of being in touch with another person and helping a person get in touch with her or himself. It is a way to be in good communication, so it is valuable when there are conflicts or differences of opinion. It is mutual - the listener can become the one listened to and vice versa, so each person can both hear and be heard.

There are many ways in which listening is important. These are the ones that stand out for me.

Listening is a way to help another person

Being listened to can help in several ways: when you are listened to your feelings and thoughts become important because here is someone who is giving their full attention and interest to what you are saying about yourself. Listening can also lead to feeling cared about, in the very concrete sense that someone wants to understand right now what your thoughts and feelings actually are. Also, listening leads to more self-knowledge, to our understanding of what is going on in ourselves and being able to go from being confused to making sense out of our experience. In each of these ways listening can be helpful.

Listening is a way of knowing another

Listening is putting your attention with the other person; not attention that is used to control or judge, but attention that is used to get to know about the other. The listener puts her own ego aside, so the talker does not have to deal with the listener's ego. Then the talker is more free to express what is really going on inside himself, which the listener can then understand. Often the listener experiences this knowledge as new and special and valuable. Now she knows something about what is real for the other that she did not know before and would have had no way of knowing without listening. Even if only a small thing is talked about it still overcomes the barrier of strangeness and lack of contact that comes up so quickly between ourselves and others. The humanness of the listener is affirmed by being in touch with what is presently real in another and by the others' willingness to share. She now feels her own personhood and her own potential for self-awareness. It takes one to know one, so to speak.

A form of political liberation

Listening is also a form of political liberation. It is liberating because it enables people to get in touch with their own reality, not reality as prescribed by society (peers, government, teachers, parents). It reaffirms each person's capacity to know his own experience and to make sense out of it himself. This means that there is not a certain group of experts in the society, such as a special university

"priesthood," that determines for everybody else what is so and what is not. It also means that certain credentials, such as a Ph.D. or M.D., are not a prerequisite for making intelligent and valid interpretations of reality. The power to define what is real is far-reaching. As long as an individual believes that he has to depend on the opinions of others to know reality he is not free to act on the basis of his own experience. This lies at the base of oppression. Liberation is the possibility to act on the basis of our own experience.

This ability depends on the realization that we are each able to create valid meaning out of our own experience (cf. Gendlin, *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning*, and Rogers on organismic valuing). We are then able to trust our own ability to make intelligent decisions regarding ourselves, decisions that are based on what is true for us, independently of what others might say or think. Society teaches that we are dependent for knowledge on others (cf. Paulo Friere, *The Pedagogy of Oppression*). This prevents independent action in our own self-interest, since that self-interest will often be in conflict with prevailing societal views. If we are taught that we cannot know what is real for ourselves we are helpless to take individual or collective action.

When being listened to the person realizes that she can know for herself what her experience means, in its full, immediate, concrete reality. This meaning may diverge sharply, even in its conception, from what parents, schools, and the media usually say. The institutions of our society do not have ways to affirm the truth of an individual’s experience. Yet in the listening process we have an unmistakable experience of knowing for ourselves what is valid and what is not.

Being listened to is a way of knowing

Thus, the person being listened to finds that she has a way of arriving at knowledge in herself. It is not "scientific" knowledge, abstract and provable, but a personal knowledge (cf. Polanyi on intuitive knowing) about what is true for oneself. Through listening one can tap into a source of truth. This can range from knowledge about more usual kinds of things, such as why am l upset or happy, or what do I feel and want, or what does it feel like to be sitting here writing this, or what do I think of an organization or a meeting, to more exceptional things such as the meaning of someone's death, an outlook on life, or a personal experience of God.

When we are listened to well we often have the experience of "Yes, that's exactly the way I feel." This affirms our own capacity to judge what is valid or true for ourselves. We know when someone is saying it exactly the way we mean it, just as we know when it isn't being said just exactly right. Our intelligence is remarkable in its sensitive ability to determine very precisely if someone correctly understands what we mean.

A mutual exchange

Listening is mutual. It is not just one person doing something for the other, which gets to be a drain on the one doing-for and keeps the one being done-for in a child-like, taking role. Each of us needs to feel we are valuable to those that are of value to us. This is especially important when we are not feeling valuable ourselves. In co-listening I learn that I can be confused, upset, afraid, anxious, and *also* attentive, understanding, caring, and thoughtful. My troubling feelings do not define me as an immature neurotic, just as my helpful feelings do not make me a superhuman expert. Both persons in the listening exchange experience themselves and the other as giver and taker, as needful and helpful. This process enables the participants to transcend roles, rather than remain locked in them. By reversing roles, the personhood of each is more readily apparent.

The co-listening structure discourages each person from identifying with a particular role, whether it be that of helper or of being helped.

Mutuality and self-help as new directions for the helping professions

The old way of the therapist helping the patient, with never a chance for the patient to help the therapist, is bad for the therapist as well as the patient. It serves the professional needs of the therapist for status and income, but it does not meet his need to be the patient. Once we are locked into a role we more and more need to maintain our counterparts in their roles. For a while the old way was justified because the knowledge of helping methods needed to be developed. But now there is that knowledge. We now know how to set up self-help relationships and groups. We know how to teach self-help skills. Professionals are now needed as resource and teaching persons and not as expensive helpers or guardians of our psyches.

The new role of the professional as a teacher of helping skills is a natural consequence of both the huge social need for such skills and the overwhelming failure of our educational systems to teach them. This social and educational failure extends to all age levels - children, adolescents, young adults, adults, and the aged - as well as to all social levels and occupations. This failure is so profound and far-reaching that professions that do not work actively to promote the learning of self-help skills bring into serious question their commitment to the public welfare and their ethical stance. The commitment to teaching helping skills to persons and groups needs to be explicitly stated in the ethical and practical objectives of the helping professions.

Professional therapists can find out about mutual selfhelp skills firsthand, use them in their own lives, and learn how they can be taught to others. They can encourage their clients to try self-help programs, evaluate their benefits and drawbacks, and find ways to support them and make them more effective for more people.

Listening is a way toward community

While persons can learn and teach self-help skills in oneto-one relationships, it is more often done in groups. The self-help group is a natural outgrowth of the realization that these skills may be widely learned and applied. The group serves as a teaching medium, as a setting for co-counseling and as a resource for co-counselors to get to know each other. An essential element in self-help efforts is the wider availability of helpers. In a group, a person can be helped by and help a number of different people. There is not just one therapist, not just one person whose schedule and cost usually do not permit the necessary amount and kind of therapy work that a client needs, and whose personality in any case limits the scope of help she or he can offer. The professional image of only one therapist for a patient, and a prohibition against any other individual therapy at the same time, may serve the needs of the therapist, but there is now ample experience in co-counseling that when many helpers are available the person in need makes good use of as many of them as he can manage, sometimes, for example, 10 per week for several weeks. The amount of support and growth experienced during such "intensives" are very rare and difficult to come by in professional therapy arrangements, which reflect the fragmentation in the lives of both the patient and the "doctor" and do not really meet the needs of either one.

After being in self-help groups for a while most people gradually overcome their hesitancy and disbelief and learn that they can ask for and get effective help from a wide range of different persons, and that they can do the same thing for others. When people are able to do this, when they are able to ask for and give help to a number of others, and when there are others available who can do the same for them, then they have taken a large and crucial step out of their loneliness, frustration, and alienation. Now "society" is no longer experienced in the usual impersonal and uncaring way. Now there is hope that one's life can be righted.

The self-help community is the natural context for self-help groups. As groups develop effective skills and methods, the word spreads and more groups form. The groups share and interchange members, ideas, and services such as training programs, hot lines, teams for people in heavy places, and special skills. Effective methods for running meetings and getting things done are developed. When the level of a self-help community has been reached, with a range of supportive resources for the members, workable organizational norms and practices, and training programs for new members, then the concept of a therapeutic community has become a reality.

Listening as a basis for a special way of relating

Listening involves a valuable way of relating to another person because of its central concern with the growth of each person in the relationship. At the heart of personal growth is our own understanding of ourselves and others and our capacity to know our own reality. Increasingly persons are seeking relationships based on growth and learning rather than on gratification and power. Often, love is no longer enough. There is a new awareness of the possibility for growth in relationships through the kinds of skills involved in listening and other

peer-counseling and self-help approaches.

More persons now want something specific in their relationships that goes beyond general feelings of liking or attraction. They want to know, "What can I learn from you?" or ”What benefit will there be for each of us from a relationship with each other?" And these questions make sense when there is a working knowledge of personal growth and helping skills that persons can use together. Without this knowledge, such questions do not lead anywhere because they cannot be dealt with. Without this knowledge personal relationships are more likely to be based on sentiment or manipulation. But with it personal growth in relationships need no longer be left to chance. We can actively direct our energies toward our growth with each other.

Listening as a way of loving

While love may not be enough, it often enters into a listening relationship. Listening can be a way of loving. Feelings of delight, attraction, and identification are commonly experienced strongly in a successful listening interchange. The listening format itself is a freeing one, in the sense that each person's experience is respected and free to emerge, and also in the sense that feelings are not tied to "expected" behaviors. We can share deeply without having to meet expectations or "take responsibility for" the other. Listening is therefore loving in the sense of prizing the beauty of the other person as a knowing-feeling being. And the one listened to often feels a deep appreciation and caring for the listener as well, for having made their self-discovery possible.

The spiritual aspect of listening

And lastly, listening is for me a spiritual way of being with another. It is spiritual because it reveres the life process. It tries not to mold or manipulate. It is a way to be with the flow of the being going on within us. It is like two persons listening to the heart of one. There is no way of programming what goes on inside us. Being listened to is concrete moment-to-moment living held in suspension for the moment in our effort to find meaning in it, but also happening as a result of that effort. It is spiritual because it is being in touch with the creation of awareness. As we are listened to we create meaning, and this meaning in turn re-shapes the experience, from which in turn new knowledge and truth emerge. At its best, it is like a dance, a joyful dance of discovery, in which the partners trace each other's steps. Together they form the pattern of their becoming.

References

Friere, Paulo. The Pedagogy of Oppression.
Gendlin, Eugene. Experiencing and the Creation of meaning.
Gordon, Thomas. Parent Effectiveness Training.
Polayi, Michael. Personal Knowledge.
Rogers, Carl. On Becoming a Person.

Ferdinand van der Veen, How to do listening: an explanation for people new to Changes

Introduction

> Mike is in a Beginning Listening group at Changes. He has just finished "listening" to me, and is now being listened to by Dave (Dave's responses to Mike are left out). Mike says, "There are two things here. Listening results in good things happening. First, in my understanding someone else, understanding what Ferdinand said, I really learned better what he was doing after I listened to him.
> And I found out something important about him.
> And then, in hearing my words back when I am listened to, when I hear Dave telling me what I say, then I understand myself. There's something the matter, that listening does these things equally, understanding someone else and understanding myself.
> I know what it is. I don't *expec*t to understand me. When I try to figure myself out I always end up confused. But now, when I listen to Dave saying what I said, I understand. It has never been like that before. I didn't realize. I could understand myself and not end up confused!"

This is a good example of the experience many persons have when they first learn listening. Listening, the way we use it at Changes, is a name for an important way that people can help each other and themselves. It is a special way of talking with someone. When we are being listened to, we can understand ourselves better and know better what we feel and think. And when we listen to another we help that person in the same way.

Listening is a way of helping a person know himself better. It is something we can learn to do for others and something others can learn to do for us.

Also, when we are doing listening we understand the other person better. That is why listening is important when something needs to be decided or when there is conflict between people or when there are problems to be solved. Listening makes it possible for people to be in good communication with each other and with themselves. That is its main purpose - being in touch with what is actually going on in ourselves and in others so that we can live and relate in ways that feel right, that work, and that make sense. That is why it is important.

How you do it

The way to learn listening is to experience being listened to and then to try it yourself. But while there is no substitute for the direct experience of it, it is possible to say some things about what it is and what it is not, and what is a good procedure for learning it. Listening is a way of putting our attention with another person, with what she is saying or expressing right at that moment. We do it by attending closely to what the other person says and then saying back what we

hear the other person say, but no more than that. We do not give opinions, ask questions, give advice, or recount our own experiences. It is a very special kind of listening because we put our own ego, our own trips, aside. This can feel hard and strange at first but it is essential to the listening process.

Also, when we are doing listening we are not responsible for the other or for taking care of her. We are agreeing only to pay very close attention to what the talker is expressing and to say that back as clearly as we can. The one being listened to can then say whether what we said was what she meant, correct it, add to it, or go on to say something new. She is then listened to again and the process repeats itself until the talker is through or an agreed-upon stopping time is reached.

The basic purpose of listening is to make it possible for the person doing the talking to know about his own experience, to make sense out of what is going on inside himself. We all have a continual stream of experience going on inside of us, but it often takes time and a chance to be heard to find words that fit that experience and make it understandable to ourselves. Listening is therefore like two persons listening to one. The process consists of the talker trying to put just the right words to his experience, hearing them back from the listener, and then going on to find better words or new words as new parts of the experience come up, and so on, in a continuing flow of referring back to what is going on inside himself.

Finding the right words bit by bit, being listened to, finding more words, and so on, is the heart of listening. That is why the person doing the talking is in charge. The talker decides what is talked about and how much. That is also why it is important for the listener not to put her ideas into the talking, because that will have the result of making the talker pay attention to what is going on in the listener, instead of what is going on inside of himself. The listener puts her own ego and her own trips aside. The listener's only job is to say as well as she can what she is understanding the talker to be saying and feeling. And the agreement by the talker is to put his attention on, to focus, on what is going on inside of himself - what he is concerned about and feeling at that moment - and to try to understand that and express it as clearly as possible.

Listening is a place for *not* being perfect. It is hard to say clearly what is going on inside oneself. It usually takes a lot of back and forth, talking-listening steps before something gets said just the way it is meant. This has the result that both the talker and the listener are often somewhat confused. It is therefore important that neither blame themselves for not getting something clear or “right”. The listener only need say whatever part is understandable, perhaps with a comment that the other part was not clear. As the process goes on the meaning will be expressed more clearly and fully and that is what it is for.

Either the talker or the listener can decide when it is time for a listening response. Usually a few sentences is all that the listener can keep in mind at one time. The listener can stop the talker and say something like, "I want to respond to what you said so far." The talker can also ask, "I would like you to say back what I have said

so far."

The listener does not have to use the exact words of the talker, but that is always all right to do. At times, they might be the best or the only words the listener has at that moment. It is important in any case to use words that stay very close to the exact meaning of what the talker says.

The listener also needs to be aware of the feelings and emotions that the talker is expressing, so that the person behind the words is heard. Our feelings and emotions are an essential part of our experience and point to the meaning that it has. Responses that ignore emotion are mechanical and not useful for the talker. It is surprising in how many ways words, tone of voice, gestures, and facial expressions communicate feelings. At first the feeling part in what the talker says may not be apparent, but it will usually become obvious after the listening-talking process has gone on for a while. In any case, saying the emotions are essential for a good listening response.

Feedback

When, by mutual agreement, the listening has stopped it is time for feedback. This means that each person takes a few minutes to say what it was like. The listener says something about what it was like to listen, and the talker says something about what it was like to be listened to. This is an important part of the process because valuable learning takes place here. Both listener and talker can check out what was helpful and what was not. It is surprisingly easy to misjudge how an experience feels to another person, and the feedback gives each one a chance to find out what was going on in the other while they were listening or talking.

After feedback, the roles are reversed so that the listener now becomes the talker and the first talker now listens. During the initial learning of the process this reversal is especially important so that the mutuality of listening is fully experienced. It is also good to do listening with many different persons so that its availability from lots of people is actually experienced, and so that the great variety in styles and possibilities of both listening and talking can be appreciated and learned about.

Where do you learn it?

A good place to begin to learn listening is in a beginning group with one or two experienced leaders (as we say more about in this section). The leaders explain the process, demonstrate listening, and give each person a chance to both listen and be listened to and then to give feedback to each other. In a group, a lot of learning takes place by watching others and from others' comments and questions as well as your own. After a few times in a beginning listening group most persons are ready to go into an intermediate group or an on-going listening group. In these groups, there is opportunity for intensive listening and talking, both in the group and in pairs, and for sharing more difficult issues and personal reactions.

After some experience in an intermediate group, persons are usually ready to make individual arrangements on their own for listening and being listened to. Individual arrangements can and do occur, though, at any point in the learning process. Also, anyone with a pressing need to be listened to has an opportunity for that at any point, so that getting help has precedence over the usual learning activities.

Eugene Gendlin and Mary Hendricks, Absolute listening

How to help with the other person's process

Absolute listening: this is not laying trips on people. Set aside a period of time when you only listen and say back the other person's thing, step by step, just as that person seems to have it at that moment. Never mix into it any of your own things or ideas, never lay on the other person anything that person didn't express. (If you do say anything people didn't tell you, make it clear that it's yours, not theirs.)

How to do that: either show that you understand exactly what the other person said or meant, or ask for a repetition or for clarification.

To show that you understood exactly: make a sentence or two which gets exactly at the personal meaning this person wanted to put across. This might be in your own words, usually, but use that person's own words for the touchy main things.

People need to hear you out loud, they need to hear that you got each step. Make a sentence or two for every main point they make, for each thing thy are trying to get across. (Usually, this will be for about every five or ten sentences of theirs.) Don't just "let them talk," but get with each thing that they feel and mean to say. Forget about whether you like what they feel or not, whether it's good or bad, and don't try to fix or change or improve it. Try to get the crux of it just exactly the way they mean it, and feel it.

Sometimes what people say is complicated, and you can't get what they say, and also what it means to them, all at once. First make a sentence or two about what they said (the crux of it as they meant it), and check that out with them. Let them correct it and add to it if they want to. Then also take in, and say back, what they have changed or added, until they agree that you have it just as they feel it. Then make another sentence to say what it means to them, or how they feel it.

Example: a person has been telling you about some intricate set of events, what some people did to them, and how and when, to put them down.

First you would say one or more sentences to state in words the crux of what they did as the person sees it. Then they correct some of how you said it, to get it more exactly. You then say back their corrections, for instance, "Oh, so it wasn't that they *all* did that, but all of them agreed to it." Then they might add a few more things, which you again take in, and say back, more or less as they said them. Then, when you have it just right, make another sentence for the personal meaning or feeling, which that whole thing has. For instance, "And, what's really bad about it is that it's made you feel very put down."

Other times what people tell about is obvious and all you need is one sentence

which both sums up *what they said*, and the *personal point of it*. (For instance, "So the way they told you to go away made you feel very put down.”)

If you don't understand what the person is saying, you get mixed up, or lost: there is a way to ask for repetition or clarification. Don't say, "I didn't understand any of it," as this requires lots of hope and energy for the person to start all over again. Rather, take whatever bits you did understand, even if it was very vague or only the first bit, and make a sentence such as, “I do get that this is important to you, but I don’t get what it is, yet…", or, “I do get that this guy came in, and starts talking, but I lost you after that, can you tell me again from there?" Then say back bit by bit what the person now tells you, and don't let the person say more than you can take in, and say back, bit by bit.

How you know when you are doing it right: when people go further into their thing. For example, if the person says, "No, it's not like that, it’s more like… uh…", and then feels further into it to see how it actually feels, then you did it right. Your words may have been wrong, or may now sound wrong to the person even though they were very close to what the person said a moment before. But what matters is that your words led the person to feel further into the thing, so your words had the right result. Whatever the person then says, take that in and say it back. It's a step further into the thing.

Or the person may say, "Yes, that's right, and another thing is…” Again, here, what you said enabled the person to go further into the thing. Or, the person may sit silently, satisfied that you got everything up to now.

Or, the person may feel a release, a relaxing, a wholebodied "Yes, that's what it is," a deep breath, a sigh, etc. Such moments occur now and then, and after them new or further steps come.

Any of these show that you are doing it right.

You can also tell when it is going right, by whether the person feels the slight but visible relaxation which comes whenever something one tries to say got across so one doesn't have to say *that* anymore. While a person is laying out a thing, or part of a thing, there is a tension, a holding of breath which may remain for several interchanges. When the crux of the thing which is being tried to be expressed is finally both said and exactly understood and responded to, there is a relaxation, like an exhaling of breath, as the person doesn't have to hold the thing in their body anymore. Then something further can come in. (It's important to let there be the silence which can come here for that seems like a long time, a minute or so, as they now have the inner body peace to let another thing come up.)

How you know when you did it wrong, and what to do about that: if a person says nearly the exact same thing over again, it means they feel you haven't got it yet. See what about what they are *now* saying differs from what you said. If nothing feels different, then say it again and add to it, "But that's not all,

or that's not right, some way?"

If, as you respond, their face gets tight, tense, confused, they are trying to understand what you are saying (and you're only trying to say what they meant), so you must be doing it wrong, adding something in, or being too complicated, or not getting it. Stop and ask them again to say how it is, as they feel it.

If they change the subject (especially to something less meaningful or less personal) it means that they gave up on getting the more personal thing across right. You can interrupt and say something like, "I'm still with what you were just trying to say, about… I know I didn't understand it right, but I want to." Then say only the part of it you're sure of, and ask them to go from there.

If they get involved in what you said, or begin to speculate and discuss generalities, bring them back to the personal point they were at before. (You can first respond to the generalities if you like.) Say something like, "You were saying…., and I was trying to feel what it felt like to you. Tell me again."

You get no credit for saying something right, only for helping a person get further in touch with their thing, just as they feel it. This may occur when you don't get it right. Of course, as they correct you and go further into it, you will get it right sooner or later, *it doesn't matter when*, it can be the third or fourth try. People can get further into their things best, when another person is receiving or trying to receive each bit exactly as they have it, without additions, elaborations, or trips on it. There is a centeredness which is easy to recognize after a while, like a train on a track. It's easy to know when you're off, everything stops, gets tight or lost or confusing, what is said is up in the air instead of connected to how they feel it. If that happens, go back to the last point where the person was on solid track inside, and ask them to go from there.

When you first do this, repeat almost word for word what people say. This helps you see how powerfully helpful that is for people, how it lets them get deeper into their things than they can alone. It also lets you see how hard it is at first, to get what a person is trying to say, without messing into it, adding to it, fixing it, putting your own things into it. When you can do that, then you can omit repeating much of what they say, and mostly say back the crux only, and the personal meaning or feel of it.

To make it possible for yourself to get another person's thing without mixing your own into it, stop for a second and sense your own whole tangle of personal feelings, tensions, expectations, which are hovering all around you like an aura. Then clear this space. Collect each and every one of all that mass, and put it all in a bag, and then put the bag over to one side. This leaves a totally clean, open space. Out of this space you can listen. You will feel peaceful, waiting, alert, and probably slightly excited. What will the other person say into this waiting space which exists for nothing except to be spoken into? The space has no features, no landmarks, no colors, no decoration. It will be featured and shaped only by the

other person. It will get the other person's colors, history, and shapes. The other person will word in the mountains, rivers, and valleys of his or her own intensely private existence, for you to hear. Very rarely is anyone offered such a space by another person. People hardly ever move over in themselves enough to let there be the space a person could exactly and clearly come into.

Eugene Gendlin and Mary Hendricks, Further steps toward better listening and focusing: centering and checking

You want to respond to the "center" of what the person is saying or struggling with. To do that, you must first of all be exact. Even though you will use your own words, don't change anything about what the person is saying. Sometimes you need to use that person's own words because any other words won't get it exactly.

Secondly, you can sum up a lot of what the person said with a few words, and you can use most of your words to get at the center of it. For instance, the person may have told you a story. What is its point? ("So, it's *unfair* that they do that to you, when you didn't do anything like that when they were down." Here you are calling most of the story "they do *that* to you." You're using your words to get the point of the story.)

Thirdly, you want to keep having a sense of the person as struggling with something, working on something, wanting something to be different, wanting to get to the bottom of something or understand it, wanting to be better or freer - listen for what the person is really struggling with. You shouldn't make up your mind what others are or should struggle with, they will tell you that. You need only have a sense that they are struggling with or from or toward something - that will help you hear the point of what's being said.

Another way to say this: what is the person *doing*, or trying to *do*, in saying this? In the above example, the person's story showed that what happened was unfair.

Take this next example, which doesn't go quite right:

> "I have this suicidal friend and I'm all uptight, like there must be one more thing I could do, and what if I don't find it, and like I have to be perfect."
> There must be one more thing to do, and you're trying to find that one more thing.
> "Yes, and like I have to be perfect and if I don't find it, God, like it's my responsibility to find it, and it's so heavy."
> You have to find it.
> "And lately I've been feeling, well, gee, *she* ought to do some of the work, she's laying it all on me."
> You feel there is something she should do.
> "She ought to take some of the responsibility, instead of it's all being on me."
> She ought to do more, she ought to try to do some of it.
> "Yes."

Here the speaker isn't discriminating, and isn't being helped to discriminate into her thing. That the listener does not take up the speaker's struggle, her desire to free herself from a weight she feels, isn't quite right from the first sentence on. The listener instead picks up on the one more "thing" to do (which was only an

example of the feeling of responsibility - the point was not one specific thing more to do), and later the listener picks up on what the person not present should do ("She should …"), each time not taking up the speaker's attempt to question and get under the weight *she* is carrying, and feels she shouldn't have to carry.

The "Yes," at the end is a kind of stopped feeling. Either the speaker must find another way to get at it, since this way didn't make it, or give up on it. (Note, earlier, our section on how you can tell when listening is working.)

A good response anywhere along the line would have been something like: "It doesn't seem right for all that weight to be on you," or "The responsibility is heavy, and all of it seems to be on you."

Fourthly, you want to respond to *this* person's feelings, the one who is talking to you, not to the other people (who aren't here), or to the events. Of course, your person's feelings are about, with, or in, the events, so you want to respond to the person+events, or the person-in-the-events, but not just to the events, or just the other people.

The last example also shows this. The listener should not respond to what some third person not here now should do, but rather to this person's feeling about that. ("You feel it shouldn't be all on you," rather than "You feel she ought to… ”)

There are times, however, when it might fit best for you to say the external details (as when the situation is very complicated, and the person can't be sure you got them right).

There are times when you won't know what's being struggled for. And there will be times when you will have to talk about the details of what the other person said and did, to get that much of it straight. Then, after that, say or ask about the person's own feeling about that.

We need a more general understanding of centering, because the above rules don't always hold.

Centering, in general, is to get that crux (which, if heard, will let the person *feel heard*, let him feel that "this" has been finished getting said, and so, there is an easing and a freedom to let the next thing come). So, we must talk about what it feels like to "feel heard." Let's turn it around and take a situation where you are talking.

Suppose you say something, and the listener says it back exactly. Do you always fee l heard? What if they say it back very fast, as if it were pretty much nothing, and yet it's important to you? Then you don’t feel heard, really, even though the words were heard. Or, another example, what if the other person looks very puzzled, and very slowly says each word you said back to you? That's like the listener is asking you what you meant. ("I don't know why I'm here." "You don't

know why you're here?") So, we see that you don't always feel heard, even if the what-you-said is said back. You also need the person's tone of voice to be one that shows that some of your point is getting across, not only the words. And you also need to see and feel that the listener gets it, doesn't just remember your words. But you also need something else:

To feel heard you have to feel. You have to let yourself feel whether what the listener say is really what you were trying to say. Where do you go, to feel if what the listener says is, in fact, what you're feeling? You have to go to you, inside you. You have to sense your thing, whatever you were trying to get across, and then hear the listener's words and see if that's right.

This is called "checking." Usually you don't have to make a separate move, to check something that's said to you. Usually you will feel it anyway, how it's right or wrong with what you feel. But there are many times when checking is a separate move, a special separate effort.

For instance, if what you are saying, and what the listener is trying to get, isn't all that clear to you, then you have to feel into it each time you are going to say something, and you have to feel into it again each time the listener responds.

> "I have this funny feeling that something isn't right about how they are doing it, and I'm scared to be part of it. I think they might be going to hurt people and it scares me."
> You're scared they'll hurt people, and you don't want to be doing that with them.
> "Uh… (gets back into the feeling) … it's sort of confused, I can't put my finger exactly on what's wrong, it's like *something* isn't right about it, or about my being in it with them."
> You have this feeling there that something isn't right, but you don't yet have it clear what that is.
> "Yeah… it's by being in that, being part of it, being responsible for it. It'll be my fault."

Here you can see that, as the listener responded the person then again felt into his feel of what's wrong, in order to sense it again and see if it really is as the listener said, or how it really is. He found that it didn't feel exactly like the listener said. (It was not clear how it was, but clear that how the listener said it wasn't it.) There was nothing wrong with the listener's response, it was a good response and got the person to go further into his feeling. His second response again was just right, and turned out to be centered.

It might be that the statement 1 check is my own statement. I could say something that I think is right, and then check it by letting myself down into what I feel to see if that's how it is, or some other way.

For instance, suppose I say, "I've worked a long time now, I bet I'm tired." I could

then very likely feel how my body feels, to check again here if I am tired. The same is true for more personal "feelings." I might say, "I feel something is wrong, I think what's happening isn't what I wanted." After I check into what I really directly feel, what I've got there, I might say, "No, that isn't it, I like what's happening, but I'm scared we won't get time to finish it." (Or, whatever I happened to find I feel.) I might also, as the talker in the last example, say, "No, that isn't it, but I don't yet know what it is, it feels like something is wrong but I don't know what."

What is important is that by checking a person stays in touch with a directly felt sense of something. Often it isn't clear what it is, but the person can *feel* it very clearly - only he can't *think* about it clearly yet, he doesn't know what that is, but he feels *that*, right there.

Or, it may be quite clear what it is. Even so, she feels it directly; it's not words, even if she can make clear words about it.

To check a listener's statement, the person has to turn to the feel of what he is saying. It may not be a very sharply distinct feeling, it might be vague, too. It might not be a specific feeling of something wrong, that you can sense very directly. It might be a vague fog. Even so, that's what's there.

For example, the woman talking about her suicidal friend felt a weight or responsibility and felt a sense of rebellion against it, a sense that it wasn't right for that weight to be there, but also a not knowing how to get it off her.
So, you can think of "centering" as trying to get exactly the feeling or "felt thing," which the person is saying, so that, when he "checks" what you say, he will find that what you said was *exactly it*, exactly what he has there.

Don't expect to be able to give a centered response every time. Just know the difference between the several tries, and the time you get it just right and the person checks it and feels freed to go on. (In the last example, had the listener not been willing, the second time, to take the "something" exactly in so far as the talker felt it, and no further, there could have been five or six exchanges in which, if the listener was guessing each time, the talker would say, "Uh … no…" etc.

The most important thing about a response is whether it lets the person go back into his feeling, to check it, and possibly to go further into it. But, now, what do you do if the person you're listening to doesn't know about checking, and doesn't do it? Then, in a way, none of your responses are any good!

Linda Olsen, A beginning listening/focusing group

The following is a suggested structure for teaching and learning listening and focusing in an on-going group. The model was developed through experimenting with teaching listening on Sunday nights at Changes, and it has also been tried in a number of other situations. It works best with about six people and the first session takes about 2.5 hours, depending on how nervous people are and how good the leader is at moving things along. More than eight people is usually too many because the last ones to get a turn can get tired, bored, or impatient.

First Session: Introduction to Listening/Focusing

Part of what the leader does in the first session is to create a sense of what the group will be working on. People will have various ideas of what is going to happen, and different anxieties and expectations about it. The leader will also have anxieties and expectations, and worries about whether he/she is communicating.

The tendency I have had as a leader has been to over talk people, to present them with more conceptual complexity at the beginning than they can understand until after they have practiced listening/focusing. So I have developed a simple way of introducing what we will do:

> "Listening is a kind of receptive attitude, a way of trying to hear and communicate what you hear going on inside another person, a way of getting at his/her experience, and communicating that you understand it. Specifically, what we'll be working on here is simply saying back in your own words what you hear the other person saying. The aim is to get *just* what they are saying, without adding or subtracting anything.
> "Listening is a way of giving another person a lot of space to tell you how it is for him/her. It is suspending the usual ways people talk to each other about problems (or about anything else). The listener is there to give the talker some room for his/her experience and to try to understand that experience *just as it is for the talker.* This means that understanding will be "right" only if it is satisfactory to the talker, only if the talker feels inside "Yes, that's what I meant." Listening is not asking questions, giving advice, or making interpretations. It is also not just parroting the other person's words.
> "This seems simple to do, but I think you will find what I did when I first started, that you may think you understand perfectly what the person is saying, but then when you try to say it back to them it comes out to be not what they were trying to communicate. Also, it often seems silly or awkward to people to say back to the person what they just said because they feel they have to add something, make comments, or give advice. So, this may feel awkward at the beginning, but it gets easier as you practice.
> "Focusing is a way of listening to yourself, a way of getting past the racket that is usually going on inside to get to a feeling sense of how you are, or about how you feel in this situation you are in. It involves getting in touch

with what comes up for you as a feeling answer when you ask, "How am I now?" or "What's the most urgent concern for me now?" or "How do I feel about this situation?" When you are being listened to, it means checking inside to see if what the listener said is really what you meant to communicate; seeing what you meant to say, what the picture or feeling behind your words is/was. Specifically, this means that as a talker, you will say to the listener something like, "Yes, that's it" or "Well, that part of it is right, but I was also saying… " You will need to go past the big temptation to agree with their response to you in order to be nice or avoid conflict."

After the introduction, you can begin by being a listener for each person, asking them to talk about what they expect from the group, or even just how it is for them to be there that day, how they are responding to starting this group, etc. Ask people to talk about a feeling or experience in their lives or a feeling they are having in the group right now - something they are willing to share with this new group of people. This may sound obvious, but it's important to tell most people what to talk about or they will talk about themselves in the same way they do in ordinary superficial social conversations.

Remember always to do a lot of what you are teaching. Every interaction can serve as an example of listening/focusing if you make sure to listen and then point out what happened and how it worked. As a general rule, I try to let an experience happen first, and then abstract principles from that experience. My goal is to allow the experience to be created in people, and then create a kind of self-observation or self-consciousness about the experience, so people can conceptualize or articulate what they are doing.

For example, suppose when you start out asking someone to talk about something and they can't think of anything to talk about. Start listening to them from there. Say back to them what they are experiencing - their confusion, hesitation, unwillingness, or whatever it is. This can be the first example of how listening works. After it seems finished, you can each talk about the process of it - what you liked and didn't like, what you experienced, how this kind of talking is different from the usual kind of interactions, how it might be done better, etc. *Share your honest reactions you become clear about inside yourself!* Then listen to reactions from others.

Example of listening teaching structure

Tell the group that you're going to be doing, what you want to teach, and that you will listen to each one for five to ten minutes about what they expect to get out of the group. When you give a listening response, tell everyone that it was a listening response, and tell them why it was a listening response. Point out how that is different from what usually happens in conversations. Try to teach while letting the interaction be as natural as possible. For example, wait until you feel you have understood the talker, and until the talker says he/she feels understood before beginning to point out the principle of what you are doing. Also, make sure

to notice and comment about whether the talker focuses or checks inside to see if he/she really feels understood by your response. (For example, "You could really see from Joe's face that his attention was turned inside just then, that he was checking inside to see if the listener's response really captured what he was trying to communicate.")

Notice that it doesn't really matter if a listener is "right" about their response. What matters is that both people tune in more and more to their experience and find better and better ways of communicating it accurately. If the listener is "wrong" it is just as well, because the talker can say "No, that's not it, it's more like… " Either way, something important is learned.

After you have heard out each person about what they want/ expect from the group, introduce the structure for practicing listening.

Here it is: each person in the group will listen to the person on their left for a brief period, until the talker feels understood about whatever experiences he/she brings up. Then you (the leader) will listen to the listener about how it was for them to listen, what came up for them while they were trying to focus on the talker. When the listener has had a chance to focus on his/her issues, then the leader listens to the talker about issues which came up for them while being listened to. This continues around the group until each person has had a chance to be both listener and talker.

Following is a list of good beginning teaching points. They can't be too complicated at the beginning because most people have to practice some before they can connect with the points you are making in their experience. Intellectual understanding often has no effect on actual listening or focusing behavior.

1. Watching the face of the talker to see if he/she felt understood.
2. Relaxing if you feel yourself trying too hard (especially in your body). Not straining.
3. Repeating over to yourself the same words the person said until a sense comes up in you of what they meant.
4. Stopping the talker before he/she says too much for you to understand. Taking care of yourself as a listener; breaking in where you need to break in.
5. Again, saying back to the talker *just* what he/she said, in your own words, without adding or subtracting. (If the listener is really lost, adding or taking away a lot, give a listening response to the talker, to clear up the interaction, then listen to the listener to find out what is getting in his/her way.)
6. To the Talker: talking slowly enough to be able to "listen to yourself," to hear what you are saying inside. And "checking" to make sure what *was* right and what felt *not* right about what the listener said. (It helps to say something about the horrible temptation there is to agree with what the listener thinks you said, in order to avoid hurting their feelings, telling them

they're wrong, etc.)

General rule

Avoid terminology as much as possible. Use what is going on in the interaction in front of you and describe it vividly, experientially, so that everyone can see what you mean.

There is a big temptation to make conceptual points when doing this, but that never seems to work as well as giving your own experience and observations about what is happening, or listening to someone else's.

Usually each interaction comes to some natural ending point when you can ask the talker, "Is that a good stopping place?" It is good to ask this, otherwise, people will often go on because they think they are supposed to keep talking. Sometimes very needy people come to the group who could go on for a long time and you need to find a stopping place for them. You can tell them you would like to hear more later, after the group.

Of course, there are times in a group like this when extremely moving or difficult interactions happen between people which cannot be artificially cut off. Use your intuition, but stick to the structure wherever possible. You may have to say clearly, more than once, that this is a learning group and that longer interactions can happen at other times.

Try to keep to the structure if a discussion gets going, e.g., ask the person who seems to have a hot issue if he could be listened to next and get someone in the group to take their turn. I try to make listening happen in almost every interaction - if this continues for a whole session, it creates a very clear, relaxed, close atmosphere and everyone will be able to experience the impact of listening.

About feedback

An important thing to stress here is becoming comfortable with giving and receiving feedback about the listening. That is, the listener should begin to get used to hearing what helped or "worked" for the talker; what he/she did that seemed to move or change things, and what went wrong. Gradually, the listener can learn about the ways people are different, about their different needs. For example, some people might need to have what they say reflected very often, because they need to make sure the listener is with them; others might need time to quietly explore themselves with little response.

The *giving* of feedback is an important process for the *talker*, as it helps him/her to become *conscious* about his/her needs, about what works and what doesn’t. Also, when feedback is explicitly asked for, it is possible to avoid the kind of "dead”, lifeless interactions that go on when the interaction goes on and on because it's *supposed to* be getting somewhere but isn't, and somehow both

people never get it together to talk about it. Discussing likes and dislikes (make sure *both* get talked about!) about what went on is helpful for both people so that they can learn to become conscious of and articulate the issues that come up *between* them, in the interaction, the "We" issues (Noel and DeChenne, 1971). Often these are just sensed - a person has a feeling that something is "off" or not going right. One way this often happens at the beginning of learning listening is for the listener to be unsure about whether or not he/she is doing the right thing because the talker is responding a certain way. Through getting feedback, the listener can go through an important learning process, discovering just where the unsureness is coming from. That is, he/she begins to learn the difference between his/her own feelings of insecurity about learning on the one hand, and what is actually being experienced by the talker on the other. In this process, both people benefit from learning about the kinds of needs and expectations they have from other people.

Sometimes the "processing" interaction or discussion between the listener and talker happens spontaneously, so each is hearing what went on for the other. Many times, however, you will have to stop each person and slow them down by giving listening responses so that each gets a chance to completely experience what happened. (It is as if you are teaching them to really *take in* what they are talking about.)

If at any point the people in the group start jumping in to say what they are experiencing, try to listen to each person in such a way that the discussion stays centered on the teaching topic and also demonstrates listening in as many ways as possible.

Non-evaluative feedback

When you (as leader) give people feedback, try to use what is going on as an example of what it is like to learn listening, or as an example of what listening is or is not, rather than as what each person is doing right or wrong. People generally run into exactly the same problems when they are learning listening, so this isn't too hard to do. If something comes up which you have had trouble with, share your own experience with it, if you feel like it.

lt took me a while to realize that both listeners and talkers feel competitive and inadequate in the learning situation (certainly not a surprise!). There is the added pressure of "learning how to help someone" and "needing to know the right thing to do," appear competent, sensitive, helpful, etc. The best way to deal with these feelings is to do a lot of listening to both listener and talker about how they feel about doing and learning what you are teaching. That way, everyone can see that other people have the same insecurities they do, and soon the group will feel they are all working toward a common goal, and sharing common learning difficulties. This builds a close feeling of cooperation.

Alwavs listen BEFORE you give feedback.

Ask something like, "How was it for you to listen (talk)?'' Don't be content with "fine" or "it felt comfortable." Ask people to say more. If no one raises issues like those mentioned above, talk about your own feelings, either present feelings or how you felt as a beginning listener. *If people do not connect with their feelings about what they are doing, their listening and talking become stereotyped, mechanical, unspontaneous.* Incidentally, listening first, before you give instructional or conceptual feedback, takes much of the burden off you as a teacher, because you are letting them tell you about what they are learning, about what comes up for them as they are learning. By listening to them you allow them to take the initiative for their own learning. Then anything you have to say is a sharing of experience between you and the person, based on mutual understanding. Your job is mainly to keep the group experience "on track," to organize and abstract experiences as they come up so that people get a sense of what listening/focusing is and what it is not.

In general, I have found that it is better to let people go through the interaction without my breaking in, so they can get a feel for it. However, if it is really going wrong, break in and demonstrate, or give a simple instruction to the listener and have them start over, *or* I listen to the listener.

As a leader, I experience myself as someone who is there to get a good process going, and to teach people how to talk about that process, rather than as someone who monitors and labels their behavior. This includes accepting negative feelings. If people complain or say it's no good, listen to that.

Remember that when you start the round robin you are first. Try to demonstrate good focusing by clearly going into yourself, clearly checking to see if the listener is getting at your experience, and giving good feedback about that. I have found that it is very important to say why listening is important to you, what you get out of teaching it, and how you feel just now in this group. This gives people a vivid sense of what this is all for, or what they might get out of it. It also helps you to feel comfortable in sharing your vulnerable feelings in the group. The more you can show this is safe for you, the safer the group members will feel.

Second session

By the end of the first session, most people have an idea of what listening is, and have begun to run into what gets in the way of listening, the ways people get tangled up inside when they try to tell another person what they understand. People have also begun to see where their troubles are in going into themselves (focusing). A group structure which helps deal with these problems is also the "round robin" (used in the first session) only with smaller numbers of people. To do this, we divide into sub-groups. It is best to have two leaders so that there can be three or four learners per subgroup. Time can be roughly divided so that each pair listens/talks for 10 minutes and then each member gets listened to about how it was for them for 10 minutes. Usually there is time for the leader to make

teaching inputs relevant to the experiences that come up. The leader should follow the format set forth in the first session in all other respects.

Group process

There is a strong pull in a small group like this to "become a group"; to start dealing with feelings people have about each other and about the group. A balance must be worked out between dealing with these issues and sticking to the learning task. As a leader, you can listen to group or interactional issues to the satisfaction of those raising them, but also make clear your own needs to stick to the structure as closely as possible for learning purposes. It helps to say that the issues people are raising are important, but should be dealt with in another context, since if the group processed them just then it would prevent learning listening. Another thing you can do is put the issues into the learning structure by asking the person who raises them to use that as what he/she gets listened to about. (This is, incidentally, a good training thing because the listener is often having similar or different feelings about this same group and the interaction ends up being an excellent example of how hard it can be to listen to someone who is having different or similar feelings about the same things as yourself.)

Some of this may need to take place at another meeting, or after the learning session.

Likes, dislikes, impressions, ideas about other people often come up in this session. These can also be important material for listening practice. Participants are often surprised about how many of their feelings about the other person disappear, make sense, or turn out to be wrong when they have learned to hear the other person out. You can say that later sessions will teach them additional ways to use their thoughts and feelings about the other person (see section in this book concerning relationships and interactions). At this early stage, interactional issues should be mainly dealt with as they come up in the context of trouble with listening or focusing. As a leader, your job is to hear out the person with the issue, then turn to his/her partner for reactions, and so forth back and forth until both parties seem satisfied. If the two are already good at listening, get them to listen to each other about the issue, and break in only when a listening response is not being given in order for you to give one or to ask the listener to give one.

There is an important and difficult interactional problem here. When one person is being some way that another person can't stand there is a tendency to tell that person how awful they are, how they are hurting you, what they are doing to you. It is important in this kind of interaction to separate several things:

1. What the other person doing to you. This is best done by being as specific and descriptive as possible, describing the person's behavior as accurately as possible as you experience it. It may take some time, and some being listened to, to get to this, since it is often hard to do when you are first just feeling rejected or irritated or feeling like blowing up at the person.

2. What you infer about what they are experiencing when they do this. They may or may not be feeling the way you infer them to be. This must be checked out.

3. How do you feel about what they are doing. It is important to discover how you got "hooked" by this particular quality of this particular person. For example, it involves going past the first spontaneous reaction of "You're hurting me," to "I feel hurt when you say that," to "I get scared and vulnerable inside when I'm wanting people to like me and when you do that I'm not so sure anymore whether I can trust anyone." This "owning" process may take several steps (Rosenberg, 1976). It may be hard to get to your feeling right away. It's also important to know that just saying "I feel hurt by you" instead of "You're hurting me" is not yet owning - what needs to be gone into is more about *you*, just how *you* are affected, what it is about *you* that makes it possible for the other person to affect you that way.

When you have finished helping one person explore this, you can go on to help the other person or persons in the interaction through the same kind of process. Keep in mind that your goal is always to clarify each person's own unique experience, and not to judge or evaluate it. If you find yourself judging, forming opinions, or taking sides, then have someone (your co-leader, preferably) listen to you until you discover what is "getting" you.

At the end of the sub-groups, the whole group can reconvene to talk about the session, what they learned, raising questions, etc. The plan for the next session and its rationale can be introduced here.

Third session

If people are still struggling with the basic ideas and still have trouble hearing clearly, repeat Session Two until they improve. Otherwise, you can start Session Three with focusing instructions. Begin by explaining focusing simply and then give the instructions (see section of this book entitled "A Focusing Group" for suggestions about doing it yourself while you are giving them). Then go around the group, hearing from each person about how the focusing went for them. This can be done without the person talking about the content of what they focused on - instead they might talk about whether they got in touch with their feeling, or got somewhere, or had trouble with different parts of the instructions. The goal here is to learn how to focus, about what it is like to get in touch with experience. Of course, it is really all right to talk about the content if that's what seemed important.

Next, there are several options. If you want to stay in the large group and learn more about focusing, you can give the instructions again, and again go around to each person to find out how it was for them. Or, if the people are pretty good at listening and focusing, you can split up in three's after the instructions, with persons taking turns being listener, talker, and observer. If you stay in the whole group, go around to each person and listen to them about how it went. Get them

to describe as accurately as possible so you can see what their process is like. Some people think they are focusing when they are not. You can tell if someone focused by how alive and energetic they are when they talk about their experience. Share with them your experience of their focusing in terms of how alive it felt to you. Then hear how they felt it. Others just get lost, give up, get angry, or space out. At some point, here or in the next session, you need to give some individualized attention to each person, explaining to them what focusing is and what it is not. This can be done the same way as teaching listening, by taking examples from someone's experience, saying something like, "That's what it means to get a whole sense", or “That’ s what it means to get words from (or make words for) a feeling." Sometimes people need special exercises to get a felt sense (see section in this book on difficulties with focusing) or need to be given relaxation instructions. If some people have a lot of difficulty, you may have to spend a whole session, or many sessions, working on focusing, depending on the needs and wants of you and your group.

If your group splits into threes, first make sure people understand the roles they will have. They will take turns being listener, talker, and observer, with time being divided equally. The observer should be a listener after each person has a turn, doing what the leader usually does, listening to the listener and talker about how it was to be in each of those roles. The observer can also check out things that he/she heard the talker saying which the listener may have missed, or parts which got passed by because a different theme was followed. The observer can make comments here too about the *interaction*, about reactions the two people had toward each other while listening. (This is also a way of beginning to show people how it feels to teach listening, so that they could later lead groups themselves.)

A common problem which occurs at this point is that the observer can become opinionated and pushy about his/her insights in a way that excludes or denies the experience of the listener or talker. The listener or talker may also become defensive about what the observer says. In this case, the leader may need to help out by patiently hearing out each side until communication becomes clearer. People usually become opinionated, pushy, and interpretive when they are upset. It is difficult to hear them out because there is usually something right about what they are saying mixed in with a lot of anxiety or irritation. Try to hear *both* the specific observation *and* the *feeling* or experience that goes with it. Help the person learn to separate these and see them clearly.

The post-interaction listening helps people get in touch with the experience of helping and being helped, generates issues useful for teaching purposes, and eventually teaches people to check *internally* about these important"meta-issues”, the vaguely sensed interpersonal "vibes" which make up any interaction. It is important to get out *both* how the talker felt about the listener's responding, and how the listener felt about the talker. The process between the two can get very stuck if these feelings are not brought out. For example, the listener may get "clogged" by all of his/her reactions to the talker, and need to get them out. Or the talker can get pulled away from going deeply into him/herself because of

something annoying the listener is doing.

The leader should be a roving consultant here, helping the different triads. People often have trouble being specific about feedback and need careful listening help to get to it. The leader should help the observer listen to the listenertalker pair, and should in general be available for any group which is having trouble. People can be told to ask for help when they feel that listening is not happening, or things are getting stuck or bogged down.

Why it is important to learn to focus

When we first started teaching listening, we put almost all the training emphasis on teaching accurate listening. This didn't work very well, as it put a lot of pressure on people to be "good at it", to learn how to be helpful. We also found that it is very hard to be a good listener without learning how to be listened to, without learning what it is like to struggle with your own inner space. Also, there are many times when listening that people get hit by their own feelings about what the talker is saying, and it is important here to have the ability to go into what those feelings are so that they don't block the helping process.

Later stages of learning listening/focusing

These can be flexible according to the wants of the group. Usually we have spent many weeks dividing into pairs and just practicing, trading hours or half-hours. We have found it useful to spend half the time talking about one particular pair's interaction, with different people taking turns each week. This has worked best for us using a tape recorder, so that we can stop the tape and each person can say what was going on for them just then. The format for this is essentially the same as in the beginning, with the listener and talker both discussing the interaction, going into thoughts and feelings about what happened, but with other people sharing their own experience (see chapter in this book entitled "Learning Together: The Way We Do It").

This part of learning listening/focusing can be very exciting. It's fascinating to learn in detail how *different* people are, how each person's experience is uniquely their own; and also, to have the excitement of sharing deeply felt common ground. There is a lot of time to explore what it's like inside you, what furthers your living and what does not, the ways you block yourself from feeling, what gets in the way of focusing; to learn about all the different complex things that go on during the experience of listening to and helping another person, when listening and focusing is helpful and when it is not, and other things that are helpful besides these - ways to integrate listening with consciousness-raising, how focusing is the same or different from meditation, and so on. It's like having a group of people sharing some of their deepest thoughts and feelings about the nature of their growth and change.

Finally, I want to add that this group has the same problems as other groups - lots

of interactional issues come up around difficulties with deciding what the group will do and what it will not. Some people stay and some people drop out. As with any group, people have to be willing to say what they want, to work for that, to deal with interactional issues in the group and to work out a common goal. This is a process, it takes shape over time, and results in a unique character, probably different in the end from these guidelines. Let us know how your listening group comes out!

References

Noel, Joseph R. and DeChenne, Timothy K. *I-We-Thou Multi-centered Counseling and Psychotherapy*, "Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice, Winter 1971, Vol.8, No.4, 282-284.

Rosenberg, Marshall B. *From now on*. (Available through Community Psychological Consultants; 1740 Gulf Drive; St.Louis, Missouri 63130.) 1976.

Ann Weiser, Common problems in a beginning listening group

My name is Ann Weiser and I've been helping to run the new people's group on Sunday nights for about ten weeks. Sometimes I feel strong and confident about being able to tell people about Listening; sometimes I'm mainly aware of how little I know and how uncertain it all is anyway. These two parts of me are present in this writing.

I'm trying to show some of the things that often give trouble when people are beginning to learn Listening. I do it by giving examples of interactions that could occur. None of these actually has occurred; they're all exaggerated to make a point. In the comments following the dialogues, the teacher part of me finds it easy to say what should have happened. Now the student part of me wants to say, it's never that easy. I'm not so sure about what people ought to do. I just know the way I like to see people Listening when they're beginning, and these dialogues are not it.

1. The conversational horror

> Mary, looking straight at John, smiling: "I'm not sure what I'm going to talk about. I'm a little nervous at being in a group like this."
> John: "You feel nervous and you're not sure what to talk about."
> Mary: "Uh-huh. I always have a hard time speaking before groups of people."
> John: "You know you have trouble with things like this."
> Mary: "That's right. It's just the way I am. Well, I guess that's all."

Mary is treating her interaction with John as if it were a conversation. She is looking at him and her attention is on conveying information to him. She is speaking of things she already knows about herself.

It's important to remember that Listening is not at all like conversation. The person being Listened to should turn her attention on herself, as a step in the enterprise of learning more about herself. The Listener doesn't even have to know what the problem is about in order for the process to proceed (although for me as a Listener I know it feels better to know). Probably a good thing for the Focusser to do, especially when first learning, is to close her eyes or look downward, as a reminder to herself that this is not an ordinary conversation and as an aid to going into the inner landscape.

2. Getting lost

> George: "It seems like my life these days is just a total jumble. There's my schoolwork - I'm depressed about all the work I have to do because I'm not sure whether I want to stay in school. And my dorm isn't helping any - the people there are really cold and distant. And this girl I'm involved with… God, I just don't know. Sometimes I really enjoy being with her and

sometimes she just turns me off, and I don't know why."
Patsy: "Uh… you… uh… I am afraid I've lost that - could you repeat it?"

There are several parts to this problem. In saying afterwards how she felt being the Listener, Patsy reported feeling confusion about what she should do: "He was going on and on and I didn't know whether I should stop him. I was losing what he said but I thought maybe he needed to go on." George said: "I didn't know whether I should stop and wait for a reflection or what." It's not easy to say what went wrong here.

One thing that could have happened was, George could have stopped for a reflection after each sentence or each "thing." After people get used to being Listened to and are more tuned in to their inner processes, their words about themselves seem to come out in manageable parts. Or they find out that they don't need the whole thing reflected, but maybe just the last part. They could know this about themselves and could say so when they sit down to be Listened to. I tell people that perhaps the most important thing to learn first is how they personally like to be Listened to. But in order to learn that, they should try Listening and being Listened to using the most basic, strict Listening technique. So, the next time George is Listened to, he should try stopping after each thing.

Now, what could Patsy have done in the problem situation, given that George did not seem to be stopping? She could have stopped him, saying, "Uh… could I try reflecting just that much?" To do this does seem to be interfering with the Focusser's process in some way, but it is important for the Listener to feel she is hanging in there, especially in beginner's Listening when nobody is too sure about his process anyway. We leave open the option for the Focusser to reply, "No, I need to go on," if he really does.

Another thing Patsy could have done, after being bowled over by a flood of stuff that was too much for her to give back, would be to say, "I got the part about your life being a jumble, but I got lost in the rest, and I really do want to understand it." This way George would hear back part of what he said, he would know that Patsy was *trying* to stay with him, and he would have the option of whether to repeat it, say it another way, or go on.

Finally, there is something that *I* could have done in this situation. As soon as George's part started getting pretty long, 1 could have interrupted gently and said, "Now, that's a lot. How about giving Patsy a chance to see if she can reflect that much?" There are problems with this, too, of course. One time I tried it and the Listener (someone who had never Listened before) asked if it wasn't his prerogative to stop it if it got to be too much? I said, “Well, yes...” He said, "Well, she can continue, because I'm getting it just fine." And by God, he was! He gave a fine reflection. So, there are no easy solutions to this problem.

3A. Adding, and 3B. Not correcting

Eloise: "I'm worried about a thing that happens to me when I'm with people I really care about. I get very anxious about their reactions to me."
Abner: "You really want to please these people and so you're worried about their reactions to you."
Eloise: "I get so anxious that I… (etc.)

Two things are going wrong here. Abner has added something to Eloise's thing. It may be a logical continuation to being anxious around people you care about that you really want to please them, but it ain't necessarily so and Eloise hasn't said it yet. It's hard to give a reflection that adds nothing at all to what the Focusser has said; maybe Abner has a similar problem that he can't help thinking about and he has trouble sorting out his feelings from Eloise's. This is understandable and needs working on but it's not disastrous - yet. Where the trouble really starts is in Eloise's treatment of Abner's response. If she is using his responses in the most productive way - that is, checking each one with her feeling to see how they fit - she will immediately reject a response that doesn't fit her feeling. In this case she would say something like, "Well, I don't know about wanting to please them. That may be true but that's not what I'm with right now. It's that I…" and so on.

This is important. Let people realize from the very beginning that the burden of power and responsibility is on the one being Listened to. It's up to her to throw out any response she doesn't like: additions, questions, interpretations, opinions - anything that would distract her from getting into her feeling. It's up to her to ask for more or fewer or different kinds of responses, depending on what she needs. This follows from the fact that she is the only one who can keep track of her feeling. This means the Listener doesn't have to get too uptight about doing absolutely perfect reflecting - of which there's no such thing, anyway.

4. A nice one

I've given three dialogues thick with horrors, and now it seems appropriate to give a dialogue where good things go on - they do happen, even in a beginner's group, and they do feel good.

Tony: (is silent for about a minute, eyes closed. Then…) What comes up here is an incident that occurred in the earlier part of the meeting, during the break. I walked up to this fellow and asked how long he'd been in Changes, and he said, 'I don't want to think about it,' and turned away."
Cleo: "You're remembering an incident in which you asked somebody a question and he wouldn't answer it."
Tony: "Yes… but it wasn't just asking him a question. (slowly) I wanted to start a conversation."
Cleo: "So it was more than just a question. You wanted to talk to him."
Tony: "That's right! I was opening myself up in a way. And now I see that his turning away was like a rejection of my openness. No wonder it feels bad!"

Now Tony knows a little more about himself than he did before he started, and Cleo has had the satisfaction of seeing him *use* her responses to help his own process. In a beginner's group, where there are so many people waiting a turn to try this new thing Listening, it's hard for anyone to get a chance to really feel the good things about it. I just keep hoping they'll be interested enough to keep trying. I wish everyone in the world knew about Listening - that world would be a better place for me.

Kristin Glaser, Some more thoughts about beginning listening groups, including what you might do if there is no leader

Everyone I have seen run a beginning listening group does it slightly or not so slightly differently. As long as the basic issues that Linda raises are being addressed, there are a lot of styles and variations which work better with different groups and different leaders.

When I run a group, I am concerned with immediately teaching the attitude which I feel goes along with doing good listening and focusing. Somehow, I have usually had a small group of people who are sitting on the floor together, almost knee-to-knee. In my introduction, I emphasize the open, relaxed, receptive - almost positive, if you can get there - frame of mind that is preparatory to doing either listening or focusing. To help people get there, I may give the following instructions, doing them myself as we go along:

> Please sit in a relaxed, but not slumped position, close your eyes and pay attention to your breathing. (Pause.)
> Take some deep breaths, and try to attend to the whole process of taking the air in and letting it out. (Pause.)
> Check your body for whatever sensations may be there - a tight place, a tense stomach. Try to relax the tension, but if it won't go easily, note that place and you may want to come back to it when you are focusing. (Pause.)
> Go back to the breathing and try and clear your head of the fast thoughts, the ticker tape, that usually runs through. Take those thoughts and try and put them away, to pick them up again later. (Pause.)
> Sit quietly now for a few seconds and then open your eyes.

When we have finished this exercise, I am usually in a very relaxed but alert state. Talking quite slowly, I may take a minute to explain how I feel and how this makes me ready and receptive to either go into myself, focus and talk about my feelings, or be really ready to listen to someone else. At this point I will probably ask someone to talk and I will listen.

I then move in front of the person who is going to talk and settle myself as close as feels comfortable. My body position of closeness, slightly leaning forward, and my facial expression of interest and warmth all combine to give a message to the talker that I am there with all my attention and caring to hear what she has to say. To me, taking the time to develop my attention and receptivity are a very critical part of the listening process and prevent the initial learning from having the stiltedness and hollowness that people complain of. However, you do it, you should be totally there.

We will then go on to do the round-robin and continue with Linda's model.

What happens when you don't have someone to teach you but you would like to learn listening, anyway? We hope that you can learn by yourself using this book. I

would make some suggestions about doing it differently. Suppose that you and a group of five others decide to try. If you want a leaderless context make sure that everyone has read all of the sections of this book on listening and focusing. To start you will want to have really studied the part on *Listening*. The structure to use is trios. Have one person talking, another listening, and the third observing and taking the leader's function of asking each person for feedback and making his own comments. Then the other three people in the group who have also been observing will make additional comments. Do a round-robin in this way but really take your time. Clearly you will be needing to learn from each other so give plenty of time to process each interaction and make sure that someone is trying to "listen" to each comment made by the interactors or observers. To make it easier to learn from each other, always go slow, try to keep your interactions short, talk about feelings but not the big heavy ones to start off with. Have a conversation ahead of time about guidelines for feedback to each other. Listening is only learned by trying and probably making lots of mistakes. Listening goes against almost all our natural impulses in a conversation. Hopefully you will all be able to agree to hear each other's comments and criticisms without it being difficult. Perhaps you can learn to offer a supportive comment to go along with each correction.

If you can get a tape recorder, it would help the learning process immensely. If you can tape an interaction, play the interaction back and let the listener hear himself, he may be able to pick up on and comment on his own work. It is also important to spend some time on the person who is doing the talking. Is she getting to her feelings or skimming along the top? Is she inwardly "checking" the responses she gets to determine whether they feel accurate? If they don't, is she correcting the listener by saying something like, "That’s almost right, but it's more like…”

Part Three: About Focusing

Kristin Glaser, Introduction

Although we have talked about focusing a little before, in this section we want to give you a much more detailed idea of what that process is about and how to do it. Focusing means sensing into one's as yet unclear feelings and allowing them to shift, release, and open. Some few people may do this naturally all the time. Maybe you know someone who can dip into herself, inquire into her feelings and then really know how it is with herself. This is the person who in a confusing situation will take a private inward minute and really be able to check with how she feels about what is going on. This is the person who can be in touch with the complexity of her feelings, not in an analytical way, but with a clear sense of the whole. Although a few people can do that, there are more of us who can do this in some partial way. l can always be in touch with the fullness of hurt, but never when there is anger. I can get in touch with feelings, but then I can't just let them come to me; I immediately grab them and start analyzing and being intellectual. I can check inside with how I feel, but not get down too far.

This section describes more clearly what that focusing process feels like, how it can be used, and also gives some different instructions of how you can do this process. People who can do it naturally may not find these instructions useful, but for most of us there is a real skill to be learned. Once you have acquired the skill, the instructions may no longer be that relevant. You will be able to focus whenever you want to. There seems to be some contradiction in having formal instructions for a very unshaped, internal process, but like listening, our natural way of doing things does not usually support the focusing process, so we must learn new ways.

This section will have the following parts:

l. Trying to give you a sense of what it is all about. Here some people will describe their focusing experiences - both unstructured and following the directions.
2. We will then give you some guidelines and
3. a clear set of focusing instructions so you can try and do it yourself.
4. Then will be a detailed discussion of each step in the instructions.
5. A number of additional aids or explanations follow.
6. Next come some problems that most people run into when first focusing and suggestions we have to meet these problems.
7. Some people have real difficulty getting to their "feelings," we have some ideas of how to begin to do that.
8. We then say more about what a feeling, or “felt sense" is in the focusing process.
9. Another side to the problem of getting feelings is people 1s difficulty getting "inside" themselves. Here we suggest ways to do this and have an alternative set of focusing instructions.
10. Then we talk about the attitudes toward self that facilitate good focusing.
11. We then give guidelines for when not to focus, and

12. try to talk about why we focus and what it is useful for.

We hope you will take our specifics here very specifically. Everyone knows some inward processes, good or bad. We aren't putting down or being against any other way, but think this one to be quite special. We feel that focusing is a very important process in which difficulties within us can be resolved. Although it may seem awkward to try to learn this process from a book, we feel it is worth the effort. The only way to learn, though, is to try to follow the instructions step by step. We know there will be difficulties and that is why we have written so much - hopefully somewhere in this section there is something written which will speak to your particular difficulty in doing this.

Eugene Gendlin and Mary Hendricks, Focusing issues: guidelines, steps, additional aids, problems, feelings and felt sense, alternate instructions, self-attitudes, and when to stop

Guidelines for focusing

It has often been helpful to say something like the following before asking a person to focus:

The method of focusing is a bodily method.

First, the method involves a sharp and complete shift in direction. One must cease talking to oneself inside; one must ask, "What's wrong?" and then keep quiet, and refrain from answering oneself. Everyone knows a great deal about what is wrong, but it is different to wait and listen than to tell oneself about it. Usually one thinks from the outside in, at oneself. In "focusing" one shifts to "from the inside out," *from oneself*. Rather than trying to say or think what the trouble is, what the answer is, one must keep quiet and listen. Then the bodily felt version of what the trouble is makes itself felt.

Secondly, one needs to understand before one starts, that *words can come from a feeling*. Words come anyway, one can't shut up for long. But there is a way of letting all words that come go by, except for such words as "come from" the feeling. Another way to phrase this (since "come from" is mysterious), is that some rare words have an experiential effect. We call it a *felt shift*. As these rare words come, one senses a sharpened feeling, or a felt relief, a felt shift, usually before one can say what this shift is. Sometimes such words are not in themselves very impressive or novel, but just *these* words have an experiential effect, and no others do. For example: "I'm scared… " might not be new, but when the words arise *from* one's quietly listening, they often have the effect of: "Yeah, that's what it is all right (long exhale breath, shakes head). Yeah, boy, I didn't know how true that was." You may have been saying at yourself for days, among other things, that you are scared, but there is a release when the words come directly from the feeling. Here is another example: When you don't like someone, there is what you criticize objectively, but that may be different from what you say from your feeling of not liking. That might not be objective, but it's *from* what you feel.

Thirdly, it is possible to sense a problem *as a whole* and let what is important come up from that bodily sensing. People rarely let the crux of the problem come freshly to them from their feel of the problem as a whole. They already know the crux (they remember what it was the last time they worked on this problem), or they decide now, in their head, what it is. One can step back and have a feel of the whole problem as it is now. Don't "decide" what is important about it. Feel it all and wait. Let whatever aspect of the problem that needs release right now come to you freshly.

Fourth, focusing instructions involve a series of questions. They are open-ended,

e.g., "How am I now?" "How do I feel?" "What words or pictures come from this feeling?" The broad openness of the question is part of what permits a complex, whole sense of something to form. If instead of "How do I feel?" one asked oneself, "Am I angry or excited now?" one may be neither - and no new step can form because the alternatives have been pre-structured. This question form is important because it permits change to happen - something new to take place. If one "asks" already assuming they know how this problem goes, what this situation feels like, then nothing new can happen. *To ask is to not yet to know*. If one asks without already knowing the answer, this automatically entails the kind of "waiting" or "keeping quiet" we speak of in focusing. When focusing works people often are surprised by what forms. It helps to have this set before beginning.

In summary,
1. One must wait about 30 seconds without talking at oneself, letting words go by if they come, until one freshly senses one's bodily feeling of the problem.
2. Words can come from a feeling and such words have a special power, a sensed effect which other words don't have.
3. When you have a feel of the whole problem, don't decide what's most important about it. Ask, "What's the crux of it?" and don't answer. Let that come freshly to you.
4. At each step have the set of an open question - that you don't yet know what will come.

Detailed description of focusing steps

It would be good if you could have someone read you the instructions one by one, with roughly the times indicated between (or a minute or so between, it need not be exact). In the silences between, both of you try to do what the instructions say.

It is somewhat harder to focus by oneself, but if there is no one to do it with, try them now, by yourself. (People differ, too. Perhaps for you it is easier alone.)

Promise yourself (and everyone else you do it with) that there is no agreement to talk about what you find during focusing. You decide later if you want to say anything from it, and if so, what. In this way, each person focusing can be private and meet the feelings that are there without being concerned about what anyone else will think.

If you stop now and try the focusing instructions, then the more detailed descripting of each step in the following pages may clarify whatever you found confusing. Focusing is not the words or concepts written in the instructions, but the actual process you go through when you do it. So, you can't just read the instructions and know what they are about, or what specific things you will need cleared up. Even if you are familiar with this kind of process, try out this specific one.

Focusing instructions

This is going to be just to yourself. What I will ask you to do will be silent, just to yourself. Take a moment just to relax …
(5 seconds)

All right - now, just to yourself, inside you, I would like you to pay attention to a very special part of you… Pay attention to that part where you usually feel sad, glad, or scared.
(5 seconds)

Pay attention to that area in you and see how you are now.
See what comes to you when you ask yourself, "How am I now?" "How do I feel?" "What is the main thing for me right now?"
Let it come, in whatever way it comes to you, and see how it is.
(30 seconds or less)

If, among the things that you have just thought of, there was a major personal problem which felt important, continue with it. Otherwise, select a meaningful personal problem to think about. Make sure you have chosen some personal problem of real importance in your life. Choose the thing which seems most meaningful to you.
(10 seconds)

1. Of course, there are many parts to that one thing you are thinking about - too many to *think* of each one alone. But, you can *feel* all of these things together. Pay attention there where you usually feel things, and in there you can get a sense of what *all of the problem* feels like. Let yourself feel *all of that*.
(30 seconds or less)

2. As you pay attention to the whole feeling of it, you may find that one special feeling comes up. Let yourself pay attention to that one feeling. Let words or an image come from that feeling.
(1 minute)

3. Keep following one feeling. Don't let it be *just* words or pictures - wait and let words or pictures come from the feeling.
(1 minute)

4. If this one feeling changes, or moves, let it do that. Whatever it does, follow the feeling and pay attention to it.
(1 minute)

5. Now take what is fresh, or new, in the feel of it now… and go very easy.
Just as you feel, try to find some new words or pictures to capture what your present feeling is all about. There doesn't have to be anything that you didn't know before. New words are best but old words might fit just as well. As long as you now find words or pictures to say what is fresh to you now.

(1 minute)

6. If the words or pictures that you now have make some fresh difference, see what that is. Let the words or pictures change until they feel just right in capturing your feelings.
(1 minute)

Now I will give you a little while to use in any way you want to, and then we will stop.

Step 1

Letting "all that" come home to one is something like this: have you ever, during a period when you had some trouble, found that you woke up in the morning just fine, and then, a few seconds later, you would remember the trouble? The whole thing just rolls in on you? It's a little like that, but less unpleasant because you are directing it. You are letting the whole thing come home to you, to sense what that feels like.

Often, we no sooner think of a difficulty we have, then we begin thinking and telling ourselves what we tell ourselves each time. It ought to be this and that way, or it's all because of such and such, we ought to try to be or do so and so. This is our understanding of the problem. Much of what we understand is probably quite true. However, if our understanding were all that helpful, we wouldn't have the problem anymore!

Instead of going the steps of thought, letting it all come home to you as a felt whole allows a felt step to happen (instead of a thought step). Usually a single specific "feel" will stand out almost as soon as you let yourself feel the whole thing.

To do that, one names the whole thing some phrase (“that whole thing," for example), and one asks, "What does that whole thing feel like?" Then one keeps quiet and allows oneself to feel it.

If you could not do that before, try it now.

If you cannot get a feel of the whole thing, see the following parts; we give more instructions about it later.

Step 2

As one feels a whole problem area, usually some specific feeling quality, feeling tone, stands out. It may not have a name (or it may. It might be "scared" or "ashamed," but then again it might just be THAT funny feeling, there.)

If you didn't get a specific feel, standing out from the whole, chances are you did

some thinking and talking to yourself, too soon. Feel the whole, and wait.

Should this not work, you can try taking a thought which you think is most important, or new, and say it to yourself asking yourself, "What does this make me feel?"

Once you get a feeling, just try to feel it again and again, as sharply as you can, trying to get what it is. Don't tell yourself what it is. Instead, *ask it*. Say, "What *is* that feeling?" and then keep verbally quiet and try to feel it again, to sense into it.

When you can feel it, just stay with it. Observe it, see what it does. You don't do anything beyond trying to have a hold of it in a feeling way.

Step 3

As you got into the feeling you may have started to think from whatever you first found. Or, you may have gotten carried away with one image stimulating another. Soon you have again *only* words, or *only* images. In that case, WAIT. Let how it now feels come to you again. Chances are it is somewhat different now, and will give you new words or images. You can't get the new ones by pursuing your train of thought or the images. It takes waiting, and letting them form fresh, from feeling, at every step.

Step 4

It is important to let feeling do whatever it does. Don't be annoyed at what feeling comes. Sit, as it were, in your neutral seat, and let whatever comes before you, speak to you and tell you its side of the story.

This applies also to what the feeling does: if it opens up into several facets, that's OK. (If your mind wanders and you are thinking about related things, and then still other related things, that's different. Bring yourself back, gently, by asking yourself what it was you were feeling, and sense the feeling. Mind steps get you off.) Any steps of feeling, or shifts in how it feels, are OK and you just follow whatever the feeling does.

If you lose hold of the feeling try to recall it, and feel it again. If you can't get it back, come around again. What was the problem? - Oh yes, that one. What were you doing? - Oh yes, letting it all come home to you. What comes there now? THAT feeling is the one now to follow, whether the same or not.

Don't go for long with only words, or only images. Stop, see what you now feel, sense into that, let fresh words or images come now from that.

If the last mentioned doesn't work for you, you can also stop some image, or set of words·, and ask yourself, “What does this image make me feel? What does this sentence make me feel?’ Then wait and let the feel it gives you come to you.

Step 5

Of course, in a few minutes, you may or may not have arrived at something really new. You may or may not have experienced a shift in the feeling. Even if not, and certainly if there is anything fresh, try to match words freshly. Take wherever you have arrived, the last way it feels, or perhaps, the feeling that seemed most important or most alive to you. Phrase that one. (Or, if you are good at getting images, let there be a fresh image for that one.) Even if what you feel has an old name, let fresh words come for it now.

This is like making a place to which you can return. If the words or image you form is really apt, really “gets” the feeling, you can remember it and find this feeling again later.

Getting it just right should also make your body relax a little, like having this exactly placed. However good or bad it is, it is just this, and you have that located.

Only just certain words feel related to your feeling, most words float over the top of it. You want words that ease your feeling, words that make you say, "Oh, yeah, that's what it is, all right."

Step 6

After you get a phrase or image to say what the feeling is, go back to the feeing and check your phrase or image. "Is this really exactly right?" (Ask this, then wait and feel the feeling.) Sometimes it pays to go back and forth several times, each time letting the words change so they match the feeling again.

To make this clearer: take an example. Suppose you think of some friend of yours, and get a sense of your impression of the person. If you know this person well, there will be several such feelings. lf you put one of them into words, these words might do the job. Yet you can still ask yourself, "Does this exactly get my feeling?" You might sense that the words are poorer than the feeling, and you can wait and see if words don't come to capture the rest of the feeling.

In trying to do this example some people say they get only words, or only self-evident feelings that need no focusing into to explicate. Think of meeting someone you know but for the moment you don't remember who they are. Don't you find then that you have a feeling about the person? It's like that. You also have feelings of people, when you know who they are. You can try, now, to sense your felt sense of people you know, and see what it's like to let words come to say the feeling, and then go back and forth to get the words exactly.

If the feeling changes somewhat as you do this, let it change. Just see what it does, and let words come always from the last feeling (or the most live feeling; if further steps lose the feeling, go back to the last point where you had it).

This was an example. In focusing you would let words form from the feeling you are focusing into, and then go back and forth between the feeling and the words until there is an exact fit.

Additional aids

More about a felt shift

Throughout focusing steps, a "felt shift," or "release," may occur. This is the bodily sensed change or "give" in what starts as a tight, tense, bad feeling.

A felt shift is what you're after. It is the actual experience of change in what was stuck, unclear, incomplete. You know something good happened. Often that's the same moment as you get the exactly right words, or when a feeling becomes sharp and located, but the understanding isn't mainly what you're after, it's a by-product. What you want is the concrete way you feel to shift, release, ease.

After a felt shift, again sense what the feeling is *now* like, and if the release is not complete, feel into what's now still off.

Since a felt shift isn't always going to come, and since you can't will it or make it come, it's not what we call a "step," like the six steps of focusing. The felt shift can come at any of these steps.

It is important, however, to expect and wait for, and sense, such a felt shift, so that you are guided; you know that all you think and say isn't it yet, if there is as yet no felt shift.

Focusing feels good

If you are making yourself feel bad, you're not doing it exactly right. Focusing feels like a release, an easing, (like going to the bathroom, or like remembering at last something you had forgotten and struggled to recall, or like letting yourself be cared for and leaning up against someone when you wanted to do that, like getting into a bathtub after a tough day).

If it doesn't feel like that right away - it is important to expect it to feel that way, to wait for something that will feel like that. Set your body to wait for, and look for, a step which will feel like that.

When that easing comes

When a feeling comes, which is the one that makes the trouble, or which is the one that has in it the reason why there is still the trouble, the one that's in the way of everything being OK, then the rest of your body feels a release, a relaxation that comes from recognition. Instead of feeling vaguely

tense all over, your body relaxes and only this feeling, right in the middle, is the tension. One eases. There is a kind of "Oh, THAT's the way it feels".

This happens, often, before one knows what the feeling is. It's just that one.

If one loses hold of "that" feeling, the overall tension comes back, and is uncomfortable. Getting back in touch with "that" feeling brings the easing back. "Oh yeah, that's the feeling," one says. It feels *better* in one's whole body, to get into touch with the specific feeling, to have it form clearly, even if one doesn't like the feeling itself.

Similarly, when the feeling "opens up" so one can see what it is (for instance, "Oh, scared, that's what the feeling is, I'm scared." Or, "Yeah, I'm hurt because they saw me that way, yeah, that's what that is…") one feels an easing, even though one may not at all like what it is.

Thinking vs focusing

Just thinking these things, or just suspecting them, if one guessed them ahead of time, does not feel good, doesn't have the release. When we think things of ourselves that we don't like, then they make us tenser, more uncomfortable. Therefore, most people think that to really get in touch inside with what they suspect is there would feel worse. But it feels better. That's how you can tell what's true. You can tell it's true because even though what it is is something you don't like, your whole body feels overall much better, more alive, energy returns, you feel like you're all OK except for that located spot, that specific thing.

If you don't do the focusing rightly, you may just be telling yourself bad stuff about yourself and making yourself feel bad. It doesn't help just to insult oneself and tell oneself all kinds of bad things. Even if they're true in general, that doesn't change or release anything.

Therefore, set yourself to expect a physically felt step that feels good, releasing, and then wait. Let what you feel form, and come before you, and open up. As it opens to let you know what it is, you will get the felt release.

Relaxing

To focus, it helps *to try to* relax, to *be willing to* relax. (If you find you aren't willing, see what this unwilling feeling feels like, what's in that.) If you are willing to relax - we mean relax inside you - relax the way your body feels from the inside, then the following sequence happens:

You relax, but some part of you doesn't. You can then feel the part of you that doesn't relax. It will be something specific, even though at first you cannot see what it is, but there it is. At first it will be just there, it will be some tension, or rattlement, or knot in your gut, or whatever and however you feel that.

Stay with that (or if your mind wanders, do the sequence again, and what doesn't relax will be there for you again.) After a little while (about a minute) it will open up and you will see some of what it is.

Don't tell it what it probably is. Wait for it to tell you what it is.

Specific focusing problems and steps for them

Perhaps, as you tried to focus, you could not because there was a steady stream of thinking words. It is all right to have words there, regard them as you would the radio playing next door - you can't turn it off but you can ignore it somewhat. Try to sense the feeling, how that whole thing feels, and any special feeling that is in that. Decide that if there are words, OK, but don't you say anything deliberately. There is a difference, after a while, between deliberate thinking which you actively do, and words that come anyway. You don't have to think deliberately, except to remind yourself of the problem area, and that you are asking, "What's in that?" or "What does that feel like?"

If your mind wandered, don't get mad at yourself. Bring yourself gently back. "'What was I doing? Oh, yes, focusing on that… " "What was I asking? Oh, yes, - What does that feel like?" If your mind wanders again, bring yourself back again the same way, as often as need be.

If you wonder whether what you arrived at is right, or is really yours rather than what others drilled into you, don't only try to figure out what it is. Focus again, freshly, on what it now feels like, and see what next step comes. (If there is persistent doubt or interference, that's a feeling, too, so focus on what that is like.)

If there is too much feeling, or too many feelings, take up a slightly removed position, not far off, close but not swamped. It is as if you stood at the edge of a manhole. Then wait and make feelings come up to you one by one.

If there were only images, make sure at some point to stop and ask yourself, "What does this image make me feel?" Then attend to that feeling and stay with it until it opens up and you sense what it is, perhaps say what it is to yourself in words. Then see, again, what changed image you now get.

If you got into some feeling, but then it didn't move any further, ask yourself, "What would this be like, if it were totally fine and sound and OK?" (Or, "How should it be different, if I were going to be pleased?") Then, after a few minutes, ask, "What is in the way of it getting like that?" Pay attention to the feeling which then comes up, and stay with that, let it talk to you and tell you what's in the way. (It is sometimes good to add these two steps just before the end of the focusing instructions, before Step 5.)

If you ended up just feeling some bad feeling, note this: Focusing is a process in which the body, the well-organized natural organism, lives a difficulty past a stuck point. Therefore, release, relief, feeling better, is what you sense when there is a step. Expect this feeling better, feeling more right or sound, and have the attitude that you are doing this, not because you want to feel bad, but because there *is* a way of feeling and being all right, and as a feeling opens to tell you what is in it, you will also feel more all right. Another way to put this is:

Suppose you came to a squabbling group, as a helpful person. You should not take sides, not tell the different people what is right and wrong, it's their group. Rather you would listen to each, make sure each is heard, and see that whatever truth each has a hold of is gotten out. Then you have to trust the group as a whole to come out better. Your body is much more organized than any group, and by nature whole and sound. So, whatever each feeling has to say, no matter how bad or wrong, something about it will also be right, and needed to come out, before the body can be whole again, and your actions more effective. Therefore, you listen gently to each feeling, not to believe or do only what it says, but to let everything be open so your body can live it on to a next, better step.

In short, you can expect a very distinct relief feeling, when just that comes out from a feeling, which has been separated off and has been troubling, without being lived out in actions or words, until now.

The good feeling you expect is something like (but not the same, rather stronger) the feeling you get when you first forgot something, and you try and try to remember, and then, ah… you remember. You might not even like what you remember, but the dissolving of the tied-up feeling and the release feels good. Sometimes you exhale a deep breath, quite involuntarily, that's the way it feels. Expect that. It is the right and good background, against which to see each feeling that is in the way.

If, when something came, you got angry at what it was, perhaps you were angry at being avoidant, or in some other way you were down on yourself while trying to focus. It takes being nice to oneself. Feelings are often like shy people, when they are being yelled at, they get cowed and can't say anything. Even if you don't like what this next one will say, give it a friendly hearing. It will not only tell you what's wrong, but also usually what the good reasons are, for your feeling that way. Allow whatever feeling is next, *as long as it is a feeling*. Every feeling has some importance.

Sometimes we stop ourselves from feeling some ways because we don't want to act on them. But feelings and actions differ, as we argued earlier. You can promise yourself that you will not act until it feels right, meanwhile you can want to hear from the different pulls you feel to see what they are and what all is in each.

If you felt something and then decided it was childish: everyone is, among other things, a child inside, and the child is a most valuable part. That's where there is a

lot of warmth and good feeling. Let your child be and feel, you will remain an adult, don't worry. Also, if you don't like your child, ask yourself, "How would I treat any other child that went through what I did, if I met such a child right now?" (The answer probably is, "I'd hug that child, comfort it, tell it that naturally it felt this and so way, given what was happening." Comfort the child you partly are, too.)

If you got involved in thinking: let yourself have a fresh start more often. Just begin anew, "How does the whole thing feel *now*?" Let a specific feeling come out of that fresh start, again.

If you get sluggish and sleepy: don't be in a sleeping position, lying down totally. Be in a relaxed position, but on an elbow or with hands behind your head, or sitting up. Focusing is wide awake, not near sleep or hypnosis. Or, if you sank into sadness or heavyness, rouse yourself, stand a little aside as it were; and let what the sadness is come to you a bit at a time.

If what seemed to be there was too rough: a feeling, once you get in touch with it, is "a place." You can kind of rely on its being there, you needn't drown in it or swallow it all up, you can take up a relation to it. After a while more will come from it, of what is in it. It is all right, for a while, just to tolerate being, and staying quietly, somewhere near it.

If you dived into your bad feelings, like diving into a manhole in the street: it is usually better to sit comfortably at the edge of the manhole, and let one feeling after another come to you.

This means, for example, if you are now feeling fine, focusing will not make you feel worse. It isn't a matter of letting go of feeling OK now, and making yourself feel bad. Rather, stay feeling OK and let whatever isn't OK come before you, so that without feeling bad you can see what it is.

So, let's say sometimes you have bad feeling so-and-so, for instance, some kind of terror, let us say. Don't now dive in and make yourself terrified. Not at all. Sitting here some distance from that feeling, let it come to you, don't put yourself in it. Don't turn away from it either. Let a touch of that feeling form for you, enough so you can ask, ''What is that?" or "What makes that?"(or one of those open questions). Then wait. Let an answer come to you.

If you begin with a situational problem, like, "What to do about…" and then find yourself only thinking about different courses of action, ask yourself, "What makes this situation so hard?" (or painful, or however it feels to you). Or, if there are alternatives but you can't do them, ask yourself, "What is it that really makes this wrong for me?" Then wait; don't answer. Let the feel of it open up and see more than you have been taking into account. Or ask, "Why can't I do something about this?" Then wait, feel that in you.

If there was too much fear, or guilt, or shame, or feeling some one bad way: with emotions of this sort, try saying something like, "All right, so I am afraid (or feeling guilty, or ashamed, or whatever), so I am, now I'd like to sense that whole way of me, that whole situation, all that is involved, which makes me feel that way". Expect to shift from one clear single emotion, to a complete maze of things, which feels different than the emotion. It is somewhat like going on, past the emotion, as if all that complexity is behind it or under it. Then let whatever is there slowly form, and see what is there.

If you went some step or steps, and now don't know how to go on, one way is: sense into how it all is now, and ask, "Is it totally OK and fine now, and if not, why not?" Let whatever feeling comes in answer to this, come and show you what's still not right.

Difficulty with getting "feelings"

Some people will have read to this point, and then will say that they don't know what is meant by a "feeling" or "sensing into" a feeling.

One way to get at that is to take easier examples than our personal problems. For instance, how do you feel about some person you know? When you get a hold of that, perhaps first in words, take the most meaningful words and ask yourself what they refer to; what you mean by them. At the end of that question you will find the whole feeling texture relevant of those words.

Or, take something upsetting that happened today. Any day, usually, there are small things that happen that we don't like. Typically, we try to be "above" them, and so far as actions about it go, we do want to be above them. But we do have feelings about them. Can you recall such an incident from today, and ask yourself what you now feel about it, still? (Your official position is probably that you feel OK about it, and that's fine. But see, just to yourself, what is left of it, that you do feel.)

Then ask yourself what this feeling is, what is in it, involved in it.

You may find that quite a lot is involved in it. Not just what happened, and not even just what you felt about it, but also how often that happens to you, and how you feel about its often happening, and what you do to yourself when it happens, and what it makes you feel about yourself, and why that is, what other things it brings up, and so on. You can't think all this, you'd have to think all these things one at a time, but you have all this there when you just let yourself have the feel of that situation, what the whole thing felt like, to you.

Therefore, it is possible to call the feeling of it by some one name (for instance, I felt "hurt"), and yet, there might be twenty things or many more in it.

It's not wrong to say you felt "hurt," if that's how you felt. But, also, if you let it

open up, there will be many things in it, too. "Hurt" isn't just itself; it's all the many things involved in this hurt now for you.

Do you see that the many things *in* the way it felt to you are not the same as the many objective descriptions you could make of a situation? For instance, a list of who was there, why they did what they did, their biographies and attitudes, how they relate to each other, exactly what else was happening at the time, and so on. These external complications are, some of them, important too. But they aren't the same as your felt sense of the situation, which has in it very many things that were involved in how you feel about it.

Some people will now say, "Sure, I get that kind of maze of stuff, but for me it's words, or thoughts. Why do you call it "feelings"? All I do is I stop and let more thoughts come, and they come because situations can be complicated. But what is all this about "feeling"?

Just take any thought that seems important, and stop: don't go on to the next one. Repeat this thought over and over, and see if you can sense what the thought was about, what in you it came out of, or was made from. THAT's there, even if you stop saying the words.

Here are more exact steps for doing that - special steps to get to a felt sense, if this is difficult for you:

Ask yourself to think of something you love. Now say why you do - let a few sentences go on. Then ask yourself, why else? Soon you have no ready words, and you have to "think" why. But you don't really "think" now, because you are going to your felt sense of this, which you love, to see why and how you do. That, there, to which you go to answer such a question, is a felt sense.

Instead of "choosing" a problem, as the focusing instructions have you do, see instead what problem of yours, that you think of, has with it *a feeling of* importance, urgency, pregnancy, so that you would want to get into it now, so it is live for you now. Again, how you know this is by a felt sense, this what you have there, along with the words (which you don't have for other problems you think of), is a felt sense of it. (When you focus, pick one like that.) Then, keep checking back to this sense of the problem, expect it to have a felt shift in it. So long as it stays the same, not much has yet happened.

Think back to a time when you forgot something, and tried to recall it but couldn't (it might have been someone's name, or something you planned to do, or something else). When you forget something, you are not just plain blank, you have left *a felt sense* of what it was. When you get close to remembering you can feel it most clearly, and yet even so you may not remember. This felt sense is enough to let you know that a lot of things it might have been are not really what it was (as you suggest to yourself, "Maybe it was this… or that…" the felt sense of what it was doesn't budge. You know it isn't this, or that, which you forgot, but

something else). Then, when you remember, there is *a felt shift*, a release, an easing, which lets you know that this time you have remembered what you had forgotten. That feeling you have before you actually remember is a felt sense, and as usual it isn't just one thing, but all the circumstances and details and how you are in them, a whole complicated mesh. But it's one feeling, and you have it even without knowing what it is.

What a feeling (or "felt sense") is

To make it clearer what a "felt sense" is, so that you can find this experience in you, we will say first what it isn't.

It is not: words, images, emotions, muscle feelings, movements or actions.

Look this list over, because the things mentioned in the list are all things you can *begin* with, to get your felt sense of them. You can ask, in the case of any of these, "What does this make me feel?" or "What feeling does this come out of?"

It might seem odd, in the case of an emotion, to ask, "What does this make me feel?" or "What is this angry feeling?" If one feels anger, one would want to answer, "Angry, of course. What else?" But you can sense, aside and different from the anger, a whole maze of stuff. To say it all is impossible (why you got angry, what you expected which didn't happen, what did happen and how, who did it and all about them, what usually happens to you when this sort of thing happens, how you feel about you when it does, all the many meanings it has for you). You can feel or sense all this, and it is what your anger comes out of. *From* the anger, you can get into that quite other thing, which you can concretely feel if you ask yourself what your anger stems from. By "stems from" we don't mean etiology, or figuring out in terms of some scheme "why" you are angry. We mean that whole directly felt texture out of which the anger is forming. This we call a "felt sense," to distinguish it from emotion (though, often, we just call it "feeling," too).

Much as with emotions, you can also get to a felt sense by asking yourself about any set of important words, or some image, or some body spot that feels tense, or some movement or action you did or imagine, "What does this make me feel?" or "What does this come out of, in me?" and a concretely felt sense will be the answer. (*Don't answer in words*.)

Another way to put it: Where do you go, to find why you are angry - supposing you *don't say* an answer right away, but want to see why? There - where you go - that is a felt sense.

There is a "zig-zag," a back and forth, one can go between felt sense and any of these (words, images, emotions, muscle feelings, actions). Just as *from* one of them one can get to a felt sense, so also, if you once have a felt sense, you can let that felt sense give you words, or an image, or an emotion, or some bodily

expression or movement, or action. It can often be startling how one of these "comes out from" a felt sense.

By "feeling" or "felt sense" we mean a whole complicated mesh of stuff, not *all* of which you can see separately. We do not mean emotion. Felt sense is also felt as one "this" but is many. "Feeling" therefore contains a kind of thinking, it contains meaning***s***. You can call them "felt meanings."

For instance, if you cut your finger and it hurts, there are no meanings *in* this feeling of pain, except perhaps that it hurts there, or that something is wrong in your finger, has intruded into your body there. Except for that meaning of the pain, as a signal, focusing on the pain sensation itself doesn't give you anything further.

On the other hand, you are likely to have some feeling of the whole situation in which you cut yourself, perhaps you felt rattled, angry, impatient, and now also angry at yourself for being clumsy, and if you pursue these, you can find how you always feel about yourself in there, whatever your attitudes toward yourself are, and also perhaps a sense that you had been in a tough situation just before this happened, and wished for some help which nobody gave, and anger at them, and the whole complications of your relations with them, *and so on*. Or you may have some feeling about being hurt and all the complex stuff that is for you - how you always manage to hurt yourself and how no-one helps you when you do, etc. (This was only a made-up example, of course. If you cut your finger, you'd find whatever is there for you, both before and then about that.)

Similarly, if you feel something in your body, a tense muscle, or your throat or face feeling odd, ask yourself what this makes you feel inside you, what this tenseness is about for you. Also, an image, or a sentence, or an emotion, or an action - any of these can be asked in this way, ’'What does this make me feel?" to give you the whole mesh of felt complications involved for you in that. Then wait, and let a specific feeling stick out of how that whole thing feels.

Usually the opening up of a feeling comes in words. Therefore, we are not at all telling people not to have words. The point is not to have *only* words, but to have and sense feeling, and let words arise as one senses the feeling, so the words can have a felt relation to the feeling.

We don't as yet have very good ways of conceptualizing, therefore funny sentences like the last one have to be used. The same thing is true for anyone who focuses, you have to be willing to allow for odd sorts of phrasings and metaphors, whatever seems to capture the feeling.

Difficulty getting inside and alternate focusing instructions

If you're one of the people who say (or if you work with people who say), "Get inside myself, what does that mean? Where is this ’inside myself?' What do people do, when they just sit there silently and alone? I wouldn't know what to do with

myself if I wasn’t doing something. How do you do nothing? I couldn't sit still that long." Or if you’ve tried focusing instructions and they don't work for you. Nothing happens…

Then you're one of the people for whom this is meant.

Some people do not know that there is a place inside themselves that they can turn to when alone, with no help from anyone else. In this place, one is in privacy and much can go on. No one else can know in any detail about what goes on unless you decide to tell them about it. Looking at someone from the outside, you can't see if they have an inside space or not. It's not something you could see or point to like another person or an object or facial expression.

Because this is true, a lot of people don't know about it. How would they know it's there, if no-one ever told them and they never discovered it on their own? We don’t get taught or even told about it much by parents or teachers. Some people seem to have it, from the time they are very young, and maybe never lose it. They're the people who are likely to have spent lots of time alone as kids and they can remember and tell you how they made up stories and had imaginary playmates and a whole world of fantasy, thinking and feeling that they did all inside themselves, alone. They always knew there was a whole vast world inside. In fact, sometimes that world feels more real or at least more accessible to them than the outside one of other people and school and things. They usually also know that inside can be an all right place to be; they are familiar with how it is inside, what their territory is like. They've been over and around in it a lot. The Standard Focusing instructions mostly presuppose this inner knowing.

People for whom this way of being is foreign, first can be told that there is such a way of being inside, and, in case it sounds odd and slightly frightening, it's a good idea to say that a lot of people have it and that it usually makes experience richer to have it.

For people whose living has mostly gone on in interactions (acting towards others and reacting to them) the first experiences of having this alone dimension may feel blank and anxious (“What can I *do* next?”). But they needn't. For these people the interpersonal function of feelings, words, behavior, tend to be primary in their experience. And, because so much of interaction is verbal, words are often very important to them. So, working with their own use of words can be an unanxious entry for them into their private, internal process.

A next step is to get the person to say a sentence or two about a concern they have, something of importance to them. This can be said aloud or to oneself. Then ask them, "Do you feel something when you say those words? Do those words refer to something? Can you *feel* what it is that you meant, what you were referring to when you said those words? Don't tell me! THAT thing you can feel is a direct referent. It's inside, private, and it's yours. You can go to it whenever you would like. It's between you and you and doesn't depend on anyone else being

there."

This gives one the experience that there is something more than the interactive impact of their words. Once the interactive function is separated out ("Don't tell me"), the non-selfevidentness of words can begin to be experienced. The words refer to something besides themselves or another person's reactions to them. One isn't just the words they say, and the reactions they elicit from others.

For some people, it is easy to start focusing with feelings or a definite felt something they can sense. The hard thing for them is to let some words (articulations) form out of that something.

But for others, the ones this is meant for, the problem is to get the something. Words are easily there. The thing to learn is how to get to whatever it is that the words refer to beyond themselves - to have the concrete experience that the words are JUST words - that they do refer to a something that isn't quite exhausted or caught by them.

Some people have to learn that you can TALK about the something - that there are words that can relate to it and express and change it. For others, it's learning there is a something that the words refer to.

In order to let the something form for any particular words, one needs to take the words and hold them still - hold them in conscious focus. *Don't let them move on to the next words*. KEEP them in front of oneself. After telling this to the person you're working with (or yourself), the instructions should then point to the fact that the words they're holding refer to something. Attention should be redirected from the words to the something, e.g., "What do those four words MEAN to you when you say them? Don't tell me what they mean in OTHER words. Capture the something that they meant. Point towards it with your attention… That there… that you just sensed that made the words. That is the something. It got said in those four words, but IT isn't the words. That's the thing to stay in touch with in-between every set of words." In other words, don't let the person give you any more words, until he has sensed the something. Stop the flow of words. Choose any words to begin with. Then don't let the person (or yourself) say anything more. Keep telling them there is something in-between the first words and the ones they now want to tell you.

Here are some differences between an alternate set and the standard focusing instructions, that help people with this problem.

Begin with a phrase, or set of words. Get the person to isolate ONE set of words, and then stick with them. This is rather than start with the something as in focusing instructions.

This might happen by starting instructions something like, "If I were to ask you what's most important in your life right now (or what's got you most hung up, or

what makes you hurt most right now, or what troubles you most now), what phrase or sentence would you tell me? What words would you say? Settle on one sentence that gets it best and then hang onto that sentence."

Next, give a clear instruction that the person is to work with that sentence, and no other words are to be allowed for the next minutes. If their minds go off to other words, they should bring their attention back to the selected sentence.
Next, call attention to the "something," the "felt sense". "Now, see if you can feel what it is you meant when you said those words. Do those words refer to anything? Are they just words, or do they refer to something? Just let yourself feel THAT. That is the something that your words when you say them come out of and refer to, but usually you are not aware of it and just go from words to words, without noticing that step in-between. It will help you be in touch with yourself and form better words, if you will remember to sense that something in-between the words. Now, go into and feel that something again. (It feels sort of like being hit by a wave, or stumbling into a thick block, or running up against something.)"

Once they get this something (felt sense), then you can let them go on to the next step, "Now, out of that feeling, do some other, new words come?"

Alternate focusing instructions

These are focusing steps specially designed for people to whom words come easily and feelings only with difficulty:

> Actually, this will be entirely to yourself, but suppose you were going to tell us, as best you can, in a sentence or two, what is of most urgent concern to you right now in your life - what would those sentences be? You can pretend to be talking aloud if it helps, and just talk around until you get a sentence or two which would let you or us know what you're concerned about.
> (1 minute)
>
> (In trying to get the sentence, some of you may get, or have gotten, a picture, instead of sentences. If you prefer, you can keep the picture, instead of sentences.) Try now to settle on several sentences (or a picture).
> (30 seconds)
>
> Now, (that picture) those words of yours, refer to something. They aren't just words (or lines and colors stuck together). They're something about YOU - there is a feeling in them. What do those words mean to you when you say them (what is the feeling of that picture)? DON'T let ANY words come right now. If some come, ignore them and turn your attention again to what the original words (or picture) refer to - that something, there, that they mean, that there which makes them not just meaningless, *that* is a felt sense. Simply note it there. Don't *do* anything with it for the moment. Just feel that meaning there. If you have a label already, then you probably haven't got the felt sense. Let the label go and get back again to that which

is in those words (or picture), that makes them *be* something real for you. You *will not* know yet *what* that is, but you will feel that something is there.
(30 seconds)

Now, focus on that feeling. Sort of slide into it and see if words form out of it (or if the picture changes from out of the feeling). Stay in the feeling. See if words come out of it or if the picture changes. The words may be startling, unexpected, illogical. That's OK.
(45 seconds)

If that feels finished, if all the words or changes in the image that are going to come out of that feeling have come, then see how now the new words or the new changed picture makes you feel.
(20 seconds)

Now see what words or changes in the picture come out of that feeling.
(45 seconds)

Keep alternating. See how the new words or image makes you feel. Then see what words or image changes come out of the feeling. Do this now for the next two or three minutes.
(2 or 3 minutes)

If one works patiently with these instructions, focusing and the whole range of private inner process usually begins to open.

Self attitudes that go with focusing

Whatever you think of yourself, when you focus be nice to yourself. Many of our most important feelings are like shy people, they sink back and get silent, if one yells at them, or treats them unkindly. You have to ask in a friendly way, or some feelings can’t come, and can't say what they are.

Just like shy people, these feelings just stay back and one never hears from them. Instead, certain other feelings that aren’t shy at all attack us all the time. It's like a group in which always the same three forward people do all the talking.

Most people aren't on friendly terms with themselves. They treat their inner person inside as they would treat some roommate they are mad at. It's like, well of course that person is there, but you try to have as little to do with them as possible, and if you have to address them you do it angrily, like, "Why the hell don’t you shape up? How often have I told you…? Why can't you do or be…, you no good so and so… " Usually the inner person then says nothing, and only feels bad and dull.

For some people, it may be years since they said a kindly word to themselves, and they may never have sat down and asked to hear from themselves.

Also, if any feeling you haven’t seen before comes up, you need to take a friendly attitude towards it (even if you don't like what it is. You won't *do* anything you don’t choose to do, anyway, promise yourself, so you can stand to hear what it says. It's OK if the feeling is a wish to stop coping with things or to stop working or whatever, you will go right on coping if you so decide, or if the feeling says you're too scared to do something courageous that you have to do, you will do it anyway if you so decide, later. For now, you can listen.)

So, don’t right away get mad at the feeling, argue with it, tell it why it's wrong. Keep your opinion to yourself for now, and let it tell you what it is.

After all, most of the time you can't find out what's wrong, what's in the way of your being OK. So here now is something that will tell you! So, you feel happy and grateful that it's here and you don’t want to make even a small noise, lest it scare the feeling away and you won’t get to find out.

Imagine you're the government. There's a guerilla movement derailing your trains and blowing up your bridges, scaring your farmers and burning crops. Your police have been shooting them on sight. You never therefore heard from them why they are doing this. They'd love to tell you their grievances, but your police shoot so fast, you can't find out what they want. What would you do? Wouldn’t you try and make it safe for them to come and tell you what's wrong, why they are doing it? Feelings are like that - some of them can't come and tell us because we shoot too fast, criticize and argue immediately, won't listen. No feeling is there for nothing, they all have some important reasons in them, something we wouldn’t want to ignore, if we could know. They make some kind of sense, something is good and constructive about them.

Of course, you don’t decide what to do, on the basis of one feeling. Whatever you learn, you then still also care about everything else, too. But for now, listen, in a kindly way, to whatever feeling will come, and to whatever it says.

Being nice to yourself while you try to focus also includes a few other points: in order to hear oneself in a kindly way, one has to turn off the self-criticizing, at least for a few minutes. The self-criticizing is like the police in that story about the government. Before you can even sense what you feel, the self-criticizing begins shooting. “You’ re probably just doing this… “, it will say, accusing you of something or other. If you were to prove that it isn't so, this self-critical part would then only come up with some other bad thing. It doesn’t seem to care much what it says, as long as it's bad.

Although this is just what gets in the way of hearing oneself, and making touch with feelings, still it helps to give even these voices some room. It helps one to see how stupid they usually are. Instead of cowering and feeling bad, when such a voice comes on, we can let it become a clear sentence or two. Then we can see that it is almost always not true or not relevant. It comes from feeling that one

isn't any good, or is always wrong. This *feeling* is worth focusing on, to see what's in that, what all is involved in having that.

People then find the different things in that, different for each person. Maybe you are angry and down on yourself because of some very specific aspect of your life (and not, as would seem from the words, that everything you do is wrong...). Perhaps you find there that you did live, for years, in some family in which they did, in fact, tell you you were no good, and at that time you had no way to know better. Or, maybe you're scared to make a mistake, and this critical part is trying to help you (a lot of help it is …!) Then you can ask what kind of mistake you're so scared of making, and that may release it some.

However, we cannot and should not wait until the selfcritical voices are gone. That can take some years. Meanwhile, if you've heard them enough, if you've heard it all a million times and you know by heart the kind of thing it is, then, as you try to focus on your more shy feelings, you can put your selfcritical part to one side. Here is how you can do that:

You can tell them to shut up. "I've heard it all…" you can say, "now just go sit over there and shut up and let me do something …" you can say, just as you would, perhaps to some nervous person that lives with you and gets terribly worried and nagging. "Just sit over there and wait a while."

Or, if that doesn't work, let the babble go on, but you turn to how you feel instead of listening. Like, "OK, sit over there in the corner and babble to yourself, while I try to do something."

Once you've heard it all, over and over, you don't have to be so attentive to that kind of thing. That sort of repetitious stuff isn't feelings at all, just a self-torture routine.

You won't be "not facing" things, if you ignore this thing, because you've heard the kind of thing it says enough times.

If it were to say something that might really be right, even then you need it to stop hurting and bugging you, so you can check into your feelings and see if and how it's right, and what to do from there. This, again, is like having some worried person with you who is talking non-stop about some danger or undone task. "Ok, OK," you say, "I've heard you. Now shut up and let me do something about it." And, if it keeps on talking and screaming, you can say, "You will just have to shut up and wait, or we can't fix it."

Then, whatever you may *think* is true, go and try to sense how you *feel* whatever it is about. Only there can you find exactly what is really true, and just how it goes.

Another way we stop ourselves from sensing our feelings is by calling them

names, and insulting them. “This is just self-pity,” or "Oh, quit being sorry for yourself," we say. Then everything gets tense and dead inside, we don’t feel better, just stuck.

Probably, there are reasons why you can feel sorry for yourself, what you went through, or lost or whatever. To call it "self-pity" is to imply that there aren’t such reasons. It's much better to see them, then after that, your life energy will return. Don't worry, you won’t just lie there forever.

The only way to get rid of a feeling for good is to let it open up to you. Then you come out the other side. To fight it means you stay on this side of it, and it doesn't release.

Anytime you say, “This is just such and so…” the word "just" shows that you are trying to pretend it doesn't matter or doesn’t count or is all wrong or "just” foolishness. Feelings never are just foolishness. They are always specifically just what they are, maybe not all true or the whole truth, but some part of the truth.

When to stop focusing

After ten minutes or so, if you have not gotten any release, opening up, felt shift, just note where you have come (like steps 5 and 6) and then stop. Don't make a work task out of it, this is time for your inner person, not a job. Do it again later, or tomorrow.

If you are terribly conscientious and usually won't let yourself avoid anything, and you happen to get the feeling that you'd like to not focus, for a change, and that feels freeing, then let yourself not focus.

When you have gotten to an important feeling but either there is too much of it, it is too heavy, or perhaps you have stayed with it and waited, but it did not move or release, "set up camp" next to it. Phrase it as much as you know of it, promise yourself that you will return to it, and do so later. Every so often, during the day, return to it just for a few moments. See if it has changed. If not, fine, just come back again later.

If the quality of your focusing process is heavy, sad, angry, or feels overall bad, negative, see if you can focus on what makes it so. If that releases and moves, fine. If not, go do something to make yourself feel a little better, then return later. (Make some coffee, give yourself some time off, read something you like, put on some music. Be nice to yourself. That is the right manner, and once you're into being nice to yourself outwardly, focusing will go better when you come back.)

If you have gone round and round and round and are worn out from grinding away on some problem or bad feeling, perhaps it has gone on for hours or days or nights, put the whole problem "on a shelf," so to speak, and rest your body. Promise yourself to come back to it tomorrow at a certain time. (Going round and

round isn't focusing, but it may all be too sore or worn, right now, to be able to focus. You can try once more for two minutes, exactly, to see if you can just get a hold of the spots that hurt the most. Then, whether that helped or not, stop for a time.) Focusing itself never wears one out, it is energy releasing and one feels rested from it, but going round and round wears one out, and can then make it hard to focus, too.

The body should not be kept in constant tension. If something is very bad and very urgent, it won't leave one alone, and yet makes it hard to focus. That's a miserable condition. Best to promise really seriously to return to it, and see if you can't rest the whole thing on a safe shelf where you know you'll pick it up again tomorrow.

Sometimes there are certain situations that won't resolve, at least not now. It is best not to put one's body through the situation over and over, feeling it over and over. Admit instead, that for now there is no solution, and let *that* truth release your body.

Every situation we care about is felt in the body, and bad situations are felt by the body making itself tight. This helps us find our way in situations. But if, for now, the situations can't get better, and if for now you aren't taking actions in it, there should be a way you can release your body from the job of holding itself as that situation directs. For now, you can let it go, and let your body live fully and at ease. At another time, you'll put the situation on again and see if you then can find a way in it.

Sometimes it is as if we had a rule: "You are not allowed to feel OK until this situation is OK, and it is not." This rule is supposed to protect us from ignoring a danger, or from being ambushed by the situation when we're not on guard. Actually, it just wears us out, like standing guard duty all the time. We are afraid to feel good as if that would whitewash the situation, as if we would pretend that it is OK, and so this rule says: "No pretending. If it's not OK, you have to feel bad." The answer to this is to agree not to whitewash, not to pretend about the situation. You'll remember all the while how bad the situation is. You won't forget it just because you are letting yourself feel OK in your body. Don't worry that you will be making the situation seem better than it is, you promise not to do that. This leads to a funny sentence: "Don't worry, the situation won't be any better if you let yourself feel OK."

This seems like advice to ignore and avoid anything that really needs working on, but we mean it only to free your body most of the time. At certain times, you will want to focus on the situation and what it makes you feel (as well as what to do) and at those times, of course, you will want the feelings to come to you. Even then, you won't want to feel all bad, just each way it feels, one by one.

There are times when one needs to sit for a long time next to a feeling. Instead of its releasing and opening up, it is more a question of just gradually coming to bear

it. Don’t drown in it. Rather, sit next to it, perhaps some yards away (so to speak). This lets it gradually become bearable.

Focusing is on feelings, and feelings are everyday plain kinds of things. They are not weird phenomena, not hallucinations, images, voices, etc. If you have those, or if the person you are helping focus has them, make it plain that feelings are welcomed. The other stuff at most, if it is there, can be used in asking oneself, “What does this make me feel?" And then, whatever the answer is, "What's in that feeling?” Feelings are sane-making to have.

Jim Iberg, Why focus? Or, What happens differently due to focusing?

There is something of an answer to these questions in my last interaction with my mother and father. I want to feel my whole sense of that interaction in relation to these questions, and see if I can say the main things that are true about this experience for me that relate to focusing. Then I'd like to describe my experience to show more specifically what I mean.

The words that come to me now from that whole sense are the following: time with Mom and Dad is really scarce. We never have enough time to do all the things we would like to do or talk about together, so it feels crucial to me to do the things that are most important for me to do with them rather than spend the time on less important things.

My part of my interactions with Mom and Dad is controlled to a large extent by past patterns and feelings, so that there is a tremendous force working to keep things going just the way that they have always gone. Often the way things have always gone is doing things that are *not* what is most important for me to do with them. But if I want to do something differently, just wanting to do it is not enough. Something special has to happen which allows me to be aware of my feelings out of which I want to do something differently. If that something special does not happen, then I don't feel these feelings out of which I want to do something new; all I feel are the feelings that keep me doing it the way that I have always done it with them.

Focusing is a thing to do which promotes that something special happening. It allows me to have closer to my awareness my feelings out of which I want to do something new. It gives me some words that express those feelings just right, so that I am not doing something new and faced with how that changes everything and also trying to find the right words for myself all at the same time. Through focusing, I can have one part of this already done ahead of time, before meeting that situation I want to change, which is making the right words for myself. Then I am a little less likely to confuse the way that doing something new necessarily feels hard with my fear that I really don't have anything that is right for me to say there. If I get confused like that, I am likely to give up trying to do something different and to do it the old familiar way. Having focused makes it a little more possible for me to feel the fragile, subtle new feelings in the midst of all those familiar and compelling old feelings. By having made words that really say them accurately, I can feel these new feelings more strongly and clearly, and this helps me to keep my sense that these feelings really are something that is right for me.

Now I want to describe more specifically my personal experience from which I am deriving these ideas about *Why focus?*

I have a sense of urgency to see Mom and Dad that comes from caring for them and some way that my interaction with them isn't complete or as full as I want it.

Out of this urgency I have been going to see them more frequently than I used to.

Because of limited time together and the way past patterns and feelings are so compelling, many times I go to see them and come away with no change in that sense of urgency.

But my last visit was different; something happened in our interaction that made it more complete and fulfilling for me, so the urgency lessened somewhat. I see this as having been facilitated or made possible by two focusing experiences that I had before this last visit with my parents. At this point, l would like to describe the focusing experiences as they happened and later try to indicate their relevance to my relationship with Mom and Dad.

The first focusing experience came about after an earlier talk with my parents. They told me about a lifelong friend of theirs, who's about their age, who I know pretty well. She had a frightening experience at a wedding which they all attended. When they described her experience, I had several immediate reactions inside of me which at the time I labeled "judgmental," "unjustified," and "threatening," so I said nothing. A few days later, back in my apartment, I noticed that I was thinking about this friend of my parents, and recalling those reactions that I had had to her experience. But here at my apartment, I didn't have the judgments that had kept me from saying anything to my parents. So, I became curious why I had such a different response to my same thoughts here and there, and decided to focus on how I felt there such that I stopped myself from saying my true reactions. The focusing went like this, with me asking these question to my feelings:

"How was l feeling at home when they told me about this?"
(I ask this question and then sit quietly and just feel how I was there. After 15 or 20 seconds of feeling this, the answer comes.)

“I was scared and a little smug."
(Now I have something more to focus on. So, I ask a question to one of these feelings and sit quietly with that.)

"What is that smugness?"
> "I know something about things like that. I feel a little proud of myself for my knowledge here."

"What is this ‘proud’ feeling?”
> "This has a little defiance in it; that is something I know more about than Dad. Oh, yes. This is connected to a way that I always feel a little intimidated and inferior in comparison with Dad. He has always known how to do it better. I feel scared here.”

"What is scary here?"
> "I won't make sense! Maybe I can’t say what I think in a way that will make sense. Maybe it will sound ridiculous. Also, it might strike them as a challenge."

"Can I say my reaction to their friend's experience so that it makes sense to *me*?”

"I felt sad. I remember the way she looked and sounded to me the last time I saw her. (At this point the words that I had for my reaction changed. Where I previously only had one sentence that sounded like a judgment of her, I could now say specific things I had observed and own my feelings about and
interpretations of those observations. That changed my sense of how I could say it to Mom and Dad.)

"How do I want to say this to them?"

"I want to say it simply as my perception, which may be inaccurate in terms of what was happening to their friend. I don't have a stake in being right, but they might not see it as a possibility unless I said it, and might miss what to do about it if they hadn't seen it as a possibility."

The second focusing experience occurred in response to a painful interaction I had with a policeman acquaintance to whom I speak occasionally when I am walking my dog. He is probably about 60 years old, and struck me always as a really nice man. But in this interaction, he was expressing angrily and hatefully what I consider to be a very racist way of thinking. I was shocked by this kind of thinking coming from this person I had seen as a "nice man," and at the time felt paralyzed to be able to say any more than, " I have a really different feeling about that.” So, the focusing began with the painful feeling about this interaction.

"What is this pain?"

"You *participated*!
I participated in this active expression of racism by failing to express my feelings."

"Why didn't I express my feelings?"

"I felt scared, and my feelings just withered away.”

"What is scary for me here?"

"It's a fight.
It feels inside me like verbal disagreement is the first step toward physical violence. I have had some experiences that leave me associating physical violence with hurt and humiliation. Also, it is *terrible* to argue with others."

"What is terrible about that?"

"Keep a happy face.
This is my impression of my whole extended family speaking to me. There was a strongly adhered to, but never said explicitly, avoidance of verbal expression of disagreement. There were some specific experiences where disagreements were ignored until they were so powerfully felt that the expression was explosive and near physical violence. Disagreement was a matter of somebody being right and somebody being wrong. And whoever was wrong was a bad person."

Saying all this to myself let me see that I believe the violence I feel in disagreement results not so much from the differences as from trying to ignore them. Also, I want to test saying my different experience, to act on trusting my

feelings and experience and the belief that I *am* an OK person. I see in retrospect that I was trying to avoid the pain of violence, but in doing that incurring the pain of participation. And in reality, the pain of violence isn't avoided, just postponed until a blow-up.

Sometime after these focusing experiences, I decided to go to visit my parents, partly to get a check-up for my car, since I can get that done cheaper and more reliably there than here in the city. I had been putting this off and was finally feeling pressured to have it taken care of, so I decided to go out on a Wednesday morning and come back on Thursday morning, a typical brief visit, necessarily happening during the week when my dad was working, because the band I was in had jobs for several consecutive weekends. So, I went out there with a lot of things to do in the short time; I also wanted to change the oil and wash the car, which I often do out there (some of the deeply ingrained patterns of behavior), and I took my guitar along, hoping to get in some practice time. Mom and Dad also have their routines, of course, so the relaxed time to sit and talk is at a premium. In addition, I got away late, and was an hour behind schedule on arriving to have the work done on my car.

After finally having talked to the car people, I was home for lunch, and letting the oil drain out of the crankcase of my car, and just remembered some of my feelings about the friend of my parents, and I asked how she was. They reported that a doctor had seen her and found nothing wrong, which was consistent with some of my interpretation of what her experience had been about, so l found myself saying my thing about that. (In the absence of the blocking-my-true-reaction feelings that had changed as a result of focusing, my reaction just came out very naturally.) It was a little hard for them to hear, but it felt good to me to be saying it, and I didn't get into feeling threatened by their having a hard time hearing it. Part of what I said in my reaction was about how important I think it is for a person to talk to somebody who is able to listen, without taking sides, to all the feelings the person is having. Well, a few minutes later, my dad went back to work, and it seems that this talk about feelings led my mother to telling me some of the hard feelings that she was having in relation to one of my brothers. As I listened to her (with some difficulty) about her feelings in relation to my brother, I started to get the impression that she wasn't seeing my brother as a whole person, but just seeing him as the struggling part of a person that she was worried for. This made me think of how when I feel a lot of concern or worry about another person and how they are, it almost always turns out to be something about me that I am having those feelings about. Then I realized that *I* was feeling quite concerned for my brother, and in a way making a plea for Mom to perceive more of him than l thought she was. I asked myself how this concern was concern for *me,* and realized that part of what was happening for me was that I had something going on inside of me that I hadn't told my parents, that I knew they would have feelings about. I felt scared of that, but then remembered my focusing on that scared feeling that had come up in my pain about that interaction with the policeman. I could feel that I wanted to do this differently, so I told Mom that 1 was thinking about living with Sally, to which she had the reactions that I

expected, of judging that harshly as long as we weren't married.

The ensuing conversation with my mom, later resumed with her and my dad when he came home was a very special experience for me, in which I was able to stay connected to feeling OK about me, and confident in my own experience and feelings even in the face of the negative judgments expressed by my parents about what I was thinking of doing. It turned out to be a sharing that I really valued. It did not feel like an argument, but like something about which we differed, and about which I wanted the benefit of their thinking and experience to make sure for myself that I would do what was right for me. I noticed very distinctly that I was more fully present and visible with my parents in this conversation than I can remember being. Whole parts of me and my values and ways of thinking came into that conversation, and my dad shared some of his personal experience that I had never heard before, and we shared some notions that apply to our very different experience which felt very validating of those notions. Another effect of this conversation was a shift in my feeling of legitimacy about Sally. I noticed later that night I referred to her and had a really good warm prizing feeling about her, where before I had been mostly reluctant to even refer to her in their presence.

I don't know if the effects of the focusing are apparent in this example, but to me they are very salient; having focused on my feelings about saying my thoughts about my parents' friend, got me to a place to be able to say some of that, and that experience shifted a whole balance in our interaction, which led to more sharing of feelings. In the midst of this, I came to the scared-about-differences place where before I would likely have chosen to just drop it, or talk about my brother, but not about what I was scared to say about me. But having focused on that earlier gave me the awareness to be able to choose to do something different here, which resulted in a quantum leap in my ability to share differences, and now feels crucial in the way that it was confirming of my trust in my own feelings and experience, and also my loving feelings for my parents and my respect for them as whole human beings.

Mary Hendricks, A focusing group

Introduction

A focusing group is an interpersonal structure which enables an inward focus and articulation of experience for each member. We are in a time when our cultural tradition is not working for many people. The socially expected behavioral and emotional patterns do not stand in a facilitative relationship to experience. Our interpersonal structures, or routines, often seem to hinder felt life. For example, marriage is supposed to enable intimacy, but for some people it is only when they terminate the marriage structure that along with the pain is a new freedom to explore relating and intimacy. When one can spend time alone ending interaction requirements for large blocks of time, the sense of self may deepen and form in a new way. When a degree is granted ending 15 or 20 years of school structure, some people become freer to read and think for themselves; education begins. When intimacy and interaction and thinking are required by outside structures, people, more or less well, cope, produce and seem to have the experiences the structures are designed to enable and support. Yet on a deeper level the structures can oppress the experience they exist to enable. As I. Illich says, "… when cities are built around vehicles, they devalue human feet; when schools pre-empt learning, they devalue the autodidact; when hospitals draft all those who are in critical condition, they impose on society a new way of dying."

Some people are able to use extant social structures developmentally and self-expressively. Others participate in the expected routines because they don't know what else to do. As expected routines, they are the way one has a place in community. To eschew them leaves one alone without access to money, intimacy, colleagues, recognition. In such isolation, we violate our interactive nature. Yet to occupy our "expected" place is a violence to our complexity, richness and differentiation capacity.

To read a book because of a felt need to know something, to call a friend because you'd like to talk to her, to sense with another how to express life-time loving in terms of a community are different actions than when performed as part of a pre-extant demand structure. When we try to fit ourselves to social patterns, do the things we're supposed to do, feel the feelings we're supposed to feel, there can be distress, self-estrangement, and internal deadening. (Sometimes it is helpful to "try on" an existing structure. By putting oneself in a particular kind of situation one sometimes can experience the feelings and living that are typically involved in it, for instance: mistress, wife, teacher.)

Some people, seeing no alternatives, go through the motions of the expected routines, but take their "self" out of them. They operate on automatic control. But the self remains experientially undeveloped. Nothing really touches them.

When an individual can make touch with his or her *own* structuring process, then the social patterns that emerge facilitate one's felt experience. The power to

directly refer to and differentiate one's own experience, is a structurecreating process. When I select my readings as I need to from within, it turns out they form a pattern. That pattern expresses me, enables me to go further with my evolving intellectual process in a way not possible if I'm only following someone else's curriculum. When I reach out to a friend because I want to share this particular experience with this particular person, a friendship develops whose structure (frequency of contact, kind and content of contact, etc.) fits the two of us. It is likely to be unique to us. For example, with one friend I dance and meditate. That's where our centrally felt needs overlap. With another, we read together and go to movies; that's where our interests draw us together. A third friend I talk with every day, we share how we're each feeling. It's not that with each friend I've agreed to only do a certain activity. We sometimes do others too. But we've allowed where we are in fact really drawn together to shape our relating. Each relationship is created differently by each of us sensing what it is we wish to share. This contrasts with a more stereotypic social form for friendship.

Often people live deadened inside routines not knowing how to differentiate their own experience and how to make structure with others that expresses their rich actual feelings or interests. I call "transition structures" those forms which teach people how to move from being caught in imposed social patterns to being makers of new forms and also help people choose existing structures that better fit their living.

Focusing (Gendlin, 1968) is such a transition structure. It is a series of internal questions in response to which one's *own* articulations (structures) arise. One silently attends to one's experience and waits for a symbolization to emerge from it which carries it forward. Focusing is usually done alone or with one other. Knowing focusing I focused on my wanting to be with others (a group) in a way that wasn't a tense imposition on myself. Usual ways of being in a group include maintaining proper social conversation, not showing too much feeling (or nowadays showing enough feeling and self-exposing material), working on a joint content project. We needed a transition structure that would help us move from fulfilling formal group norms to becoming a structure-creating group. Out of this need for a communal transition structure grew the focusing group.

Group method

A focusing group is a structure in which an introverted, individual process can go on in the presence of others. (Most group situations demand extraverted process.) This paper describes the structure and nature of this original focusing group. The group met in the context of Changes, a crisisintervention, therapeutic community in Chicago. I invited anyone who wanted to do focusing with others during the Sunday night meetings to join me in a group. We met weekly for two hours, for one and a half years. There were from 5 to 12 people present at any given meeting. The group was closed to new people (to keep size down), but there were no agreements to attend regularly by anyone (including me). To require or pressure for attendance already violates the group as a structure that expresses

an inner felt need. It makes it an obligation. If I didn't feel like coming I didn't and whoever wanted to meet anyway did. I was unwilling to make the group one more task to "get through" or "perform well." There was no money involved. The point of the group was to focus - each person silently - but not alone. I gave focusing instructions out loud each time, but people were asked to ignore them if they didn't feel right or interfered with their own process.

The group was structured to facilitate each person's attention to their own inner process, through relaxation, silence, and focusing. Each individual was insured privacy and safety from external intervention. Within this context full attention to internal process can *begin*. When mobilized to meet responses (positive or negative) of others (as we usually are in group situations) one cannot focus. We met in a sanctuary of a church, quiet and candlelit. People would find a comfortable position in the room where they could feel undisturbed. Usually, people would take a mat and lie down. I gave relaxation instructions followed by a minimum of 10 minutes of silence. That's a long time to share silence.
People slept, dreamed, fantasized, thought, cried, as *they* were moved, with no instruction or response from anyone else.

lt came to be that as people came in, took their shoes off and lay down, they would sigh with relief, "This is the only place in my whole week where I can come and just be myself, with other people, but not having to interact and be mobilized. 1 can entirely go into my own space and see who I am, take time to catch up with what's going on in me." Just entering the room became a powerful experience. The silence was a time in which one could disengage from being tensely involved in this and that, reacting to what one just had come from. One could get some distance from immediate concerns and find one's larger sense of center or balance.

At the end of that 10-minute period, I would give some version of focusing instructions, for those who found them helpful to their inner process of centering. In order to make the instruction-giving feel helpful *for me* rather than a burden, I needed to be free to make up those focusing instructions which seemed exactly right for me that evening, rather than memorize a standard set of instructions (Gendlin, 1968) and give them by rote each meeting. Near the end of the 10-minute silence I would focus on how to start the focusing instructions. I would do this by saying silently to myself, “What question feels most right to begin? What open question would center me the most deeply now?" Then I would wait and see what emerged from my whole felt sense. The starting question would come (usually with a felt shift impact in me just from getting the centering questions). Then I would ask, again, silently to myself, "Then what question next?" After I had the first several steps of the "focusing instructions" for the evening, I would tell people that after a few minutes (to complete their process if they wanted) I
would begin the instructions. As I gave them out loud, I also *gave them to myself* (which was the point of the group for me - to focus with others present). The rest of the sequence of questions would arise from my own specific process. For

example, if I found my mind wandering, I would say, "If you find your mind wandering, bring it back." Or, if I needed to sense what was in the way of this feeling or trouble shifting or opening, then I would say, "Ask yourself, ’What’s in the way of this feeling shifting or opening up?’ “I generalized whatever instruction was arising for my process. If I got a sad feeling, my next step might be to ask myself silently, ’'What is this sadness?" I would then say out loud, "Ask yourself now, ’What is this feeling I'm working on, what’s in it?’ Just wait and see what comes." The content "sadness" was mine. The generalized spoken question was a process instruction, applicable to any feeling content.

I timed the focusing steps by how long it took me to get my bodily response, plus time to sense the next instruction and 10 or 15 extra seconds. If I got stuck on a step and it took me a long time, then that step took a long time. The instructions usually took 20 to 30 minutes, mostly of in-between silence. I and later others in the last months of the group felt safe enough to formulate instructions on the spot from our own process.

Often during the instructions people would cry or laugh or sigh as their process shifted, released, opened. But this was their private process and called for no response from another.

Certainly, the group was good for me (having made them up, l got exactly right focusing instructions each time!). But the depth of my process helped deepen that of others. Especially in silence when one's pace slows, and inner sensitivity deepens, the inward-turnedness of another is keenly felt. Therapists often have the experience that when the inner world begins to open the silence of the client becomes richly textured, charged. The fulness of the client's silence is tangible.

l usually generated my focusing instructions by asking myself what would center me because the feeling I call "living from my center" was most important for me. Someone else doing a different group would find their own right way of generating instructions. Obviously, since my instructions arose from my process, they were often not right for others. And people often did ignore my instructions and made up their own to themselves. Still, the minimal provision of structure in my instructions seemed helpful. l don’t think out loud instructions would be necessary if everyone knew focusing well.

I stress a reflexive principle, focusing on how to focus with others, focusing to get focusing instructions, etc., because I think many shared steps of this kind of structure-deriving process made the powerfulness and creativity experienced by each of us in the group.

In the first weeks, after the focusing instructions, I would invite anyone to tell me what had happened for them at each step of the instructions. This was both a way of verbally sharing what had gone on in the silence for those who wished (this can often sharpen one's own sense of what one's experience "was"), and a way of working with specific difficulties in focusing.

Here are some examples of sharing in the first sessions:

Example one

I felt unhappy. My job won't let me go. I didn't think anything good could happen for me tonight because I was so tense. I couldn't relax during the relaxation period. When you said to ask, "What do I want to work on?" I didn't know. I had tried to think before I came what I wanted to work on. I couldn't think of anything. But when I followed your instructions and asked myself, ’'What do I want to work on?" what came was, "I want to be able to ask for what I need!"
I was surprised, but it felt good to get that. Then right away three images of three situations in which I need to ask and feel I can't came to me. Then, when you said to ask ourselves, "What needs to happen for this to shift or open up?" I tried asking in fantasy for what I need in each of these situations. And you know what happened? Nothing! No-one got upset. Now I feel like I can go and try it. For instance, I can say that I need to meet once a week with this person instead of twice, that it’s too fast for me. The outside instructions were very important. I couldn't have done it if left to myself.

Example two

There were too many words. I didn't listen to the instructions. I stayed with my feeling. I got an image of what on the outside could make the feeling change. Then as the image came, tears came. Then anxiety, a wanting it to go away. The feeling started with a place in the body, my chest, and a tightness in the throat. Then words came, "Oh, it's a sadness." I spent a long time feeling that sadness, I never did feel it as parts. It was one big feeling and then the image came of what would change the feeling.

Example three

My mind kept wandering. I decided to focus on my breath. It was hard to get into a feeling. The instructions seemed too vague. When you said, "Let yourself have a feel of the whole problem" that seemed vague. I didn't know how to do it.

Example four

When I asked myself, "How am I now?" I immediately felt anxious, slightly nauseous. Then when you said to let a phrase or image form from the feeling, I saw myself as a scared little girl wanting to hide. When you said to see what was in that feeling or image, I couldn't get anything because there were too many reasons; I didn't know what to attach the feeling to. But there was a shift in that it felt good to get to the place where I really was rather than the social "out there" place.

When people are able to share their process exactly as in these examples, their

difficulty can be worked with precisely. From this sharing, I would make up simple exercises to address a given person's difficulty with the instructions: How to discriminate a felt sense; how to let words/images form from it; how to ask oneself open-ended questions, etc. Different people have trouble with different steps. For instance, the person in Example Three above was not yet able to get a felt sense of a whole area. I made up exercises by saying to myself, e.g., "Oh, I see, she's having trouble with getting a felt sense of a whole. What would be another way of letting her have that experience so she'll know it?" Or, often you can see the person already has the experience of a particular focusing step in a different context but hasn't discriminated it as being something. People were supported in saying, "I didn't get anywhere", "Nothing happened when you said …" Describing with internal precision is the point. What actually happened specifically is what is interesting and can be worked with.

This sharing at the end was in a "go around" format. Each person who wished said what they wanted. I might reflect in a client-centered fashion what was shared, but there was no other interaction. Each person's sharing was received, not judged, sympathized with, argued about. This was part of the norm of not having to mobilize to deal with people's reactions to one's inner process. Silent attention combined with lack of external consequences makes a large, free space in which inner creation can take place. When something is just trying to emerge into articulate form the concentration required is often shattered by external input and response. (Later one wants input, feedback, but not at this stage.)

This no-response format was difficult at times for some people. Some people need more interaction out loud than others at a given time. Several times someone wanted an encounter group. However, helping each person into their own private space by the support of others doing the same kind of process is different than an interaction group. When someone was more in need of interaction, they were referred to another group for a while.

During the go-arounds, I often would go first, sharing my exact process steps. For example, "When I asked myself, 'What do I need to do to center myself? an image came of me sitting in meditation. When I said, 'If something came, see how it makes you feel, there was a sad feeling. When I said, 'Gently ask yourself, What is this feeling, welcoming it', what came was my longing to be who I am, and how hard it is to sometimes be apart from myself." I went first to model discrimination of inner process. I sometimes said I didn't want to share my process.

As people became more capable and confident about their focusing, after the first two months, this "teaching" format shifted to a sharing circle at the end. During one session at this time, a focusing instruction came up in my process, "What could I do here, in my few minutes at the end of the evening, that would be actually taking a life-step on this issue I've been focusing on?" I added this instruction out loud, and in the sharing circle, those who wanted, each took the step that had articulated in their focusing. This was so powerful, I often included it in the instructions.

As we gathered in the circle, I would divide the remaining time by the number of people and say how long each person could have (usually 5 minutes). A lot can happen in 5 minutes. Anyone was free to not use the time. I or someone would time keep and hold people to the limit. Each person would do as they wished with the time, sometimes sharing the steps of their focusing process; sometimes if a life-step had come, they would do that. Some examples of life-steps people took were: doing yoga for 5 minutes instead of only wishing she would do it; making up and singing a song, letting herself be the pied piper she only dreamt herself to be; asking to be massaged to release a tense back or neck or be healed by touch; standing at the pulpit preaching, claiming the power and authority to speak that he felt but was embarrassed to show; turning her back on us and screaming at her mother to get out of her way so she could have room to live; bursting into tears and crying with no words. A lot of discharge would happen, because when one takes a life-freeing step it releases feeling. As you move forward, you cry, laugh, take a deep breath, your body lets go, changes. It helps one's own courage to see another's moment of conscious life-forwardness, to see a shy person
stand up and say, "I want you to like me."

Instead of being given a sentence to elicit discharge by a Re-evaluation Co-counseling teacher, or being touched on pressure points at the judgement of the bioenergeticist, people in this group *derived* their own discharge sentences, discriminated where they needed to be touched, etc., out of their own structure making process. This derivation capacity must be a dimension of self-healing process. (Probably the more information - already existing structures - available to a person, the more creative their own structure-creating can be. This was mostly a psychologically sophisticated group, some of them psychology graduate students who had experience in various therapy modalities.)

As each person's time was up attention moved to the next person. Again, there was no discussion, challenge, attack, but only silent empathy or regard. One's few minutes belonged entirely to the self, made safe in the circle.

When I focused on the right way for me to leave the group (to work full-time on something else), what came was to give each person a chance to work out how they would lead a focusing group. During the last months, some people focused on what doing a focusing group would be for them. As they felt ready, they led the group for a number of sessions trying out their own focusing instructions and structures. Most of the people in the group have since done their own focusing groups and focusing teaching in a variety of contexts and places in the country. I have since modified this structure for use in doing therapy groups with medical students wishing help with their own stress.

This paper has described a group in which a particular kind of inward-directed attention, focusing, was maximally facilitated. Obviously, there are other ways to do this, and other valid concerns (confrontation, contact, support, drama) which

group settings address.

Part Four: Doing more - advanced listening and focusing methods

Eugene Gendlin and Mary Hendricks, Doing more

Although we emphasize absolute listening, clearly there are other ways of being helpful to people. At times, it is necessary to do more. We want to make very clear, though, that you are then in a different ball park. When you are just listening and reflecting you are totally in the talker's space, accepting her definition of the situation, and not adding much of your own except your concern and presence. Anytime you start adding something of your own, you are altering the internal space of the other person. This may be good and appropriate or it may be unnecessary and cause trouble. In other words, when you add something more than listening you are taking risks - risk of making things better, risk of making them worse, risk that the person now talking is going to have to consider you in the relationship, too. It just changes things.

We are sounding these warnings not to scare people off, but to make them consider what they are doing. Pure listening is so good for people in that it is such a rare experience for people to be completely in their own space, that it might be good to think twice whether your input really adds to the situation. People. are sometimes so eager to be helpful and to be active intervenors that they aren't aware of the power of letting the person do her own thing.

On the other hand, the person who is talking is probably used to a much more interactive relationship and may really want and need some more input from you. Also, there will be times in which the person talking gets stuck and can't move just with reflection. This section, then, talks about the various ways that we in Changes do more than pure listening.

Helping a person focus, or "making places"

In previous sections we talked briefly about focusing in a beginning listening group, and offered detailed descriptions and directions about how you can do it with yourself. In this section, however, we will describe how you can help someone do it when they are talking with you even if they don’t know anything about focusing as a formal process.

Often absolute listening as described before leads people deeper and further into their own concerns (their issues, problems, whatever they are talking about). As what they say is picked up, further steps come. However, sometimes people seem not to go down into themselves at all. When this happens, first make sure you are really reflecting the feeling edge of what they are saying. Many people can tell you their thing just as far as it is clear to them, but then they stop, or go on to something else. Yet, it’s just where feelings and situations aren't clear that the focusing process needs to happen. It can happen if people will first focus on, or "make a place" out of what's unclear, or unresolved, and then feel their way into that.

Frequently we have feelings but are blocked from them, or have feelings that are so chaotic that there seems to be no handle on them, or have feelings which drift off like clouds when we approach them. We use the expression "making a place" because focusing often feels like we make room inside ourselves for such feelings to be, or when we focus we are almost geographically locating our feelings. Making a place is like creating a picture frame inside yourself where feelings can come up. Then we can stand comfortably and look at what is there and experience it. Making a place is like saying to oneself, while pointing, " *That there*, that's what's confused," and then feeling "*that there*." Like, "*There* is that whole big confusion."

Making a place can also be in some way separating out, locating, getting in touch with a feeling. It is the act of recognition: "Oh, it's just this part about it that is scary, not all of it." Or, "Yeah, it's that I'm so disappointed, that's what is getting me."

A place is not only words, but something in the person that is directly felt, and can be pointed to inwardly: "*There*, *this*, *that* is what the worst of it is."

It is necessary for the person to keep quiet, not only outwardly, but also not to talk inside, so that a feeling place can *form*. It takes a few seconds, maybe even a minute.

Some people talk all the time, either out loud or at themselves inside, and they don't let anything directly felt form for them. Then everything stays a painful mass of confusion and tightness.

When a place forms, the person also feels better. There is some relief. It's as if all the bad or troubling feeling goes into one spot, right there, and the rest of the body feels easier and freer, and one can breathe better.

Once a place forms (and this happens by itself, if one keeps quiet and lets it), then people can relate to that place. They can wonder what's *in* that, and can feel around it and into it, and can let aspects of it come to them one by one.

When to help a person let a place form

When people talk around and around a subject and never go down into their feelings of it;

When people say things that are obviously very personal and meaningful to them, but then they go on to something else, and again to something else, and don't get *into* any one of these things;

When people have said all that they can say clearly, and from there forward it is confusing, or a tight unresolved mess, and they don't know how to go on;

When people can't get out of just describing the situation, what one could have seen from the outside, and don’t go into what it adds up to, in them, or how they feel it, where it gets them;

When a person tells you nothing that seems meaningful, but seems to want to;

When there is a certain spot that you sense could be gotten into further.

How to help a place form

There is a gradation of how much help you have to give to enable the person to get a place: always do the least amount first and more only if that doesn’t work.

1. Some people won't need any help except your willingness to be silent for a minute now and then. If you don’t talk all the time, and if you don’t stop them or get them off the track, they will feel into what they need to feel into. Don't interrupt a silence for at least a minute or two. Once you have responded and checked out what you said and gotten it exactly right, be quiet.

2. The person may need one sentence or so from you, to make the pause in which a place could form. Such a sentence might simply repeat the last important thing you already responded to, it might just point again to that spot, it might be just one important keyword. (In our earlier example, you might just repeat "put down" slowly, letting yourself feel what it might have in it, and letting the person do the same inside them.) Or you can make a simple global sentence, like, "Yeah, that feels heavy," and then stay quiet.

Whatever people say after you attempt to enable them to form a place, say the crux of it back. Let them and you go on as usual, and try again a little later. If you, in this way, don’t get hung up on the fact that you hoped and tried for a silent deeper period, your efforts have cost nothing. You can try again soon. Therefore, don't refuse to go with whatever comes up, even if the person didn't do what you said.

3. If, after quite many tries the person still isn't feeling into anything, then, the next time you try, say explicitly, "Sit with it a minute and feel into it further." Say something like, "For the next minute don't say anything to me, or to yourself either. I'd like you to just hang on to that one spot and keep quiet and let the feel of it come to you, see what’s in it. It takes a minute of keeping quiet to let that come in more."

4. You can also make a question for the person, and tell them to ask this question inwardly, to ask not the head but the gut or feelings, "Stay quiet and don’t answer the question in words, just wait with the question till something comes from your feeling."

Questions like that are usually best open-ended. The following examples are all

the same: "What really *is* this?" "What's keeping this the way it is?" "Why is this still the way?" "Just where is it really hung up?" "Why am I still hung on that?" "If it's still not OK yet, why not?" (These questions refer to the specific thing or place just talked about.)

Another type of question applies to the "whole thing"; use it when everything is pretty confused, or when a person doesn't know how to begin. Tell the person to feel the whole thing, let the whole mess come home to them and ask (but not answer in words) the question, "Where is this really at?" or, "Where am I really hung up in this whole thing?"

5. Some people won't know what you mean by "let yourself feel it" or "let the feel of it come home to you and just see what it feels like." They know only about words. In that case, repeat the person's last most meaningful words, and ask them to say this to themselves again and to sense what they are feeling when they say these words. In this way, they can notice the fact that there is something there besides words that they can let themselves get or have.

Usually, if the person has a felt place, by sensing into it and letting it be, a next step will come, some aspect of it not had before will emerge, and the whole thing will shift a little, and then more. The deep kind of process will go forward.

6. If nothing like that is happening, and a person *has* let a felt place form but is stuck, it may help to ask the person, "How would it be different, if it were all OK; what ought it to be like?" Then, after that, tell the person to ask inwardly, "What's in the way of that?" and to not answer the question, just to get the feel of what's in the way, and let that talk.

All these different ways need the person to stop talking out loud and inside, and to let the feel of whatever it is get sensed.

This stopping of deliberate talking, inwardly as well as out loud, is a sharp change. One stops what one was doing. One does nothing further. One *lets come*, instead of doing it oneself. One keeps only the focus, the topic, or question.

Even more globally, one can use this way to ask oneself, "Where's my life still hung up?" You can ask yourself this now, and see how fast it gives you the places, if you ask and don't answer with words but wait for the places to come to you in a felt way.

You can also pick the two or three most important things the person said, if you feel they go together into one thing, and tell the person, "When I say what I'm going to say, you don't say anything to me or to yourself, just feel what comes there." Then, say the two or three things, each in one or two words.

7. These ways could help when a person doesn't want to say some private or painful thing. They can work on it with you even without your having to know what

it is; they can get into it, and say how it is·, without telling you what it is about.

How you can you tell when it isn't working, and when it is

1. When people look you straight in the eyes, then they aren't yet focusing inward. Say, "You can't get into it while you're looking at me, let me just sit here and get with yourself."

If the person speaks immediately after you get through asking them to be quiet, they haven’t done it yet. First get, and say back the crux of what they say, then ask them again to make a place as described above. If you've done a very heavy trip on it, let it go fifteen minutes or so, and then if the person still isn't into anything, try again.

If, after a silence, the person comes up with explanations and speculations, ask how that point feels, and what's *in* that, to feel it out. Don’t put the person down for "just head stuff." Rather, pick up what people do say, and keep pointing into feeling, so they get there eventually.

If people say they can't let feelings come because they are too restless, tense, feel empty, discouraged, trying too hard, etc., ask them to focus on *that*. They can ask themselves (and not answer in words), "What is this ‘rattled’ feeling?" ''What is this ‘tense' feeling?" "What is this ‘empty’ feeling?” “What is this ’trying too hard' thing?"

2. How can you tell when a person has a place, and when referring to this place is working? One has a place when one can feel more than one understands, when what is there is more than words and thoughts, when something is quite definitely felt, but it hasn’t opened up or released yet.

Referring to a felt place has worked when something further has come up, something one hasn’t just thought up, or figured out. This way a person feels something directly, and doesn’t only figure that it must be so.

Anything whatever, which comes in this "from the gut" way, should be welcomed. It is the organism's next step. Take it and say it back just the way the person tells it.

It feels good to have something come directly from one’s feeling; it shifts the feeling slightly. Even if one doesn’t like what has come it feels good. It is encouraging when more is happening than just talk. It gives one a sense of a process, and movement from stuck places.

This whole way of listening, responding, and referring to people's own experience just as they feel into it, is based on the fact that a person's things, feelings, and troubles are not just concepts, ideas, but are bodily. Therefore, the point of helping is never just to figure out, just speculations, abstractions, explanations.

There has to be a physical, concretely felt bodily process of steps into where the trouble is felt. Such a process gets going when someone responds to the personal, felt side of anything said, just as a person feels it, without anything else messed into it. Felt movement and change happen when a person is given the peaceful moments to allow the bodily sensed version of a trouble to be, to be felt, and to move its own next step.

A person can do this alone, but the presence and clear bit by bit responding of another person who gets each bit, has a powerful peace-and-room-making effect. With most people, one can feel into oneself *less* than when alone. With some rare people who will really listen and get each thing, we can get into ourselves much more than when alone.

In this process the bodily felt steps, that are next, "come" as of their own accord. As each bit is taken by you, just as it is, a moment of peace is possible, and then some next thing or part of the thing will come. (Don’t theorize about all this until you have observed and experienced it. See first if you experience and observe a powerful process when you try these things out.)

Eugene Gendlin and Mary Hendricks, How to use your feelings and thoughts of the other person without laying trips on him/her

What you say isn't as important as how you do it. You can try out almost anything with pretty good results, or at least without disruption, if you will do it in the following ways.

How

1. Whatever you say or do, watch the person and respond to where ·your input leaves him/her. If you can't tell, ask him, then get with that. Even if what you say or do is bad, stupid, or hurtful, it will come out good if you ask about, and respond with absolute listening to whatever the person's reaction is.

2. Make what you say about him/her be questions, not conclusions. And not questions to his/her head, but invitations to him to sense into him/herself and see if something like you say - or something else - is there, directly for him. *You* don't ever know what he/she's got, you can only wonder and help him/her to ask himself. So, use a non-conclusive, inquiring way. For example, "I wonder if that makes you hurt in some way," or "It seems as if you might be angry, are you?" (You can also tell him/her, "I don't mean that *I* would know. Feel it out and see, is it like that or how is it?

3. Let go of your thing easily, as soon as you see that it leads him into arguments, speculation, or just doesn't get him further into anything he feels directly. If you think it's good you can say it twice but after that, let it go. You can bring it up later (you could be right but something else might have to come first).

4. Make sure that there are stretches of time when you do only absolute listening, or helping the person focus. If you interrupt with your ideas and reactions constantly, his process can't get going. There should be ten or fifteen minutes at a time when you follow only him. If the person is feeling into his thing, do less of yours; if he is stuck, do more.

Let his process go ahead, if it seems to want to move a certain way. Don't insist that what you sense should be next has to come next. Go on with what's next for him.

If he tries to teach you to be a certain way, be that way for a while. For instance, he might say he needs you to be more quiet, or more talkative, or to come at him some definite way. Do it, you can always go back to your preferred way later, if it comes to nothing good. People often teach us how to help them.

It's always enough that a person heard your thing, he needn't agree with it, or make use of it, certainly not just then.

5. If you got him off his track, and he is now arguing, speculating, or confused,

bring him back to the last point where he was in touch with himself. Say, “You were telling me … Go on from there."

What

Here are some types of things you could contribute to him. (You will work out your own after a while. What matters is how! If you check yourself against the five “how” points you can try these and other things.)

Your reactions, feelings, and hunches

6. Watch your person's face and body, and if you see something happening, ask about it. Nonverbal reactions are often good places to ask him to get down into his feelings.

7a. You don't need to get hung up on whether you're right or not, when you sense something. If you sense something, then there is *something*, but you may not be right about *what* it is, so ask.

You will often see on his face some of how he is reacting to whatever you are saying or doing, and ask about that, too. (Feel easy about it, if he doesn’t like how you're doing. You can change it, if you so decide, or you might be fine even if he doesn't like how you do. Let the person have room to have negative reactions to you, and be wanting to hear what they are.) Don't guess, ask. If you guess, make it a question, "What did you just feel?”

7b. Don't always stay with the words the person is saying, look at and sense the person and whatever you see, hear, or sense, you can say that. Does he sound angry? Does he sound discouraged? Insistent? *What way* did he say what he said? Then instead of just getting with what he meant to convey, you can say, "You said such and such, but you sound angry, also. Are you?" (and if he says yes, let him tell you what that is. If he gets no further, ask him, “Can you get into what the anger is?")

8. You can use your own felt reactions to what's going on, to lead you to sensing more clearly what is going on with the other person or with both of you. If you feel bored, annoyed, impatient,
angry, embarrassed, excited, or any way that stands out, it indicates something. See in you what it indicates. If you are bored you might find that it is because the person does not seem to be getting into anything meaningful. Then you can ask him, "Are you getting into what you really want to get into?" If you are angry, what is the person doing to make you angry? When you find that, you can say it, for instance, "Are you maybe shutting me out, like you gave up on me already? Did you?"

It helps to permit yourself to have any feelings whatever that you may have while working with someone; let them be as unlovely as they may be. That way you can

be free inside to attend to what's happening in you, and that often indicates what's happening with the other person, or between you. This does not mean directly sharing the negative feeling with the person, but doing some work to find out what the feeling means for you and sharing that.

9. If you get a hunch as to what he is feeling, by putting together a lot of theoretical reasoning in your head, or if you get it from a long set of hints, don't take up time saying all this to the other person. Just ask him whether he is feeling the way you now think he is feeling. For example, don't say, "Because of these and these and those and those reasons, which I put together this way and which indicate this and this because of that and that, I think you must be afraid of such and such." Just ask him, "Are you maybe afraid of such and such?"

Example: If you conclude that his relation with a woman is "oedipal" (if you're into that theory), ask yourself, what sort of a feeling edge might he then find in himself. Then skip the oedipal theory and ask him, "Do you maybe feel small or something, as if she is the adult and you aren't quite?" Or, "Do you have something there like you could be punished, some threat or something?"

10. You can say any hunch or idea in an asking way, sometimes you might add another possibility to ensure that he knows it's not a conclusion but an invitation for him to look how it is in him. "Is it like you're scared of so and so… or maybe ashamed? How does it feel?"

Some standard good questions which may help, especially if the person is stuck

11. The most basic questions are, "How are you feeling?", "How is it with you?", or "How have things been for you this week?" Getting someone focused on the present can also be good. "What are you feeling right now, here in this room?"

Other good questions are those which check specifically about a person's life. Who does he live with and what is going on in that situation and how does he feel about it? What are his school or job issues? Particularly if people are talking around and around about what seems to be stuff in their heads, it may be good to ask about what is or isn't happening in their real lives.

It may be worthwhile to ask how the person is meeting his needs for closeness, whether physical or emotional. If no closeness is happening for that person currently, you might check out what is happening about the unmet needs. Is the person into heavy fantasy stuff or any kind of weird trip? It also may help to talk about what is in the way of getting these needs met, how to change this. This may, of course, get you right to the heart of their big life problem.

12. If the person is unable to do something he wishes he could do or do well, ask him, "When or with what could you do this kind of thing well?" Then ask him to use that as a model for how it might go with this thing you're working on.

13. You can ask the person, regarding any bad thing he's fighting in himself, or puzzling about, "How is this bad thing in some way good, or useful, or sensible?" This is a heavy question and you might precede it with something like this, "No bad thing that's in a person is all bad. If it's there, it has some right or useful aspect which we have to listen for. If we find what the thing is good for, then it can let go. So, give it a friendly hearing, and see what it says, why it's right." The point is to help him stop fighting his bad things long enough to allow them to open, so the positive striving in them can come out. (Another way to put this is that anything in someone makes sense, and he has to let the way it feels be for a few minutes, so that the sense it makes can come out.)

Often very bad things protect the person from other bad things. If he can see what the bad thing protects him from, he can sometimes protect himself much better than this thing does for him.

Sometimes the trouble is in the very fighting and trying that a person puts against the way he feels. If he lets how he feels be, a right next step then comes out of it which he couldn't make up and force. An example would be a fat person who can't control his eating and who is very down on himself about this. If he can inquire in a friendly way what the eating and fatness does for him, he might find that this is the only way he has been able to take care of himself when he is down.

14. If the person sounds discouraged, suicidal, or very angry about his unmet needs, you can ask him, "Do you feel an assumption that you can't *ever* get what you need?" (If so, let him feel his way into what that is.) Some of people's most frantic or seemingly destructive reactions are really a life-affirming fight against some part in them which prohibits what they need ever coming about, and thus makes them sure they can never have it. The point then is to shift the focus to this assumption or prohibition, which has to be false in some way: what does it say, and why?

15. Sometimes it helps to ask a suicidal person, "Are you thinking about committing suicide *at* somebody? Whom at?" He may know right away whom at, and the focus may shift to where it needs to, that relationship. (It may also help to say that this person probably won't understand the suicide any better than he or she understood anything else…)

16. Sometimes, if a person is angry, it pays to ask him: "Are you hurt about something?"

17. When a person is stuck, say, "*Be* that part of you (that anger, that stopper, that such-and-such), what does it feel like saying? Say that out loud." Then, after a minute or two, ask him to be himself again, and to see what he feels like saying *to* that part.

18. If a person got down to a basic fear or bad thing ("Then I'd be all alone …", or

"Then I would be helpless…"), and if he is sitting there and nothing good is happening for him, ask him what it is that makes that seem so bad, "Why would it be so heavy if you were all alone?", "Why does it feel so terrible to be helpless?" You are asking him to challenge the assumption that this particular thing is obviously "the worst" thing, and instead to see what's making it seem so. (You aren't implying that it isn't bad, just implying that it needn't be a dead-end obviously-totally-bad-thing that one can't go any further with.)

Some helpful things to say to people

19. One kind of helpful thing to tell someone has to do with letting one's feelings be felt (as in No. 13). It helps to assure people that it's OK to have their feelings - at least long enough to feel what they are. The same is true of needs, desires, ways of seeing things. There are various reasons people stay clear of their feelings. Here are some spec1fic things to say:

20. "Feelings and actions aren't the same thing. You can let yourself feel whatever you do feel, there's room in you for seeing what's there, then when it's clear you can still decide what you choose to *do*."(Some people avoid their feelings because they think they would then necessarily act some way they are afraid to act.)

21. "It's OK to need. Trying not to have a need you have makes a lot of trouble. There it is, you need that. Even if you can't get it, don't fight needing it."

22. "It isn't like just wallowing around it what you feel. Let yourself feel whatever is there and expect it to resolve, to open up, to get un-hung up."

23. "Weird states are different from feelings, it helps to move out of them toward life and ordinary situations. Weird states may not ease by getting further into them. What in your living is making things bad, now? Can you sort of move forward, both your body and your sense of things? What happens if you lean forward into living, instead of laying back?" (But you shouldn't ultimately decide whether to go into, or out of, anything; he should decide. He may need someone who is willing to go with him into some weird things. Anything is safer in gentle company, than alone.) If his life is now intolerable, or his relationships are bad or non-existent, help him arrange what he will do to change or find new ones.

24. "To change something or to do something that's been too hard, we have to find small steps, some first and second step you can actually do. What would that be?" (Then make suggestions if he has none, but don't settle on anything unless he feels with some elation that he actually can do the first step.)

25. "Put away for a minute what they think and what they said, and let's see what you feel about it, how you see it." (Some people are so into what somebody else is thinking, or what they have been told, that they need help getting to what they themselves think and feel, or how they really perceive the situation.)

Other ways to be helpful, other than centering on the other person's trouble

26a. You can talk about yourself, your day, what other things you are into, work, dance, anything, also private things, ways you feel about you, or light things - anything you feel like saying from you. You need not always try to get into the other person's heavy things. Of course, if he is in the midst of speaking from them, or indicates that he would like to, you would then not refuse. Also, the person should know that you would welcome hearing what really troubles him. But there will be times when it will be a relief to the troubled person to find that you can just talk of you, and other things.

26b. Silent peaceful times are also a great thing. It is good to lie on the grass, to do Yoga, go for a peaceful walk, just being together, without any tension of waiting for something to be said.

26c. You can get a very freaked person to talk (or do) something he is competent in. For example, sewing, music, or some subject he is into. This helps him sense himself OK for a while, and lets you respond to him as to a competent person. It gives him the opportunity to be responded to positively and for good reason.

It is often after such times, after having been able to just be with you, that a person might feel like taking you into some of his heavy things, and then you would be willing if it feels all right to you, then, to stay longer.

Two items about very freaked people

27. If the person says a lot of strange stuff you can't understand, then maybe does say one or two things that make sense, and then goes on with strange stuff, stick with the one or two things and repeat them again and again many times. They are your point of contact, and by repeating them (if nothing further comes) you are retaining and remaking contact. It is all right, then, to keep saying these things, with silence or other attempts in-between, even for an hour.

28. If the person says stuff that can't be true, respond to the feeling that's in it rather than to the facts or non-facts. For example, “The Martians took everything I had away from me… " You can get the feeling here. Say, "Somebody took what was yours? You got robbed some way or messed over?"

Betty Lou Beck, Self-healing meditation

I am interested in symbol meditation as a powerful healing technique, but usually there is a leader who chooses the symbols and guides the process. How do you go about doing this for yourself so that it can be a daily self-healing meditation? This paper will describe a way to use image focusing (Reference 1) to get a symbol to meditate on. Briefly, first you focus to find out what you are feeling in the moment, then you use this present feeling as the context in which to ask, "And what can I give myself right now?", "What do I need right now to heal me?" The answering image that comes up is the symbol to meditate on.

The role of the body is central to this process. Lowen (Reference 2) describes how we respond to painful feelings with muscular tension which blocks the free flow of energy, both physical and psychic. Feeling flows on energy, and energy flows when feelings are released. Symbols can act as bridges to facilitate the flow of energy between the unconscious and the conscious. First, energy must be flowing for the healing symbol to come up from the unconscious, and then, once conscious, the symbol can speak directly back to your energy and transform your feeling. So it helps to begin with warm-up exercises to open the energy vortices and to release the neck, which is the physical bridge between unconscious and conscious contents. Then relax and quiet your breathing (another bridge), and center down into your body. As you breathe feel the space inside and notice any blockages or tensions. As you relax notice where there is resistance. It helps to focus wherever you feel deadness or tension (or the stirrings of movement), because information is there about what you are feeling. Otherwise you can focus at your body's center, your abdomen.

Focus down on the diffuse "felt body-sense" of your general background feeling, and from within this ask, "What am I feeling right now?" Let the immediate, superficial, already-known answer go, and wait with a kind of passive concentration for a clearer, more distinct feeling to surface from inside this. If words come, sometimes they are just right. If so you should be able to feel concretely what they mean. If you can't, then let them go and wait for more, because that usually means they weren't quite "it." When they *are* it you feel them. Or you can go back down and wait for an image to form, a picture of what you're feeling. For some people, an image comes visually clear and detailed. For others, it may be semi-visual, i.e., the basic elements are all there, but visually it is fuzzy. For still others the picture itself may be composed of words. If an image comes, focus on it, and see how it makes you feel. See if it holds the feeling-sense of the whole, is a container for all the nuances of what you are feeling. If not, continue to focus and wait for it to form itself wholly and fully. Keep checking back and forth between the image-sense and the feeling-sense until your whole psyche says, "Yes, that's it." At this point you may have an image that you can't even explain exactly right off, but it *feels full*, and you can focus into it and read from it what you are feeling.

Now, holding this image or feeling-sense, ask, "What do I need?", "What can I give

myself right now that will heal me?" Wait in the same patient way for an answer that feels right, that your whole psyche responds to. The image-answer may come up as a static or dynamic symbol, in the form of words, a gesture, a current of energy, a scene, a color, picture, object, etc. And when you meditate on this you can shift your feeling-energy and heal it.

Example One: When I focused there was a vague feeling of excitement, and mixed in with this were flashes of fear. Then an image came of a vast dark plain with fires burning in the distance all around the edges. From this I could feel how the situation I was in was both beautiful and dangerous and I felt shaky in both an excited way and a scared way. When I asked, "What do I need?" I got an image of myself throwing a handful of pollen on the ground a little ways in front of me. The pollen lit up my path, and I took a step and threw some more and then took another step. There was a sense of "staying with myself, step by step." As I meditated on this image I experienced a calming and centering in which the excitement was still present, but I was not thrown off by the fear.

When you focus you might experience an absence of energy some place as a clue, or a sense of stuck energy that wants to move.

Example Two: Once when I focused I caught a sense of wanting something very much, but not knowing what, and a feeling of anxiety about it. Simultaneously I experienced this as something moving in from behind my belly and out my solar plexus over and over again. And the image of this was of a kind of fish that comes half-way up out of its hole, catches food, and then zips down again. In this example, the image and the feeling were accompanied by a sense of the configuration in my body energy. What I needed was to stay with this up-and-down-again movement, and doing so I noticed that it never made it up to my heart. This brought a realization of how I was lacking work that I really loved. So, as I continued to meditate on the movement, I let it move up to my heart and open it to the possibility of finding nourishing work.

Example Three: When I focused there was a feeling of fear about my unborn baby. What I needed came up as "courage" with a particular sense of need in my upper back. When I focused there an image came of a beetle which turned into a gold bug, which turned into a scarab; a sense of "carrying the sun on my back," "carrying my son on my back", with an accompanying feeling of the courage I needed. "Carrying the sun on my back" was the image which brought the real feeling of courage with it, so I meditated on this and let it shift my fear energy and heal it.

There is fluidity here. The image leads to a feeling which then leads to another image, on and on, clearer and clearer. Holding the healing image together with the feeling and letting them infuse each other is what allows a new, freer energy to flow. Not only can the symbol be fresh each time, but the meditation process is likely to be different, too. You can treat the image like a dream - become the sense of it, let it take over your body and thoughts, let it develop freely round your

need. One time I experienced needing water, like a fountain inside to heal myself, and my meditation took the form of a detailed scene of a rushing spring-thaw creek with everything in the stream coming alive, coming into movement, in the water, on the surface, along the banks, in the forest alongside.

Another time I was experiencing an intense but diffuse sense of anxiety and fear. From out of this came a feeling of cutting myself off from my own power to act and move - a whole sense of hiding. Then I felt how this part of me didn't have my best interest at heart, and that there was another part of me that did. Gradually the scattered and vague contents of these two sides gathered themselves into images; one, the hider, as a horseshoe crab, and the other, the healer, as a shaman, and I let myself feel out the characteristics of each part and the fullness of the image as it related to my feelings and my body sense. The meditation consisted of a dialog in which they both described themselves, and I got to know them a lot better. The horseshoe crab is a familiar toe-pinching creature of the ocean where I grew up. It is ancient, unchanging, slow, heavily armored, and it contains the sense of both how I feel when I obstruct my energy and *how* I obstruct it. The shaman is androgenous, able to mobilize the energy of the group, the balancer of energy who can talk with animals. The meditation ended with an image of the shaman's drum resonating in my solar plexus, drawing the powers together, speaking to them with the healing clarity of my own inner rhythm.

This whole process can be done alone, but it can also be done in small groups, first focusing and getting the image symbol you need (about 10 minutes), then going around and briefly telling each other what came up for you, and then meditating together (10-20 minutes). It is interesting to learn how each person develops whole characteristic sets of processes unique to them according to their most developed functions. And from each other you can learn to expand your ways of speaking to your soul.

David's images would tend to be very visual, and part of the healing in his process would take place as he would hold the image and let it get visually clearer and clearer, more and more detailed. For example, once when he asked, "How am I feeling?" he got sensations in his body but no words came. Then an image come, a golden shape that he didn't recognize at first. Then he realized it was a horn, "a horn to use to be in the moment." He rotated it around so that the bell was facing him. Inside it was dark, a hexagonal shape, with very matte black rods diminishing back to a circle of color. He decided to go in and see. Next, he emerged out of the dark tunnel into a wide grassy plain where he started to look around, seeing no-one. Then he decided to find someone there and got a sense of someone approaching from afar (possibly to be continued in a later meditation).

Judy would often work with a chronic sense of stuck energy which felt like it was blocking her whole life. First in focusing there would be an urgent sense of wanting, wanting to do more (like writing papers), and not being able, and then a feeling of "but that's not enough, "accompanied by a longing for relaxation and pleasure (sun, music, dancing, poetry). The stuckness was in the conflicting pull

between the two, and the presence of anxiety and anger at herself for getting neither of them done. Then she would take one aspect of the conflict at a time and, putting aside the negative messages of anxiety and anger at herself, focus on the positive feeling of the want underneath. Out of this she would get an image-word that seemed to really hold the body feeling, like "create" for the doing aspect and "open, receiving" for the relaxing aspect. Then she would use that word-image to get deeper into the pure feeling, feel it move up through her body and seek a healing image that went with it to strengthen it. The healing symbol of a golden sword for the "creating" and a glowing rose for the "receiving" were images of what her energy would move like without the obstructions. During the meditation, she would focus the two images together to integrate them by first flashing back and forth between them, and then juxtaposing them visually, or holding a sense of herself as either of them, or of herself as the two images together in a setting.

With this meditation technique, I get a sense of discovering and creating my own process, what works for me. From this comes a sense of trusting my own positive healing energy, a sense of becoming acquainted with my own power to give myself what I need. And I become more and more able to get in touch with what I'm feeling, because I know I can do something about it, I can let it flower and transform itself.

References

1. E. Gendlin and L. Olsen, "The use of imagery in experiential focusing," Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice, Vol. 7, No. 4, Winter, 1970.

2. A. Lowen, Depression and the Body. New York: Penguin, 1974.

Part Five: Relationships and group interactions

Eugene Gendlin and Mary Hendricks, Interactions

In this section, we take up how to express *your* own personal feelings, and then other aspects of your interaction with someone. Up until now it was either only responding to the other person's feelings, or your feelings and ideas about the other person's feelings. Up to now it was all about helping the other person. Now we come to your feelings. This section is as much for you, as for helping the other person.

How

1. Move from the given interaction-event into you and say what is happening in you. (From a given moment of interaction (what happened), you can move either into him or into you. For example, he did something to upset you. Now you can go from this into exactly what he did and what he is like that explains why he probably did it. Or you can go into how it upset you, and what you are like that it upsets you. Don't do the first, leave that to the other person. Do the second: move from the bit of interaction into you, see what and why it affected you, and share this. Say this just as straight as you can.)

(It is hard for a person to listen to you telling him what's wrong with him. It is easy for a person to listen to you saying what's wrong with you, or what is at any rate vulnerable or upsettable or shaky in you.)

It isn't very honest and straight therefore, to "share" your feeling that he is such-and-such. (Anything that goes like, "I feel that you… " is no good. You're expressing his territory, and *staying covered* about yours.)

Sharing what is happening in you, and why, makes the interaction more open and personal. It makes it possible, then, for the other person to say what goes on in him and why, to give you more, usually, than you could have guessed or gotten to by making him uptight.

Examples
Don't say, "I have to express my feeling, can I trust you with it? I feel that you bully me, you always have to do your thing on anything I say, and it's like you know it all. Like, before, too, when I said this you had to say…, and I think you just don't want to let anybody in, maybe you're scared to."
Do say, "I get angry and upset when I can't get to finish what I started to say, I lose track and I get insecure about whether I have any ideas, really. I'm not very strong I guess, I lose them right away. I'm very unsure if I'm really intelligent, objectively I know I am, but inside I'm very unsure."

2. Specificity is essential in expressing yourself. Only the unique, specific, finely caught strands of your peculiar texture inside really share you. Generalities are

everybody. It is still a rebuke to a person, and not much more, to be told he made a bad thing happen in you. It is a sharing and a closer open interaction, and gives him you, when you share not some generality but some of the specifics actually going on in you.

3. Share only what you can stand to have ignored. The other person may not be able to meet you immediately, or even that day. He may still be in his own anger or withdrawal, and may lag behind your being open. He may have to say angry things once or twice more, or laugh derisively. (He will have heard you anyway, and the open quality of you will reach him anyway, but he may be unable to meet it and let on.) Therefore, you want to be able to say what you say of you without having to have immediate warm receptiveness as feedback. If you feel very shaky, wait a moment or two. Get it so you can say it of you just because it's you, and true, and it can stand on its own, whatever his reaction.

4. Say how you feel directly. Even if you aren't hiding your anger but saying quite obviously angry things, it is better to say, "I'm mad," than indirect things, because if you say it directly you share it. If you merely let it be seen, you are really hitting the other person *from* it, but not letting him at it. Say it directly.

5. If the first string of words you get feel like you can't say them, don’t fight it. Wait a few moments and let another string of words form. If that one, too, can't be said, wait again. Don't give up the ’what’, which needs expressing, and don't work deliberately to change anything, just wait. Still another string of words will come to you, until a sayable one comes.

What

6. Express directly what you most fear, or what you find yourself struggling with. If you feel uptight, turn around and see what you're running from, then say that. If what he says makes you uptight, see what you're afraid he’s saying, and what you're afraid that means, and then say that.

We often work desperately on top of what we feel, or how we’ve just reacted, trying to fix it or make it something else. But it is easy to let that speak directly.

Examples
"That hurts my feelings."
"I'm sorry you're mad."
“You’ re scaring me with that."
"That makes me feel pushed away."
“I feel out-maneuvered."
''I'm stuck."
"That makes me feel like I'm wrong."

7. Say the covert things that go on in interaction explicitly, and say how you feel about it. Often things are happening that both of you hope aren't being noticed.

You know the other person knows, but even so, you hope the other person doesn't notice that you know he knows.

For example, he might be pressuring you, and you might be trying to avoid being pushed into something, and avoiding letting on that you are resisting. Or, you might wish that he would feel some other way than you know he does, and not saying that you know how he really feels. Or, you might have just done something stupid, or wrong, and you might be trying to recoup without that error being acknowledged, trying to make it have been something else than it was. There might be a seduction possibility, which if talked about openly would let you say exactly how you do feel about it. You might want to go and the other person wants you to stay and knows you want to go. You might be trying to argue your way and know you're wrong somewhere. Or, perhaps he caught you lying, and you both know it but aren't saying so.

When things like this are already so, saying them gets things unstuck. Not saying them keeps the interaction stuck.

Say exactly what you think is going on, which nobody's admitting, and what you feel about it. Say exactly what seems as if it can't possibly be said, seen, or owned up to.

8. Anything you did and wish, now, you hadn't done, say now. It may seem too late, but to get the interaction unstuck it isn't ever too late.

Examples
"I feel stupid about getting mad and yelling."
"Back a while ago, you said… , and I said 'yes'. I was too chicken to say 'no', I was afraid of fighting it out with you."
"I let you think I could dig it, but I've been thinking about it and I can't."
"I hate to admit it now, but that thing you said about so-and-so at the start, I didn't get it."
"Now I wish I hadn't rushed you around like that. I get that way when I'm uptight and I wish I didn't."

Numbers 1 – 3 together, after you do them for a while, become easy so you have a real appetite, when sticky spots come, to encounter the other person in them. What feels impossible to face down is so often a special opportunity to be much closer with someone. (The examples above don't show this, it would be assumed that you would say more of your inward goings-on, than these examples have.)

9. If nothing is happening and you wish something would - even if it seems that not much is going on in you, let your attention down to your gut. There is always a texture of many things going on there, and some of them belong with the interaction with this person. Express them.

10. When you're being pushed too far, call a halt, set a limit, some time before you

utterly blow up or get mad. Protect the other person from what happens when you don't take care of yourself. Say, with specificity, what and how you need or don't want, while you yet have time and willingness to stay after that, to hear what it is and means in him.

11. If you're sitting in silence with a mute or silent person, say something like “I’ll just sit here and keep you company," or something like that, maybe also stretch out on the floor, relax, show that you can maintain yourself on your own without needing to be dealt with. Then, in such a silence, if it is long, you will have many chains of feelings, some of which you can say (every few minutes, perhaps). When you say something, you may then have doubts about how sensible it was, and these lead you to another thing.

For example, you might say, "l do wish you'd let me know something of what you're into." Then you probably think, why are you pressuring the person? So, later on, if the silence continues, you might say, "It's OK for you not to say anything if you don't want to." And that might make you think, maybe he wants to but he can't. So, later on, if the silence still goes on, you could say, "Maybe it's very hard to say *anything*, now." And then, maybe you think, I bet he can talk fine but doesn't want to to me. So, later on, you can say, "Maybe you wouldn't want to talk to me, you don't know me at all." But this chain is only an example, you would have your chain of whatever you thought and felt. It's also good to say, in there somewhere, "But I don't know what you feel, you haven’t said anything yet.” (That takes it out of guessing, and gives him his space.) But, if it feels like pressure on him to talk, quit.

Another thing to express, is something like, "Whatever it is, I guess it's pretty heavy." These expressions of yours let the person know what sort of a way you would take things, if he did say any. It's like giving a lot of an understanding attitude even though he doesn't say anything.

12. Say anything relevant to his situation to a person very straight, even if he is mute or very spaced out. He may not give signs of hearing you, but he *can* hear you. You don't need signs from him that he is receiving, he is. He is in there, whatever he is in.

Examples
“I’ll be back tomorrow around this time."
"We'll come back sometime and we will keep seeing you.” (For example, if a person has to be left in a hospital or in bad condition, it is important that he know it if you are sure you will come back. If you aren't sure when, don't promise when.)
"Man, we've travelled together to here, and I'm not leaving you here in this shape. I'm gonna wait for you." Do not tell feelings you haven’t got and only wish you had. Tell anything valuable you do have for him. "You can stay here a couple of days, then we’ll find you another crash place."

Some ways of looking at it which make being straight easier:
Other people don't care how good or wise or beautiful you are, only you (and maybe your mother) care all that much. So, you don’t have to care that much about it either. It is not bad for the other person if you are or look stupid, crummy, or imperfect.

What is true is always *already so*. Owning up to it doesn't make it worse, and isn't what makes it be. What is true, is in a thousand ways, and affects us in many ways other than words. Anything false is only the words, in all other ways what's true is still the only way things are. Not being open about it doesn't make it go away. And because it's true, it is what is there to be interacted from. Anything untrue is a dead end, it isn't there to be lived. People can stand what is true, because they are standing it already. Only what is true is, and therefore it's the only thing you can trust.

You may find other good ways to be straight with people, ways not written up here. To be straight is much more important, than just how you do it. You can stick with the person and help with anything that ensues.

When

When not to
When the other person is into his thing, or might get into it if you let him. People can almost always hear you better if they are heard first, and get in touch with where they are first. Also, as the other person does this, it may change what you feel without your saying anything. It might be something of a wrench in you to let the other person go first, we all feel the need to go first. But it is hard to hear you on top of unclear and upsetting feelings in the person.

If you are very upset, and if the interaction isn't already a trusting one, wait a few moments. As you calm down you can sift your feelings better, and also, they are easier for the other person to take if it seems clear that you aren’t being wiped out by what you feel.

If you are very confused about what you feel, and need to talk the stuff before you even know yourself what you feel, ask the person first if you can. It lets the other person get ready and it helps them not get upset at the first thing you say.

When to express yourself
When you want to make a relationship better or closer or more personal.

When you are being "twisted out of your own shape" in some way. For instance, if he is implying that you agree with him, and you don't, or if he is implying some way you feel about him, and you don't feel that way, or if for any other reason you can't be there straight and yourself anymore, unless you say something of you.

When the other person's process is stuck on something which has to do with your

insides, as when he needs to hear more from you to feel at ease about you, or when he misconstrued one of your reactions, tell him openly how it is inside you. Don't let him try to relate to what you really weren't. He can continue interacting with that, it's not you, even if it may be easier for you to remain unseen or misconstrued, private.

When, in a group, nothing is happening, if you express some of you, it opens things up for others also to express themselves. (Something personal and meaningful inside you is better to express in a stuck group, than merely your feelings about it being stuck or boring.)

When the other person isn't up to relating with you it may help for you to just freely express anything from you or about yourself (so you don't have to be carried by him as a dead weight.)

When you are being idealized, viewed as wonderful or free of troubles, the next trouble or not so nice way you are that you find yourself in might be good to share.

When the other person feels afraid that he or she has wounded or destroyed you, share the specifics of how you do feel. Usually this is the only way to let it be seen that, although hurt or upset or whatever, you are also still OK too. If you think you'll blow up or cry, that might be OK, if it doesn't seem OK wait a few moments.

When you feel like it. There are two people here, both have equal rights. The above reasons are only some, you may not need to know why you feel like it, always.

Heavy interactions

13. If a person asks you for something you can't give: maybe you can't give it, but you can tell him you're glad he's in touch with what he needs. You can also tell him you're glad he felt OK to ask. This is especially so if the need is in the direction of life and growth for the person, such as wanting to engage in some activity or wanting sex or closeness or time with you (see below for other examples).

14. Sometimes, even if a positive life thrust isn't obvious, you can say that there probably is one in what the person is doing, and ask what it is. Most people have the world against them, but you're with him.

15. When a person acts to you in a way that is obviously bad or (you think) would make most people uptight, or is self-defeating (and you think, maybe, no wonder lots of people turn off to this person, if this is how he acts…) there are several things you can do.

15a. You can say how it makes you feel, with most of your words about you.

15b. You can point to what he is doing and ask what that is for him. Do not call it what most people would call it, leave it vaguer and not defined, describe the moment just now when it happened and let him feel into what it is. If you call it "attacking", "manipulating", "lazy", "whining" or "controlling", or any such condemning label, you give him only the external view. Inside of him it's never this but something more complex and different. So be puzzled about what this is in him, even if you could give it a clear bad name from an outside viewpoint.

15c. If you sense what good life thrust might be in this bad way of acting, then respond to that life thrust, just as if he had acted it fully and appropriately. A lot of crummy ways are really crummy only because the right thing is *half* done, and half defeated, instead of being done fully and freely. If you respond to the half of it that *is* happening, that lets it happen more. Responding to the half that's missing isn't as helpful.

Examples
Someone is whiningly complaining, and you sense that he is trying to take up for himself and doing a half job of it, half sounding defeated and childish, then it is not so helpful to say, "Why do you always whine and come on so weak? Why don't you stand up strong and say what you want?" It is more helpful to respond to the half of this that's already trying to happen in the whining, and say, "You're really calling a halt to their shit, and saying exactly what you need from people instead."

Some healthy life-enhancing processes are: taking up for yourself, defending the way you see it, allowing yourself to be free to feel as you do, reaching out for someone, getting it together to try to do something when you haven't been able to for some time, exploring, wondering about yourself, trying to meet people, sexuality, a sense of cosmic significance or mystery, getting peaceful, letting someone see you, trying something new, taking charge of the situation, telling someone how you need them to be, being honest, hoping, refusing to give up, being able to ask for help, checking someone out before trusting them, and many more.

Action with the person

It helps often to let a person into your life more, to take them with you to things you care about, to let them watch or be part of interactions with others you are involved in, to include them in even if they can't say anything much or participate, to show them places you like, etc. (None of this can be real if it doesn't feel OK to you.)

It helps to go with the person to and into his activities, situations, places and with people he is involved in.

It is much better to go where a person is, or let them come to where you live, than always meeting them in some "Center" or neutral or official place.

If he has to do something hard, it's good to have someone, maybe you, along.

No one should depend just on you alone, let him meet other people you know, or call someone else in to help with the person.

The person should be present when he is being discussed by people trying to help him. It's heavy to be straight in front of someone you're trying to help, but it's shit not to.

A person's need for help with jobs, places to live, situations, etc., should be part of what help is about. Help is about whatever he needs help with. It’s no good to separate "psychological" problems out from the rest, they aren't separate in a person’s life.

Ferdinand van der Veen, Dialoguing: a way of learning to relate constructively in close relationships

Nonjudgmental Dialogue, or Dialoguing for short, is a readily usable and uncomplicated method for increasing understanding, acceptance and respect between persons and for helping to resolve conflicts. It is especially valuable in close relationships like couples, parent-child relationships and friendships. Dialoguing has certain ground rules and skills which, if followed by both persons, are likely to clarify feelings and ideas, to clear up misunderstandings, to increase closeness and satisfaction, and to stop habitual nonproductive ways of relating. The basic skills may be applied by only one person in a relationship, but that is more difficult and less effective than if both persons learn to use the method together.

My purpose in this paper is to describe the essentials of Dialoguing and to encourage its use by helpers and in therapeutic groups and communities. In my estimation, a method which can deal directly and systematically with important relationships is urgently needed. I see a widespread inability by therapists and groups to deal effectively with relationship issues, even though the most painful and troubling experiences typically happen in relationships. Personal growth often appears to occur at the expense of relationship failure. In my experience, new interpersonal skills are often required before a relationship is able to deal with its problems. But methods for teaching such skills to relationships have not been generally available, and have been ignored in the prevalent sickness-cure thinking about emotional disturbance.

Dialoguing consists of several sets of specific skills for improving communication in a relationship and a systematic program for teaching them. The approach was constructed by Bernard Guerney and his associates at Pennsylvania University, as part of their Relationship Enhancement programs (Guerney, 1977). Their program has theoretical roots in client-centered, gestalt and behaviorist therapies and shares techniques with other skill training approaches, especially those of Rosenberg (1976), Gordon (1970) and Carkhuff (1969). My personal interest in this therapeutic method has grown out of work in client-centered and family therapy and experience in two, quite different, therapeutic communities. One of these, called Changes and located in Chicago and several other places, has pioneered teaching therapeutic skills within a therapy community, particularly skills in empathic listening and experiential focusing. The other is Re-evaluation Counseling, which is an international community of classes and co-counselors dedicated to the practice of a specific well-developed method of therapy and theory of personal growth. I became acquainted with the Relationship Enhancement program at a three-day workshop on it, and found that the program's point of view and methods for helping close relationships were highly consistent with my own values and experience. I have termed my particular adaptation of the method Dialoguing, to make it easy to refer to and to characterize the mutual development of understanding and acceptance that lies at the heart of the process.

A communication model

Dialoguing is based on a communication model that assumes that persons continually generate meaning about their relationships and the events that are associated with them and that adequate communication of these meanings is an essential part of relating. We need communication to exchange information, to settle problems and to fulfill needs for acceptance, understanding and respect. The model for dialoguing is, simply, that communication is successful when we say what we mean and it is heard accurately and with respect, so that we feel understood and accepted. To the extent that these steps do not occur, that we do not express well what we want to convey or that we are not understood or listened to with respect, effective communication has failed. Dialoguing therefore involves skills in expressing oneself, "congruent talking", and in understanding and respecting the other, "empathic listening." It also involves skills for shifting from being listener to being talker and vice versa, termed switching, so that communication goes both ways and is actually dialogue.

The congruent talking skills

The purpose of the talker, or expresser, skills is to ensure that the feelings, thoughts and wishes of the talker are clearly expressed in a way that is most likely to lead to greater understanding and acceptance by the listener. There are five talker skills: say emotions, be specific, speak from a personal point of view, state positive wants, and make a positive relationship statement.

1. Say personal emotions. Openly state the emotions or bodily feelings you are having, like, "I feel frustrated", or "I am feeling happy", or "My stomach is in a knot." Sometimes it may be hard to say what your emotions or feelings are. It is necessary then to say a little about that, which may also help you become clearer on what they are. When you do not say your feelings, it is easy for the other person to misinterpret the meaning for you of what you are saying, or for you to not be clear about what you mean.

2. Be specific. Say in concrete terms the specific situation and behavior you are talking about. If you say something like, "I don't like how you have been treating me lately," the listener will not really know what it is you are talking about. Much more understandable is a specific statement like, "I was upset yesterday and I wanted to talk about it, but you kept telling me not to worry, so I thought you didn't want to hear what I had to say."

3. Use a personal point of view (owned or "I" messages). Say how *you* feel or think about something, not how something "actually" is "out there." Stating something subjectively means that you are aware you are talking about your perception or interpretation of the situation or of the other person, and that your perception or interpretation may not be completely accurate. You are more likely to avoid an argument by saying, "It seems to me that you are not doing your

homework," than to say, "You are not doing your homework." This is most damaging when it takes the form of an accusation, "You are lazy", or "You are unfair", rather than, "I don't see you doing any work around the house," or "I think you are not being fair to me." We are each the ultimate authority on how things look to us; an argument is therefore less likely when we clearly label what we say as our own experience and not as "fact."

4. Say a behavioral action want. This means to include in your message what you would specifically like the other person to do or say. It is again important here to be specific. Rather than saying, "I want you to be more caring," which leaves the listener uncertain about what to do, say, "I want you to hug me when I come home", or "I want you to ask me how I am feeling when I act upset." It is especially important that action wants are included with criticisms. This may save a great deal of time and unnecessary argument, since the other person may be willing to do what you want, though still disagree with your opinion.

5. Make a positive relationship statement. Say something positive about the relationship, why it is important to you, or why you like the other person. This will lessen the likelihood that the value of the relationship is buried by the particular issue of the moment. Small differences often consume a great deal of time while common wishes and interests go unsatisfied. A positive relationship statement helps to put negative feelings in perspective. Some examples of positive relationship statements are, "I think that one reason I am so upset when you don't listen is that your understanding is more important to me than anyone else's", or "I am glad you brought this problem up because our relationship means a lot to me and I want you to care about me", or "Even though I feel angry I also know that you have been trying hard and I really appreciate that." The point here is to be able to get past the particular issue to a positive sense of each other as valued persons.

In my experience, the use of these five skills will make it more likely that I will be understood and that my wants will be met in a relationship. It usually takes several expressions in order to adequately cover all five points, particularly if a topic involves strong feelings. Also, being listened to empathically usually helps me express myself more accurately and fully.

The empathic listening skills

The purpose of empathic listening is to convey to the talker that the talker's feelings, thoughts and wants are understood and accepted. Listening in this way does *not* mean agreeing with what the talker says; rather it conveys that the talker has the same right to her thoughts and feelings as you, the listener, have to yours. As the listener, you indicate by tone of voice, facial expression, eye contact and the manner and content of your words that you are, for the moment, putting aside your own thoughts and feelings and concentrating fully on understanding the talker's experience, from the talker's own point of view. When listening you (1)

concentrate on the feelings, thoughts and wants expressed by the speaker; (2) say back to the speaker the main part of what you hear her to be saying and feeling and only that; and (3) correct your statement if the speaker indicates that that was not what she meant or that you left out an important part.

Probably the most consistent way to convey empathic understanding is to reflect back what you hear in words very similar to those used by the talker, being especially sure to include feelings expressed by the talker. Using words similar to those of the talker is especially necessary when first learning listening. Most beginners are surprised at the difficulty of simply understanding the *other's* experiences and not adding their own thoughts and opinions. After some practice at it you will be able to comprehend the talker's personal feelings and wants more accurately and to reflect back just the most essential part of the talker's message. It is important to be continually open to correction and to new meanings as these emerge for the talker.

An essential negative requirement for listening is to put aside your own thoughts and feelings. This means to *not* offer advice, give opinions, ask questions, recount your own experiences, or any of the many things we usually do or say in ordinary conversation. Such responses usually divert the talker's attention from what is on her mind to what is on yours, before she has been adequately understood. Only be attentive and check to see if your understanding of the speaker is adequate. While this can be quite difficult with more emotional issues, it may help to keep in mind that you will soon have a chance yourself to say what you think and feel, and that then you will receive the same careful attention that you are now giving. In learning dialoguing the listening skills are usually practiced more at first, to increase the likelihood that the speaker will be understood and accepted.

Switching

Switching refers to changing from talking to listening and vice versa. This is an essential part of dialoguing, because it is in the back-and-forth, give-and-take interchange of the process that movement toward resolution is likely to occur. It is important, therefore, for each partner to keep in mind that *both* sides of the process are essential. They need to say to themselves something like, "While what I am saying is very important to me, how he feels about it is also important", or "While what she is telling me is important, my feelings about it are important too." This way the interaction will be balanced and lead to an exchange for understanding, so that it really is dialogue.

Either the talker or the listener may want to request switching. The talker may want to know how the listener feels about what she has just said or the listener may have a reaction that he wants to express. Examples of requests for switching are, "I would like to say something now if you are ready to listen", or "I want to hear how you feel about what I just said, so I would like to listen to you now." The best time for switching is when the talker has expressed the main part of what she wants to say and the listener has understood her to her satisfaction. However, *the*

listener always has the option to request a switch, as long as he *first* gives a listening response to the last speaker statement which satisfies the speaker. If the listener needs to switch before the talker has really finished, it is usually best to switch back again as soon as possible so that the dialogue stays on one track and does not get overloaded with issues. Dialoguing is more likely to succeed when it deals with only one main issue at a time, so it is good to switch after the talker has made one main point. It may be tempting for the talker to use the dialoguing structure to unload a lot of negative feelings on a "captive" listener, but that defeats the basic purpose of the process, which is for both partners to understand each other better. While dialoguing is a reliable method, it is possible to exploit it if a serious effort is not made to modify lop-sided patterns of communication.

The talking, listening and switching skills are not complicated, but they can certainly be hard to do well. Many old and ingrained communication habits and attitudes need to be unlearned as the new ones are learned. It is therefore necessary to try the skills gradually and systematically, with large amounts of practice and homework. They are first learned for non-relationship topics, then for positive relationship experiences and only after that for negative relationship issues, since these are likely to be difficult and painful. This requires discipline by the learner and firmness by the trainer, based on a thorough explanation and an agreed upon contract between them about their work together. Persons who want to become trainers need experience and expertise both in using the skills and in teaching them to others. Modeling, demonstrating, role playing and positive reinforcement are some important aids in teaching the method.
While I have attempted to give an overview of the dialoguing process here, the full program for learning it is beyond the scope of this paper {see Guerney, 1977).

Facilitation and use of dialoguing

It may be helpful, and sometimes necessary, for a third person to sit in to facilitate the process. The facilitator checks that the basic structure of the method is being followed, gives reminders and suggestions for the different skills, and encourages and reinforces correct use of the skills. Facilitation is important in the early learning of dialoguing, when dialoguing difficult issues and for using the talker skills. The talker skills appear to be especially difficult to apply without help.

Dialoguing is possible whenever an interpersonal issue. or concern arises, once the basic method has been learned in a relationship or group. It may be initiated by a simple request to dialogue by one person to another or it may be suggested to a relationship by someone not directly involved, perhaps with an offer to facilitate if the persons involved would like help with the issue.

Why "non-judgmental" dialogue?

I believe that it is characteristic of relationship problems that the participants are unable to share the experienced realities that lie at the crux of their differences. They are therefore unable to create a new shared reality that better serves their

individual needs. Instead, they react in old rigid ways, fail to comprehend each other's experience as well as their own and remain stuck in the problem. I therefore place a high value on the ability to be open and understanding in personal relationships.

In my opinion, a common obstacle to sharing personal realities is the strong habitual tendency to evaluate our own experience and that of others as good or bad, right or wrong, and to want to assign blame. We usually react to experience before understanding it, both in ourselves and in others, and even more so when disagreements arise and we are in danger of being labelled "bad" or "wrong." Reacting judgmentally is therefore often an obstacle to resolving an issue on the basis of actual feelings and needs.

Dialoguing is non-judgmental in the sense that it strives to avoid judging the rightness or wrongness of our experience. Rather it attempts to view it and communicate it as it is, fully and honestly. A non-judgmental attitude on the part of the talker says, in effect, "I want to trust the ongoing life process in myself and in you and to see my experience with you for what it is and not for what I think it 'ought' to be. My judgments about either myself or you as good or as bad are likely to prevent me from seeing and saying what is real for me, and it will then be more difficult for us to work out what is best for our relationship. So, for the moment I only want to describe what I see, think, feel and want as clearly and honestly as I can. In addition, it will be much easier for me to do that if you also want to understand my experience accurately before judging it."

A non-judgmental attitude by the listener conveys that, "While I am listening to you I want to suspend making judgments about you, whether what you are saying is good or bad or whether I like it or not. Instead I want to understand your feelings and wants and what your experience means to you as best as I can. By doing that I will better understand what your experience in our relationship is really like for you. Later, after I have understood you, I can look honestly at my own reactions about what you have said and express those. In that way, we will best be able to work out our real differences. Also, when you tell me your own feelings and thoughts without labelling them as good or bad, I am more likely to understand you better and to be able to be more honest myself."

A shift to a more trusting and less judgmental attitude may come about as a result of the dialoguing process itself. The structure enables us to risk saying and hearing what we may have feared to say or hear before. Defensive blaming then gives way to understanding and appreciation, with a change in feeling from tension and frustration to warmth and trust. The concrete felt sense of opening and renewal in the relationship, which may accompany such a shift, is a good indicator that the dialoguing process is working successfully.

The larger significance of the process

The essentials of dialoguing are widely applicable, since they may be adapted to

many settings and relationships in which mutual understanding and trust are valued. Persons often respond with enthusiasm when the process and the program for learning it are explained. They welcome the possibility of making sense out of what is typically a confusing and uncertain area of their lives; to replace a hit-or-miss approach to communication with one that is understandable and learnable, one that takes their own needs and those of the other person into account. This is the reason that I am hopeful and excited about dialoguing - it provides a way for us to deal directly and responsibly with our problems and goals in relating to one another.

References

Carkhuff, R., Helping and Human Relations. Volumes I and II; New York Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969.

Gendlin, E., Focusing. Psychotherapy : Theory, Research and Practice, 1969, 4-15.

Gordon, T. Parent Effectiveness Training. New York, Peter Wyden, 1970.

Guerney, B. Relationship Enhancement: Skill Training Programs for Therapy, Problem Prevention and Enrichment. San Francisco Jossey-Bass, 1977.

Rogers, C. R. On Becoming a Person. Boston, Hughton-Mifflin, 1961.

Rosenberg, M. From Now On. St. Louis, Community Psychological Consultants, 1976.

Kristin Glaser, Suggestions for working with heavy strangers and friends

A “heavy" person is someone who gives you a gut feeling of "Oh, God, I don't think I can handle this!" Whether they would be labelled suicidal, hallucinating, needy, or just behaving in strange ways, you feel them as heavy. The following is an account of what Changes has learned about helping heavy people.

Most people who come to Changes, whether to give help or receive it, are single, relatively together people looking for a community to join. Our usual way of relating to people is to let informal listening, caring relationships develop, depending on who happens to be around, who likes whom, etc., and this usually works pretty well. We have learned, though, that some people who come into our community need a very different way of relating.

The following principles were developed through our experience of working with and being worked over by a number of fascinating people who thought they had cancer, only talked Latin, threatened to kill themselves or us, and in other ways opted for the privileges of the insane.

Some thoughts about heavy people

1. Some people come and say in plain English, "Help me with my head," but very often heavy people don't ask for this in a straight way. Instead, they may ask for a place to stay, or a job. *You* may be able to see their need for change, but *they* don’t, and you may feel in a bind because you know you're going to have to deal somehow with their heavy behavior.

2. Keep in mind that heavy people may have come from another place that tried to make them get help.

3. Some heavy people are old masters at the interaction of "let's you and me fight about getting help," so if you start giving advice or trying to organize them, you may be giving them an old response that hasn't done them much good. ln fact, fighting with others about their "illness" may be one of the few ways they have to relate. Try to create new ways of relating and avoid the old ways.

4. Many heavy people have become expert at showing how freaky and crazy they are, and some have become highly resourceful at getting people involved with them. Respect this powerful interpersonal skill.

Dealing with your own feelings

Often when people try to deal with a heavy person on an individual basis, one by one they were turned off or worn out by the excessive demands and strange behavior. You become uncomfortable because you feel you're failing, the heavy person gets more upset because people are turning away, and the situation isn't helpful or productive for anyone.

There are a number of personal issues I usually have to deal with. I tend to get uptight because I identify with heavy people in various ways, or I react to them with helplessness followed by anger and depression. Also, I get a strange kick out of someone who is doing crazy things. It's like, "I can't faint and be super-seductive to get attention, but just look at that lady go!" When I catch myself feeling like this, I feel bad. Another problem is feeling guilty about not responding to a heavy man's sexual overtures because of class prejudice. Other people have to deal with their anger at people who are making so many demands ("like babies") and feeling overwhelmed by "I am responsible to do something for this person." Another frequent issue is fearing "I might be like them" or "somehow they will hurt (contaminate) me."

In the unstructured Changes community, I've sometimes had trouble because I don't feel like a friend, and I know I'm not the therapist - so what the hell is my role? To avoid feeling like a "responsible doctor" or a phony friend, I try to settle on being a community member who is relating with the heavy person. This gives me a standard: I am offering a basic level of caring, concern, and resources that I would probably offer to any person in the group. If the heavy person wants it, a reciprocal relationship is possible. If they don't want to be at the helped end of a one-way relationship, they can be a community person toward me.

Many of these personal reactions to a heavy person can be supportively dealt with by a team, which decides together how everyone will relate with the heavy person. It doesn't matter whether or not the heavy person officially asks for help, because the team also benefits itself by getting together. Ideally, this team is a group of people who know each other well and are comfortable talking about their feelings. In actuality, it is any group of people we can get together.

The team's approach

1.The team meets with the heavy person in a relaxed and friendly way, making clear that there is a team in existence and explaining that we like to work around people's needs in groups. To avoid unkept promises or unmet expectations, the team should be very explicit and straight about what it does and doesn't do.

2.When the team is talking with the heavy person, particularly when giving feedback or making plans, at least one team member should take the heavy person's side, making sure he/she is being heard and feelings are being brought out as clearly as possible - even if the team doesn't like what these feelings are.

3. All behavior is communication of some kind: the team should look very carefully at the heavy person's behavior. Since communication is a two-way process, we need to look at our own behaviour, too. Instead of seeing craziness as "in" the heavy person, we should seek the meaning of his/her interpersonal behavior, by making a "heavy interaction analysis." It's essential that this analysis not put someone in a conceptual box and leave her/him there. Understanding the

heavy person's world and needs as a *process* helps the team avoid being trapped by confusion into being rigid or crazy themselves.

The team's analysis might focus on one sequence of communications between two people. For example, "I got upset when she said that. Why? What was that tapping in me? Did she want me to get angry, or was that a backwards way of wanting me to say hello?" We can also look at the interaction between the heavy person and the whole group.

In one case, a woman claimed all sorts of terminal physical illnesses. She would talk very expressively about her complaints and then "faint" away on the floor, particularly if men were around. We would get very upset and rush around trying to revive her in a way that always involved touching her. When we finally realized the pattern we'd gotten into, we were able to see her fainting as asking for something from us. We then tried to give her a lot of attention, particularly male attention, when she wasn't talking about her symptoms, and we ignored her when she fainted. The actual situation was much more complicated, of course. The above is an outline of our team's approach.

The team's "interaction analysis" may be quite wrong, but it provides the basis for a tentative commitment to the heavy person and a plan for acting differently, so the old familiar bad ways don't have to come up as such. Rather than merely having our painful reactions to the heavy person, we can become more active, expanding our interaction. Instead of standing still, waiting to hear the next crazy thing he/she did so we can groan, we can make moves to relate before the crazy things happen.

4. We've found that about 5 people make a good size team, although others are needed if support is being given around the clock. It's important to divide up responsibilities: who'll help with housing, who'll go to welfare with the person, etc. It's also usually best to have a team coordinator who keeps track of who is doing what and what isn't happening. Team members should have each other's phone numbers, so that help can be reached quickly and easily. Whenever possible, invite the heavy person to the meetings. It may also be productive to have a different heavy person(s)as part of the team.

5. We try to find out if the heavy person has a support network nearby. If there are friends, roommates, or relatives, it usually helps to try to work with them. Often these people have become scared, bewildered, or just tired and fed up. If we can support them in finding new ways of relating with the heavy person, they are obviously the best bet for the person's long-term support. Also, a lot may be learned from people who know the heavy person. From the friends of a very spacy girl we'd been protecting, we found out that she'd been spacy but able to take care of herself for many years.

6. The team needs to meet frequently, ideally with someone who is experienced with heavy people but not actively involved with this particular person. To avoid

feeling bad and wanting to dump the heavy person, it's essential to keep in touch with our own heavy feelings. As a team, we should constantly review our analysis to see where we're getting stuck. It's easy to get involved in a troubled person's system and find yourself playing a part you didn't intend.

Team limits

1. The team needs to feel very clearly that it doesn't have to control the heavy person or do anything about her/him "getting better" - like talking to a therapist, being open about her/his problem, going to a hospital, taking a pill, etc. With some exceptions, the team should not feel responsible for someone's life and welfare. They should not get into control battles about *making* the heavy person do things.

When a situation seems to be heading for a fight, instead of upping the ante of pressure on yourself and the heavy person, try to step sideways. One time on our hotline, a very provocative guy told me he had taken a bunch of pills. Obviously, my next move was supposed to be "how many, how long ago, where are you?" and these things he wouldn't tell me. Instead, I said, "You must be feeling pretty bad to have done that. Can you tell me what's going on for you?" And we got into a rap about his feelings. About 10 minutes later, he was able to back off and say he hadn't taken the pills - yet.

2. The team needs to attend to the heavy person's survival needs. It's pretty hard to get your head together when you aren't sure where your next meal's coming from or where you're staying that night. Sometimes heavy people will resist your efforts to stabilize their living conditions, but we've learned through bad experience that if we keep crashing someone for months, making new arrangements every day, the only result is uproar, a lot of which is due to our own grudginess about limited resources.

If someone is too upset to work, he/she can be put on welfare. Sometimes when heavy people refuse to go on welfare, it indicates their desire that the group support them. Insisting that a heavy person get living security is making the person do something, to which we are generally opposed, but the other side is what the person is making us do by continually coming in for a handout and a place to crash. If we insist on welfare, we should make it clear that it is for our good, not theirs. Of course, the person always has the option of splitting.

We also have some very basic limits: we don't want to be shit on, and violence is not acceptable. To keep these limits, we try to understand behavior and relate to what's behind it, or by ignoring it, leaving the room, etc. If all else fails, we need to feel comfortable saying, "I can't be with you when you're like this. There is no way I can be helpful now. I guess you'll have to leave.”

Except in certain suicidal cases, we need to feel comfortable about not being responsible. If there are repeated signs that the person can't make it, sees no way

out, and has made previous attempts at suicide, then we need to feel more responsible, acknowledge that we can't work with the person, if they are someone whose relationship with us can't be trusted as much as their urge for death. We have carried suicidal people, but only when there was one Changes person who was clearly so closely relating with the person that we could absolutely count on a call for help.

We haven't worked out the dimensions of extra responsibility. Obviously, every precaution possible must be taken.

3. Knowing the relationship is free and voluntary on both sides gives everyone a lot of psychological space. People should not have to work with someone that don't like or feel very comfortable with. Hopefully, within a non-demanding situation with clear limits, heavy people have maximum flexibility to do what they need to do. And the rest of us should be only as involved as we feel good about. It's always better to have a lot of people involved who each give a little than a few people who feel ripped off and get resentful.

4. No matter how strange, give heavy people credit for having good reasons for their behavior. Another way of looking for the function of their behavior is to look for what "good life thrust" might be in their bad way of acting. Then, respond to that life thrust just as if they had acted it out fully and appropriately. A lot of crummy ways are really only crummy because the right things are being half done and half defeated, instead of being fully and freely done. If you respond to the half of it that is happening, that lets it happen more (from the Rap Manual by Eugene Gendlin and Mary Hendricks, and within this book)'. There are impulses which could be happening while the person is being annoying: if it is appropriate, you could say, "I'm glad you're reaching for contact with me," or just respond by giving contact.

If a person asks for something you can't give, tell him/her that, but also that you are glad she/he is in touch with their needs and felt free to ask for them. This is especially important if the need is in the direction of life and growth for the person, such as wanting closeness, sex, or time with you. (Rap Manual)

If you're working with a very freaky person who says one thing that makes sense and then a lot more you can't understand, stick with your one point of contact. "I really understand it when you say you hated her." If the person continues to say things that don't make sense, you can repeat that one thing again and again. Also, if someone says something that can't be true ("The Martians took everything from me") respond to the feeling part ("You feel like you've been fucked over.") (Rap Manual)

Generally, we invite heavy people to share in our community as we would with any new person. They can hang around, work at the coffee shop during the day, and drop in (and work) at the office during the evenings. They are invited to our Sunday night community meetings, which are more formal than our daily

meetings. On Sundays if we let them, heavy people are apt to demonstrate how crazy they are by talking constantly about irrelevant things and making the larger meeting very difficult. As very polite folks who tend to ignore heavy people's behavior, we sometimes increase their disruptiveness. If other members of the group don't handle the situation, someone on the team should respond by listening carefully and reflecting to heavy people those of their feelings that make sense, and also have enough courage to tell heavy people to be quiet when they're making no sense. This reflecting should diminish their need to use crazy methods to make themselves heard.

Sharing your personal life and feelings with heavy people is very helpful: going to the movies, out for coffee, etc. Communicate that you're willing to share your "normal" life with them - they don't have to be freaky to spend time with you. Be careful, though, that you don't get so caught up in being friends that you forget their need for "therapeutic" talk, too.

Working with heavy friends

It took a near fatality for me to realize that all of these ideas about heavy people apply very much to friends as well as strangers. A casual friend came to see me in a very depressed and confused state, and I kept seeing him alone. It wasn't until he was in the hospital, almost dead from a suicide attempt, that I realized I had ignored all my own past experience when I related with him. There were several ways I had trapped myself and I want to share these as postscripts.

1. It's easy to get caught in a "snob trip" of thinking your friend is special because she is your friend and able to talk in a rational, intellectual way. If someone is acting dysfunctionally, she should not be cheated of the same good treatment you give others - particularly in the team approach.

2. Avoid letting friends "really communicate" with you because they can't communicate with their "traditional shrink." Something gets messed up if a person communicates in the place where he isn't committed and can't communicate when he is committed. You need to help him/her get the two together to get a working contract with someone or with people generally.

3. When you have an historical relationship with someone, it's essential that you get an outside, experienced opinion because of your own blindness toward your own part in the interaction system.

At Changes, then, we have found that the Team "Heavy Interaction" analysis approach is valuable, because with the team's support you can work toward clearer understanding of what makes sense about a heavy strange person and deal openly with your own reactions of fear, confusion, and prejudice. You are much more apt to have the energy and desire to relate in a real, live way with the heavy person, without backing off and treating them as an “it”.

Note: This is a revised version of an article of the same title which appeared in Rough Times, July 1972.

Eugene Gendlin and Mary Hendricks, In your own group

1. When the group is having trouble with someone, or you are having trouble with someone, set aside a separate time and arrange for a couple or three people to get with him. Let the purpose be everybody's growth and straightness. Difficulties between people and in people don't hang up the work and living of a group if they're dealt with as such, in fact they make the group better. Any bad things that get resolved, and any growth a person experiences in the group, lets others feel the room and excitement that maybe they can do a process on theirs sometime. (But if it's done as a mix between personal stuff and trying to get work done and living made possible, everyone is too uptight for listening and working out to be felt as a good thing. Instead, everybody's living and working is held up.)

2. Of the people who get with a person whom the group or you need to be different in some way, one at least should be designated as having the special job of insuring that the person gets heard, that the way he feels and sees things is really listened to, repeated until everyone has heard it. This greatly helps him be willing and able to take in what bad feedback is also being given him.

3. Credit another person with some good or seemingly good reasons for whatever bad things he says and does, even if you feel angry and think it unlikely. Apply here what was said in "How To Use Your Feelings and Thoughts of the Other Person" and "Interaction."

4. Whatever you find yourself saying to others about someone in the group is something you need to say to him in some form, probably with the above ways.

5. If someone in the group isn't doing the work well, you don't need membership rules to get him out. Get with him as in 1) above; if necessary, many times. It helps everybody else feel secure and learn how to come on really straight.

6. When an interaction is bad and continues bad, for instance you've been talking for ten minutes and it's getting worse, stop. Put your thing down for the moment. Use absolute listening and what is described in "How To Use Your Feelings and Thoughts of the Other Person." Then, when his side is cleared or heard, say you want now to do your side, and do it. Assume the person is trying to do some good thing, tell him that, try to get what it is and say it to him (even if you hate it. You can say you don't agree but only understand.) Even if the person doesn't want to hear it, say your side before it's over, or sometime soon. Perhaps bring in someone who can help you be heard, as in 1). Be willing to spend ten or fifteen minutes *just* getting his thing (not: "You feel…", but, "I…") Then only, when that's really out, do yours if it hasn't already gotten changed.

Why give your life and work to a group and then not be willing for the couple hours it takes to work things through with a person? You begin by being scared to hurt his feelings and you end by trying to get rid of him altogether. Working things out can be good and exciting. Accept the fact that there will be certain

characteristic negative feelings about whatever work or living your group is doing. It is bad for each person to have these in private, and worse if everybody is down on him when he has them. At one time or another you felt discouraged about the group, unwilling to do the work, anxious you weren't doing it right, or whatever. Give the person who is having these feelings today some support, even if today you don't feel that way.

If you can figure out what the issue is, be straight about it. Don't let the group go on discussing one thing when you know all the while that under it something else is the real point. Say that point, or ask, if you're not sure.

7. Not everything that happens in your group, or is done by it, needs to be OK or passed on by every member. Sometimes it helps to just let everybody go ahead and do what they will, and then if the group doesn't like it they can give them feedback later and see that it doesn't continue. That avoids some of the sticky business of endless haggling before anyone can do anything.

8. It helps, in a group, to invite a person to speak who has made motions or grunts and didn't get in. Or, if a person said something heavy or meaningful and right after that a lot of more trivial things were said, or if he was asked irrelevant questions, it helps if you ask him to go on from what he began to get into.

9. The group or at least someone in the group, needs to support each person who is being criticised. When all are down on one person there has to be someone who is more interested in letting that person get heard, then in attacking him. Even if you feel very insecure or an outsider in a group, you can express your wish to hear more from him or to have him repeat something he said and didn't get responded for.

10. How to help with an interaction between two other people: if two or more are having a hassle, and you are not too upset yourself, you can help each person get heard. In a bad interaction, usually neither person can hear the other very well. If you respond with absolute listening to one person, the other can hear you respond, and can see the good process which then happens. His perceptions of the person change and become more accurate. Then turn, and respond to the second person's feelings. That lets the first one listen. (Don't mediate and decide who's right about what. Keep your view for later, or maybe say it fast and get back to them.)

11. Just about all of what we've written about absolute listening, and in "How To Use Your Thoughts and Feelings of the Other Person" and in "Interaction" can help you in your interactions with your own people. The difference is that you aren't ever *only* trying to help, you're also trying to live and work, so expect it to be much harder and slower. Accept it in yourself if you can't do as well when you yourself are very much involved. Don't be surprised if you can't listen well when you're being attacked. Although slower and harder, even trying these approaches gets people out of the bad atmospheres that often exist. Confronting,

encountering, working through, growing, lets people feel accepted and elated at finding things in themselves that they want to change.

Even if at first this kind of process doesn’t go right, see if everybody can be into figuring out how it should go. That way everyone can do their own learning, which might be better than what we say here.

G. Daniel Massad, Learning together: the way we do it

At Changes, there is a saying (and a principle) that goes like this: if you want something done for yourself, or if you want to do something *with* or *for* other people, speak up in the open meeting and see what happens. What often happens is the forming of small groups around certain kinds of needs and enthusiasms. There are groups that serve people in crisis, groups that plan the open meetings, groups that focus together or cry together, and groups that go to the beach together. What follows is a description of another kind of small group - a group that formed for learning.

We began, tentatively, as a training/study group that was convened by Linda Olsen, an experienced therapist. Our purpose was to practice "listening" and "focusing" and to talk about the bearing that these skills have on our lives. We met once a week - at the church, on Thursday evenings, for three hours. Because the membership was open, there was always a mixture of new and old people - beginners who knew nothing and beginners who knew something about listening and focusing. And Linda Olsen was the leader of the group - a warm and highly skilled teacher who did most of the work of structuring the group tasks, nurturing the discussion, and welcoming new members.

Now, after months of gradual change, the group looks like this: we still meet on Thursday evenings for three hours, and our aim is still learning. But beyond that, we are a different animal. We no longer have an acknowledged, permanent leader. Leading, of course, still happens. When it becomes necessary to make a decision about the direction or the structure of the group, some people tend to lead more than others, but everybody understands that everybody leads: all of us can, and do, influence the shape of the group, and anyone who speaks up will be heard.

The membership is closed. Ten people is our limit, and new members come in only when old members drop out. By making this decision, and by keeping ourselves to it, we aim for both stability and the kind of understanding that comes from prolonged dialogue.

We are all beginners, but none of us is at the very beginning. We have all spent months or years practicing and experimenting with listening and focusing. We believe in these skills as potentially valuable, and we are all committed - in different ways and degrees and for different reasons - to learning more about them. And we are also committed to the study and the invention of the way we learn together.

The way we learn together, in our group discussion, is what I aim to talk about in this essay. My purpose is to describe - not the content of our learning - but the *way* we learn, and specifically to list and to elaborate the seven rules for talking together in a group of ten that we developed for ourselves.

But first, I want to explain that it’s not as if we placed a structure (our new set of

"rules") over that which wasn't already structured. From the very start, we behaved in the group as we have always behaved in groups, and as a result our discussions took a very definite and a very familiar shape. Familiar, but unsatisfying. We responded quickly to ideas and questions, even before we understood them. We passionately argued in behalf of our own ideas and perceptions without being aware of a personal stake in them. We were too timorous to express confusion, or to stop the discussion in order to clear things up, just for ourselves. No one actively listened to anyone else, and everyone expected not to be heard. And even without the presence of teachers and parents and impending grades, we consistently flaunted what we already knew and hid our ignorance. As if we were not beginners, all of us. As if our ignorance were not the bond between us.

We had a month of that, and at the end of it everybody felt tired, misunderstood, confused, and uneasy with one another. It was clear that our learning, as individuals and as a group was not being carried forward, and we began to think that possibly this failure in learning was due, at least in part, to the way we interacted with one another. We knew how to compete for space, but we didn't know how to share it. We were yearning to understand each other, and to feel understood, but we didn't know how to make it happen. And so, we became inventors. We began to build the group. We stewed and fretted and experimented, and eventually came up with and agreed upon seven basic rules for group discussion - rules designed to rescue and to enrich our learning. Of course, they were awkward at first, and even now we don't stick to them all the time. But we've found that the awkwardness wears off, and that the more we use them, the more useful they are.

Rules for group discussion

1. *Going slow*. It's like this: we're all bright and eager and full of ideas that clamor to be heard, and it seems as if there's hardly enough time for even *one* person to express *one* idea thoroughly. But when we act on these feelings and perceptions, as we have in the past, all we end up with is an accelerating, non-stop group speed rap. Hardly anything gets finished, and hardly anything gets across.

Creative thinking takes time. Finding the appropriate words for complex experiences takes time. Understanding, and being understood, takes time. And until there is a group consensus that going more slowly than we have in the past is productive, it is impossible to follow our other time-consuming ground rules.

2. *Giving and asking for a listening response*. A listening response, from the listener's point of view, amounts to saying in your own words *your understanding* of the gist of what another person has expressed. Not your interpretation of what they said; not your own similar thoughts or experiences; but *your* sense of *their* meaning. And, of course, from the speaker's point of view, a listening response amounts to hearing another person's understanding of what you have expressed, or tried to express. In other words, it amounts ideally to feeling understood.

Obviously, this particular kind of a response can be misused. It is possible simply to repeat what someone else expresses, word for word, or nearly word for word, without really grasping what they mean and without really laying aside, for the moment, your own thoughts and feelings. For listening to work, *understanding someone else has to matter*. It has to be, at least temporarily, your task. When it *is* your task, and when you concretely communicate your understanding of what someone else expresses, the result of it is that you know that you *do* understand, because they confirm it, or you know that you don't, because they look uncomfortable or say, "No, that's not quite what I meant." And if someone is expressing a very intricate thought, the listening response is a great aid for the rest of the people in the group who are trying to grasp it. Temporarily stopping the person with, "Now what I heard you say so far was…" can help all the people listening *stay with* what's being said, however complex.

The person speaking, on the other hand, feels connected to the group, accompanied and understood by the group. Which means that *what* the person says, with that much practical support, takes a shape more nearly its own. At least that has been our experience. When we feel that the rest of the group is with us, or alongside us, as we express our sometimes complicated and often never before articulated thoughts, it usually happens that we say just what we mean to say. And it has also been our experience that when we say what we mean to say, with the group's support, our thinking takes a step forward.

Or, to put it differently, the listening response is congenial to what we don't know yet - what we don't know of the other person's experience, and what is not yet sensed or explicated in our own. And what we don't know yet is what we're after.

3. *Stopping*. When you are confused or troubled about what is being expressed or how the group is interacting, raise your voice, call a temporary halt, and ask for what you need. Before we agreed to do this, we found that our inclination was to back away from the group (internally, not physically) whenever we were unable to understand was being said, or whenever we were uneasy with the way it was being said. Some of the thoughts and feelings were simply too complex to grasp the first time around; some of the interacting was too fast to follow, or too full of discomforting unexpressed tension. Instead of calling a halt and asking for clarification (or whatever else we needed at the time) it seemed to be everybody's natural bent, as listeners, to conceal the trouble and to stay physically *in* the group feeling *out* of it - disconnected, irritated, bored, sad or critical of ourselves!

On the other hand, as speakers we assumed that our listeners *would* conceal that kind of trouble. In other words, we expected not to receive direct feedback - not to know if we were confusing or irritating anyone - not to know if we were getting across - which amounted to another kind of disconnection. And so we agreed to carry out the second half of the "stopping" rule: when someone calls a halt and asks for help, we temporarily lay aside what we're doing and heed them. Stopping is a way of keeping the discussion owned by everyone in the room.

4.*Tagging*. When you make *your* contribution to the discussion - your immediate reaction, your own similar experience, or question, or critique, or whatever - try, if it is at all possible, to make your intention known beforehand in a short sentence. For example, "I want to lay out an experience of mine and see if it's like yours" or "I want to clarify that for myself" or "I'm not really sure what I'm feeling about what you said, but I want to try to say it anyway" or "I want to talk about something related but a little different" or "I disagree with your approach, and I want to talk about that."

We're not *always* able to tag our contributions, but there are at least three good reasons for doing it when we can. First, in order to make our intention known to the rest of the group, we have to know it ourselves. We have to be aware of what's going on inside of us in relation to what is being said - excitement, criticism, confusion, assent, or whatever. And we have to be aware of what we want - what we want from the rest of the group, and how we want to influence the discussion. And when we have this kind of an awareness, the group comes alive.

Second, what is happening becomes clear to everybody, because everybody is in on it. We know what each person aims to do - compare, disagree, clarify, assent, or whatever - before they do it. Without this kind of clarity, we're babes in the wood. And with it (and this is the third good reason for tagging our contributions) we are better able to exercise our right to object to, or to support, each new turn in the talk. For example, perhaps Jane wants to share an experience of her own, which is similar to the experience just described by Linda, and she says what she wants to do before she does it. Tom, on the other hand, is still trying to understand Linda's experience, and so he says in response to Jane, "Wait, before you do that I want to hear a little more from Linda." Jane, then, holds onto her contribution to the discussion until everybody is ready for it. And she can rest assured that when she makes her contribution, everybody will be ready for it.

5. *Defining the words we use*. As we describe our complex experiences and thoughts to one another, it is often useful - especially at the beginning - to find out what certain key words and phrases mean to each one of us. I am not referring here to the words and phrases that we don't understand because we've never heard them and therefore have no referent for them. I mean, instead, those words and phrases with which we liberally sprinkle our talk, and which bear an assortment of meanings. (For example, "feeling," "empathic response," "a felt shift," "getting somewhere," "getting stuck inside", "making contact," "being centered," "good therapy," "unconditional positive regard.") We have found that it is particularly useful to talk about just what we're trying to *point at* with these key words before we assume that we're all pointing at the same thing. In fact, when we explicate what we mean by them, we often discover that we mean slightly different or very different things, and that we need a richer vocabulary in order to talk sensibly to one another. That is, in order to understand one another at all.

Here is both an example of "defining the words we use," and a demonstration of

the way in which our ground rules work together. If Linda isn't absolutely sure that Jim means what *she* means by a certain frequently repeated phrase, she "stops" the discussion and says, "I need to see if we mean the same thing by that phrase. Could you say a little more about what you mean when you use it?" ("tagging"). Jim, in order to do that, has to turn his attention inward for a few moments. He needs to sense anew what he means to convey, so that he can find other, more finely discriminated words for it. And of course, at this point a "listening response" from someone in the group helps him enormously in his task.

6. *Finishing*. This has two sides. As a speaker, if the group interrupts you and responds to only the first part of what you were going to say, *ask* the group for more time and attention and say the rest of it. And as listeners, if you notice that someone else *might* have been interrupted and *might* have more to say, ask them if your perception is correct, and, if it is, invite them to finish.

This was very difficult to do at first. For some of us, *asking* was hard. We tended to stick up for ourselves in a way that was not responsive to the needs of the rest of the group. That is, we were capable of verbal aggression, but we were not capable of *asking* the group for the group's attention in order to finish describing an experience or expressing a thought. Not demanding; not asking angrily; but asking vulnerably.

On the other hand, some of us found that we tended not to stick up for ourselves at all. Asking for time and attention was like being another sort of person altogether. And it was especially difficult to assert ourselves - and particularly easy to let the group interrupt us - whenever we were trying to express something long and complex, or something that we hadn't yet put into words. But we have found that with practice and with the group's support, we can do it.

Of course, in order to make the second part of this rule work, we had to re-train ourselves as listeners. When we came into the group it was customary for us to assume that people were finished speaking whenever they paused and allowed the rest of the group to interrupt them. We felt so rushed and so competitive that it was easy to assume that other people's experience was not at all like our own. Now, we are just beginning to learn to hear the difference between a finished and an unfinished contribution to the discussion - the difference between coming to a stop, and pausing on the brink. Knowing that the rest of the group is growing sensitive to that difference is helpful to all of us.

7. *Reminding each other, gently, that the ground rules are not being honored*. We haven't thoroughly learned these rules yet, any of us, but we can help each other learn them simply by speaking up when we notice their absence. Also, we need to keep paying attention to how we're faring with them. They seem to be good for us, because we have profited by them. But we need to keep evaluating their usefulness to us, as we change. We need to keep asking ourselves, Do these rules continue to serve us?

Let me say a little more, generally, about our group.

These rules are not really rules. They are behaviors that suit us. They constitute a description of the way we like to be together - which is the best way of being together that we've discovered *so far*. But they are by no means a complete description of what commonly happens in our group. There are other things we do that we have no "rules" for - ways of interacting that simply evolved, without our paying attention to them. Our discussions, for instance - even our grandest theoretical schemes - are always grounded in and supported by our personal experience. Likewise, the urgency that originally plagued us - the urgency to express ourselves - has somehow given way, so that now we can sit for an hour and listen actively to *one* person without our own ideas, reactions, corrections, and comparisons clamoring to be heard. And with the group's encouragement and practical support, we have all developed a knack for separating our interpersonal issues from our intellectual disagreements.

And there are attitudes that we share - attitudes that are, I believe, a prerequisite for the successful use of our "rules." First, we hold that every person in the group *belongs*. Every person is valuable, and has a valuable contribution to make, which will be heard. Nobody is too smart or too dumb or too advanced or too behind to be gladly received.

Second, we believe - and we know that everyone else in the group believes - that it is *all right* to behave in accordance with our rules. It is acceptable to every member of this group - it is considered the norm - it is even considered a virtue -to say, “I want to finish laying out my idea”, or "I'm lost, could we stop for a moment?" or "What I heard you say so far was…" or “I need someone to say what I just said so I can see if anybody understood it." I have been in many types of groups in my life households, classrooms, meetings, consciousness-raising groups, therapy groups, task groups, churches, dinner parties - and if I had behaved in any of them as I behave in ours, I'm almost sure that my behavior would have been neither understood nor valued. Saying, "I want to finish my idea” would be labeled vain and presumptuous by many of the people I have known, including myself a few years back. Saying, "I'm uncomfortable with what's going on, could we stop here for a moment?" could easily be interpreted as an indirect criticism. But in our group, saying what we want from the group is what we want to hear from one another, and stopping the flow of the discussion so that we can re-enter it is what we all do and value. In other words, if these rules weren't our norms, and if these norms weren't prized by all of us, they would perform a very different task. Instead of connecting us, they would divide us. And then we would all be back where we started.

But I have to admit to wishing that more than ten people in my world shared these norms - and that other groups I join, in the future, would form along these lines. As Jane Batt once said, "How I would dance in the kitchen then, how my pencil would dance. The very spoons would join in that dance."

Note: This is a revised version of an article entitled "About the Thursday Night Listening-Focusing Group" which appeared in Rough Times, September/October 1973.

Kathy N. Boukydis (a.k.a McGuire), Rules for listening in task-oriented groups

We have found at Changes that, contrary to our old learnings, feelings and intuitions can be valuable contributions to decision-making at task-oriented group meetings; that to stay on a completely businesslike, logical level can miss a lot of creative input and can contribute to the building of tensions which finally explode. It turns out that one person's scared feeling about a decision, if given space to be heard, can lead to a new insight for the whole group; that someone's very vague, hard-to-say intuition can turn out to be a creative input that the more logical mode of discussion would miss.

Connected with this, we found that certain ways of responding to a person's feeling or idea make the person feel punished or less likely to talk again, even if that wasn't the group's intention. So, we tried to develop some rules for meetings which spot the punishing responses and provide, instead, an encouraging, warm way of response. They also instruct the group to pay extra attention to feeling places and vague intuitions, so that the decision can be based on as much input as possible. They also set a time limit for uninterrupted talking so that, if you can't relate in any way to what someone is saying, instead of telling the person to "Shut up! " you can wait until that person's three minutes are up, and go on.

It doesn't work to just tell people to let all their feelings hang out - then the group gets all caught up in the feelings and can't get its work done. What we have found is that, if you can disconnect yourself from arguing with the person or taking what the other says personally and defending yourself, and just ask the person to "say more" about the feeling or idea that is there, a whole new and peaceful way of dealing with tensions arises.

Although using rules seems silly at the beginning, they are necessary to help recognize old bad habits and to try a change. One group member needs to be a "process monitor" - to stay out of the discussion, no matter how heated it becomes, and to concentrate totally on helping the others to remember the rules. Each time the rules are used, a different person can try being process monitor. The process monitor can also have time to say his or her opinions, as long as someone else in the group takes over the role of process monitor during this time.

So, the rules are based on the assumption that, at certain times, the best possible thing to do to fix hassles and/or to help a person feel understood and supported by the group is simply to ask the person or persons involved to say more about where they are coming from. For instance, if someone says, "I can't stand this whole group and what it's planning," ask that person to say more, and you will see the person shift from anger to telling you where he or she is hurting; jump on the person or argue, and you'll get a big mess and misunderstanding that may take weeks to clear up. You'll find that, when people know that they are going to have a chance to say more, their whole way of being in the group changes. People come on less defensively, because they know that they're not going to be attacked;

everything goes more slowly so that people have a chance to think before they speak and to hear what someone else says so they don't have to repeat it. Very creative inputs to decision-making come out when people have the time to put their finger on exactly what it is about the present plan or discussion that makes them feel uptight or to explore carefully some inkling they have of what would make it really exciting.

Some "how to"s for group discussion

1. First, two people need to volunteer to share the role of "process monitor" (PM). They can sit next to each other, and if one needs out, the other can take over. Only one needs to be doing it at a time. The PM needs to be willing to stay out of the discussion, no matter how heated it becomes, and to concentrate on helping others to remember to try the new behaviors. This is done by gently reminding people in the situation if they are forgetting ("Wait. You need to ask her to say more" or "Your three minutes is almost up.") The PM also keeps track of who gets the next turn to talk, especially if there are several people waiting. The PM needs to have a watch with a second hand, and a little bravery.

It won't work unless you have a real live appointed process monitor. You may think that you can do without, and watch yourselves, but soon you will have snow-balled right back into the old way of being. The PM doesn't really have to miss out on giving his/her opinions, as long as there are two and they can take turns.

2. Agree to limit uninterrupted talking by one person to three minutes, to be timed by the process monitor. This does not apply if someone is asked to say more - then, they get more time. This way, if you want someone to stop so you can have a turn, instead of interrupting or getting into a hassle with the person, you'll know you only have to wait patiently for three minutes. On the other hand, you'll know you'll have an entire three minutes to lay out your thing, if you need that much time.

3. ***No stealing the floor***. You can interrupt *only* to ask for clarification ("Can you say more about…?") or to say, "I need a turn soon," if you are afraid that you will never get a turn. Then, the person can go on, but the PM will make sure you get a turn soon.

4. ***No "But…". Instead, ask for more***. This is the new thing that you are learning here: how to turn an interruption or an argument into a chance for understanding. When you feel upset or confused by what another is saying, instead of interrupting to say your side, ask them to say more about the specific part that is upsetting you. In this way, you get to point at your problem with what they are saying without clobbering them unjustly. If you ask someone to say more, you automatically get the next turn, so you'll know that you'll still get to say your thing, if you still need to.

Remember, no "But…" or interrupting. Instead, say, "Can you say more about…?",

or “Can you say more?” You don't have to sit and be confused or upset while they ramble on. Stop them and ask them to say more about the part where you got lost or confused or angry. For example, "Wait. I need you to say more about how you think this is related to our public image."

Example

Alice: "I think we should have a steering committee and that it should meet once a month. It could have one representative from…"

Not Bruce: "But this is supposed to be a collective!"

Instead Bruce: "Can you say more about why you think a steering committee would be helpful?"

5. The same thing applies when someone is having a heavy feeling, even if the heavy feeling is about you. Ask them to say more about what they are feeling or what’s upsetting them about that, instead of ignoring them or putting them down or immediately rising to your own defense.

Example

Helen: "I feel scared to have us do that speaking engagement."

Not Susan: "Oh, there's nothing to be scared of; I do it all the time."

Not Allan: "l feel really angry with you because you are always pushing us to be more political!"

Not Marge:"I am not. It's just that you're so wishy-washy!"

Instead Marge: "Can you say more about what feels bad or pushy in there?"

6. The same thing applies when someone is having trouble finding the right words to say their thing - either ask for more specifically to help them or just tell them to take their time - they have an entire three minutes. Don't let them give up just so the rest of you can hurry on.

Example

Donna: "It's something about confusing our goals… Oh, I give up. I can't think of the right words to describe it right now.”

Not Wayne: "I have something to say about that. It's our need…"

Instead Wayne: "Can you say more about how it’s a confusion of goals?"

Or Sally: "Take your time. We can wait."

Nobody has to say more, unless they want to, but it’s wise to ask them. Remember, the more often you can find appropriate times to ask people to say more, the better things will go the more possible confusions and misunderstandings you will avoid. Also, stay away from Who, What, Where and Why sorts of questions as much as possible. (This does not mean that you don't ask for a simple piece of information where necessary. It just means not to put people to the third degree.) Instead, phrase it open-endedly so that the person does not feel defensive about giving the right answer, “Can you say more…?”

7. Last, but not least, if you find yourself thinking, "I like what she/he just said,"

or "That was really brave," etc., say it out loud. People need to know that their words aren't going into a vacuum and need all the support they can get, especially if what they said was risky in the first place.

It may seem awkward at the beginning, but pretty soon asking for more will become a habit and a natural thing to do. Good luck!

Judy Henderson, The politics of group process

I want to say why I think the activities of "listening" and "focusing" are very important for people on the "Left" to know about, practice, and even develop further. I've come to this understanding from what was originally a socialist orientation, activism through the Women's Movement, and then through the Gay Women's Movement. Consistently during that time, I have been hurt and seen group potential destroyed by an ignorance of and apparent lack of concern for what individual people were experiencing, needing, motivated by. Most of us have heard slogans such as, "This is politics, not therapy! There is no solution but the collective one; individual solutions are cooptations." I have been around a number of groups where the idea of dealing with personal experience and interaction was looked down on as worse than useless, as a drain on energy, a misdirection away from "the real issues," even as "elitest, pampered, self-indulgent."

I have been in "socialist" groups where I was basically classified as an oppressor, where energy seemed to come up in people often from eagerness to vindicate themselves. There was value placed on cool, intellectual talk with a certain "rational" tone to it that reminded me of a classroom, where emotional struggles and competition went on under that surface. I have been in women's groups where anger seemed to hold the group in a vise of tension, with each of us watching for how not to rock the boat. Talk about gay feelings would be too threatening, and talk about masochistic feelings would be traitorous and unliberated. There seemed to be an iron-jawed defensiveness covering fear of our anger and of the mess we were really in as women, the dreadful questions it raised about personal life choices for each of us. We either kept properly inhibited behind that defensiveness or lashed it out at each other. I have been in gay women's groups where somewhere in the air there was even a proper way to dress, to stand and sit, and where no-one dared express kind or even ambivalent thoughts about wanting to relate to men - in fact, where male-female interactions of all sorts mostly fell into slots like cartoons. The talk was pushed toward trying to be unified and strong, but more force actually got spent fighting and yelling not to get lost in the crowd.

I am saying that these groups, in the name of radicalism, practiced on me both explicit and tacit kinds of authoritarianism. I'm talking about the tyranny of unspoken norms and roles subtly controlling what kind of thing gets said and what doesn't, who speaks most and who listens, who ends up supporting someone else's need or idea, but not his or her own. In other words, the operating structures of these groups were microcosms of the institutions they wanted to change or replace.

This thing I've just pointed to is a big issue for me. After some years thrashing around in "protest" groups and groups supposed to represent the beginnings of alternative power structures, I begin to see how little practical understanding people on the "Left," just like the rest of society, have about how a group actually works, what it really means to be a collective body, whether it is called a union,

club, party, government, or meeting. I'm talking about how a *social contract* gets made, back before it has already become as unconscious and regular as breathing for each of us to assume group identities, as say, in the hospital bureaucracy I've worked for, or even walking down a public street. We seem to be early and easily conditioned into institutionalized roles that we know very little about ever granting authority to. We understand very little about where and how *a group starts being invested with authority*, how the power of each of us individually gets transferred to that group.

I want to mark off that activity of transfer, investment, of power from a person to a group, and say we need to study that seriously. And first we need to study where and how the power to be invested sits in the individual person. I think we feel so impotent, and saturated from childhood with group identities, that we often don't take seriously the issue of where power *is* in the individual and how it has become lost, abdicated, stolen, whatever. We use the word "power" easily in political rhetoric, but I think we won't get to social-institutional alternatives until we stop thinking of "power" as the relative bargaining positions between representatives of two corporate agencies. I think the real transfers of power happen long before that stage, as in the groups I've been in.

The abdication of my power, for example, has already happened in a meeting when I am too afraid to bring up the familiar way Beth just undermined what Cynthia suggested by making a joke out of it. I feel my power when I step over the line of that fear, of all the reasons why I am afraid to challenge Beth, and state my perception loudly and clearly. And I stick to my perception although everyone is shocked, even when Beth puts me down even before some of the other people begin to support me. I have felt this kind of shift happen in me a number of times. I go from a deflated, helpless sense of just watching others talk to a release of energy through my body and a thrill of congruence between my feeling and my action, my voice. It happens usually when I stop the guard constricting me and let what I have to say out in a rush. Before I or anyone else does this, Beth can control that group interaction through *our assumptions and behaviors supporting her*, perhaps liking and respect for her, fears of her anger and judgment, selfdoubts about experience or self-expression, confusion about believing our own perceptions. As another example, no agency would operate with a sexist policy on hiring practices and remain viable without having built up behind it the unspoken law of distorted assumptions and perceptions that most of us carry around in our heads about sex differences.

Opening up my perception, seeing and feeling a situation in a new way, seeing how it could be for me instead of how it is, seeing how I made a choice when I didn't even know it, that I had options I didn't know about, has been the crux of getting a grip on my personal power and wielding it differently. An instance of this occurred when I had to look inside myself to discover what was underneath the vague uneasiness and timidity I took for granted feeling around men I was involved with. I had to get into and raise to consciousness from my own reliving of it the fact that these feelings were connected to an old expectation of rejection

that had to do with me feeling a certain inferiority about my body. I had to reach a place in my own awareness where I noticed my sense of my body, holding it in, ashamed, in many little ways. I became conscious that that same set of feelings felt familiar from male-dominated classrooms in graduate school, and had created a lot of the anxiety I went through when I spoke there.

Getting clear hold of what these bad feelings really were, was the first step toward wanting and imagining how it would be to feel differently about my body. This consciousness allowed me to get angry; it heightened my perception of how I held my body in different situations, how that was part of the interaction with people around me, and how their body language and non-verbal cues reinforced it. Two things ultimately came out of that for me: I began to develop a relaxed, flowing, integrated, assertive sense of my body that I had never felt before, and I began to confront men more directly about the parts of their behavior that seemed to constrict me. I noticed how much qualities of "authority" and "masculinity" were linked in body language, how crucial having the right body language was to the assumption of roles, and how much violating the norms of body language could alter the interaction.

It is because I have used such methods to produce big changes in my way of living that the issues and attitudes surrounding responsible use of certain therapeutic techniques for self-discovery and for stopping bad interactions do not appear "counter-revolutionary" to me. There are people on the "Left" who would see them as arguments against the need for group action, ways of diverting energy into seeking personal comfort, or ways of getting embroiled in personal conflicts that destroy the possibility of group action. These fears and suspicions of “a psychological approach” come from the ways industry and the establishment have used techniques of psychology skillfully, within the confines of their own institutional goals, to keep people committed to them.

I myself have experienced the kind of traditional "therapy" where a medical resident in a starched white coat consults his watch every 15 minutes, pretends he has no feelings or reactions to me, or if he does and I am picking up on them, the issue is irrelevant, since I am the one who is "sick" and paying the $25 an hour. I have been in the kind of group therapy where the therapist is always right, and anything he or she does goes, even if it means laying their own trips and projections on people. I know there are therapies where you can get wrapped up in memory, reliving old pains in the privacy of a therapist's office, using up a lot of energy and relieving some tension, but without confronting present life situations. I know there are therapists who explain away social discontentment as personal pathology: women angry at men have "penis envy," gay people have failed to overcome certain Oedipal conflicts, and so forth. I know there are forms of fantasy and body relaxation that can soothe the eruption of frustration and discontent without getting at the social root of it. And, worst of all, I have seen well-meaning people on the "Left" take up some vocabulary about "sensitivity," "encounter," "dealing with feelings," and proceed to unleash the chaos of their undiscriminated anxiety and frustration at each other in very destructive, unilluminating ways that

ended by reinforcing their trapped, defensive feelings, their distrust of others, adding to that a renewed distrust of facing those feelings or ever trying to share them again.

The other side of this wooden nickel is that a number of companies have lately incorporated counseling programs, weekend marathons, ongoing groups, for personnel up through the executive level in order to maximize efficiency and keep that irritation that results from inhuman pressure down at a socially "safe" level. Such companies have also become increasingly careful, I have heard, about controlling the kind and extent of therapy they expose their employees to, after losing a number of them when the process of self-discovery got working too well. Our industrial system and the culture supporting it and perpetuated by it is actually extremely conscious and sophisticated, more so all the time, in the way it manipulates people's values, self-concepts, perceptions and assumptions about the world, in order to keep them programmed into everyday roles that keep it all running. There is evidence of this manipulation in any popular magazine; just study the contents and the ads and think about who reads it. All of which simply goes to prove that there is no powerful idea, no area of real knowledge, that cannot be corrupted and misused.

So, there is this fear some people on the "Left" have of dealing with feeling and personal experience, and also a belief that people complexly entrenched in the system's roles can be appealed to through logic, ideology, and argument alone. Many radical organizers of one faction or another have leafleted, given speeches, coaxed and propagandized people whose underlying sense of values, whose perceptual framework, they understood very little about or else considered irrelevant. So, they might appeal to people through a certain moral sense, using certain concepts and arguing in a certain intellectual style that might be valid, comfortable, convincing to themselves (if that), but had little to attract the people it was directed toward. Many of us, in trying to politicize others, have failed to see that theory, concept, intellectual argument, is only one arena of real experience, only one narrow aspect of "the truth," an aspect which, by the way, is particularly familiar to and valued by our *own* class, by those with *our* social background. Other people we speak to may filter us through a complex set of beliefs: for example, that human nature is corrupt and greedy, that all political people lie, and so you are ultimately helpless, and may as well leave things to the authorities. Such people probably don't even hear our arguments; their jobs and homes, children, vacations, hobbies, private hopes and fantasies are where their energy is invested. And they are probably not aware of how these very personal hopes and fears are part of a huge social-economic system.

Our prejudices against dealing with reality at the feeling level are thus a perfect way to keep us away from sources of mind and behavior control that stay hidden, and to keep us wasting much of our effort. Another way to look at it is that we are all so indoctrinated in our culture, in ways of experiencing our individual power negatively, that even the most executive "rulers" of the establishment do not need to be (and probably are not) consciously aware of using that cultural experience to

keep people under control. In fact, they may not be more aware than any of us as to how their own values and assumptions about power were determined and keep them plugged into the machine (although at the other end of the stick) that just perpetuates itself like clockwork. Except that it is a clockwork that may also destroy itself through the unhealthy ways it collects and channels the energy and consciousness that it feeds on.

What I can say about the concepts of "listening", "focusing" and "rational communicating" as I understand them is that they provide germinal tools for a radical self-experience, interaction, and group process. To me, these techniques are the material basis for discovering a new politics and a new approach to politicizing others, coming from a rich, as yet untapped, understanding of and access to the locus of power in the individual. Briefly the way I see it working is this: the processes of listening and focusing are made to get you in conscious moment-to-moment touch with what goes on in you, what you feel, what affects that and how, what's really important, all the complex parts of it. The first thing about this is that you get conscious hold of yourself in a full, present way, so you see clearly what's happening in you and to you in a situation, making you aware of what all your choices are. The second thing is that that consciousness comes directly from what's rooted in you alone. Even though it may involve larger social issues that affect us all, it comes at those issues from the meanings you bring out of you, from your experience of them, and only from that, not from what someone else says next to you, or from someone else's idea of what's going on in you. It makes you and lets you be ultimately responsible for defining what is relevant to you and how. Then you can deal with the experience and opinions of others without losing your own feelings and identity.

So, I see it as a way to wake us all up to awareness of ourselves and responsibility to that awareness. It could mean continually rediscovering what we need and want and going after it, instead of being muddled or taking what we're told to. And the point about this process of rediscovery is that we learn to keep it distinct and clearly separable from anyone else's process, anyone who tells us what to feel. This includes people we value a lot and relate closely to, even authority figures, and high-pressure groups we depend on for support, which I think are all prime tests of autonomy in our lives.

When we as radicals try to talk to people about politics, we don't have to get them stuck in abstractions about their environment and the world, meanwhile taking for granted the way their personal lives, jobs, and homes are set up. By listening to people, we can begin to offer them a way they can make personal sense of how roles at home and at work might be oppressive to them as gut experiences, and, most importantly, *because* they are gut experiences, not because we, or a newspaper editorial, or the President, tell them so in generalized rhetoric.

Exploring these techniques can also mean repossessing the rights of judgment and decision that we give over to structures that rule us. Listening-in-communication provides ways to make groups and relationships really go rational and democratic.

We get to build into the process of interaction mechanisms for keeping each individual's experience and choice continuously present and clearly separate from everyone else's. This, of course, protects the rights, power, and responsibility of each.

Here is an example of how radically these techniques can improve group interactions. It happened when the women in our South Side Chicago Gay Liberation group were negotiating a monthly Gay Women's Coffee House with a local church that supported a number of radical community groups. A problem was the deeply-rooted desire of the women to ban men, and the church commune's policy of keeping an open door to everyone at their coffee houses, regardless of who was sponsoring it that week. Most of the negotiation took place between a very sensitive lesbian, who felt overrun by men in both gay and straight worlds, and a male member of the church commune staff, who wanted to protect the trusting, transcendant view of the open-door policy, and did not understand the history and necessity behind the defensive, strictly all-female approach to a lesbian coffee house.

There were personality clashes and strain in trying to work out a policy suitable to both sides; a number of events caused tension to escalate mostly through misunderstanding, until the existence of the coffee house was threatened, and a general meeting was called. Without advance planning, it just happened that members of both groups present were involved in the radical therapy community "Changes" and they had learned and incorporated these techniques in their behavior. Because of this, the two pivotal figures who had the history of difficulty negotiating were able, not only to state their positions, but to go into their hurt, misunderstood, distrustful feelings with the help of the rest of the group. That stopped the polarization, shifted the defensive energy inward for each, and cleared the air for a new negotiation, based on a clear, open, thorough sense of the underlying needs and fears of each group, from which developed a specific procedure for the Coffee House which compromised neither group's ideals. The incident, in fact, opened up possibilities of communication between the two groups at a level deeper than would have been likely given their original social alienation from each other. The Gay Women's Coffee House became and remained a flourishing community institution for the rest of that year.

All of this stuff does work; I have seen it many times transform what was horrible and familiar into something new and transcendent. But it doesn't happen without backsliding and exhaustion. I say this after struggling for a year now, together with a number of people, to integrate these attitudes and processes into our personal, collective, political lives. It goes slowly; it requires large belief and perseverance. It starts by opening the Pandora's box of each of us, the place where each of us had had to begin crawling out of the personal compromises we had made with our pains in this culture and grow new skins. This has meant frustration, fear, chaos, and gains appearing only very gradually. The beginning seems to last a long time; there is need to relearn what it means to be myself, then to be with another, and then to form a group. I have to keep sight of

long-range goals when I feel mired down in personal hang-ups. I have tried to keep hold of the processes I have learned to trust, even when I am fearing and doubting everyone around me and what we are doing. I have to keep remembering, with some relief, what a new thing we are trying to find and how much we are up against, when I start envying the efficiency of established institutions and the easy action of groups that organize their power in the showy, familiar ways.

It is damned hard to keep writing, theorizing, and applying things we learn to organized work with other people when our own community and our own selves are so much in upheaval. But it seems to me, after a year, to be very much worth it, because I see in myself, and in the challenges, we have begun to face as a community, *real* change and the possibilities of a new social system that gets at the roots of our disease. This opens into new alternatives to offer people politically and new ways to approach them with what I have to offer. Of course, the task is difficult. The thing is, I feel good and right doing this particular struggle in a way that I never have before. There is a sense of clarity in myself and human beauty in anyone I might work with that is strongly infusing my political vision and action, and bringing me great joy, in the oddest, unexpected ways, even when I "lose."

Revised from Rough Times, January-February 1974

Part Six: The history of Changes

Kathy McGuire, History of Changes 1970- 2016

I am going to give here my version of the original Changes Listening/Focusing community in Chicago during the early 1970's. I will also continue that history with my own lifelong career of spreading the Changes model. You can read my article outlining the model, "Changes: Peer Counseling Supportive Communities as a Model for Community Mental Health," online at http:llwww.cefocusing.com!pdf/2F2qChangesPeerCounselingModelOfCommunity MentalHealthFinal.PDF

I can only give my own point of view, and I hope that the many others involved will write their own lived-experience of the early days when Changes was forming and when the articles in this, The Changes Book: A Handbook for Empathic Listening. Experiential Focusing and Therapeutic Community, were written, 1970-1978.

I will hope to encourage others to start their own Changes-like Listening/Focusing Support Groups, using my manual, Focusing in Community: How To Start A Listening/Focusing Support Group, available as a $5 computer download at my website for Creative Edge Focusing, www.cefocusing.com, in English and Spanish, in The Store.

Year One: Crisis Hotline, organizational struggles

I entered the University of Chicago as a doctoral student in the Department of Education in Fall of 1967. I transferred to the clinical psychology Ph.D. program in the Department of Behavioral Sciences in 1968.

I do not know the history of Eugene Gendlin there before I arrived, and I do not know if other people involved in the beginning of Changes, like Mary Hendricks and Linda Olsen and Jill Gardner and Kristin Glaser, started that year or had already been there for a year. Jill and Kristin were in the Human Development Department. The client-centered student counseling center, which Carl Rogers had founded and Gendlin and others were involved in, was on campus at that time.

Gendlin had gotten a Ph.D. in philosophy at the University of Chicago under Richard McKeon, but then he also came to work with Carl Rogers as a client-centered therapist, theorist, and researcher. Those two did extensive research in a psychiatric hospital in Wisconsin where a lot of the formative work on research in client-centered therapy and the Experiencing Scale (EXP Scale) was done. It is all summarized in a book edited by Rogers called *The Therapeutic Relationship and Its Impact: A Study of Psychotherapy With Schizophrenics* (University of Chicago Press, 1967). There are a lot of formative articles by Gendlin and others in this fat volume.

Mary Hendricks, Linda Olsen, and I were taking classes from Gendlin as an existential/phenomenological philosopher/psychologist and also from Israel Goldiamond, a specialist in behavior analysis and modification. We were also being intuitively involved in the rising feminist movement and the radical therapy movement. All of this worked together in defining who we were as women getting Ph.D.'s in psychology at the time. But that is another story.

This was a time of great turmoil related especially to the Vietnam war protests and also eventually the murder of Martin Luther King and many other notables.

There was a sit-in at the administration building at the University of Chicago, protesting the Vietnam War, that some of us participated in. It got national attention. We marched in demonstrations on the streets of Chicago. Our male fellow students struggled with the threat of the military draft.

There was the Kent State massacre, where The National Guard shot and killed students protesting at that college against the Vietnam War, May 4, 1970.

It was in response to this that the first gathering of graduate students in Behavioral Sciences, including psychology and related fields, was called, perhaps by Mary Hendricks and some of these others. Gendlin was present kind of as a faculty advisor. I was not part of whatever led up to this meeting but only attended the meeting.

As I recall, at this first meeting, we were looking for some form of response to the Kent State massacre and decided that we would circulate petitions on the north side of Chicago in favor of the Hatfield /McGovern amendment to end the war in Vietnam. So, we did that.

After getting petitions signed, we decided we wanted a response to the way the Vietnam war was affecting our country that was more reflective of who we were as graduate students. I do not know whose idea this was, but it was Mary Hendricks, Jill Gardner, Kristin Glaser, Hillary ?, and Gendlin who were most formative in these beginning stages as far as I recall. Linda Olsen and myself joined soon after. And eventually that is how the idea of Changes was hatched.

We decided we wanted to aim our response to helping people in our local area. We came up with the idea of a phone hotline which would help the people who were struggling with drug overdoses, suicidal thoughts, and whoever else might benefit from some volunteer psychological counseling by phone.

I have no idea who actually got us the office and the phone lines in the upstairs of the church where we eventually had our meetings (and which church was it that housed us? I remember the name of the coffee shop, The Blue Gargoyle). I don't know how Bob Whitney got involved, but I think he was maybe studying divinity through that church.

At some point, someone got us involved as one of the hotlines covered by a grant from the Playboy foundation, of all places, to help pay for these phone lines. And at one point we even had a paid staff coordinator, while the rest of us volunteered to man the crisis line. Unfortunately, as money can lead to problems in organizations, I think this paid staffer might have eventually absconded with the money. You can read about this in the draft history of the first year by K.G. which follows my history.

The core group of planners had a lot of meetings where we tried to sort out who we were and what we were really doing. One of the strands of a kind of wrangling was between being more organic versus being more structured. I don't even remember exactly what this meant but we wrangled about it. But K.G.'s paper to follow outlines a year of such wrangling.

Year Two and beyond: peer counseling community

But Gendlin, who was not fond of decision-making meetings even then, perhaps because of his experience in the counseling center run by Carl Rogers, and then in the large research project in Wisconsin, kept making the very important point that "we should be doing Listening and Focusing rather than spending our time talking about doing it." This really was his mantra which I do think kept us on track and got us into having these weekly peer counseling community gatherings at the church. We were meant to be doing Listening and Focusing and never to lose touch with that activity being our priority. But it took us that first year of wrangling to get to this point!

Gendlin had seen too many good ideas get swallowed up in contentious decision-making meetings. After a full year of long meetings with much wrangling and disagreement about issues like “hierarchy” and “money” and “structure” vs. “organic growth”, and many interesting experiences as we tried to incorporate ex-convicts and schizophrenics and all kinds of people in crisis into our group, Eugene Gendlin finally won his argument that we stop *talking* about doing something and just start *doing* what we cared about. He insisted that “decision-making” happen at a different time and place, and the group time be used to actually *do* community mental health.

We had early on realized we did not just want to offer phone counseling but to invite people to become part of our supportive community. We were influenced by people like psychiatrist R.D. Laing in Scotland who was starting therapeutic communities where schizophrenics and regular people lived together on the assumption that everyone was really OK.

We had also realized that we graduate students, "the helpers", where as much in need of support as the so-called "helpees." So, we started a peer counseling community where everyone learned the Listening and Focusing skills, and everyone exchanged turns as equals.

After that year of wrangling and frustrating long “planning” meetings, we came up with a model where any decision-making meetings were held an hour before the actual peer counseling meeting started. Those who wanted to attend that decision-making could and their decisions would hold. If anyone didn't like their decisions, they could come to the next decision-making meeting and state their opinion.

K.G.'s history draft which follows tells of the first year *before* Gendlin offered training and we started teaching Listening/Focusing at our Sunday night meetings. Jean Rickert's short history at the end tells of this important transition from being a hotline to being our own peer counseling community and asking everyone to join us.

Eugene Gendlin offered the first 10-week training course in Listening and Focusing at the church. And I guess he already had quite a reputation, because around 60 people came. That became the core of the first Changes Listening/Focusing community.

It was also important to Gendlin that "everyone did not have to do the same thing or agree to do the same thing." So, at the weekly meeting, there might be a presentation by Gendlin, the initial 10-week training class, for instance, but there eventually were presentations by lots of other people. But no-one had to attend the presentation. They always had the option to just find someone and go off and start having a Listening/ Focusing turn right away. Or there might be several different presentations or interest groups in various rooms. You can see how this basic tenet for Gendlin carried out when he started his own The Focusing Institute (www.focusing.org) with a guarantee of diversity of training programs.

For me, personally, the decision-making meetings themselves, one hour before the peer counseling community meeting, were fascinating. We used our growing Listening and Focusing skills to try to come to decisions that were not just a compromise but a brand-new solution which arose as we listened to each other and spoke from our felt sensing. I ended up doing my dissertation with Gendlin on this very thing, how can you incorporate Listening and not interrupting into decision-making groups in such a way that the participants can speak from their felt experiencing, instead of arguing, and see a brand-new solution arise (see my paper, "Listening and Interruptions in Task-Oriented Groups," http://www.cefocusing.com/pdf/2f2e _Relationship_ of_Client.pdf)

So, Gendlin was offering the I0-week training class at the church with 60 to 100 people in attendance, and maybe the hotline crisis line was going on upstairs in an office staffed by us graduate students as volunteers, and a core community of at least 20 but sometimes up to 60 people was developing. And this community was expressing itself in a number of different ways.

We were involved in some action in the community. One story is of Mary Hendricks seeing someone being shuffled into a police car and actually stopping and offering

instead to get that person a more appropriate kind of mental health care (which meant at that time coming to crash with Changes members until they could link her up with appropriate social services help).

I left for at least six months or more to follow a boyfriend to Oklahoma and Texas. So, I missed some of the development that first year.

We had incorporated as I said a number of so-called schizophrenics etc. into our community. On the one hand, in some amazing cases, we found that, when in the role of Listener, these people, otherwise seen as not completely "normal" by society, could set aside everything just like anyone else and really be there as a Listener. We learned a lot about everybody's unique world from opening ourselves to whoever wanted to belong and assuming that we were all equals in terms of our need for helping and getting help.

But also, out of this, we developed the method of forming "teams" (Glaser, K., "Suggestions for Working with Heavy Strangers and Friends," in Part Five of this book) around people who needed a lot of support, for instance someone who was suicidal or having delusions or fighting off temptation to addiction, etc. Per usual, as we realized that we "helpers" were also "helpees", people started asking for teams around other things for ourselves. Gendlin had a team to help him get his work out, and I had a team to help me find a husband. We had a support group for all of us trying to get our dissertations done, etc. There was a thriving Women's Group which eventually split into two, and eventually a Men's Group.

Since many of us were doing Ph.D.'s, there was a strong research component, everyone doing our research on some aspect of Listening and/or Focusing with Gendlin as our advisor. Jim Iberg, who was in the business school, did research on Focusing as a way of centering people before they went to job interviews. Elfie Hinterkopf and Les Brunswick went out to a local state hospital and taught Listening and Focusing to psychiatric patients and did research on that. I was doing my research on Listening in decision-making groups. Mary Hendricks was developing a version of Klein and Mathieu's "Experiencing Scale" to be used in analyzing low to high experiencing in dreams. Linda Olsen and Gendlin worked together on a model for including Focusing imagery work in psychotherapy. And many more.

And there were other people allying with us, who had discovered Gendlin and his work on their own, like Nonn Don doing research on Focusing and brainwave changes, and Ferdinand van der Veen, who became a central driving force behind this The Changes Book.

Then there was a community of people who might have initially found us through crisis but went on to become central to our community. So, they were not graduate students at the time at least. And some of them actually were the drug addicts or ex-cons or schizophrenics that we had initially meant to reach out to and include in our peer counseling community. And others were just everyday

people who came to us through the crisis center advertising and became fascinated with Listening and Focusing in community. And I would list their names, but it feels like almost a violation of their privacy since they were not really graduate students or authors in this book, so I will not do that.

But some of these combined with us graduate students to build a wider supportive community consistent with the visions of the time. Some of us shared communal housing. We had communal meals. We shared resources like a vacuum or a car or a photography studio. We were involved in a food co-op. A group of us drove to visit Walden Two, a self-sustaining commune based upon the principles of positive reinforcement outlined in B.F. Skinner's novel, *Walden Two* (1948; MacMillan, 1976).

And, also consistent with the times, we were involved in a lot of different kinds of intimate and sexual and love partnership relationships. Given the free love and open relationship tenets of the 1970s, you can imagine that there was quite a lot of potential for conflict.

However, we applied our same Listening and Focusing skills when conflict arose. I have written a chapter in my manual for starting Listening/Focusing groups on how to use the skills to resolve conflict (see "Interpersonal Processing" in *Focusing in Community: How To Start A Listening/Focusing Support Group*, my manual available in English and Spanish, and in a $5 computer download version, in The Store at www.cefocusing.com).

To me, as with decision-making meetings, it was beautiful and sacred to see the way in which owning and Focusing upon one's own reactivity, and really trying to Listen to the other person's point of view, could lead to deeper sharing. People actually became closer through conflict resolution. It was really pretty amazing how much conflict we worked through and how, at least at that point, conflict did not tear our community apart. From my point of view, it was only when people refused to engage in Listening/Focusing conflict resolution that schisms arose and the Changes movement and Gendlin's separate Focusing Institute took differing paths.

At some point, Mary Hendricks started the first purely Focusing group. A bunch of us went off to a quiet chapel, lay down and closed our eyes, and Mary guided us through the Focusing process. And then she Listened to us on our experience. So, this was not a peer counseling model for exchanging Listening/Focusing turns but a new model more emphasizing Focusing on its own. Mary's paper on how to run a Focusing Group is in Part Three of this book.

A number of people became involved in the more eastern spirituality of Vasavada, who was a Jungian analyst as well as something like a Zen Master. Out of this interest in Jung and dream analysis, Mary Hendricks also started a Focusing and dreams group. This interest of many of us, including Gendlin and Mary Hendricks, in dream work and Jungian psychology eventually led to Gendlin's book *Let Your*

Body Interpret Your Dreams (IL, Chiron, 1986).

A lot of us became involved in re-evaluation co-counseling. And Marshall Rosenberg, the creator of nonviolent communication (NVC), was a frequent presenter at our Changes meetings. Rosenberg had been one of the therapists in the huge research project done by Rogers and Gendlin and others when he was a graduate student in Wisconsin, and so he and Gendlin had met. Reuven Gold taught us about Gestalt. We were exposed to yoga, meditation, massage, rolfing, reiki, primal therapy, whatever was out there.

But it was always important that we held the line at one hour for a presentation and then everyone splitting up into peer counseling Listening/Focusing turns as pairs or triads or small groups. We were there for the primary purpose of Listening and Focusing and were not to be coopted by someone who said, "Oh let's be a Gestalt group instead."

Ann Weiser Cornell entered Changes in 1972, and became one of the foremost teachers, developing her Inner Relationship Focusing model. She will have to tell that story. Her article in this *The Changes Book* is about common problems in a beginning Listening group.

Gendlin used our early Listening/Focusing exchanges to do phenomenological research, figuring out what we were doing when we were Focusing by watching us and also asking us what we were doing inside. So, in this way, I at least came to feel like we had some ownership in the specification and development of Listening and Focusing skills as they were defined in those Changes years.

1974-1978: Changes International

Around 1974, Gendlin got a sabbatical to go to New York city as a visiting professor. I think it was Mary Hendricks, his partner, who really wanted to live in New York. Kristin Glaser had moved to Vermont. And I moved to Toronto (with that husband my team had helped me find!) A lot of the main people were moving away. So, others still in town kept Changes Chicago alive. Maybe Dave Young and Ann Weiser Cornell can speak to this, or maybe it was Elfie Hinterkopf and Les Brunswick.

At this time, a group of people also got together to write this book about Changes, *The Changes Book: A Handbook for Empathic Listening, Experiential Focusing, and Therapeutic Community*, latest version dated 1978. Gendlin and Kristin Glaser and Mary Hendricks wrote various things including the "rap manual." Many others wrote about various other aspects of the Changes experience as well as the basic philosophy underlying it. As one of the last assigned editors, I have decided to offer that book online now, in 2016, so that people can experience Listening and Focusing in supportive community as it was being developed, freshly, by founders who were impassioned about these ideas. Changes had also gotten some national recognition and had been included in books on radical approaches to social

support. Various of us had published papers about Changes in The Radical Therapist, Communities magazine, Voices, and other journals of the times.

The Changes Book never got picked up by a mainstream publisher. Everybody moved to different parts of the country, we had some conflict about editing issues, and it remained circulated only within our community. In part, I think Mary Hendricks and Gene Gendlin had decided to put their energy, and revisions of their chapters, into Gendlin's *Focusing* book (Bantam books, 1981, since reprinted and translated throughout the world).

We did form Changes International at this point, in 1974. Tom Brouillette started a newsletter called InterChanges, and we had a number of yearly conferences. Joan Klagsbrun hosted one in New Hampshire. There was one in New York. There was another outside of Boston. Kristin Glaser hosted one in Vermont. I hosted one in State College Pennsylvania around 1976.

1976-1978: From Changes International to The Focusing Institute

To my mind, this conference that Zack Boukydis and I hosted in State College, Pennsylvania was a turning point in the history of Changes Listening/Focusing Communities vs. The Focusing Institute emphasizing Gendlin's Focusing. Because of my great interest in decision-making and conflict resolution as part of the original Changes model, I included times for decision-making and conflict resolution, using our Listening/Focusing skills, as basic parts of the structure of our gathering. And, saying it in short form, some people rebelled, especially Gendlin.

To my mind, although The Focusing Institute might have existed in some way at that point, Gendlin more formally split away from Changes International and started The Focusing Institute as a separate entity. Ruth Arkiss and Doralee Grindler played roles in directing the beginnings of The Focusing Institute (TFI) while Gene and Mary were still in Chicago.

Gendlin and Mary Hendricks-Gendlin came back to Chicago for a time, starting The Focusing Institute with the help of Doralee Grindler-Katonah as the first Director around 1978(?). Ruth Arkiss helped get out the word about Gendlin's *Focusing* book, marshalling forces to get it into bookstores throughout the nation. Bebe Simon helped with early workshops and training, especially for the first visitors from Japan and Germany.

Bebe also started a Changes Group in her own apartment on the North side of Chicago, a group which has met once a week ever since then! Elfie Hinterkopf went to Germany and Japan to teach workshops. And the international Focusing movement had begun. But it was a number of years before The Focusing Institute moved to New York and became a formal non-profit with Gendlin and Mary Hendricks and Mary McGuire as the Directors.

At that time, they also set up a method by which all of us were now to apply to

become Certified Focusing Trainers and Focusing Coordinators and Certifying Coordinators and to sign contracts and pay dues.

And some of us did not like this transition from being equals in a peer counseling community to having to pay dues and sign allegiance to The Focusing Institute in order to continue teaching Listening and Focusing. In my case, it took a good 10 years before I became willing to go to The Focusing Institute in Chicago and get formally certified and become a Certifying Coordinator.

And during that time, I continued to start Changes groups wherever I lived. In 1981, I had published my manual, now called *Focusing in Community: How To Start A Listening/Focusing Support Group* (also available in Spanish translation for $5 as a computer download from the store at my website, www.cefocusing.com, or in paperback from the Focusing Institute store).

1978-present: Publication of Gendlin's Focusing Book and future history

The hardback edition of Gendlin's *Focusing* (NY: Everest House, 1978) and the paperback edition (Bantam, 1981) included a description of Changes and the *Listening Manual* for the exchange of Listening/Focusing turns. The beginnings of the *Focusing* book and that *Listening Manual* can be found in this *The Changes Book*, with Gendlin and Mary Hendricks as partners, struggling to find their first words for the nuances of the Listening and Focusing practices we were exploring.

Many people who have been central to The Focusing Institute for the last 30 years began their involvement as members of the first Changes: Jim Iberg, Doralee Grindler-Katonah, Elfie Hinterkopf, myself - Kathy McGuire, Ann Weiser Cornell, Dave Young, Mary HendricksGendlin, Gendlin himself, etc.

The beginnings of Focusing-Oriented Therapy (FOT) also developed as all of us clinical psychology students honed our therapeutic skills in our peer-counseling relationships with each other, as well as in our formal training. See:
McGuire, K. "Psychotherapy Training Through Peer Counseling", 1985, http://www. cefocusing. com/pdf/2F2dPsychotherapyTrainingThroughPeerCounseli ng2.pdf);
McGuire, K., The Experiential Dimension in Therapy, 1984, available to download at www.focusingtherapy.org;
Gendlin, E.T., Focusing-Oriented Therapy: A Manual of the Experiential Method, Guilford Press, 1996.

In the 1990s, Mako Hikasa in Japan started a network of Changes groups as an offshoot of Listening/Focusing classes, and kept them connected through a newsletter and regional gatherings. Nicoletta Corsetti in Italy also made the Changes format central to her approach. Robert Lee, in founding his own approach to teaching Focusing, kept the peer counseling group model as central. Suzanne Noel includes group work in her approach using Focusing and Listening in addiction treatment.

However, the emphasis within The Focusing Institute became more narrowly defined in terms of Focusing as a self-help skill which a person could do alone. Ann Weiser Cornell's Inner Relationship model had the goal of people being able to do Focusing on their own. Gendlin worked on his philosophy as expressed in *The Process Model* and *The Philosophy of The Implicit*. With the help of Nada Lou and others, he developed Thinking At The Edge (TAE). TAE is the process of Focusing as applied to creating one's own theory or ideas. As with Focusing, Gendlin got help by doing phenomenological research, demonstrating Focusing oriented theory building, watching others do it, and analyzing the step-wise process people were using.

The emphasis on peer counseling, and Listening/Focusing communities, and interpersonal conflict and collaborative decision-making, went to the back burner.

Starting your own Changes Listening/Focusing Support Group

I will say that the original Changes in Chicago, the basis of this book, was unusual in the sense that there were probably up to 20 of us graduate students with the time and energy to be there as teams and phone volunteers, etc. In the many future Changes groups that I have started, we have not offered an open invitation to the community, not having the resources or the energy or the desire to take care of what we came to call “heavy people”.

This does not mean that any one of us could not become a “heavy person” at a certain point in our life, and we often did have maybe one or two people who came to us as friends of friends and needed a lot of support.

But I want people to know that they can start a Changes group that is much more closed and selfselected. When moving to a new city, for instance, I often network with the local nonprofit organizations of helpers and find my personal Listening/Focusing community among those people who already have a personal growth and therapeutic orientation. And many Changes groups have formed as a self-help continuation of 10-week training courses in Listening and Focusing, or a gathering together of Listening and Focusing trainers in a particular geographic area.

As Suzanne Noel has recently counted up from the Changes page at the Institute website, www.focusing.org under Felt Community, there are over 40 Changes groups listed throughout the world. I hope that, by publishing this early manuscript, *The Changes Book*, which is full of the enthusiasm and passion of us early pioneers, to inspire others to start their own Listening/Focusing support groups. I would like to see a return to an emphasis upon this more interpersonal aspect of Focusing, including the wonderful use of Listening and Focusing for personal growth and support, and for a new model of group decision-making and conflict resolution.

In 2016, the political situation in the US, especially the hate and prejudice-filled

election campaign, and the refugee crisis in Europe, also bringing an increase in hate and prejudice, has led to a renewed interest in the need for empathic understanding. The pendulum seems to be swinging back in the direction of an understanding that empathic Listening, setting aside one's own judgments and prejudices and stereotypes, and coming to understand people who are different through empathy, is a skill and an attitude needed in our present world situation.

Edwin Rutsch of The Center for Building A Culture of Empathy and Compassion, www.cultureofempathy.com, and the new International Empathy Trainers Association, IETA, www.empathytrainers.com, are bringing together people throughout the world whose interest is in spreading empathy.

Greg Madison, and others from the social activist subgroup formed at the International Focusing Conference in Cambridge, England, 2016, have launched The World Day of Listening (you can join the Facebook group at https://www.facebook.com/groups/WorldListening/). It is because of this rebirth of interest in Empathic Listening that I have decided to make *The Changes Book*, with all of its exact instructions and its enthusiasm, available.

Rough draft of the History of Changes, First Year by K.G.: Crisis Hotline
(edited by Kathy McGuire, 2016)

This is a brief history of Changes. It is divided by the quarters of the year as our development corresponds roughly to university quarters.

Spring, 1970: Origins

The idea of Changes was developed in the aftermath of the Cambodia-Kent uprising of 1970. A group of University of Chicago clinical psychology and human development graduate students had worked together in those two weeks organizing, conferencing, leafleting, and had enjoyed working together. Mostly women, we had been friendly with each other before but most of the bonds were between pairs.

After the political fervor died down, we didn't want to give up working together and met with the rest of the two departments who had been working with us to talk about a long-range project. There was some thought of doing a political project, but careful polling of our interests led us to choose something that would combine our political concerns with our clinical interests.

The idea for Changes grew out of two related concerns. Some of us had been involved in a community psychology practicum at the University and had given some thought to models of mental health service and the needs of our geographic community. We felt that our Hyde Park neighborhood had few resources, despite the University, and that people in trouble had no place to turn if they didn't have money, didn't like the University health services, or didn't belong to the university. Others of us were concerned with a broader community of young, hip people who either lived around or drifted through the city.

There were some strong feelings that these were "our people" and we should be there in some sense for them. At the time, it came to our attention that a young woman who had been crashing in Hyde Park had been put on the psychiatric ward at Billings Hospital because she was sort of weird and no-one would take responsibility for her. Our feeling was that, if we could pull ourselves together as a support group, perhaps we could help keep other people out of the hospital. So, with a sense of us (a group of about 12 clinical students) having some resources, time, energy, and seeing needs, we decided to try to put the two together.

Summer, 1970: The Beginning

In the beginning of the summer, people began working in two ways. One group of people continued to visit the girl in Billings. Another group of people went to various people in the community to talk about what the community concerns about mental health were. A rather large plan to talk to all concerned people dwindled to talking to a few ministers, the two newspapers, and a few concerned lay people. There was a real resistance in the group to doing more checking in the community,

partly because it was scary, partly because people wanted to do their own thing.

We began to get together on a regular basis to figure out what "our own thing" was. It was clear that we wanted to be a network of people willing to support other people in trouble. There was difficulty in achieving agreement past that point. Polar opposites began to appear immediately. Some people wanted us to not structure ourselves, but simply agree to make up informal "teams" as the need arose. There was nothing we "should" be, we simply would be whatever we were. Others wanted to set up definite teams that would already be organized and used to working with each other before a crisis arose. The "organics" won on that issue, for the time being.

We met a number of times to have "training" sessions on crisis intervention, suicide, and drug effects. We talked a lot about our philosophy of working with people. We were almost categorically against hospitals, feeling that they made people more crazy by their treatment of the person as a sick child. We thought that a lot of craziness was the result of interpersonal rather than intrapsychic problems and, if the person's life situation could be changed, he might feel better.

On the other hand, some of us had read R.D. Laing and were into the idea that craziness might be very much "in" someone and that it was something that you just let him live out. We thought we might be able to intervene in a person's current social situation and help the friends and family not be so scared of illness and see what their part was. Hopefully, with our support, a community system would be able to change its behavior to support a person who was upset.

We spent a lot of the summer talking and working with one man. This was a very heavy experience, and we basically didn't know what we were doing. Being a good listener was simply not enough and, although everyone involved survived the experience, several people quit the group because they had had enough. There were more issues raised than settled.

At that time, we didn't resolve how to define our relationship to someone coming for help nor how we would react if they then decided they wanted to be a helper. How can you be there as a whole person and yet set limits to protect yourself? What do you do when someone is afraid of doing violence but you have defined yourself as not taking over for that person?

We had another reason to end the summer in a shaky way. A couple had crashed another man for a week and not been able to find a team to support them. The guy was so hyped up that he talked constantly and left them totally wiped out. That was the end of the "organic team" idea. We decided that we did need formally organized teams. We made careful plans for a recruitment meeting in the fall when we hoped to attract a large number of psychology, education, and social service administration students. There was a strong feeling of, " in the fall is when we will really get started."

I had been in an informal leadership position during the summer, doing most of the pushing toward organization. I was starting a clinical psychology internship in the fall so the group was also in the position of having to decide whether that leadership position should be filled by another person.

Fall, 1970: The "real"beginning

There was a fantasy during the summer that in the fall we would "really get underway". We expected other people "like us" - clinical or social work school, would get involved. Then, with all the enthusiastic people, we would put out publicity and make commitments to work with people. So, we had a big meeting for recruiting and got a large number of people from all over the University and community. They had all sorts of different ideas about what Changes should be - and there were more of them than us. It was a very tense meeting in which it became clear to the original people that we didn't want our game taken away from us. It was our first "old" vs. "new" struggle. With some unpleasantness, we survived, and a number of new people decided to work with us.

The transition was rocky. We had decided to form steady teams to work with people, but the original, now somewhat experienced people, who were friends, decided to stay together as a team rather than split up and work with the new people. The new people were told to find friends in the group and make their own teams. The situation made it hard for them to do this, and I think they rightly felt excluded.

A, a psychology graduate student, was "volunteered" to be our chairman (or whatever we called it in those days). He organized a council of one person from each team to help with the drudge work, and that seemed to work fairly well

We had a number of problems. Very little publicity was put out, leaving us with a lot of workers and nothing to do. Our main business was very wordy weekly meetings at a commune. New people kept coming to every meeting, demanding to know what we were doing, and then arguing with us about our ideas. We got very frustrated because we could never go ahead with our own planning or develop a steady sense of who we were. I know the new people were frustrated because we wouldn't really "get with them," and there was so little action. A few people were willing to stick around and help us struggle through.

Winter, 1971: Steady business begins

Toward the end of the fall, our publicity finally appeared in the Chicago underground paper, the SEED. We advertised that we were willing to talk with people about all sorts of problems and gave five phone listings which were people's home numbers. When we had originally made this plan, the idea was that the person answering the phone would then refer callers to different people on his permanent team as needed.

However, when the calls began coming through, the teams had dissolved through disuse. What happened then was that the person taking the call would check around with the Changes people he knew to do the follow up. The result was that the phone people were very overworked, as were their friends, but that new people didn't get much of a chance to do much.

There was another coordination problem: some people would call several of the numbers and run through their problem again and again. We didn't have any system for sharing that information except at the next meeting, and then it was often too late to do anything constructive.

There were other organizational problems. A said he had to quit the leadership position because he needed to study for prelims. No-one wanted to take his place, and we began to hassle leadership responsibility issues again. Some people wanted a coordinator.

One thing that pleased us during the winter was that we really were functioning as a resources network. The girl we worked with so intensively brought a friend of hers to Changes who brought other people who helped with things. One of these kids wanted therapy which was arranged within Changes. A friend of my roommate's was having marital difficulties and stayed with us a while. Someone in Changes was able to offer her counseling. Later she was able to help us cut red tape in getting the original girl on welfare. It seemed that the idea of mutual help within a circle of friends was really possible.

Spring, 1971: Hassled business

Changes continued to have a lot of calls and see many people during the spring. It also became a majority group opinion that we were getting swamped in our current state of loose organization and needed some structure. We began to look seriously for a place to live in and a person to be coordinator. In considering whether to move into a place or not we were worried that "placeness" would substitute for "groupness." When we weren't bound to a room, we had to always think of ourselves as people, rather than an institution. The fear was that, if we found a home somehow, Changes would become a non-living, dead structure. The urgent need to have a central phone overrode this concern.

We also began looking for a coordinator, hoping to find a person who would take a subsistence salary made up of donations from Changes members, while looking for money to really support him/herself. There were a number of issues that developed. One was a notion of what this person would do for Changes. There was real concern that having a central person would mean that we would be taken over and lose our autonomy...The idea of one person having authority over the group didn't feel at all right.

We settled on the idea of a coordinator who would somehow organize the administrative work and look for funding. We were able to relax some of our fears

by deciding that the group would be responsive to the coordinator and, if he/she was doing things the group didn't like, the group could just let him know.

We were looking for someone with some background in working with people in a close way (clinical training) plus administrative capacities. Within the group was one woman, C, who wanted the job. She was a graduate student in Chemistry who had done a lot of administrative stuff for student groups but hadn't had much opportunity to learn close interaction skills. There was a lot of tension between people who felt that, since she wanted to do the job, we shouldn't judge and should let her try, and others who felt that C wasn't qualified. There was real unease about how C dealt with her own feelings and how we had seen her relate to others. There was also fantastic unease in saying anything straight to her.

This made it very clear that the group really wasn't "open" in a sense that we could give feedback to each other without fear of hurting. A few of us were finally able to make our reservations clear and, of course, it wasn't a disaster. C could hear us very well. We then spent a great deal of time looking for someone to do the coordinating to no avail and finally gave the job to C anyway. Though partly out of expediency, this was also done with the agreement that C would get some real backing and training on "getting with people" skills.

C took the job with the agreement that she would do it through the summer. What she did was jump in energetically, get us involved in a number of activities, and then she pooped out. She was in a bad place personally, felt she couldn't handle the job, and wanted to get to California. C's cycle reflected what was happening with the rest of the group also.

We had made the decision to move to a place and been offered a room at the Blue Gargoyle. By looking at our numbers, we felt that we had enough people to man a 24-hour phone. So, we had the phones put in and kept trying to pull together a phone schedule. Every time we tried, we only came up with odds and ends. It seemed as if we had jumped in enthusiastically, only to find us a mirage when we tried to get real commitments. It was almost as if the push toward structure and organization, with the commitment this implied, was too heavy for people, and they beat a hasty retreat.

The other side of a structure issue was a self-conscious push toward greater intimacy in the group. I can't remember which came first, but there were two events which really affected our group process. One was that we had a meeting out at a beach house. As usual, not everyone came, but those who did spent the day relating in a way that had never happened before. We played frisby, made sand sculptures, and really got to know each other. When we finally had a meeting, it was very productive.

The other incident was a regular Sunday meeting at which there was very open talk about how exhausted people were of doing things for others, and at how we never did anything for ourselves. We dredged up our earliest memories of

Changes, remembering that the group had been formed because we wanted to have fun with each other and build a network/community of people who would support each other as well as outside people. I remember very clearly that H said wistfully, "The other day, I needed a ride somewhere but didn't feel that I could call anyone because rides should be saved for people we are helping."

We had a long talk about this and essentially reaffirmed our number one commitment to each other. There was a great feeling of warmth, caring, and goodwill. In this atmosphere, M and C, who had had a long-standing misunderstanding, were able to work this out with a small group of people supporting them. The end result of this meeting was planning a party for the next Sunday.

The next Sunday, no-one showed for the party, and very few people came to the meeting which followed. It became clear from that that, although people could be a community, they didn't necessarily want it and weren't really ready for it. Just like the rush for structure resulted in no-one wanting to be counted, the rush for community made people withdraw.

This was a very clear example of the desire and fear of intimacy and commitment and how these opposing needs affect our process. When I talked with people later about the Sunday debacle, it was clear that, although people in theory wanted "community," it wasn't clear to them that they wanted Changes as that community. For the first time, a few people at least looked openly at how they saw Changes people. For myself, I had to ask, "Did I want to be a community with people whose cultural and intellectual backgrounds are so different than mine?"

Most of the people in Changes I felt friendly to but didn't consider as my friends, nor did I want them as my friends. Did I really want to make commitments to this group? I wasn't sure and, evidently, a lot of other people weren't either. I think one could say there was an elitist edge to this, to say the least. I think there were other side concerns, such as time availability, some people not being big on community anyway, old tensions between people that had never been resolved, etc.

On top of all these organizational hassles, we were learning a lot about people. We came up with the chronic caller problem which again was difficult to handle because we didn't have a central way to coordinate. One of these callers was a man who was interested in women's clothes and who wanted to masturbate over the phone. The issue of what one's own boundaries and values are as opposed to the caller's was raised by this. We were also learning from this that there were definitely people who were really "using" us, who just wanted to run their problem through over and over and didn't want to change (how come that's a surprise each time?)

A major input that spring was that L and I went to a radical therapy conference in Washington which helped us see what other people were doing. I think that part of

the pressure toward community came from us when we came back. A number of us were talking about making a commune together, but we never got that together.

The spring ended in pretty much a disaster. We didn't have a coordinator. Absolutely everyone whose phone number was advertised was leaving town. After having had the phones installed (and someone running up a big long-distance bill), we weren't together enough to use them, and then we found out the Blue Gargoyle was closing for the summer. We were down to about 12 people and feeling very shaky.

Summer, 1971: Strategic retreat

Two things happened which set the tone for the summer.

One was that, during the late spring, a number of new people joined Changes who had considerable enthusiasm and energy. Apparently, our shaky condition did not daunt them, and they were very open about taking on responsibility for Changes work. People agreed to go to meetings, do publicity, etc. It seemed as if the process was reincarnation rather than death.

The second event was that in my anxiety, focusing more on the negative rather than positive events, I jumped in as a Changes leader. I had a vested interest in keeping us afloat and, though I didn't have the time {I was in the last quarter of my internship), I nudged us along.

It was the most expedient approach. In retrospect, I think we would have survived had I not done this. However, I'm not sure it was that harmful until the end of the summer. As people took over more and more responsibility, I should have let go more control, and I am afraid I was a bit slow, I will return to this.

What we decided to do was have a different phone number for different nights of the week. It turned out that we had only four people who could volunteer a night, so we operated on Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday nights. Unfortunately, again the Seed had trouble getting our numbers straight, so it was late summer before we got many calls.

What was remarkable about this summer was that people didn't feel lousy that we had gone from such a full-scale operation to doing so little. The group was small but felt really good about us. Reality, that we couldn't do much, didn't hurt.

One reason people felt good was that we were doing a lot for ourselves. The phone nights evolved into work and party nights. People would drop by the house of the phone person, and we would eat, talk, do some training, listen to music, etc. It was one of the first times that people had a chance to get to know each other. Another good vibe was another beach outing that people again enjoyed as a chance to have fun.

During the summer, representatives from Changes were working with people from a network of youth agencies in Chicago to try to get funding. We originally had begun the search for money for a coordinator and to pay for the phones, but, as the possibility of money came closer, it became more of an open question as to what we wanted the money for. Although I am not familiar with all the ins and outs of our funding game, apparently it was at times a painful process, and a great deal of wheeling and dealing went on. What finally evolved was that the Playboy Foundation agreed to fund a city-wide help switchboard (Metrohelp) which would in tum fund local switchboards and backup centers and services.

We were being considered for funding as one of the local switchboards. The money issues raised a lot of questions for us - did we want to tag ourselves as a switchboard and meet the commitments that were implied (eventual 24-hour service), did we want to take money from the Playboy Foundation at all, what did we want the money for, anyway? A lot of tension was brought into the group through suspicions about the people with whom we were negotiating. A number of people in the group were quite angry, feeling we were getting screwed, and upset, while others couldn't understand what the fuss was about.

After quite a bit of heat, the issue was resolved. We worked out an agreement with Metrohelp that we would essentially keep doing what we had been and attempt to work toward a large phone hour commitment. People felt fairly satisfied that we wouldn't be forced to become something we weren't. After some hassling with the Blue Gargoyle coffeehouse, we worked out an agreement with them about our relationship. The anger and distrust that was directed outside the group seemed resolved.

We did not get enough money to fund a coordinator in any realistic way. In the meantime, the issue was raised again about whether we wanted a coordinator. Most of the older Changes people, including most of the original "organics," wanted a coordinating person, while many of the new ones didn't, again raising the concern that people should do what they want to and, if we are really interested in Changes, we will all pitch in and see that it happens.

I was offered a one-half time job starting sometime in the fall with the Depot, which was a family conference center around the corner from the Blue Gargoyle. This job would offer me one day a week to "coordinate the Depot with Changes." Thus, I would have the time to be coordinator if l was wanted. We had a big fight about both the principles and personals (unfortunately, much mushed together).

Finally, we got more together by being really open. This eventually worked out to the group offering to support me during October while I was waiting for the job and understanding that I would then be a fifth-time coordinator.

September was a slow time with a number of people gone and others working on getting us ready to move into the Blue Gargoyle. People were working on painting

the room, making plans for decorating, getting the phones ordered, etc. Although we were not doing much phone business, several groups of people were working with individuals during the summer.

Looking back, the summer was really a time for regrouping. For the most part, there was relaxed coping with the current situation, lack of work, and use of the time to get to know ourselves. The ongoing intimacy vs. distance tension seemed to have been temporarily resolved toward greater tolerance of intimacy. The question of funding had made us reconsider the whole purpose of Changes and, after almost throwing the whole process up for grabs, we had opted in favor of more structure - getting a coordinator, having definite phone nights. We also said we had to have more talk about our philosophy and purposes - maybe we grabbed at the structure because it was the simplest thing. Our discussions of why we wanted a coordinator or what we wanted Changes to do usually bogged down. The one clear thing I remember was saying that we didn't want to make too many commitments about the phone because we wanted to do the backup of getting with people in person.

Note: see the next article by Jean Rickert on Year Two and the transition from phone crisis hotline to Listening/Focusing peer counseling community.

Jean A. Rickert, History of Changes in the past year

In the summer of 1971 when I first came to Changes there were perhaps a few more than a dozen people who were greatly involved with the idea of Changes and had been trying to make it work in each other's homes for the past year. It had apparently been a struggle at times but there was still an enthusiasm and what one person described as a freshness or a softness he had not found anywhere else in an organization.

As the fall approached we were faced with the possibility of getting some money or funding to carry on more effectively. Some of us felt a need for more leadership to get more coordinated and we wanted to pay one or two of our members to give them the time to do this for us. Yet there was also a lot of hesitation about the money, fearing it would spoil our freshness and leave
us with heavy obligations we did not want.

When the fall did come we accepted the money, hired two "coordinators", moved into a small office in a church and expanded our crisis phone service to cover every night of the week. New people joined us and we actually got some teams together to work on the phones. The "coordinators" did get us some more organized with ourselves as well as with other resources in the community. Having a place to come regularly seemed to be a big help and we tried to decorate it so that we would like coming there. All in all, most of us felt pretty good about the way things were going in the fall.

Yet somehow, we had not yet learned how to really listen to each other and be a community so we went through some bad times. We had weekly meetings which were generally miserably long business meetings with lots of arguing. Eventually we decided we did not want to have "coordinators" any more and even did not want any business meetings at all. Business would be handled it was decided, by whoever wanted to show up ahead of the regular meetings to discuss it, but in our regular meetings we would have none of it.

At first having banished the business meeting we did not know quite what to do in its place. The business did get handled all right outside of the regular meetings because a group of concerned persons volunteered for various jobs that had to be done and formed a council which did come early and got business done fast. In our regular meetings, we seemed to need some sort of structure to relate around yet obviously the business meetings had not been the right thing.

Finally, by the winter some of us got our heads together and decided to get some people with skills to come in and teach us how to listen and do the things we wanted to do. Gene Gendlin did a 10-week listening training series for us followed by another series led by Joe Noel in the spring. Gene's thing really got us together again and drew a lot of new people in. Joe's thing continued the listening training in groups and pairs with a focus on community development. A sense of community did seem to arise among us from meeting in the same small groups

each week and taking the time to listen to each other. Becoming a community also seemed to become a more explicit goal again.

With the crisis phone all this time we seemed to be going through cycles. We would be getting lots of calls for a while and be kept hopping trying to help with all the problems and then calls would drop off and teams would sit by silent phones and people would quit because they got bored. Then we would get some more publicity out and the phones would start ringing again and we would scramble around trying to get teams together to handle it all.

From time to time covering the phones got to be such a hassle that we talked about not "doing the phones" anymore. We did not want to do a bad job with them and we did need to put energy into getting with each other and working out our own problems. Most of us figured we had about as many problems to deal with ourselves as did the people who phoned us. Yet we also felt that we needed to do the phones and really wanted to if we could just get organized enough to do a good job with them. So we struggled on with them with one person after another taking responsibility to try to keep them covered.

One of the exciting developments of this last year was that a lot of us did learn how to start "listening" to each other and taking time for this outside of the regular meetings. Some of us were able to pair off and trade listening time with an agreement like "I'll listen to you for an hour and then you listen to me." Others of us just felt more free to ask for someone to "listen" to us when we needed it and to agree to do this when someone else asked.

Another important development was the development of a women's group by several women in Changes. In this group women were able to share common feelings and issues and here again took time to "listen" to each other. A men's group also developed which has been important for a few. The women's group grew by leaps and bounds as women became more aware of common issues and found that the group could be an important source of support and growth.

Throughout the year there has been a continual high rate of turnover among the people in Changes. Sometimes this is a great source of fresh energy but sometimes it is difficult to absorb new people. Old people leave generally because they are leaving town or burying themselves in writing a dissertation. Many new people do not stay long enough to become involved. Sometimes they probably discover we just were not what they were looking for. Other times they must feel like we did not give them enough of a welcome.

Where are we now? There may be perhaps a bit more continuity in membership though not much. Some of our old leadership is leaving us. We still have diffic u1ty absorbing new people but we still need and want new people. We still have a struggle sometimes trying to cover the phones and do them well. The women's group seems to be growing very important and a second one has just been formed. It seems about time we have another listening training series. During the

summer, we have had a variety of programs and listening training has been carried on some informally by concerned individuals. Generally, though we seem to be in a much more solid place. There seems to be more of a consensus among us that we want to be a community to each other and that "listening" is an important part of being this.

Ann Weiser Cornell, A rough History of Focusing

(Notes on the concomitant development of Changes by Kathy McGuire shown indented and in blue.)

Subj: Re: [FOCUSING-DISCUSS] :Re: history of stages of focusing
Date:7/9/99 10:51:15 PM Central Daylight Time
From: Awcomell@aol.com
Reply-to: focusing-discuss@rivertown.net
To: focusing-discuss@rivertown.net

Dear Neil,
Good idea! Let's do a timeline, "History of Focusing". I'll put in what I know or think I know, others add or make corrections.
195?: Gendlin writes Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning
195?-6?: Gendlin's research on successful psychotherapy, leads to development of the Experiencing Scale, and Focusing
1964: publication of classic paper by Gendlin, E. T., Beebe, J., Ill, Cassens, J., Klein, M., and Oberlander, M. "Focusing Ability in Psychotherapy, Personality, and Creativity." This paper summarizes the research, and gives a version of Focusing instructions to be read to a client.
1969: Experiencing scale training manual published. Gendlin's paper "Focusing" published in Psychotherapy, Research and Practice, VI, 1.

May 4, 1970: first meetings of what will become Changes. Response to Kent State massacre.

1971: "Changes" started in Chicago by Kristin Glaser, Linda Olsen, Kathy McGuire, and others. (Elfie, were you in this group?) Changes was started as a crisis hotline, a phone for people to call who needed help and support in their lives. The Sunday evening meetings started as training for people answering the phones. They became a place to learn and exchange Focusing and listening skills on a peer basis.

1971: Changes peer counselling community formalized.

1972: A linguistics graduate student starts going to Changes meetings (me). Her teachers there include Elfie Hinterkopf and Les Brunswick. Joining at the same time: Jim Iberg.
1973 - 1976: Gendlin in New York. The "steps" are being developed. The collection of writing which will become the book *Focusing* is assembled. Neil Friedman gets on board.

1974 – 1978: Changes International Conferences

1978: Publication of *Focusing* in hardcover.
197?: Gene Gendlin asks Doralee Grindler to create a Focusing Institute and be its Director. Reva Bernstein works with Doralee to create the first Focusing training program.

Elfie Hinterkopf travels to Germany and Japan.

1979: Kathy McGuire and Zack Boukydis found Center for Supportive Community to carry on the Changes model.

1979: Gendlin travels to Japan. Focusing training begins in Japan, led by Takao

Murase, Shoji Murayama, and Akira lkemi.
1980: Weekend Focusing workshops begin, six times a year. Assistants for these workshops are called "trainers." They include: Doralee, Reva, Bebe Simon, Mary McGuire, Ann Weiser. (Who else?)
1981: publication of *Focusing* as a paperback by Bantam. Publication of Jim lberg's article "Focusing" in Corsini's *Handbook of lnnovative Psychotherapy*.

1981: Publication of Kathy McGuire's *Building Supportive Community: Mutual Self-Help Through Peer Counselling*.

198?.: The journal, *The Focusing Folio*, begins publication.
198?: Mary McGuire takes over from Doralee as Director of the Focusing Institute, which incidentally has no location and no budget. Mary dreams of finding a location for the Institute.
1983: Ann begins analyzing linguistically what the trainers are doing, offers the first workshop on "guiding."
1984: Having moved to California, Ann starts publishing the first Focusing newsletter in English, *The Focusing Connection*, in order to stay in touch.

1984: Publication of Kathy McGuire's *The Experiential Dimension in Therapy*

Summer 1984: The first advanced Focusing weekend is given in Chicago, attended by Bala Jaison. Bala and Mary McGuire begin to brainstorm about creating a weeklong Focusing retreat.
1985: First weeklong. Publication of Peter A. Campbell and Edwin M. McMahon's *Bio-Spirituality: Focusing as a Way to Grow*.
1986: Publication of Gendlin's *Let Your Body Interpret Your Dreams*.
1989: Ann attends a weeklong, is inspired by a presentation by Reva and Lakme Elior on "Steps and Skills." Begins to change her teaching from "six steps" to other ways.
1991 - 1993: Ann publishes three editions of *The Focusing Student's Manual* and *The Focusing Guide's Manual*.
199?: The Focusing Institute moves to New York, Mary Hendricks Gendlin takes over from Janet Klein and Mary McGuire as Director.
1995: Publication of Neil Friedman's *On Focusing*.
1996: Publication of Gendlin's *Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapy*. Publication of Ann's *The Power of Focusing*.
199?: Publication of Elfie's *Integrating Spirituality in Counseling: Using the Experiential Focusing Method*.

A very biased timeline. We need others to add to this. A lot happened with Focusing in Germany and Switzerland, very early, but I don't know the details or the dates. Apologies to whoever l've left out, please add yourself in.

Also, I'm aware Neil that you were talking about "stages" of Focusing, actual differences in how Focusing is presented. In my timeline, I'm trying to get down the "events." I think we'll find that the "stages" grow out of the events, especially the people involved and how they learned and taught.
Love,
Ann

Part Seven: Beyond roles

Eugene Gendlin, Beyond roles

The capacity to sense into oneself and articulate what is there is not only important in a private way. It has great implications for how we structure our living with others, and how we are in social structures. I would like to present a way of thinking about that.

After discussing this question broadly, I want to turn to certain specific aspects of how Changes is organized. These specific points, which I also list at the end of this paper, are an *organizational model*. I think the model or at least some of it can be usefully applied in many places.

Part 1: Toward living roles

People today, especially with focusing and listening, are becoming able to sense their own experience much more directly. When they do, they discover that the usual boxes, concepts, categories and labels, don't fit well at all. The usual words and phrases don't get at what a person really feels - it is always more specific and part of a finer texture. To say or think what one feels, what one lives, takes being inventive with language. It's beyond the usual trite words.

Not only is this true of our feelings, but also of our living - how we are in our situations. That's because feelings are really our inside sense of what we are living. Situations these days don't come in routines, each one needs special handling.

This is because our "roles" have changed, yes. But they have not only *changed*, they have also become much more *specifically unique*. They haven’t changed from this to that role. Rather, they have changed from easily understood but stultifying "roles" to confusing complexities which each of us must get into directly felt touch with, and which each of us must struggle with.

We can say that this is a tremendous historical development of the human individual! Rather than consisting of canned routines and handed-down roles, each person develops beyond that. It is a new and more real kind of inward in-touchness, a new and deeper way of being alive. Our time is an exciting era to be alive in. *What is it to be human* is developing another whole step.

But this development is also pretty rough on all of us and pretty spotty! And there is still a lot of confusion. Most people are not yet at the point where they can easily sense down into themselves and come up with some creative expression and improvisation of living that will work out. That's an understatement, I know from my own experience! I am not at that point either. I don't know anyone personally who is. Let us look ahead a little and imagine a world in which focusing and sensing oneself will be easier, and improvisations of how to live will be more

common and expected. How can we even think about such a world?

The concepts today are still those from before this development. Theories still view humans as a bundle of handed-down roles. Personality is supposed to consist of "traits." Psychology teaches psychological contents, little packages, factors, inner thing-like boxes. But these are much too general and empty compared to the rich texture we find inwardly! Yet, the concepts and words we have are still the old ones.

Therefore, even social change is being talked about as a change in roles from this role to that role. Women will take men's roles, or all the roles will change, but into what? Other roles. New roles.

A new kind of role

Are people *only* roles? A truer philosophy of people recognizes them as processes, not as bundles of role patterns. In the papers in this book on Focusing we have seen the details of a process that alternates between outward patterns (roles, words, actions) and inward feeling and sensing. Through this alternation, newly made acts and words can be fashioned *from* what one feels and senses into.

This means that it wouldn’t be enough to change our roles from this to that, if we are in the new roles in the same put-on, constricted, unalive way we were in the old roles. Unless there can be this creative alternation, this "zig-zag" from what is done or said to feeling, and again from feeling to something new, one profits little by changing from one role to another. The new roles can be as oppressive as the old ones were.

For example: Jeff's place is a commune with a lot of very young people. Jeff and Beth are a little older and have a five-year-old girl. They believe in new patterns, especially multiple sexual relationships, and sincerely share the view that the old monogamy game is an empty routine in which one shouldn't be stuck. In a general discussion, they agree on "values," but if they go a little deeper into their experience, then they feel a lot of rather different detail about these values. Jeff works in the city to bring the money that keeps the commune going and pays off the debts. On his job he meets people, some women, and it seems inhuman and artificial, he says, to cut such relations off at the sexual point, especially when one or another really meaningful relation develops. Sometimes, also, he brings such a woman to the commune to stay for a while.

Beth is seeking other relationships but not yet finding them. Beth stays mostly in the commune where everyone is younger, and with Margie, their five-year-old. She says there are times when she doesn’t know if Jeff won’t just leave, and leave her with all the eighteen-year-olds and Margie, or worse, take Margie away too. She won't let herself wish back to the old monogamy, she'd rather go forward to something new, if she could find someone. Once or twice she thought she did but Jeff interfered and managed to stop it, and *that* gets her mad. Jeff says she's right

but he hasn’t been able to help doing that. Really, he wishes she'd find someone. She doesn’t like it very well that that’s what he wishes, either. She doesn't want just another monogamous relation, that would be the old dependence. She is into women's things and wants to reject that. It certainly hasn't worked. Right now, Jeff is going to be half time out of the house and things feel pretty bad, but when he's here with some other woman it doesn't feel OK either. Either way she feels hurt.

This is an example of two people who both believe in a new role pattern and the abstract values that go with that pattern. Yet, I would argue that these people are in this new pattern just in the same way they were in the old one. The pattern came to them as an invented pattern, "multiple sexual relationships." It also fitted the economic situation of him working, and her staying at home. Home is now something very different, yet it's again a trap for the woman, making it much harder for her than for him to find these abstractly talked about multiple relations. The economic situation makes it "natural" for him to pursue such relations, and "artificial" for him to cut them off. For her, the reverse is the case and she has to work to find someone, and she has to fight being dependent on him. While she would sincerely like and value being in the new pattern, so that it isn't forced on her against her values, it goes all the same against her organism and felt sensing of what’s what. If she lays out this felt sensing, a different and much more detailed texture of things emerges, than the abstract value. This pattern is forced on her, by him and her. It has so far failed to fit or to carry her living in it forward.

Superficially, Jeff, on the other hand, seems to have it all his way. This also isn't true. It ignores his need to relate deeply, which can't very well happen in a pattern in which one person's living is made to be blocked. In doing these things without her lively experiential approval (although with her verbal approval) he can no longer live a moving process with Beth really - only with this stuck Beth. Not that there aren't days and nights of discussing and working on the issues and so on, but that’s mostly so hard and unrewarding as to become a duty, not a living. A close relationship that moves is also hard, but it is constantly rewarding, one gets less tired of it than of anything else. Just working on stuckness that stays stuck is unrewarding and painful.

Had they both in their mutual process come to a choice of multiple relations, that would have been something else. Before that could even begin, and anyone could get hurt, the problem of how to make it equally possible for Beth to meet new people would have had to come up. In a real process also, both would have come to know deeply what they could and could not fear from each other, as Beth now fears either losing Margie or getting stuck with her. Trust between people isn't just some general thing you're supposed to have when you can't feel it; trust comes from taking steps into both people’s feeling-detail so that they can feel each other, and so that what is said and done flows from that. They might have agreed to the very same general role pattern, but in a very different way. They would then have been in that pattern in a different way of being in a role.

But it wouldn't be the same role, quite, if it had been arrived at *in a process way*. It would only look the same. The reason it would be different is that if the moves are made from out of both people's sensing (or even one person's - because one does sense both people's situations to some extent). Then each such move would be modified in detail, would have the odd special unique specificity each person needs. Then Jeff would be saying that he relates to other women in just such and such a specific way that Beth can stand, and that Beth relates to that in just such and such ways that he can stand, and vice versa. People differ greatly on these unique details. For example, one person needs every detail of the other's outside relations shared, while another person may feel all right about such relations only if they are never mentioned. What a person will feel violated by isn't as simple as the breaking of monogamy, but very special to that person and that person's interaction with that other person.

But with all this we are not saying that multiple sexual relations will work, if done in the experiential manner, because we have never seen that pattern really work, and we have often seen it fail. Neither are we saying that it cannot work. We argue that new roles, if we are entering into them in the old forced-onto-us way, cannot work much better than the old roles. We also argue that the new roles we are looking for will be found only if we look for them by developing their form and detail from out of the at first clearly felt detail of our sentence, in accord with which we then modify and specify them.

Such a new type of role would still be a role. At least from a distance it would still look like a repetitious recognizable pattern, but it would be different because inside it, it would not only be *developed from* experiential detail, but to carry out the role would always *be* a process of role-feeling-role alternation. For instance, not only can two people develop their specific pattern of multiple relationships, but that very pattern involves them in being sensitive to each other and mutually devising each new specific situation. Otherwise how could they really live closely with each other (the multiple relations pattern is supposed to be a pattern of one's closest relationships)?

Thus, it can be said that the new way of being in roles will itself be a kind of role. It is OK to say that, as long as it's clear that it's different in kind from the way old roles were. Old roles did not involve, in fact prevented, that kind of getting into oneself and each other, that kind of continuous adjusting and changing.

If the new way of being in roles *is* a role, then it is a role in a more general over-all sense. What used to be "role," the specifics on what you say and do, now varies. The how of its varying, by sensing into oneself for one's next step, that "how" would be the new role.

Instead of describing only the content (the what is done and said) of the role, we would now be less specific about the greatly varying always new content, which we could only describe in broad outline. However, we would describe the role also as the kind of process it is, the "zig-zag" of outward-inward alternation.

Anthropologists a hundred years ago thought they could find out what human nature really is, by collecting information from all the different cultures and finding out what is common. This information is now largely in, and the answer is: next to nothing is in common! There doesn't seem to be anything such as a human nature, according to these findings. People have much less in common than any other species of animals. Any species of animals, wherever in the world they are found, all feed the same way and mostly on the same food, build the same kind of nests, and have the same kind of mating patterns and action patterns. Human's don't.

So, if we take roles and patterns to be our nature, then there is no human nature but only a welter of different roles and patterns.

The anthropologist Victor Turner (The Ritual Process) holds that breaking roles is utopian, if one wants to be permanently beyond roles. He says, however, that there is such a thing, but it occurs between one set of roles and another. He explains ritual as this between, and describes many instances of a ritual being the way in which someone is entered into a new role. For example, in initiations toward becoming adult men, boys are taken into the woods and there are led to interact in ways that contradict all their previous roles. Turner views this as a breaking down of roles to a "lowest common denominator," and also describes the great intimacy which develops. Turner views these as necessarily temporary situations, after which everyone is again in their (new)roles.

Turner is sure that anything beyond roles can only be the temporary breakdown of roles. If permanent it would be chaos, nothing, no society. And, if you think of anything formed (actions, interactions, words, etc.) as formed one way or another, then anything beyond roles would at best be sitting silently doing nothing, perhaps feeling strongly. Or is there, somewhere, an example of people living beyond roles?

Can we, perhaps, find an example of people living beyond roles, not as a temporary breakdown, and not in silence and inaction or chaos, but rather in a continual process of freshly forming words and actions?

Psychotherapy is often exactly like this. But until now psychotherapy has been thought of as temporary, as "not real life," as an interlude, after which the person is able to function in existing patterns. This old view makes therapy temporary and unreal. But the kind of process therapy is, need not be temporary and it is very real.

Here is another example of living beyond roles: although rare, there are some close relationships in which what people do and say is taken directly from how they feel, rather than what their roles prescribe. Such relations are called "intimate," but that word is also used for love relationships, and we do not necessarily mean those because often they are as role-determined as any others.

We mean the kind of relationship in which "taking a role" would be felt as withdrawing from the relationship. Friendship is somewhat like that. If you start to act a role, you put your friend off. But most friendships are role-determined in what goes on (doing certain things together, discussing certain topics and in certain ways). If one is fortunate, one has, or has had, in all of one's life perhaps one or two relationships in which what one said and did was made from oneself, from the yet unclearly felt insides, newly. But there *are* such relationships.

In such a relationship, one does not express what fits best, one does not do or say only what is supposed to go here, or come next, but whatever rises up in one and is next. One responds from what just then is inside, rather than from what one wishes were there. Or, if one struggles to be a certain way one isn't yet, then one lets the struggling be visible and known to the other person. To relate in this way makes each bit of relating something that has never before happened in the history of the world.

Experientially-based relationships

To understand psychotherapy and "intimate" relationships (in this sense of "intimate") requires that we understand that in each person, any moment, there is a level of feeling which isn't just this or that, which isn't just an emotion or a thought or anything that is clearly patterned. Rather, this level of feeling is a complex maze of very many implicit aspects that are not clearly known and have never been separated or sorted out. When speaking and action is conducted from that level, what is said and done is uniquely formed, and new, and not a repeating or role patterns.

Without going into oneself in this way one could only "take positions," that is to say, one can only present some role pattern, some canned and already known way of acting or saying. Even in our best love relationships we often take positions, we express what we think we ought to express. We try to be how women or men should be, and do not nakedly show ourselves. Indeed, to show ourselves takes not only overcoming fear and justified mistrust, it also takes the effort of entering into our own unclearly felt inside, something many people can't imagine and don’t know how to do. (We presented very specific steps of doing that in the Focusing Section of this book.)

Role behavior and avoidance, covering up, occur very swiftly, often before we even had a chance to see how we do feel. We express what we consider right (according to some role or pattern we believe in), and only that, instead of coming to know what we feel.

Or, we express what we really feel in so far as it fits, but not the rest. Or, we express what most promises to save the situation, regardless of what we do feel. In the split second between feeling and saying we change it, select it. For example, if the other person says something that threatens the relationship, we quickly say whatever promises to make it better, rather than whatever we do feel

(which is, for example, that what the person said scares us, because it threatens the relationship).

And, even if we are "completely honest," this is only saying what is right there. There is much more, if instead of taking only what is on top, we are willing to enter into that level of feeling which is not as yet clearly this or that. Only by doing so can one be honest in a meaningful way. Honesty isn't just saying every unexamined thing that comes to mind, since only some things, and often one-sided ones, are immediately clear. One must enter into what is felt and not yet clear, and allow that to open itself up and to see what is in that.

One does not necessarily do what one feels like doing - one allows what one feels to come up, which often changes it minutes later. One step leads to the next and then the third; often we cannot anticipate at the first step what the third will be like. Therefore, there is a flow and movement, so that what seems a hopeless thing at one point, opens up and changes and becomes several quite other things only a few minutes later. Without this process, there is often no way to move through stuck places, so that what could alter in a few minutes becomes instead the permanent condition of the relationship for however long the relationship lasts. To make this process happen, definite and specific ways are required (many of which are described in this book).

The reason why going into what is felt and not yet clear has this power of getting bad situations unstuck, is because much of what we sense and feel is already interactional, it is already by one person toward the other. So, to remove it from the relationship and keep it covered insures that the interaction cannot get beyond it.

In the kind of "intimate" relationship we mean, each person at least sometimes, goes into the feeling mesh that is there, and can say or do from it at least some of what is found there, so that, during such times, nothing is canned, nothing is routine, new forms of speech and action have to be invented. This kind of sensing into oneself, and expressing, moves beyond the older roles. It is a "zig-zag" between felt inwardness and roles.

Not all relationships need be "intimate”. Often that won’t be what we want at all. We are using the "intimate" kind of relation as an example, first to illustrate that something other than roles is possible. Shortly, we will apply the zig-zag structure to other kinds of relationships.

It had seemed impossible that there would be anything but roles and patterns, or else silence and inaction. Now it turns out that living beyond roles is possible. How was the puzzle solved? It was solved, not by an absence of words and actions, but by a constantly new invention of words and actions. And how was this constant or frequent invention of words and acts possible? It was by sensing into oneself between these words and the next, or between this bit of action or interaction, and the next bit.

It is now interesting to note that Turner, who considered living beyond roles as an impossibility except as a temporary interlude between roles, reported the great intimacy which develops between those temporarily de-roled people! He thought of this as *less* than roles, as a "least common denominator." What if, instead, we think of it as *more*, so that instead of repeating the same few, canned, role-behaviors, these people invented new things to say and do, from their feelings. To put it perhaps too grandiosely, this is like inventing new culture every few minutes. To say this is to bring home that the process beyond roles is more, not less, than the few roles from which these people have been temporarily freed. Rather than not knowing what to say or do because the roles are gone, people can shape something directly from the feeling they now have, for nothing prevents them. The result of this, when done in interaction, is a closeness which no roles can give, for one comes into touch with another person's felt inwardness. The person, too, in such a relation, first comes to know inwardness in a way not previously known, as many facets come to be where only a hardly attended to, dull sense was before.

Human nature is therefore not any or all of those very different patterns we find in different places. It is not even an inward source of patterns, as if the new patterns and things to say and do were waiting there, to be noticed. Rather, the inside, too, stays dull and dumb or has only repetitious contents, unless it is lived out forward into new words and actions, or patterns.

How did we come to need such a role-sensing alternation? At one time, perhaps, the roles were sufficient for people and they did live fully forward in them. Perhaps long ago, when people found themselves wondering about their lives and anxious about it, they could say to themselves, "I am a ……, and a ……," and perhaps whatever they put into those blanks felt like it was them. Today this doesn't work for most people. The roles don't hold us up, they don't sustain us - we have to hold them up.

We hold up the roles, most of each day, and then we come exhausted to the one relationship we hope we can really live in - which puts a heavy load on that one relationship, if we even have such a relationship. It helps to see how unnaturally demanding we are in the one relationship, because in none of the others do we even expect to be ourselves. We get little experience of how to do that well and still leave room for the other person. The way we have roles now most of the time is to give up on sensing ourselves continuous with our felt living in the role. A few islands of such living are supposed to be enough for us, and we're lucky if we have them. Maybe most people don't.

From filled roles to empty roles to process

Perhaps in more traditional times the roles were not *empty*. The change might be due to industrialization. (Marx termed it "alienation"- people's lives do not express them anymore when people make products that will belong to others, when "work"

is not expressive of life but only of money, when large parts of each day are taken up with producing what is then taken away and "alienated" from the producer. In Marx's conception of human nature, work and making were natural expressions and manifestations of living, and the alienation unnatural.)

The literate individual of today has a great deal more capacity than can be exercised within the roles. Long ago the roles were a precious way of keeping, for the mass of people, the inventions only a few were capable of. To keep civilization, discoveries had to be routined so the mass of people could do them. Greater sensitivities than most people had would be enshrined in such roles. The roles were better than what people could have managed, had they innovated. Barbarism and breakdown were always just one backslide away. Today it's the other way around, people's abilities and sensitivities are far greater than what their roles structure them to do. Instead of enabling us to be human, as perhaps they once did, we feel roles as limitations on our humanity.

Our society has arrived at this development in very many ways. Old forms have been broken over and over again, a puzzling "zero point" has been reached, of nothingness, absurdity. Finally, a process is being discovered, in which there is neither straight-jacket form nor nothing, but a *process* in which there is not one controlling form, but rather an alternation. This development might be described as first a breaking of forms and roles, then a *zero point* where everything seems absurd, and then thirdly a process in which again all forms become usable, but not as before, not as *the* form of the living, and not singly as just one form. Rather as a process, a sequence, in which many forms are used and are only one side of an alternation, with the person's felt creativity being the other side.

Before I discuss institutions and the more specific institutional roles they involve, I want to say something about this sensing-form-sensing alternation *in general*. It applies to a lot of places, including the relation between logic and feeling. You can think of this basic idea as the process of form*ing* (instead of just forms), or pattern*ing* (instead of just patterns), or role-structur*ing* (instead of just role structure). Add, however, that such forming requires not mere inventing of patterns, but the felt sentience of human experiencing in its detail, between every form and the next ensuing one.

This is very different than going from one pattern to the next via logical thinking. It's also very different from staying in one form, or from having no form at all.

For instance, in art, in the last seventy years, there was first a movement to break old forms. Cubism and other types of painting, twelve tone scale in music - there was a breaking out of old forms. Then it got to be difficult to find any forms that hadn't already been broken down. A painter would have to come up with something form-breaking somehow (and still make a good painting, too). It got so painters threw paint at the canvas, and Cage played a tape recording of random traffic noises in the concert hall. Similarly, drama broke old forms, for instance the distinction between the actors and the audience (Gide), and went from this to no

forms at all, just the absurd (Ionescu). A nothing point is reached. It seems then, just as with person and role in our discussion, that without some patterning there isn't anything. It seems that form is all there is after all. Similarly, in religion there was first liberal reform and a breaking of old forms, and then nothing. When the forms break there is then a stage of zero.

Currently we are moving from forms and then nothing, to a process that employs many forms again, but in a new way - in a way that is experientially continuous rather than being continuous because of a form. Our music still has radically new sounds, but now they aren't just one strange noise after another, but sounds that follow in a continuity you can feel. Our poetry is again lyrical, and has left behind the days when only experts could read it. The poetry uses images from wildly different places in one poem, but it follows - you feel how it follows, it doesn't follow because it makes thought sense. An old-fashioned lyrical poem would be about a walk in the woods and everything in it would be imagery that fit the walk in the woods. Today what each image is about doesn't necessarily go with what the one before it was about, but the poem makes a continuous feeling process, and is not absurd. Frank Lloyd Wright, rather than staying with boxes and steel frameworks that all look like graph paper, one form, and also rather than building wildly as in Las Vegas, devises a new form for each building depending on its function (as in the Guggenheim building).

And people today do the same with religion. The forms, patterns, words, concepts, can come from very different and opposing religious systems, but it isn't any longer the forms themselves that matter, it is how they carry further the feeling process of the people who are in them. The way they carry that further makes it possible to combine forms that would contradict as forms and systems. It is as if, long ago, as Jung says, these forms encapsulated the real live collective process, and now we are liberating these forms to carrying that process forward again, rather than encapsulating it.

Psychology, too, must go this way - must leave off asserting this or that system of theoretical forms and concepts to people, and instead offer all the various forms it has to people's live sensing into themselves and carrying themselves forward with any of this vocabulary or some other. Psychology cannot be used to say what is in a person, it is only a welter of generalities, words and patterns that *can* be used, but only if used so that a person's direct sense always goes beyond them and corrects them and details them. Your hang-up isn't to be found in Freud's books, though you may fit into one category or another, along with six or eight million other people. From Freudian orthodoxy, psychology went to a large number of disagreeing theories and from that to pure emotionalism. But just emoting and screaming till you're tired doesn't do it either. There is a process, this way: *your* hang-up, now, can be found by you only if you can stand to let yourself gently down into your feel of your living, so that what then won't relax and sticks out can be found by you directly. A process of psychotherapy from that can only be one in which, step-by-step. what you say or think moves what you feel directly. Keep only those concepts which help that open and come apart, and which further the

complexity and richness of your ongoing living.

Therefore, in our group and in this book, we don't subscribe to any of the various definitions of what is crazy and what isn't, or what is good and what isn't, which can be found in psychology. A certain *process* can be defined, and is good, and only that process can tell one whether a given content is good or not, for this person, at this time.

Of course, if society is changing, psychology cannot adjust people to society as it is, to some one form. Rather, people can free themselves as much as possible to carrying forward their living and sensing, which is beyond the roles and forms and words and structures society offers. This doesn't mean that they do without words or forms, zero, nothing, or aren't in society, but that they move beyond any given form to further form via their sensing beyond a given form.

Today's literate developed population in an industrial society consists of more and more people who can do just that, whose sensing exceeds extant social patterns. This brings us to the discussion of social institutions and their needed new kind of pattern.

Institutions now, and the needed change

Organizations in the old pattern make nearly all of their members passive, only acting in some minimal role, which is far less than they are capable of. A small executive committee, by whatever name, is highly active and deplores (sometimes sincerely) the apathy of the members. Why don't more people come to church? How can we get the patients in the mental hospital into activities instead of sitting around? The teacher wonders how to "motivate" the students. Chain stores have suggestion boxes for the customers to participate in running the store. Political parties, even new movements, wonder how to get more people moving, the people whose interests they seek to advance.

It is clear now, however, that organizational structure and roles make members passive. The goings-on don't enable the members to live there, rather they must come and sit quiet and listen, or behave in some appropriate routine. There is no living process issuing into words or action, to be lived there.

The question is not that the members don't participate in "the decisions", so-called. If they were asked whether the meeting should be on Monday or Tuesday, or whether this speaker should be invited or that one, things would be no better. Hospitals will not change if the patients are permitted to decide if the TV is to be turned off at 10 or at 11. School isn't better if the kids are asked what they're interested in, and then made to prostitute that into writing a paper on it.

The question is how to make an organizational structure in which one can *live*. For this to be true, the activities the structure offers have to have something to do with people’s living. It isn't enough that they make decisions about what the

organization should do, if that is quite distant from their life needs, and from what must next happen for them in living. Sitting and listening to speakers is not usually one's next life step, nor is deciding which speakers should come. Neither are political abstractions, no matter how incisive, an immediate life step for anyone. Similarly, "work" while it pays and enables us to eat, is alienating for most people; what they do and make at work is not directly from or about their living. And even where the work is with people, and its very essence could be a living together, the roles so structure the work that there are narrow and forced limits and false fronts, behind which one must remain non-living.

Because of this, many people today can find no role that they can live in, and yet many of these old roles contain necessary dimensions of living. One doesn't want to go to school, but one wants learning. One can't stand it in church, but one may feel infinity. One doesn't want to work in agencies, but loves to relate to kids and work with them when they can be met on the street. One feels politics as a dimension of oneself without which one is truncated and locked into oneself, but no available action makes sense. One wants love and work, but the patterns for them don't do that which love and work should - they leave us alone within relationships, and without fruit despite much labor. All these are dimensions of anyone's living, and so these roles must change to lead these dimensions of people's living forward, instead of being separated from that. How? We have a few leads.

First of all, *within* an old type institution, the roles are divided, the division of labor assigns some people some role, others another role. People who could do all of these things are supposed to settle for just one. Now everyone may not be able to do each thing, but most people can do more than one. There is a way to let everyone do everything they wish and can.

Secondly, the institutions are divided *from one another*, so that one is a school and another a church, and a third is a work place. That way only just certain things are fitting in each place, and living cannot go on anywhere, because living involves more than these.

But you get to the same wish to combine and tear down the walls also on another road: what would be a really good school? It would not be the kids sitting and being told about something (by someone who hasn't actually seen it, either). There would be a chance to see directly what you are supposed to learn, and to relate to people who are doing it. So, you would have to have the adults who are doing it, and whatever they'd be doing would make the place not *just* a school.

What is the worst thing about a mental hospital? The isolation of the people in there from life, from work, from other people not just then troubled. To have such other people present would mean having the patients in a place that wasn't just a hospital.

In a summer camp for teenagers, the problem was that the kids liked none of the

activities very much. Everybody was freaked out and depressed and nothing appealed. There was only one trip they took that they liked, that was to the old age home five miles away. Kids kept on getting permission to go back there and talk more with the old people.

How would you run a good old people's home? Obviously by making it a summer camp for teenagers so the old people would have someone to talk to, and some impact and function in fresh living now happening.

So, to do any of these institutional functions well, you need more than just that one function. No person is really living forward by just one role. You'd have to be a doctor *and* a preacher *and* a farmer *and* a mechanic *and* a politician. These each take a lot of knowledge and experience, so that is obviously impossible, but let me talk a little longer about needing that.

People have a political and social dimension to them, and if they can't sense it something is missing for them. But this doesn't mean they need the sort of thing that goes on in political groups, it means that to change and build a world is something that's part of a person. To do that isn't only to take part in some social action we think may be effective (but it is that too), it is really to build the world, to act in a lot of ways to do that: to be able to organize some space around ourselves, to express ourselves into the way things are built around us, to build structures and institutions (not just come into them as they are already fixed forever), to help build a community and society.

Human beings *are* world-builders, the forms of space, sound, movement and interaction *are* the forms by which living is carried forward and into further living, because living is very largely interacting with others, with nature, with sound, and space and things that become made under our hands.

So both we, and our institutions, need to open the divisions between the different functions and to have more than one thing go on in one place. And we need it so that people make new patterns and structures, not merely get slotted into them. This is again the process of making forms from sentient life feeling, forms that carry it forward so that a further making can ensue from sensing into oneself. Life is structur*ing*, not just structure.

But what now is a different way of being a church or a school or a hospital or a work place, so that some of the above can begin to go on there? So that living can be carried forward there?

Of course, there have to be some people who know, or can come to know, how to do some of the specifics you need, but if you have that, then there can be other people doing other things. It's vital that those who know something are willing to share that knowledge with anybody that wants to try it (and also, that not everybody be required to learn it - see later). It's true that you might have to limit something somewhere, but maybe not along the old lines of doing only this and

not anything else, or having only people who are specialized in that and nothing else, only doing it in one place and nowhere else, and so on.

It is true that you aren't likely to have every function, but even four or five important ones are very different together, than separated. Room can be made for the living of the people there. But it wouldn't be only adding these slots one next to the other, it would be to let them all happen in that different way in which people are able to live forward in them.

Part 2: The Changes model of organization

Changes involves a number of organizational innovations that are in line with the preceding discussion. They are very specific. They do much more than illustrate what I have said. They introduce a new organizational model.

One example is that Changes uses neither the usual small executive clique which runs everything, nor participative democracy with its endless, boring, acrimonious decision-making meetings. Changes has a small group making decisions, but everyone is invited to come to it, and knows where and when it meets. Most people are glad, most of the time, to leave the house-keeping to those willing to do it. If something important to them comes up, they may come. Or for a while they may want to participate more. This leaves the big meetings free of "business." Imagine! An organization whose meetings concern what the organization is really there for! Most organizations, old and new, spend their meeting time on "business" decisions and house-keeping, and it is often bad time. People cannot welcome each other and care for each other; they need to be concerned with the positions they take, the obstructions they seem to want to be, the trouble they seem to make for each other.

I date the success of Changes as an organization from the day we decided to have the business meeting consist of those who wanted to be part of it, and to have it separately. So, the big meeting can consist of the activities we most value and want.

On the one hand, everyone can participate in every decision, but on the other, the time of the whole group is not taken up with that. This gives much more efficiency than the old closed clique form had, because all contributions are welcome and the "clique" is not closed to anyone. More on this later.

The Changes person

Before I go further into the model, I want to discuss at length one aspect of how Changes functions. I want to look at it from the question of "roles" which I have been discussing. What sort of "role" does a Changes person have?

What kind of mental health role is it to be a Changes person? It is not the role of a mental health professional. Nor is it the role of a "sub-professional" who practices

like a professional but without the credentials, or under supervision. It is not a new kind of helping person either. I see it as an example of what I have been saying. Let me explain why.

Changes' starting function was "clinical" service - but from the start we did not limit ourselves to helping people with "head" or emotional problems. People have problems, their life is stuck some way, it doesn't work to split this up into psychological and other problems. So, at times we have fixed cars, got people welfare money, found crash places, helped people move, or formed a team around a problem or tough time somebody had, if we could.

In the old institutional structure of "therapy" the "professional" is not supposed to life-relate. The "patient" is supposed to get "cured" (a notion that involves some kind of pattern of what's "well" and not "sick") so as to relate to real life people better, not to the "therapist." If the "patient" relates to the "therapist" for real, that's "dependence" or "transference" or something that has to be "worked out."

It was even worse, according to the old structure, if the therapist found the "work" becoming real living, instead of "just" work. That was called "counter-transference," transferring the "therapist's" life needs onto the "patient." The old idea was that it isn't "work" unless it's alienated. The idea was that a therapist uses "techniques" and when the real person of the therapist enters in, then that must obstruct the supposedly medical or scientific objectivity. (But this view is going out even in "professional" therapy, where it is being learned that what is therapeutically effective is people relating personally, not technically.) In our group, we threw that whole structure out, eliminating these walls and splits.

Even most "hot-lines" and youth networks are "services," that is to say, only for those who come for help. The old way of being in roles is still there, even though the role-patterns are new. Sure, the members of the hot-line enjoy their work, but so does the professional therapist. The members of the usual hot-line group are not there to live their own needs forward into some life-developing steps, but only to help others. And those who come are viewed only as to be helped, unless some time later they might join the hot-line. We differ from this old way.

For us, instead, it quickly developed that those who came to serve and help needed each other's help as much as anybody needed it - and also, that those who came for help often could do more than those who began the group. From almost the beginning, *we don't differentiate who was there to help and who to get help* and it has turned out that sooner or later most have done both. Of course, lots of people come for what they want and then leave, but while they are here they become part of the ongoing little group every evening, or big group on Sundays. They get to know a few people (which is often more help than what they came for).

In other places in this book we tell about the problems peculiar to this form of organization. Here we want to illustrate the principles of that form. So far, we have

said that the function we began with (psychological help) is combined with other functions, so that we can live together and with those who come. We said, secondly, that our role-definitions are mutual, giving and getting help are both part of the role. Thirdly, we said that anyone who comes is considered as part of our organization already, as a member just by being there. Fourthly, we don't select or delegate certain people to do certain things, and prohibit others from doing it. As each thing comes up those who want to do it take it on. (There is a problem when people take on tasks they don't know how to do. We handle it by forming a team, so that at least some know how to do what needs to be done. The others can learn. It is better than "selecting" those who know - as in the old-type institutions. That way does not usually select the best.)

Another aspect of the old roles, including the therapist role, had to do with time and place. We still find that having a certain time and a certain place enables something to happen. If no one knows where and when, they cannot be there, or have to depend on luck to meet. But the role does not need to specify the times and places as the same for all, as the therapist role used to do (twice a week, in an office.)

Old roles specify all the content. The new *type* role specifies *how* the contents will be made, as one goes along. For example, the therapist role used to specify what was to be done and said, and what was not to be done and said, as well as where and when. A therapist does not visit a patient's home, nor invite the patient home. A therapist does not share the life places of the person, not even the street or going for a walk. But a therapist who would invariably visit your home is just another role, different but the same in kind. (It's called a "social worker… "). Yet if we threw all roles out, there wouldn't be anyone designated to help you get into yourself when you're stuck and feel terrible.

We invent a role called "Changes Person" which defines not a friend nor a stranger. It leaves you free to have an office and also invite people home, or go with them where they go, but it isn't just the variety that matters here. How in such a role will you decide whether to visit the person at home, or not? The role is of such a kind that you determine that from your sense of the whole situation up to that point, and not alone but in interaction with the person. This role is not the same as the "close relationship" role we discussed earlier. You could take the person home or not without becoming close. The person may, for example, be so "freaked out" as not to be able to become close, or you may sense that this isn't, so far, the kind of person with whom you choose to be close. Even so you may want to take the person home rather than arrange another place, if that fits with where both of you are at that time.

Such a role still serves the purpose of saying how you function. It's not as a pretended friend, which you aren't just then for this person, nor as a stranger who is being bothered, but as a person who has a function. You are a person with whom it is appropriate to take up the problem of being freaked out and also of having no place to go. And that is what a "role" does for you, and yet you can

make the role be a sentience-form-sentience process of how you are in the role.

What sort of role-definition is it, to be what we call "Changes persons?" A Changes Person *is* a role. How else could it be *appropriate* to ask for help from one of these people, to ask to be listened and responded to on very personal problems when perhaps you hardly know them? Or, the other way around: it is a role to offer listening to a person who just walked in. How would a "team" run, or be run, if it weren't implicit in the roles that each does as much as possible, no one orders anyone around, and anyone can ask others to help. It's quite a subtle role, it might have more detail to it, than the older therapist role. Yet it *is* a role. It developed to enable living and variety, rather than just always certain behaviors.

Of course, "therapy," if done for real, *would* lead to this kind of openness, you might say. It may seem that the therapy area is an easy instance for this kind of change in role patterns. But on the other hand, the professional skills involved, the social halo around them, and the responsibility that seemed involved with freaky and suicidal people, made it especially hard too. Also, would you not say that other roles and institutions in the society would lead in this direction if done for real? We think they would.

If by "role" we mean some way to know what to expect, and what can be relied on not to occur, then *close relating* is a role. In a sense, it is more reliable as to expectations than most roles, because it isn't the content you can predict (that's unpredictable) but *the kind of living* it will be. With most current roles, it's the other way around, you can know the content in advance, but not the kind of living it will be. The store clerk will sell you things and make certain expected responses to what you expectedly do, but what kind of living it will be can vary very greatly. Only in a close relationship do you not know what will happen next, but you do know the kind of quality it will have, the kind of process it will be.

New roles would not be forced on oneself from the top down, from the outside onto oneself, or from one's head onto one's feelings. Rather, they would be a making of specifics from one's feelings. Even if got from outside, they would fit one's felt living and allow it to live further in that form than without it.

Without this touchstone, a new role you invent might seem attractive to your abstract values, but might not let you live, really, in the role. Even if it does carry your living further, if you push it on others, it might leave their living stuck, despite their affirming the abstract value principles in it. Then the role would be new, the old bad roles would have been changed, and yet people would be in the new ones, in no better way than they were in the old ones.

There aren't any times and places cut out of our life and not part of it, and cut out of somebody else's life and not part of theirs. When someone calls we don't hold them off into some distance pattern, but ask them to come to our big meetings. Then they are just a "new person," one of us. Or the caller should not wait till Sunday. We might ask the person to come now if they need it. Or some of us will

go and meet them there. (That can be difficult, like walking around some locked house in the dark, with somebody who called us inside too scared or confused to open up, for instance.)

On closeness

Not everybody wants to be close to everybody - why force everyone to the same thing? We don't. Some of our hardest telephone-covering workers haven't been coming to our training sessions (given by experienced therapists for ten weeks on Sundays), nor to our sometime encounter group sessions. It doesn't make sense to make everybody do the same thing, that's again being in roles in the manner in which people had to be in the old ones.

I have tried to make clear that we don't want close relations with everyone, because that would get sticky. I have tried to emphasize that carrying forward life is what matters.

In our Changes community too, it's like that. Not everyone is intimate, not at all. What matters is that for most, who are there, what they do in Changes has something to do with where their life is needing to move, or moving, or still stuck. There are people to learn to get close to, because that is one dimension along which the lives of many are needing to move. But other things too, not only this.

Relating closely, in something like the way we outlined earlier, is a vital need and not much met, most places.

For instance, in many communes, people give everything up to the group, all money, exclusive relations, the bathroom door, everything. And yet - when it comes to getting into each other so that a closeness can be real, they shy away from that. But why commit to that life, if you can't then really live there? That's being in a new pattern, but the way of being in it is like the old marriage pattern - you give up everything, and then you're still alone, unmet, unheard, and without even the privacy at least to hear yourself.

Sometimes nobody comes to our big meetings for help. But many of the people in the room, "our group," are people who came for help not very long ago, and never needed to say so. We have a loose community, and inside it there are sub-groups that really have a very deep and life-involving community. That's help, but it doesn't fit to call it help, and it isn't clear who is helping whom.

In other places in this book we tell about other more specific patterns we developed for handling the differences in skill and attitude among us - we mention some of them now only to illustrate that the sort of new roles we are talking about can look like any other roles, and yet, inside, be specific and adapted to living, to a process of sensing and then modifying forms, so life can proceed in them.

Openness and third persons

We develop the principle in Changes (not always followed, of course…) that we discuss our troubles with someone we are working with while that person is present. Of course, it is harder to express oneself honestly about someone when that person is there, but it's also more rewarding. The person can talk back, and also, we can watch others relate differently than we do with that same person. Then we get to see how that person can also behave and be different than with us. In such meetings, some of us have been most able to communicate our attitudes to new members, something that can't always be done by general talk. Therefore, also, when we don't like the way someone is acting, we can get with that person. We try to have someone present who makes it a specific task to listen to that person and make sure that person's side is fully heard and brought out and understood and validated too. This makes it much more possible to give the person honest feedback. It's better to do it that way, than not to let that person work - who knows, that person may be right and we may be wrong, or that person may be contributing something valuable as well as us.

In this way, we can let everyone do whatever they will do. We don't need unanimity. We don't have to agree before-hand. When we have had that kind of structure, the "democratic" kind, so-called, we were all tied up in decision-making meetings about things which only one knew all about, and which only some were going to do anyway.

Of course, if everyone must do what the majority decide, then it's very important not to let anybody into your group whose attitude and spirit differs from yours. But, if people are let to do what they will do, then you can do as you value even if you come to be in the minority - so you can let anyone in who comes, and you can let all be full members as soon as they come. If you practice and show your ways they may want to learn yours if they find them better.

Again, if you forbid some people to meet separately with only those they like, if you can only have your whole group meeting, then letting new people in all the time keeps the group at some kind of beginning level. But if any who like can meet by themselves without that insulting others, then they can go in depth with each other, and still also be part - at other times - of a completely open group. Because in depth they developed closeness, therefore now in the open group they still relate closely - and since others are not excluded from that they come to be part of closer relating. In this way, some of our sub-groups have very much aided the larger group. For example, the warmth and acceptance developed in the women's group made for gentle and mutually supportive close relations which the women have also in the big group. In the small one they came to support and invite and receive whatever each of them offered, and then in the large group they still do that. And that's the kind of climate we would want a new person to walk into, and take part in.

On politics and ideology

Politics isn't split off from this - at those times at which we have had people who felt strongly in political ways, we have gotten from them not only what they say to everybody, but deeper more personal underpinnings of those things which could also reach people not politically attuned and agreeing. It seems better to come to be able to communicate in this way, rather than reaching only those who agree, and demonstrating our political involvement to those who agree, and only trading arguments with those who don't.

For example, once one of these discussions began and continued as an argument - one person arguing that Changes is not political enough and only a reform trip, the other person defending everything very strongly. Others interceded to hear both people's felt and unclear underpinnings better. Then the first person expressed his fear that if Changes isn't more political he was being in the wrong place again, which was always happening and made him fear that he couldn't find a place for himself. The other man arrived at and expressed the inner wish to be more radical if he knew how and could find the courage. Obviously, it was then no longer difficult for them to get together, and meanwhile the group that was present learned something about how to listen, and about some life-needs which Changes could try to meet and how that could be in terms of becoming more political.

Will cultural change lead to what's needed, or must there be straight political approaches to what keeps present power structure as it is? Enough has been said on this too. We don't believe you can understand what makes things as they are without a political and economic analysis, but we don't believe ideas alone will change anything. Idea movements - those in which the people are together because they agree on ideas - don't effect much, because only some few people are the type who find their living moved by trading ideas. Most people cannot be in a movement very long if they cannot live in it, therefore idea movements have a big turnover. People get experienced and tired and need to move their lives on, and to do it they can't remain in the movement so they leave. Others come. Any effective movement would have to be one in which people could remain, in which they could live, relate, work, love, and so on. Typically, however, new patterns of living haven't been political in any major way, and that is also true of us so far. And political groups have usually not made living possible, and so have to consist of people who will give time and effort in an interlude of their living. The two must come together. Mere idea movements are the old role of political action, separated from living and the felt underpinnings of why people believe what they argue, and separated also from the other aspects of their living, which, after a while, they must pursue and thus drop the old separated form of politics.

A group that doesn't require an ideology before you can be part of it is much better even for those who are committed to communicating their particular ideology - because people can openly say their doubts and needs for more clarity (instead of only agreeing and disagreeing). Also, one's way of being in one's ideology is more important in communicating it, than only the dead, cut-off conclusions.

The same thing is true about attitudes toward working with people. Changes had, and still has among us some who believe in hospitals, therapists, and the whole old structure. Where would they meet something different, if not with us? How would they change their attitude if not from actually working? If we kept them from it until they agreed, they would go away and miss it all. Of course, we wouldn’t and can't force them to do what we do, or anything for that matter. But in the process, they can develop their own changing and developing sense of how to work, and probably also add to ours. This isn't all as pretty as we are making it sound; there is the person who came to us for help and then was placed in the hospital because one of our group sent her there (because he got scared, we think, and didn’t feel he could call on others, as we would have liked him to feel). There are also times, we recall, when people smiled and chit-chatted in a phony way with one very upset person, while planning behind her back to take her to the hospital. Others came in and got the person and these people to talk straight with each other, and to express their fears and helped the disturbed woman say things that were also quite straight. That time everything worked out well, but it isn't an easy experience even to look back on. Still, it's better to have an open group, open to anyone, and with all roles open to anyone.

Some people come to our group verbally asking for help with finding a job or a crash place, but really, they're looking for friends, or a sexual relationship. Is that bad? In some organizations people would say, "We’re not a dating bureau." But why should we want to separate and reject that role? It's another function we often perform - and better, I think, than where it exists alone.

On structure and looseness

No structure leads to nothing happening, makes depression and emptiness and falling apart. Structure kills living and sets routines and boxes for people. The argument is an old one. Without structure it doesn't happen, there is no when, where, who or what. But sticking people into structures kills it too.

We believe (and don’t always act on the idea) that there ought to be a lot of structure, preparations, times, places, and organized things to do, but then people ought to be left free to change them, to do from these preparations what they can make out of it, and not just what is prepared. We see this also as a sentience-form-sentience chain. We need structure and form, but it should emerge from living and should be a vehicle for further living, which will surely change the structure further.

Freedom doesn't really relieve you of planning and organizing, freedom only adds the further dimension that there will be more organizing every time a new person or group enters the scene – and not because they have to make the decisions all over again, but because what is there is for their living.

On autocracy, majority, and freedom

Of course, it's better for all to decide, than for someone to boss everyone around. But there’s a third way. You can let all do what they will and can, and give them feedback afterwards. That way there need not be those interminable and deadly meetings in which the few who know the details have to argue with the many who don’t. Let those who know the details take the actions on those details, they have to do it anyway, and the meeting has to decide as they knew anyway - because they know what can work and what won’t. If the meeting decides otherwise, what happens? There only has to be another meeting - to change the decision. Majority is eyewash, except on really major issues of direction - and even those are better not decided at all, so that everyone can learn attitudes and insights from others, instead of foreclosing that with a decision.

If you care very much, what is done in the *name* of the group, that’s an obstacle. Then you have to control everybody (just because they're in your name group. Outside, in the world, a whole lot of things go on which you can't stop.) But if you can stand it when, in the name of your group, someone does or says the opposite of what you needed to be done or said, then everything becomes free. Of course, you can still also dialogue with them, but not everything people do can get so it feels okay with you.

Out-people and in-people

It seems important, in a transitional time, to let there be relations between people who are staying in some old-line function, and those who stay outside of these. Out-people need resources, training being shared with them, and some way of developing life and work roles. In-people, who sense what is wrong inside, need connections with what is trying to be built outside, with new ways and new feelings. Many in-people aren't really in-types of people at all, and have more identity with out-people, yet they stay. Some do so for good reasons, others cannot find good reason and wonder every day how long they will stay. In-people can give resources, training and opportunities, while receiving sustenance for their inner life and needs to be committed to positive changes.

Our group, basically an out-group, enables a number of in-people to contribute to it, and in turn gives belonging and connection vital to people who live in isolating straight places.

But these are relations between individuals helping each other. On the other hand, if an "out" organization as such ties itself up with an "in" one, it is soon lost. Then the in-people have to function as officials of the structure, and they cease to be open and more sensitive and creative than their organization.

To summarize, the organizational model of Changes has the following characteristics, among others:

1. All of a person's life functions are relevant and can be brought into the organization and advanced there.

2. Our role definitions are the same for all, and helping is mutual as far as the role definition goes. At one time or another everyone will do both.

3. Anyone who comes and is present is a member, just by being present. It is better to work with people by letting them be part of us, and by working with each other. There are no qualifications for belonging.

4. Any type of work or task can be chosen by any one. Usually a team forms so that some who know how are involved too.

5. Times and places are set up by the people who will meet, but aren't necessarily always in the same place or time. Whatever places and times in their lives people want to take someone into, they do. Conversely there is no implication that everyone should allow everyone else into every part of their lives.

6. The idea, not always followed, is that difficulties are taken up with the person with whom one feels the difficulty, rather than behind people's backs; someone else may be brought in to ensure that both people are heard.

7. People exchange feelings and attitudes and ideologies, rather than laying down one way and excluding those who don't like it. Nobody in the organization is the spokesperson for it.

8. There is not majority rule binding on everyone, therefore it is not awful if one's own view or way is not, at first endorsed by many others. One can still go on working and talking as one wishes. (Therefore, one can also be more at ease listening to what others might be right about, or be interested in why they don't grasp the value of one's own views and ways.) It means bearing it, that in the name of the organization people sometimes do things one would not want or be proud of.

9. There is a community in which everyone is welcome, and on Sunday and some other times there are places people come, and everyone is welcome. There are *also* subgroups which meet when they wish and do not invite everyone. Their intimacy develops in depth, as could not occur if only open meetings with always new people existed.

10. Closeness is neither avoided, nor required. It develops where it can and where people want it.

11. People don't hide the closeness they already have with some others, so that the open meetings come to have some of this closeness which some people have developed.

12. Ideology and personal matters are not split - if ideology matters very deeply to a person, that person is heard, just as anyone should be heard on what matters to

them. Conversely, personal reactions are not pushed off as being beside the point or the task at hand. This speeds things up, rather than - as always seems at first - getting in the way. We get to find out what really is under someone’s arguing, rather than only hearing repetitious arguments.

13. We have "rules" and "roles" that define, for example, that one can ask someone to listen very personally. (Any Changes member can be asked to spend an hour listening. Anyone can go up to anyone else and say, "Would you be willing to listen to me for an hour, I have something I need to get into." The person asked can say no, that too is part of the role definition.)

14. Another Changes role definition is that one can ask any member, not just for one-way help, as above, but for a mutual exchange. "I think I'd like to know you, can we spend some time?" is a way of saying that to each other. Again, this includes the asked person’s refusing if that feels right to do. Although we don't always manage, we believe in being straight and honest.

15. We try to have things organized - and then still leave it to people to change what was arranged as they need to. We sometimes have written policies for how to do things, but then people do things as they wish. Anyone may write such a statement. We have plans for every large meeting (including times without structure so people can just be with each other), but if people don't like how it is planned they can say so and change it on the spot.

16. We don’t spend much time on decisions, and don’t believe that housekeeping decision-making is living. It isn't even a model for practicing life, as so many people seem to believe. We would rather have something going on or planned, to react to, than spend half our time making decisions. A small group plans and decides. Everyone knows where and when they meet and everyone is welcome to participate. Few do. A very small amount of time is taken announcing these decisions. If something else is wanted, those who want it can arrange that too. Large meetings are for good things, not ''business," though sometimes that can happen too.

17. Anyone may announce or say anything they wish in any meeting. Anyone may form any kind of group about anything; that is to say, they may ask if there are others who want to join to do that.

18. No distinctions are made as to age and culture. Without deliberately working on it, the group is a kind of bridge for some, between age groups, between regular and counter culture, between races, between sexes.

This organizational model is very generally applicable, but some of what has been said probably applies only to organizations in which ordinary people can do what used to be called "therapy," and can aid each other in doing that. Then no one need be dependent on just one other person for help in personal difficulties, there can always be a team, a group, many people to choose from, so that if someone

isn't felt as sufficiently helpful, there are others. Also, when aiding someone gets burdensome the organization has the explicit rule that others may be asked in, to help carry the helping task. Both for these reasons, and for one's own living, there needs to be a group something like Changes.