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A Phenomenological-Hermeneutic Study of Adept Practitioners' Experiences of Focusing

Sarah Nokes-Malach

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A PHENOMENOLOGICAL-HERMENEUTIC STUDY OF ADEPT
PRACTITIONERS' EXPERIENCES OF FOCUSING

A Dissertation

Submitted to the McAnulty College and Graduate School of Liberal Arts

Duquesne University

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for
the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

By

Sarah Helen Nokes-Malach

August 2012

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Sarah Helen Nokes-Malach

2012

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Sarah Helen Nokes-Malach

Approved June 22, 2012

Russell Walsh, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Psychology
(Committee Chair)

Eva Simms, Ph.D.
Professor of Psychology
(Committee Member)

Will Adams, Ph.D.
Associate Professor of Psychology
(Committee Member)

Daniel Burston, Ph. D.
Chair, Psychology Department
Associate Professor of Psychology

James C. Swindal, Ph.D.
Dean, McAnulty College and Graduate
School of Liberal Arts

ABSTRACT

A PHENOMENOLOGICAL-HERMENEUTIC STUDY OF ADEPT PRACTITIONERS' EXPERIENCES OF FOCUSING

By

Sarah Helen Nokes-Malach

August 2012

Dissertation supervised by Russell Walsh, Ph. D.

This study presents a qualitative analysis of six accounts of focusing, a method of embodied reflection. Six expert practitioners were interviewed, and each participant's account was brought under two rounds of analysis. First, a modified descriptive phenomenological analysis was performed on a portion of the interview in which the participant described a particular focusing experience. This was followed by an interpretive phenomenological analysis of the participant's interview as a whole. Analyses resulted in the identification of explicit and implicit themes that were constitutive of focusing experiences across participants. Several themes that were identified include: the importance of social support and validation for experiences that depart from the norms and values of materialist culture, the exquisite gentleness and receptivity of the focusers' attitude toward their experiences, and the dialogical qualities

of the practice. The details and significance of the dialogue, which is a synesthetic exchange between the focuser and responses arising in her perceptual field, is explored in the discussion. Attention is paid to the fluid and at times ambiguous self-other experience suggested by the dialogue, and an archetypal framework for interpreting this dialogue is introduced. Additionally, the two phenomenological methods employed are reviewed and compared for their relative merit in the study of focusing.

DEDICATION

All of the virtues that I have performed
with body speech and mind
I dedicate to the welfare of all beings.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I would like to acknowledge and thank the participants who offered their time, their experiences, and their hospitality. Without each of you this study would not have been possible. Thank you as well to the wonderful people in the focusing community who have provided the context for this work, especially Eugene Gendlin and the kind focusing instructors who introduced me to the practice.

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CHAPTER ONE: LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1 Overview

Focusing, a practice codified by Eugene Gendlin, has flourished among practitioners as a psychotherapeutic approach, a self-help method, and an applied branch of Gendlin's philosophical project. In recent years the proliferation of approaches to and adaptations of focusing has facilitated the exploration of nuanced aspects of the phenomenon, which is regarded as fundamentally fluid—even while the designation of the practice as focusing remains quite salient among practitioners. Such an apparently complex and perhaps paradoxical phenomenon resists simple description, as the body of writing on the subject attests. In this study, I hoped to offer a fresh perspective on the phenomenon by carrying out a phenomenological-hermeneutic study of focusing as it is experienced by experienced focusers. The aim of this study is to catch sight of the wholistic meaning of the experience of focusing as it is lived pre-reflectively by practitioners, and to explore how this pre-reflective experience might differ (or not) from didactic and theoretical descriptions of the phenomenon.

1.2 Introduction

In the course of introducing focusing to therapists and other potential students of the practice, people often begin by telling the story of its origin (see, e.g. Gendlin, 1981; Weiser Cornell, 1996; Hendricks, 2001). Since the beginnings and subsequent development of focusing figure importantly in this study, it is fitting that I should follow a similar approach here.

Focusing refers to a practice developed by Eugene Gendlin out of his research with Carl Rogers in the 1960's. In an effort to understand why some clients improved in therapy while others did not, they listened to segments from thousands of psychotherapy sessions from a variety of therapeutic orientations (Gendlin, 1981). Though the study sought to compare efficacy of therapeutic approaches, Rogers and Gendlin discovered that successful therapies (measured by self report, therapist report, and the report of a significant person in the client's life) could be predicted not according to therapist orientation or session content, but rather according to *how the client spoke*. Those who made the most progress in their therapies had in common a particular way of attending to inward sensations as they spoke; they halted, paused for long moments, and struggled to choose words that exactly fit what they were trying to convey.

Furthermore, Gendlin and Rogers found that efficacy could be predicted based on recordings from first or second session (Weiser Cornell, 1996; Hendricks, 2001). They concluded that this way of speaking was apparently not learned in therapy, nor was it impacted by the orientation of the treating therapist. Instead, it was something some clients seemed naturally to do on their own; it was a skill that they brought to their respective therapies which were more successful than the therapies of clients who did not use this inward referencing speech. Based on these observations, Gendlin developed focusing as a way to formalize, and thus make teachable, the way of inner referencing that he observed more successful clients doing spontaneously.

What were these successful clients doing which Gendlin sought to formalize? In contrast with clients who made less progress, Gendlin (1996) understood these clients to be speaking from a very different "place" in themselves— from an inner place "where

therapeutic movement arises” (p. 1). In order to access this space of therapeutic movement, it seemed clients were relating with the subtle somatic flow of their experience, which Gendlin named the “felt sense.” Gendlin’s focusing consists of a stepwise process of interacting with this “felt sense” to accomplish “shifts” which bring therapeutic movement.

Understanding the general aim of focusing as described in the literature requires some basic grasp of the “felt sense,” upon which I will briefly elaborate. Gendlin (1996) defined the felt sense as “the wholistic, implicit, bodily sense of a complex situation” (p.58). The felt sense is not an emotion, although it may have emotions in it; Gendlin described the felt sense as “at first unclear, murky, puzzling, not fully recognizable” —a vague sensation which is clearly felt in the body, typically between the neck and pelvis (p. 26). One example of the felt sense is the sensation one might experience when one knows one has forgotten something, but cannot figure out what one has forgotten. When one finally recalls what one has forgotten, this vague feeling “shifts” and there is a sense of relief. Even if naming the thing forgotten also brings some anxiety about consequences, there is still a particular kind of relief from having put one’s finger on what one had been struggling to name (Gendlin, 1995). In therapy, shifts in the felt sense are understood as valuable movement, regardless of the emotional valence accompanying them.

Thus, Gendlin (1996) wrote, “By ‘focusing,’” we mean spending time with something bodily sensed but unclear (until it comes ‘into focus’)” (p. 34). This is what the clients Gendlin observed seemed to be doing when they groped and searched for words to fit what they wanted to say: they were spending time with the *sense* of what

they wanted to say, and accepting only the words that fit that sense exactly. Gendlin's codification of focusing is a way of teaching people *how* to spend time with "something bodily sensed but unclear"—the "felt sense"—and *what to do* during that time. The six steps of the process are articulated by Gendlin as instructions to focusers in keeping with the premise that an experiential method must be practiced first hand to be understood. These steps are presented by Gendlin with detailed instructions that anticipate potential obstacles to the process and offer suggestions for dealing with them. Although focusing often involves a guide or "listener" who facilitates the process of the "focuser" (that is, the person focusing on her own experience), the steps are articulated for the focuser, who can guide herself through the process without a supportive listener. The general instructions of focusing process according to Gendlin's formulation are summarized below:

1. "Clearing a space" is a process in which one problem or issue is singled out for work in the focusing session, and a "space" is "cleared" around that issue to avoid interference from other concerns. Gendlin (1996) instructs:

Begin by taking a minute to just rest and be friendly with yourself inside. See what stands between you and feeling fine...Put your attention in your stomach or chest, and (knowing it probably is not so) say something like, "My life is going just fine these days. I feel totally fine about it." Then attend to the middle of your body and see what comes there (p. 71-72).

2. The next step has to do with finding the "felt sense," the "unresolved edge" of the concern chosen in the first step that holds "implicit richness that is more than you can fully comprehend" (Gendlin 1996, p. 72). To find it, Gendlin writes: "Attend in your stomach and chest and see what the whole thing makes you feel, there, what bodily quality it has there" (pg. 72).

3. Once a felt sense is present, the next step is to “Try to find one word, phrase, or image to capture exactly the *quality* of that felt sense” (p. 73). This is called the “handle” of the felt sense.

4. The handle must be checked against the felt sense to be sure that it fits; this step is called “resonating” or “resonating the handle” (p. 73). Gendlin instructs, “If the word, phrase or image really fits, there should be a little relief to be had, just from how well it fits...Ask your body ‘Does _____ really fit? Is it _____? Is it like that?’ There should be a little relief, a bodily signal, that says ‘yes (*breathes*) that’s it all right’” (p.73).

5. The next step is to ask the felt sense what it is. Gendlin offers several ways of formulating questions to the felt sense such as, “ ‘What’s really in this _____?’ Or, ‘What’s the worst, the most _____ about this whole thing?’ Or, ‘What would it need to feel ok?’” (p. 74). A focusing response to this question always involves a movement in the felt sense; Gendlin notes, “Let all thoughts go by if the felt sense does not stir in response to it...before there is any effect, there might need to be a whole minute of tapping the unclear felt sense, touching it, perhaps backing off, and then touching it again” (p. 74).

6. The final step in focusing is to “receive” with welcome whatever comes from the felt sense. Gendlin clarifies, “To ‘receive’ in our sense means to let the step be, give it space to be in, not to reject it, however odd or wrong it may seem in itself. It comes with a little bit of bodily felt release, a breath, a bodily sense that something is right about it, and that is what you want” (p. 75).

Though summarized succinctly in these brief steps, the complexity inherent in this process is suggested by the following: individuals who want to learn to teach others how to focus go through a two-year training program in which the process of focusing is broken down and explored through weekly practice for months at a time, with full days of didactic training punctuating the process (J. Pfunder, personal communication, February 6, 2010). Though the basic process of focusing can be defined and described in a matter of a few sentences, many volumes elaborate on, reframe, and seek to clarify these basic steps. What is, for some, a spontaneous and apparently adaptive way of relating to their experience has inspired an entire literature devoted to the explication and teaching of focusing.

1.2 Review of Focusing Literatures

A review of the literature pertaining to focusing complicates Gendlin's initial description of the phenomenon considerably. First, I will begin by broadly orienting the reader to the varied landscape of focusing literature. Next, I will indicate tensions within this body of literature that complicate—and arguably obscure—the phenomenon at hand; I will finally offer the present study as an attempt to address this obscuration.

Clinical research on focusing stretches sparsely across the last 5 decades, proceeding from Gendlin's and his collaborator Zimring's early development of the "Experiencing level" variable, which operationalized the key construct on which focusing research was initially based: "experience." Related research to date has focused on the correlation, if any, of experiencing level with successful outcomes and the correlation of focusing with successful outcomes (Hendricks, 2001). According to a review by Hendricks (2001), experiencing level was positively and significantly correlated with

improved psychotherapy outcome (e.g., Goldman, 1997) and client perception of successful sessions (e.g., Warwar, 1996; Kubota & Ikemi, 1991). Focusing oriented psychotherapy correlated positively with successful outcome (though statistical significance was unclear) across a variety of patient populations (e.g., Hinterkopf & Brunswick, 1975, 1979, 1981; Hostein & Flaxman, 1997; Sherman, 1990; Wolfus & Bierman, 1996; cited in Hendricks). While promising, many of these studies appeared preliminary in nature (e.g., Sherman, 1990; Hinterkopf & Brunswick, 1975).

Though Hendricks's summary suggested a few recent studies may feature improved methodological rigor, these studies were not available for review, either because they are not available in English (e.g. Leijessen, 1996; Sachse, 1992, cited in Hendricks), were not accessible through the library system, (e.g., Hostein & Flaxman, 1997; Warwar, 1996).

Perhaps one reason why focusing research has remained generally underdeveloped is that Gendlin (2007) has identified himself primarily as a philosopher, and his efforts have been concentrated on developing the philosophical underpinnings of focusing. In other words, focusing can be understood as the applied branch of a broader philosophical project; these writings comprise another category of focusing literature. Gendlin's work is founded in phenomenology; his theoretical writing describes the complex and reciprocal relationship between our bodily experiencing and our conceptual formulations, which he articulates in his philosophy of the implicit (e.g. see Gendlin, 1962). His work proposes ways to access, talk about, and make use of the awareness contained in our pre-conceptual experience, which he sees as instrumental in advancing novel conceptual formulations (Gendlin, 1962, 1989, 1992, 1995, 1997, 2007). Focusing

can be conceived as a method by which we can make contact with, and articulate the knowledge contained in, the implicit.

Clinical literature describes and develops focusing-oriented psychotherapy, an integrative approach to therapy that utilizes focusing (Gendlin, 1996; Goodman, 2007; Hendricks, 2007b; Leijssen, 2007). Numerous other practitioners have contributed their own understandings of the focusing process, modifying it and/or applying it to various kinds of therapy (e.g., Friedman, 2007; Rappaport, 2009). Clinical literature also touches on ways in which focusing can be used alongside other therapeutic approaches; for example, Gendlin argued that focusing can be used to deepen the experiential component of any therapeutic approach (1996; see also Welwood, 2000). Hendricks (2007a) made a case for using focusing to increase the efficacy of cognitive-behavioral therapy.

A particularly widespread development of focusing has been the movement to teach it as a self-help practice that individuals can use with focusing partners, or on their own. Because focusing is understood by practitioners to be an innate (though often underdeveloped) capacity of human beings, focusing instructors emphasize the availability of the focusing process to most people, without need for formal therapeutic training. For the lay population (with some overlap for clinicians) focusing has been developed for use in a broad range of applications, such writing, art, spiritual development, work with children, and more (Perl, 2004; Rappaport, 2009; Hinterkopf, 1997; Stapert & Verliefde, 2008). A great deal of focusing literature takes the shape of personal accounts of practitioners' own experiences using focusing in a wide variety of domains. The Focusing Institute, a non-profit dedicated to advancing focusing in public and academic arenas, publishes a journal by and for focusers. In this journal, *The Folio*,

practitioners explore the impact that focusing practice has on their diverse professional and personal lives, among other more scholarly discussions of focusing.

Because focusing has been developed from clinical, philosophical, and self-help perspectives, descriptions of - and approaches to - the phenomenon vary. The latter two can be thought of as opposite ends of a conceptual spectrum, with one end featuring highly complex and nuanced terminology, and the other featuring colloquial and sometimes vague language. Clinical writing can be seen as falling at varying points between the two, complicated by its crossing of other clinical vocabularies with Gendlin's terms. All of these approaches can be seen as working toward an explication of focusing, with disparate results. That is, the comprehension of focusing that the current literature affords is highly dependent on the particular category of literature through which one approaches it. This point bears explication.

As noted above, in the context of Gendlin's writing, focusing is a process that is embedded in a broader philosophical project that has been developed from the work of Heidegger, Wittgenstein, and Merleau-Ponty, among others. The existential phenomenological influences on Gendlin's thought can be seen across his writing, perhaps most foundationally in his conception of the human being, which follows from Heidegger's idea of being-in-the-world. While a thorough summary of Gendlin's philosophical writing is beyond the scope of this review, it is my point here to indicate the foundations of focusing in this thought. For instance, in one article published a few years before his popular book *Focusing*, Gendlin (1978-1979) drew on Heidegger's concept of *befindlichkeit*, or "being in a mood," in order to challenge conventional dualistic thinking about human perception of and relationship to the world, arguing that

we sense not only “ourselves” or our “inner” feelings, but *whole situations* (para. 2). He wrote, “Heidegger's concept denotes how *we sense ourselves in situations*. Whereas feeling is usually thought of as something inward, Heidegger's concept refers to something both inward and outward, but before a split between inside and outside has been made” (para.10). When Gendlin (1981) instructed focusers to ask, “What does this whole problem feel like?” or to ask about “all that,” the instruction reflected his position that we can indeed form a distinct sense of our entire situation as a being-in-the-world, prior to distinguishing between what in the situation belongs “inside” or “outside” (p. 54).

Gendlin’s philosophical writings thus form a conceptual explication for focusing through which he works to develop descriptive terminology capable of adequately articulating a practice that, prior to his formalization, existed pre-reflectively, without conceptual labels. Gendlin (1964) noted, “We can have a genuine theory only with carefully defined terms, and only by using defined terms can we later modify, improve, and extend theory” (para. 2). These terms are then often (but, importantly, not always) taken up by fellow focusers to describe what they do in practice. In addition to the basic process steps noted in the introduction, some further language to describe the way humans relate to their experiencing and to their logical thought includes “crossing and dipping,” and “carrying forward” (Gendlin, 1991; 1995).

One of the leading teachers of focusing, Weiser Cornell, offered a summary of a few key terms introduced or redefined by Gendlin in his philosophy; for example, she writes:

* a *situation* is an interactional context which has its *implying* of the next steps.

**Body* is much more than the physical material delimited by our skin. It is the body as bodily felt, which includes the sense of here and now, there and then, and future. It is body as interaction with its environment. It is body as sensed from the inside...

**Implicit* : What is consciously experienced but not yet symbolized, not yet explicitly formed. Not unconscious, also not 'buried', not already formed contents that we 'discover' or 'uncover.'...

* *Missing*: At a stoppage there is a missing. What is missing is what would carry forward the (organism, situation, body ...). What is missing is implied. From the felt-sense of what's missing comes the knowing of what's implied (2008, p. 42-43).

As is perhaps apparent from these definitions, the seemingly ordinary terms that make their way into focusing literature carry highly nuanced and possibly confusing meanings, which Gendlin elaborates throughout his work. Thus, as the applied element of this philosophy, focusing must be approached *via* comprehension of this voluminous and complex body of writing. Understanding focusing in these terms requires philosophical sympathy to Gendlin's understandings of human being, which are rooted in existential phenomenology and developed throughout his philosophy of the implicit. For individuals outside this philosophical persuasion, gaining a thorough account of focusing as a phenomenon stands as a formidable task indeed.

In stark contrast, approaching focusing via more popular, self-help literature presents a different set of challenges for understanding the phenomenon. These writings often attempt to speak to the experiential impact of focusing, yet attempts to say what focusing means slide in the direction of what seem like vague platitudes. In appealing to a broader audience, focusing is presented as a practice through which one may reveal one's "true self," to cultivate one's "inner wisdom" or the "wisdom of the body," without

appeal to the conceptual framework articulated by Gendlin (e.g., see Weiser Cornell, 1996). Though this framework may be understood and implicitly intended (as indicated by authors' usage of them elsewhere), they are not made explicit, suggesting perhaps that the basic practice can be conveyed without comprehending the nuances that are elsewhere regarded as indispensable.

For individuals exposed to focusing through such self-help texts (e.g., Gendlin, 1981; Weiser Cornell, 1996; McGavin, Weiser Cornell, 2002), simple descriptions, followed by didactic instructions, may adequately convey the gist of the practice enough to encourage a first hand experience of something that they may assume is focusing. Yet these descriptions are insufficient to distinguish focusing as a phenomenon from other popular practices or therapies that promise similar contact with one's "true self." In at least one case, elements of focusing are presented by analogy to another rather poorly understood phenomena. For example, in the introduction of Gendlin's (1981) landmark instructional book, *Focusing*, the author Ferguson noted without further elaboration, "The felt shift is essentially identical to the freeing insight of the creative person" (in Gendlin, 1981, p. xi).

Reference to the personal accounts of focusing found in *The Folio* may lead to further confusion, as reflections about and responses to focusing range from descriptive considerations of focusing's applications in professional domains (e.g., Doi, 2008; Orth, 2008), to laudatory reveries. In one personal reflection, the author, Foxcroft (2008), asserted, "It is through the naturally emergent process of focusing that we come into contact with our loving, and that love holds sway over our lives" (p. 314). Foxcroft likened focusing to "cutting Diamonds or something: quite a small tap in just the right

place; and suddenly, here is a mass of shimmering reflections” (p. 319). Foxcroft’s poetic description is quite evocative, yet his account is vague when describing the actual process. In writing about people who, in their various professions, exhibit a certain flow or connectedness with their vocation, he queried,

“Does Nick or Richard or Gavin have a felt sense? Well in one sense, yes of course; but not in another. If you think you can get these guys to rummage around in their body sensations, you’ve got another think [sic] coming. Still, when you meet them right where they are, you will find yourself asking, “If *this* isn’t focusing, then what is?” (p. 321).

That focusing is a difficult phenomenon to render in description—especially without the benefit of Gendlin’s corpus of terms— is not lost on those who have endeavored to do so. As Weiser Cornell (2002) noted in one didactic text, “Focusing is full of paradox. It is both direct and indirect, subtle and concrete, active and receptive. As a process, it frees you to follow a precise inner path—and to change its exact steps if that feels better” (p. 1). The evident difficulty of adequately describing the practice in common terms is heightened by the multiple interpretations and adaptations of focusing practices that continue to develop, which will be addressed below.

Between the two extreme characterizations of the literature described above are located a vast array of writings. Many practitioners and teachers occupy multiple positions with respect to focusing’s roots, integrating philosophical insights and clinical or self-help practices and presenting them for both therapists and laypersons. The result of this complex engagement is a variety of modifications of focusing, and emphases within the practice, so that it may become further unclear what constitutes focusing. That is, with many variations “evolved” from focusing, retaining more or less the same

focusing terminology, how is a researcher to discern the point at which a modification to focusing results in a substantially different experience of the practice?

For example, Perlstein and Frolinger (2008) added an additional “action” step to Gendlin’s initial six, seeking to increase the applicability of focusing “in the here and now” (p. 34.) Additionally, they modified focusing training in an effort to “weave focusing into the public language and daily conversation in order to integrate focusing as a way of being and living” (p. 34). Weiser Cornell and McGavin (2008) developed a variant approach to focusing referred to as “Inner Relationship Focusing.” They described it as “a process for emotional healing and accessing positive life-forward energy” which is developed “primarily out of their own practice, based on the focusing work of Eugene Gendlin with some influences from a number of other methods” (p. 21). McEvenue and Fleisch (2008) developed “Whole Body Focusing,” which combines focusing with the Alexander technique of bodywork (p. 179). Each of these adaptations remains a variation of “focusing” by name, while combining the “original” practice with other methods. Because focusing has been understood from the start as a fundamentally human process, Gendlin and the Focusing Institute have embraced the development and variation of the practice. An official diversity statement approved by the Focusing Institute board states, in part, the following:

Focusing is a practice that honors what arises freshly in the moment. Frozen structures of any kind are antithetical to the ethic of focusing. Therefore, the Focusing Institute takes as a core value the principle that the practice of focusing, how it is taught by certified focusing teachers, and its application in different fields will not be standardized. Diversity of approaches will be protected (TFI Diversity Statement, 2009).

Along similar lines, Gendlin (2007) called into question the relationship between the phenomenon—or perhaps, phenomena—of focusing and any rigidly codified approach to it: “Once you know the steps, of course, to hell with the steps...Steps are for teaching, to help a person find it” (p. 14.).

By protecting diversity and welcoming modifications of focusing, yet maintaining an apparently meaningful term for the practice (and the Institute), Gendlin and the Focusing Institute echo Weiser Cornell’s observations that focusing “is full of paradox.” With variation proclaimed as essential to the practice of focusing, the question remains: what, if any, are the constitutive features that unify these practices under the designation “focusing?” While “frozen structures” are decried on the basis of Gendlin’s philosophy, the existence of some common themes is nevertheless suggested by the assumption among focusers that they share some practice in common and that it is distinctly meaningful *as* focusing. A thorough description of these themes across a variety of focusing practices could provide the basis for articulating the meaningful differences between approaches to focusing, as well as for comparisons between focusing and other practices.

In summary, much has been written about focusing that develops its theoretical underpinnings, teaches it as a practice, and develops variations of focusing that share commonalities with the “original” practice, while also moving in new directions. When we examine this literature closely, we can observe a sizeable gap between the highly developed terminology of the philosophy of the implicit, and the sometimes vague shorthand characterizations of focusing that permeate the non-philosophical literature—a

gap complicated by the simultaneous proliferation of approaches and rejection of codification by the main proponents of focusing.

CHAPTER TWO: METHOD

2.1 Introduction to the Research Method

The aim of this study is to approach focusing from a novel direction that, I hope, will contribute to a fresh understanding of the phenomenon—one that is accessible through non-jargoned, descriptive language and highlights what differentiates focusing from other practices, without disregarding the importance of variation in the process. By analyzing experiences of focusing, I hope to clarify the meaning of this process as it is *lived* by practitioners, rather than as it is theorized by them. It is my hope that this study will result in some clarification regarding the “paradoxical” nature of focusing by yielding general statements regarding the *experience* of the phenomenon observed across individual variations.

2.2 Participants

Selection Criteria

Participants for this study met the following criteria, with one exception (discussed below): they were experienced focusers, they were naïve to the method of phenomenological research I conducted, and they were accessible for in-person interviews.

Regarding the first criterion, I defined “experienced” as having either formal training through the Focusing Institute (with Certified Focusing Professional being the minimum level of formal training) or a minimum of five years focusing experience, with some formal instruction through Focusing Institute affiliates. Further details on each participant’s experience with focusing is included below.

In this study, I was interested in understanding focusing as a wholistic process that is lived through pre-reflectively, as a generally taken for granted experience; this pre-reflective experience seemed less likely to be available for individuals whose engagement with focusing is explicitly mediated by the conceptual framework of the process. During focusing training, the six steps described above are approached sequentially, with significant time devoted to each step before progressing to the next. Beginning focusers are more likely to either be working with limited parts of the process, or to be involved in some level of reflection on the process as they proceed through a focusing session; they may pause to recall steps, rehearse new instructions, etc. In contrast, more experienced focusers are more likely to focus more fluidly and easily as a result of practice. While advanced focusers may also have adapted the process to some degree over their years of practice, the capacity of focusing to be adjusted according to individual temperament and needs is understood as a key feature of the process. By seeking accounts of focusing that are both grounded in agreed-upon process, but which also allow for individual variation, I expect to access a more representative sample of what focusing means as a lived practice.

As stated above, the second criterion for participation was that participants must be naïve to the phenomenological research methods I employed. The initial rationale for this was that the data analysis that I proposed was based largely on Amedeo Giorgi's (2009) method of descriptive phenomenology. I was seeking spontaneous descriptions of lived experience that were not influenced, implicitly or explicitly, by an awareness of how these descriptions might be handled methodologically. Additionally, I wanted to avoid participant self-consciousness about the implied horizons of their accounts. It appeared that the simplest way to avoid this complication was to limit my participants to

individuals who did not have prior knowledge of phenomenological research methods, either Giorgi's or hermeneutical variations. However, after having only secured four participants over a four month period, I was inclined to accept as a participant a woman who had completed her dissertation a number of years ago using the phenomenological research method of Clark Moustakas. After discussing this with my advisor, we agreed to include this participant on the basis that adding another account to my data collection outweighed prior concerns that her awareness of the method might unduly shape her response. Her account stood out from the others primarily in her reference to a journal to provide accurate details of a focusing situation, and in her occasional asides indicating theoretical underpinnings of the focusing session that she shared. While the spontaneity of her account as told to me was mediated by the use of a journal, what she recounted there was not only spontaneous and uninhibited, but arguably more detailed and complete an account than those of some phenomenologically naïve participants.

Third, participants were accessible for in-person interviews. As will be described in further detail in the section on data collection, I conducted in-person interviews with my participants with audio and, in the case of the first four participants, video recording (video recording technology was not available for interviews with the fifth and sixth participant). Due to limited financial resources, I confined my participant selection to New England, where I was able to gather four interviews over the course of a several day data collection trip, and two more on a return visit.

Participant Recruitment

I initially contacted possible participants via email. In a general letter, I introduced myself, described briefly the nature of my study, what I was asking for in

terms of time and effort, and participant criteria. I also invited email recipients to forward my email to individuals who might not be on the list, but who might be interested in participating. My initial email was sent to geographically accessible individuals who participated in a recent focusing conference, each of whose email address was listed in the conference program. This group included individuals with whom I had personal conversations and developed a friendly acquaintance, as well as individuals to whom I was not formally introduced. I also submitted to the Focusing Institute a call for participants, which was posted in their monthly online bulletin. (These documents can be found in Appendix 1.) I screened participants via email exchange and in some cases over the phone, in order to be sure they met the participant criteria and to further explain the study. Once I had identified several participants in geographical proximity, I scheduled interviews. Below, participants are referred to by pseudonyms. Participants referred to as Pleck, Yolanda, Eliza, and Ila chose their own pseudonyms at my invitation; Anna and Sophie did not provide pseudonyms, but were assigned them by me.

Participant Demographics

Participant One: Pleck

At the time of the study, Pleck was a 55-year old married European American male. He was a physician in partial retirement. When asked to describe his spiritual or religious affiliation, he included the following: Zen practices, including sesshins, several years of Hindu meditation retreats, a year of “A Course in Miracles,” and current participation (as of the last 5-6 years) as a member of a synagogue for reform/renewal Judaism.

Participant Two: Anna

At the time of the interview, Anna was a 49-year old Latina married woman working as a group facilitator, organization development consultant, social worker, and writer. She said that she was raised Catholic and has practiced Buddhism for “many years”; she noted that she is currently learning about Judaism.

Participant Three: Yolanda

At the time of the interview, Yolanda was a 63-year old European American married woman. She was retired from work as a college English teacher, and also had had a life coaching practice. She was currently working as a writer, musician and artist. She practiced Vipassana, or Insight, meditation.

Participant Four: Sophie

Sophie was a 63-year old bilingual (Spanish/English) divorced woman who identified as European American and “half Jewish, but not raised Jewish.” She worked as a focusing teacher and eco-travel consultant, and identified her spiritual/religious practice as “focusing, chakra meditation, walking, praying.”

Participant Five: Eliza

At the time of the interview, Eliza was a 63-year old European American married woman who worked at the time as a faculty member and artist. She was also developing a life coaching practice. She identified her religious/spiritual practice as Protestant.

Participant Six: Ila

Ila was a 53-year old European American married woman who worked as a "teacher/healer" at the time of our interview. She identified her spiritual/religious practice

as the following: "multi-religious practices originating in Catholicism and recently returning to there as a space for me to be still and explore the symbols further, from a different perspective after coming to Buddhism, Yogic philosophy, and Native cultural practices and beliefs."

Ila began focusing in 2003 and took various retreats and workshops over the next few years, training through one of the advanced levels in 2008, at which point she decided to complete her training as a focusing trainer. She had been focusing twice a week with one partner since 2008.

2.3 Data Collection

Participant Data Collection

I began each interview by giving the participant a consent form detailing the purpose of the research, the duration of their participation, how I planned to maintain confidentiality, and any risks or benefits of participating in the research. Once they had given consent, I began video- and/or audio-taping the interview. A video camera was not available for use during the fifth and sixth interviews; these were audio recorded and careful notes were taken regarding gestures made by participants.

The interview began with questions regarding the participants' focusing training and experience. These included at least the following questions: "For how long have you been focusing? How did you learn focusing?" Next, I invited participants to make any adjustments they needed to make themselves comfortable and relaxed, and to take as much time with the following question as they needed to recall it as vividly and as fully as possible. I then asked each participant the following question: "Please describe for me your experience of a specific focusing session (with you as the focuser) that stands out

for you as particularly memorable. Take as much time as you need. Describe how the session began, what happened for you while it was going on, and what happened afterward. Please include as much detail as possible about the situation, your feelings and thoughts throughout, bodily sensations, movements or shifts, and anything else that comes to mind about what happened in that session.”

During the participant’s initial response, I limited my queries to clarification questions and prompts to elicit responses to all parts of the question, if necessary. When participants finished describing their experience to their satisfaction and responded to all parts of the question, I asked unstructured follow-up questions in order to elicit clarification and/or elaboration of statements that seemed unclear or especially important. Each of the interviews took place in the respective homes of the participants, at their invitation.

In addition to these procedural specifics with respect to data collection, the “how” or the attitude in which I carried out data collection and analysis is also important to note. As an interpersonal event I expected it to be shaped in both gross and subtle ways by the manner of relating between participant and researcher; I hoped to speak and listen in a way that the participants would experience as supportive and deeply curious. Les Todres (1999), a phenomenological researcher and focuser, noted that the quality of the researcher’s questions and words to the participant can dramatically shift *how* the participant comes to find the words she uses to describe her experience. According to Todres, the authenticity of qualitative data offered by participants increases when their speaking is present to an “inner” responsiveness—what above has been referred to as the felt sense:

...my task as an interviewer is to act in such a way that my presence does not excessively obscure her faithfulness to the lived bodily process in which words stay connected with the 'felt sense' of what they are referring to...My words and questions need to serve this process" (p. 294).

Drawing from my experience as a therapist and my developing awareness of my own felt sense, I allowed some time before each interview for a few moments of reflection and quiet in order to notice and put aside distractions, anxieties, etc. I was attuned to the possibility of participants speaking from this place of "inner responsiveness." Though I neither explicitly suggested such speaking, nor interrupted an ongoing description in order to encourage it, I allowed my sense of how each participant spoke to inform my follow-up and clarification questions.

Following my transcription and analysis of each participant's interview, I made each transcript and my interpretive comments available to the respective participants and invited each of them to provide written comments.

Researcher Data Collection

Walsh (1995) has demonstrated the importance of explicating the approach of the researcher. He noted that while Husserl offered the phenomenological epoche or "bracketing" as a way to set aside researcher presuppositions, Heidegger argued that our very mode of being-in-the-world is pre-reflective, engaged activity; thus our presuppositions constitute the grounds for our understanding of that activity (p. 336). Merleau-Ponty (1962) agreed that we cannot sever our immediate engagements with the world, but that reflection "slackens the intentional threads which attach us to the world and thus brings them to our notice" (p. xv). Walsh argued, "Bracketing, therefore, can no longer be seen as setting aside assumptions to provide a clear view. Instead, bracketing

becomes a process of explicating one's approach as inexplicably part of the observed phenomenon" (p. 336).

In an effort to rigorously perform this explication, data in this study includes the researcher's own reactions to and reflections about the research process. These have been critically examined for their influence on the data collection and analysis. This second category of data consists of the following:

1) notes taken following each interview, recorded immediately after the interview. These notes vary in length and include general impressions of the whole interview situation, such as affective responses, points of confusion or uncertainty, insights or hunches, associations, etc. As needed, these notes also include my reflections on interpersonal dynamics that may have emerged throughout the interview, so that the impact of the interpersonal relationship was accessible for consideration during data analysis (see Walsh, 2003).

2) a written reflection on my perspective on the phenomenon of focusing prior to conducting analysis of protocols. This included an exploration of my conscious expectations, assumptions, hopes, and motivations regarding the phenomenon at hand.

3) notes taken during the process of transcribing and analysis. As I worked, I attended to perceptible and notable shifts in my own mood and overall feelings about what I was reading. The places in the work where these occur were noted on the original transcripts, and when possible I offered a brief description of any explicit content associated with the shift. This last step was informed by Todres's (1999) articulation of interpretive research as a fundamentally embodied event, discussed further below.

2.4 Data Analysis

Using Embodied Understanding in Phenomenological Research

Focusing and phenomenological research have shared philosophical roots in phenomenology; both hold that reflective or symbolic knowledge is based in pre-reflective immersion in lived experience. Les Todres (1999) has integrated principles of Gendlin's philosophy in general, and focusing specifically, into phenomenological research methods, underscoring the importance of the felt sense (described in detail in Chapter 1) as a way of accessing one's wholistic sense of the research situation. The felt sense is "felt as a whole and serves as a reference for words" (p. 285). Todres understands sense making in data analysis not merely as a "personal cognitive process" but as requiring "the participation of the lived body as an authenticating or validating procedure" (p. 285). Interpretation is understood to proceed from the tension between the language we use to communicate partial meanings and the response to this language by our bodily sense of the whole.

In the description of analysis that follows, I refer on numerous occasions to an "embodied" sense of understanding, by which I mean a visceral feeling, usually in my torso, that corresponds to the kind of engagement or understanding I am experiencing with the data. I use this interchangeably with the idea of the felt sense; by including the more general "embodied understanding" I mean to indicate an ongoing reference to this bodily sense than is more casual than might be implied by "felt sense." That is to say, when analyzing data, I was not following focusing steps, but was often aware of bodily responses to shifts in meaning, fit of interpretation or descriptions, etc. I relied on this sense to detect shifts from one hermeneutic movement to another; it also signaled when I

was satisfied with an understanding of a part enough to bring that understanding back to consider the whole, or vice versa.

Rationale for Two Tiered Analysis

This study was designed with the acknowledgement of the importance of attending to the role of the implicit horizons of participants' experiences in formulating an understanding of the meaning of the phenomenon. Initially, I modeled my method on Amedeo Giorgi's descriptive phenomenological method, but diverged from it in these two respects: first, I wanted to pay more attention to the implicit features of participants' experience; second, I wanted to illuminate as much as possible the beliefs and assumptions that shaped my reading (see Walsh, 2003).

In an effort to gather the most complete "descriptive" and "interpretive" understanding, I initially planned to perform a descriptive analysis in the style of Giorgi, adding a step at the end in which I considered the implicit themes that appeared in the accounts (see Colazzi, 1973). As I began to work with the data, however, it became evident that this modification would not be sufficient to address the implicit themes in the account, for reasons I will elaborate in the methodological descriptions below. After some trial and error with the first two transcripts, I settled on an approach in which I could clearly distinguish between my tasks as a researcher. This approach utilized a descriptive phenomenological analysis and an interpretive phenomenological analysis, rather than a blending of the methods. Each of these analyses is described below; a discussion of the sensitivities of each method and overlap between them is included in Chapter 4.

Analysis One: Modified Descriptive Phenomenological Analysis

For each transcript, I began by reading the entire account as a whole, taking all of the description, caveats, etc., to be meaningful in light of their being offered in response to the prompt. The goal of this first reading was to begin to acquaint myself again with the way the participant's account unfolded, shifted, and hung together as a unified expression. Early in this process it was clear that, in addition to responding to my prompt to describe a particular focusing session, participants included information that expressed either general experiences with focusing, and attitudes and opinions about their specific or general practice. According to Giorgi's (2009) articulation of the method, this material is considered extraneous when it does not directly provide a "concrete and detailed description" (p. 124) of the experience of the situated phenomena (further discussion of the methods will be in Chapter 4). Therefore, the next step involved reading through the account again, this time to distinguish moments in which participants were offering a situated description of the experience from content that would be considered extraneous to Giorgi's method. The sections of the account that were part of a situated description were cut and pasted into a fresh document, the result being an abbreviated account of the sort that Giorgi's method prescribes. However, since the descriptive method prescribes analysis of the entire protocol collected, this analysis is considered "modified."

I broke this circumscribed portion of the interview into meaning units, which are short chunks of text that are demarcated by perceived shifts in meaning. I grouped repetitive meaning units together so as to be able to distinguish between meaningful additions of detail and repetition. After the meaning units were demarcated, I constructed a table to track the transformations of meaning units as described by Giorgi. The first

transformation entailed transforming the first person account into a third person account, so as to establish distance from the “tendency to identify with the experience of the describer” (p. 153).

Next, I followed Wertz’s (1995) procedures of “handling” and “sense making” for each meaning unit. Handling included the following steps, as summarized by Walsh: “(a) empathic presence to the described phenomenon, (b) slowing down and patiently dwelling, (c) amplification of details, (d) turning from objects to immanent meanings, and (e) suspending belief and employing interest” (p. 337).

Sense making involved attending to what the participant’s words simultaneously concealed and revealed. This involves systematically considering what was being expressed in each discrete point of description, and imagining variations in the description in order to ascertain which of the elements of description were essential to the meaning of the experience. Walsh (1995) summarized Wertz’s sense making steps as follows:

(a) recognition and utilization of an existential baseline, (b) distinguishing constituents, (c) reflection on judgment of relevance, (d) grasping implicit meanings, (e) relating constituents, (f) imaginative variation, (g) conceptually guided interrogation, and (h) psychological languaging. (p. 338).

The final step in sense making, the articulation of psychological languaging, is represented in the second column of the tables (see Appendix 4). Throughout this process, I noted ambiguities, associations and hypotheses about meanings in a third column of the table. These observations were intended to inform my explication of implicit elements of the account; however, as I got deeper into analysis I realized that

these observations were generally redundant to the comprehensive interpretive analysis, and I did not pursue integrating these comments into the descriptive approach.

After completing the translation of meaning units, I read and re-read through the translated units. I waited for an embodied sense of understanding to form concerning the essential or constitutive meanings and how these related to one another, the articulation of which would form the structure, or wholistic description, of the participant's experience. In most cases, I began writing by copying the essential themes into a new document, so as to see them together without clutter. Invariably, as I did this, relationships would occur to me and I would begin writing the structure. After a short burst of writing, I referred back to the themes, not trying to think too analytically but rather just take them all in freshly. At this point, I also varied the themes imaginatively to discern whether they seemed truly constitutive. When I had a feeling of connection to the whole emerging from the themes, I returned to writing the structure, including parenthetical phrases to indicate quotes that I might use in order to include to illustrate a feature. When I had an initial draft done, I went back to the themes to see if there were any that had not been included that seemed constitutive of the experience. Sometimes I offered a new translation of a meaning unit or rephrase a thematic heading, if in light of the whole it seemed more fitting. By returning again and again to the constitutive themes as I wrote the structures, I sought to maintain the integrity of the meaning of the account by staying close to the participants' descriptions. By allowing the forming whole of the structure to occasionally alter my interpretation of specific meanings, I acknowledged the contingency of specific details on the wholistic meaning of the account, an emphasis on the whole that was not generally as salient during the analysis of meaning units.

When all six transcripts had been worked through in this way, I read through all of the individual structures, forming an embodied sense of the constitutive elements across them, and articulated this as a general thematic structure. Writing the individual structures was an iterative process that included my own attunement to the felt meaning of the protocol as a whole and how the meanings were related, with frequent reference back to the translated meaning units. This process continued as I worked on the general structure, for the meaning of the individual themes sometimes took on new meanings when viewed across structures.

Challenges Encountered in Descriptive Analysis

Throughout this process, my focus was on the positive descriptions provided by the participants, in keeping with Giorgi's (2009) theoretical articulation of the descriptive phenomenological method. Giorgi asserts clearly that "descriptive analysis attempts to understand the meaning of the description based solely on what is presented in the data. It does not try to resolve ambiguities unless there is direct evidence for the resolution in the description itself" (p. 127). However, he does not elaborate on what constitutes "direct evidence" for the resolution of descriptive ambiguities.

Accounting for gestures was particularly problematic in this approach, and highlighted the uncertainty of what counted as "direct evidence." For example, in Pleck's account, his gestures initially seemed to substitute for words, but were later revealed as more ambiguous. When he said "here" and placed his hand on a part of his body, I generally understood and felt there was good evidence for the resolution of the ambiguity of the gesture; I reflected this in my analysis by transforming the "here" in the original meaning units to read the name of the body part he was indicating (see Appendix

4), according to the gestures noted in transcript (see Appendix 7). Yet, upon later consideration of the whole of Pleck's description, it seemed that a reference to his head or his abdomen might refer to a number of planes of bodily experience, since it appeared later that he experienced sensations in varying spatial relationships to his corporeal form. Though the meanings implied in the gestures were "evident" insofar as I felt I understood them initially, there was no way in the descriptive analysis to account adequately for the ambiguities that later analysis opened up. Similarly, silences, missing words, and ambiguous pronouns rendered some meaning units incomprehensible when isolated from the whole, though I had felt I'd understood them in the context of the interview. In order to restore to his description the clarity with which I had understood it in the moment, I included in brackets my commonsense understanding of what he had been communicating. This translation arguably introduced a level of interpretation to his account by translating movements and silences into a verbal form; however, without this procedure important meaning units in his account would have been unintelligible. To the extent that I understood the descriptive references of his nonverbal communication, translating them into words served to fold them back into the concrete detail upon which a descriptive analysis relies. However, doing so meant that the meaning of ambiguity or of wordlessness at those points was covered over.

These issues, combined with the desire to examine the protocols as a whole, with all the detail "extraneous" to a descriptive account, motivated the addition of a second analysis. Ultimately, these issues underscored a fundamental incompatibility between Giorgi's descriptive method of phenomenology and its use to study focusing, which will be elaborated in the Methodological Considerations in Chapter 4.

Analysis Two: Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

The second iteration of analysis I performed on the data was based largely on the method outlined by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) in their *Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis: Theory, Method, Research*. The goal of this second analysis was to reconsider the whole of the transcript in a way that allowed implicit themes to emerge in the context not only of the situated description, but also in the context of communications that suggested meaningful information about the participants' experiences, such as commentary and asides. Giorgi's method attempts to avoid reflective descriptions on the basis that such descriptions are more likely to reflect what the participant thinks about her experience, rather than describe how she lived through it. The interpretative approach I utilized looks for thematic meaning of experience in the entire participant response, which may also—as in several cases here—include important information about related experiences that shaped the experience of the focusing session.

I began this analysis by formatting each transcript so that it appeared on a horizontal page as a block of text with several inches to the left and about one third a page to the right. I read through the transcript as a whole again. Next, I separated the transcript into meaning units. After demarcating them I numbered them for ease of future reference. (I did not initiate this helpful numbering procedure until the third transcript; for the first two transcripts, this was done after the fact.)

Next, I read through a printed out version of the transcript with a pencil in hand, making notes in the wide right margin pertaining to psychological meanings that emerged from the meaning units. As noted above, this process had a very different quality than the meaning-unit-by-meaning-unit reading. Whereas that process had a tight, close, even

restrictive feeling of attention, this method felt much looser, more open, and associative. At the same time, I was aware that despite my efforts to look freshly at the transcript, my detailed attention of the previous round of analysis inevitably shaped how I understood the portions that I had deeply dwelled with there. After two rounds of this note making, I read through the notes of the transcript in order to distill the right margin notes into themes; these themes I noted in the left margin. After this, I transferred the themes to a new document and under each theme I copied the verbatim words of the participant that corresponded to it; this was to facilitate grouping the themes with ease.

Once the list of themes was typed up and formatted, I read slowly through the list of themes and supporting evidence. As I read, I looked for themes that seemed similar or otherwise related to ones higher up on the list, and cut and pasted them into clusters within the document. As the clusters began to form (even before I had worked through the whole list), I tried out tentative thematic headings, or grouped several textual excerpts together under one of the already articulated themes. This was a very bodily responsive process, and I relied on my feeling for the themes to recognize a match. When trying out thematic headings, I checked the original textual support against my embodied sense until I had a feeling of provisional rightness of fit. I did not belabor this process, knowing that as I moved themes around there would be changes to the groups. I did find it helpful, however, to do some of this interim work with the themes as I moved them around, because this work seemed to go more smoothly if I made space for possible thematic headings as they arose, rather than trying to come up with all of them ONLY after I was happy with my groupings.

At the end of this process, I had clustered the transcript's contents into thematic groupings (see Appendix 5). I transferred the thematic headings into a new document, and followed a procedure for writing the thematic cluster that was very similar to the one I used when I wrote the six general structures in the first analysis. Themes that did not gather into a cluster, or did not shed light on the meaning of the focusing experience for the participant in question, were not included in writing the account for this second analysis, but were retained at the end of the thematic document for reference.

After completing an interpretive thematic description for each participant, I began a more general articulation of the phenomena across descriptions by identifying convergent and divergent themes. In order to avoid moving too far away from the participants' descriptions, I returned to my thematic groupings for this work, rather than working with the structures. I created a new document in which I included all the thematic groupings for each of the six participants, as well as the verbatim material (in 8 point font, for easy reference without excessive distraction). I assigned a font to each of the six participants so as to maintain distinctions between each participant's themes and quotes. I printed all of this out and laid each page side by side on a large table.

Beginning with Pleck's thematic groupings, I read through the themes and assigned a color to what seemed like important themes that I recognized as likely present elsewhere (e.g., blue= flexibility in focusing approach, pink= importance of waiting/supportive attitude to parts, purple=attention to lived body, etc.). After going through Pleck's thematic clusters and categorizing each of them by color, I went through all the rest, theme by theme, and marked each instance of a theme with the corresponding color.

As I went into Anna's and Yolanda's protocols, themes emerged that I hadn't recognized in previous thematic groupings. When this happened I went back to look for possible iterations that I might have missed. In this way I proceeded through all the groupings a number of times, keeping my overall thematic groupings very loose, since I knew I would have to pull all the evidence together freshly to try to characterize the heart of each theme, and possibly move supporting themes into other groupings. In several cases supporting themes fit in multiple groupings; in these cases I marked them with multiple colors, to be looked at more closely later.

This process was importantly informed by my feeling for resonance between themes that might or might not have very similar thematic headings. For example, the themes "taking care of vulnerable parts" and "importance of waiting" shared an attitude that seemed to underlie the focuser's experience, even though the particular expression or enactment of that attitude varied depending on the transcript.

The next step consisted of moving all the apparently related themes together, so that I could reconsider them in groups. I did this by creating a new document and cutting and pasting all the supporting thematic material under loose thematic headings (in some cases just the colors I had assigned, because I was yet unsure how to characterize their relationship to one another which I nevertheless felt intuitively was there as I scanned the spread out themes). Importantly, in this step, I included the excerpts from the transcripts for each theme with their thematic heading. I did this in order to be able to consult with the participant's expressions, since in many cases I was grouping themes that I had named differently in each individual analysis. Since I was letting my grouping choices be motivated by an embodied sense that they went together, it was important to check that

sense against the initial data, to be sure that what I suspected—that the meaning of the participant’s expressions was very closely related, even if the themes I had initially assigned highlighted different features—was supported by the data.

Invitation to Participants to Provide Written Feedback

Following the completion of the steps detailed above, I emailed the participants to follow up with them about the results of the study. I included the following as attachments for each participant: 1) the participant’s transcript 2) the modified descriptive structure identified for the participant 3) the interpretive structure identified for the participant 4) the descriptive structure across participants 5) the interpretive structure across participants. I invited each participant to provide written feedback about results. The brief responses I received are included in Appendix 6.

Reflexive Analysis of Researcher Data

After reviewing the notes that I collected throughout the process, I wrote a brief reflection on the research process. I identified, where possible, previously implicit assumptions that informed my research, and described how my perspective on the phenomenon changed over the course of research. Following this reflection, I returned to the research results and wrote a statement describing how the results may have been influenced or informed by my assumptions.

CHAPTER THREE: RESULTS

3.1 Introduction to Results

The structures that constitute the results of this study are intended to articulate the global, wholistic meaning of focusing for each participant, as well as across participants. As described in detail in Chapter 2, the structures emerged from an iterative process of moving between the specific descriptive or interpretive meanings explicated in the analyses of meaning units, and the fit of these meanings in the context of the whole.

As also described in detail in Chapter 2, analysis of the participant transcripts consisted of two iterations for each transcript. The first iteration was based largely on the descriptive phenomenological method described by Giorgi (2009) with a key modification; the second was based on the interpretative phenomenological analysis described by Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009). Below, the results of the modified descriptive phenomenological analysis are presented first. Each participant's descriptive structure is preceded by her demographic information, a summary of her focusing experience, and a brief description of the interview scene. The six individual structural descriptions are followed by a modified descriptive structure that incorporates themes across all six participants.

Next, the results of the interpretive phenomenological analysis are presented. Six thematic clusters (one for each participant's account) are followed by an interpretive phenomenological account that incorporates convergent and divergent themes across participants' accounts.

In the case of both descriptive and interpretive accounts, commentary regarding prominent features of the accounts—for example, the role and relationship to the “other”

in the focusing dialogue—will be presented in Chapter 4.

In all the results, original textual excerpts are included in parenthesis and are followed by the number of the meaning unit to which the excerpt corresponds. For example, “MU 17” refers to the 17th designated meaning unit in the corresponding Modified Descriptive or the Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (see Appendixes D and E, respectively). Text in brackets ([]) refers to a physical gesture or other non-verbal enacted by the participant; texts in alternate brackets ({ }) indicate understood meanings of inaudible or unintelligible statements. Pauses in speech are indicated by an ellipses (...); omission of words for clarity is indicated by four periods (....). In the case of Eliza only, phrases or sentences in italics refer to a previously written portion of an account which she read aloud.

3.2 Modified Descriptive Phenomenological Structures

Participant One: Pleck

Modified Descriptive Phenomenological Structure

At the time of the study, Pleck was a 55-year old married European American male. He was a physician in partial retirement. When asked to describe his spiritual or religious affiliation, he included the following: Zen practices, including sesshins, several years of Hindu meditation retreats, a year of “A Course in Miracles,” and current participation (as of the last 5-6 years) as a member of a synagogue for reform/renewal Judaism.

Pleck first encountered focusing around 1985-1986, when he read Gendlin’s (1981) *Focusing*. He experimented with the practice on his own and had several experiences that he described as “profound.” In 1988 he went on a focusing week long

retreat. Pleck got “more seriously into focusing” after taking Ann Weiser Cornell's "Treasure Maps to the Soul" workshop in 1998. Since then, he has attended a few workshops on focusing (an introductory weekend with Joan Klagsbrun, and an introductory weekend of Biospiritual focusing), as well as a few focusing conferences, including three Focusing International Conferences, One Biospiritual National Conference and One International Focusing with Children Conference. At the time of the interview, Pleck had four active focusing partners with whom he worked over the phone for an average of about 2-3 hours a week.

Pleck's had been the first interview that I had been able to secure in the area, and he referred me to several other focusers whom he thought might be interested. Pleck invited me to his home in New England for the interview. I interviewed him in a comfortable space in a beautiful historic farmhouse. The room was given character by an old, wall-sized pocket door that closed the room for the interview; various musical instruments, books, and art suggested the wide ranging interests of Pleck and his wife. Pleck related a focusing experience that had happened a number of years before, and which he had described in writing for his own purposes around the time that it happened.

For Pleck, focusing is a process that begins with the focuser creating a supportive temporal and spatial context (“I was... in my house.... I was focusing by phone with one of my focusing partners” MU 1). The focuser then intentionally shifts his attention from an everyday mode concerned with external stimuli, personal projects, discursive thought, etc., to a reflective awareness of his precise somatic experience as it arises in the present moment (“as I get quiet I can kind of feel my attention kind of [brings both hands up toward head, one on each side, palms facing one another and fingers inclined toward each

other and draws them together in front of his face as if closing an aperture] tight and here [referring to gesture]" MU 2). As he becomes aware of uncomfortable sensations of tightness, he responds automatically with the desire to move away from or change the discomfort. In turn, he takes this urge as the object of awareness, observes it, and then returns his attention to the feeling of discomfort ("... I didn't want to be sensing with this [invisible ball gesture in front of his face] tight attention.... So I was aware that I was doing that" MU 5; "And, I felt thissss [hand in front of face] and I felt this [gestures to back of neck] tightness here as I kinda sensed in and I felt this [indicates lower abdomen/pelvis] and I just kinda sat with it" MU 6). He maintains this attention for a period of time until there is some bodily and psychological sense of release and his awareness expands to include, but not be limited by, the sensation that was just its object; at this point a new somatic experience becomes the focus of attention ("And then because I usually feel a kind of discharge—some of the energy or some of the fear or whatever it was, you know, that caused me—'me,' my sense of 'me' [closes hands together tightly in front of chest]—to be this big. And as I did that in this particular case I think I just noticed that: 'Oh, tight. Ok, that's where I am. I've done this 40 times before; let's just be with that.' [fingers up to touch forehead]" MU 20).

This back and forth cycle—becoming aware of some constriction, becoming aware of his aversive reaction to the constriction, returning his attention to the restriction with refreshed curiosity, and then experiencing a release or expansion of awareness around the restriction—continues for several iterations. At each iteration Pleck shifts incrementally toward a more receptive, open state of awareness where the subjective urge to manipulate or react to experience is gradually quieted by the repeated application of

patient and steady attention to somatic experiences (“Wow! That’s kind of [other hand up and out about 12-15 inches from head, palm toward body] interesting because now I’ve got this little space from it then! Ohh-kay, I got some space from it. What else is goin’ on? I know I have a place here [gestures to low abdomen] I just can’t feel it yet” MU 22; “because I’m realizing now that this is a kind of really small attention [pointer to thumb loop] that I’m bringing into my being [bringing to mid abdomen] and um, just in this case I think I noticed it and I think I remember and I also know—I’ve done it enough—over a couple of minutes if I just breathe I can’t go down here, but it will open up” MU 24). In this session, this deepening reiteration results in the spontaneous manifestation of insight that is experienced as coming to him from a source that is remarkably distinct from his sense of self (“it was fascinating for a while and I kind of asked into that space, ‘Why are you showing me this then?’ like, ‘Why are you showing me this if I’m not supposed to do anything about it?’” MU 15; “it’s kind of like, ‘Well, why’d you show me? [laughs] Seriously, why did you show me this?’ [looks upward]” MU 38; “I got quiet and I had a very, very sweet kind of felt response um, and it was um, it was, ‘You always wanted to know this. Now you know. Be happy.’” MU 15). The content of the insight and the sensations leading up to it are experienced as notably real, visibly and palpably (“what I actually felt was this [circling motion] and I kind of saw though the edges of this [indicates “reflectors,” limits of the energy motion]” MU 26; “I don’t know how to describe it any other way and I can feeeell [finger making energy loop] and seeeee it in some level that, yknow, if I was an artist I’d draw it. It was, uh, something else” MU 28).

Participant Two: Anna

Modified Descriptive Phenomenological Structure

At the time of the interview, Anna was a 49-year old Latina married woman working as a group facilitator, organization development consultant, social worker, and writer. She said that she was raised Catholic and has practiced Buddhism for “many years”; she noted that she is currently learning about Judaism.

Anna learned about focusing initially in 1995 by reading Gendlin’s (1981) book, *Focusing*. This sparked her interest, especially given that she had 4-5 years of experience doing “co-counseling” and was interested in learning about focusing which is often a peer-to-peer practice. About three years after learning about focusing initially, she attended a workshop and then joined a focusing group that met every two weeks. At some point she took a class with Ann Weiser Cornell and eventually became certified as a focusing instructor.

I wasn’t sure whether I would be interviewing Anna until the day when I was in her town for another interview. She had expressed uncertainty about whether she would be able to provide the kind of description I was looking for, but ultimately decided to share her experiences and agreed to an interview. At her invitation, I met with her in her home in New England. Prior to our interview, she made tea and set out fruit for us to share as we talked. At the conclusion of our interview, we chatted briefly and she insisted on sending me with some fruit for the road, a kind gesture that summed up the warmth of her hospitality. She

described a focusing session which had occurred a number of years before, and which she had shared with others on previous occasions.

For Anna, focusing occurs in an interpersonal context with a listener who facilitates exploration and expression of whatever spontaneously arises during verbal exploration of a topic, including physical gestures (“I didn’t know what the meaning of it was but there was something about just wanting to go like this [lifts shoulders, then arms up from her body so that they are about half way between her waist and shoulders. As she lowers both arms, she lifts her palms up and pushes out away from her body. All of this is done in a fluid, expressive motion] just wanting to go like this. It’s like, ok, I’m just feeling like I need to [repeats]... [sigh] yeah... MU 2). The context also encourages close attention to bodily and emotional responses to performing that action (“I just feel like, ‘Ah!’ Y’know, I just... [sigh] like I just want to do [exhale] and then I just kind of want to explore...” MU 7). The action is not interrogated for symbolic relevance but is accepted and valued in its opaque spontaneity (“and it was just movement, it had no conceptual thing to it, until it was out there, and then it was just like, ‘Ok, how does that feel?’ ‘Well, that feels good’” MU 7).

Taking time to explore and feel the action for its own sake provides the opportunity for the gesture to evoke conceptual meaning for the focuser, which is experienced as having been inherent in the gesture all along (“in the next moment there was like ‘Oh! Wait a second! Maybe this does have something to do with the issue I was talking about!’” MU 8). Its meaning is revealed in increments, as she moves back and forth from her performance of the gestures, to increasingly nuanced responses to it, from recognition of relevance, to explication of personal meaning. This meaning is

experienced as a profound surprise that is experienced as deeply, personally relevant (“ohhhhh! Maybe this is what people mean by boundaries!’ Because ...that was a word that had always mystified and puzzled me...and all of a sudden it was like I got in this instant that it’s like, ‘Oh!...this is something to do with how I’m feeling inside, how much space I am wanting and needing!’ and... and there was even this part of the gesture that had come, and sometimes it’s here [elbows bend to bring hands, palm out, drawn closer to her body], and sometimes it’s here [straightens arms and pushes palms out further] and it’s kind of connected to me!” MU 5). The focuser’s valuation of the experience is enhanced by the sense of mystery suggested by the combination of personal relevance, and lack of personal agency in revealing that relevance. What is revealed in the session is experienced as independent of the focuser’s or listener’s intentions for the session (“the person I was with wasn’t trying to teach me about boundaries, or wasn’t saying anything about boundaries, I mean they were like, totally just listening” MU 6).

Participant Three: Yolanda

Modified Descriptive Phenomenological Structure

At the time of the interview, Yolanda was a 63-year old European American married woman. She was retired from work as a college English teacher, and also had had a life coaching practice. She was currently working as a writer, musician and artist. She practiced Vipassana, or Insight, meditation.

Yolanda had been focusing between 5 and 6 years. She had learned in the context of a writing retreat and had continued through various workshops to pursue certification through Level Four. She utilized focusing in her work as a life-coach, and had worked with a number of focusing partners over the phone during her training.

At Yolanda's invitation, we met at her home in New England. It was fairly early in the morning and upon my arrival she offered me a frothy cup of cappuccino. She shared a bit about her pursuits and about the geographical area in which she lived. We interviewed in a cozy room that was filled with musical instruments and art supplies, evidently recently used. She described a session from years ago which was one of her first focusing experiences.

For Yolanda, focusing is facilitated by the presence of one or more trained listeners who provide guidance and support ("They were they were both very experienced trainers, focusing trainers so I was in good hands" MU 2; "I mean mostly what I do now is focus by myself, which is, uh... good, I think it's a little harder, uh, but, having a really skilled person to lead you through the process is...is huge" MU 26). During focusing, Yolanda gives sustained attention to somatic and imagined visual experiences as they unfold in response to her consideration of a particular subject, in this case the participant's childhood. Awareness of physical sensations is fleeting relative to the evocative images that emerge and are experienced in relation to a particular bodily area that they are felt to inhabit ("Yes, they're physical but they're also image based. ...I had in this process uh a sense that that there was a child—a small child in me, um, and it was as if I could envision this small child inhabiting my body. It was down in my stomach and that place where emotions live" MU 4). Relating to these images is a way to connect with parts of her emotional experience that had previously been unavailable to her ("I was able to extend to a part of myself that had been pushed aside or exiled... um, hadn't been able to speak until then" MU 6). Focusing moves Yolanda toward the emotional center of the issue she is dealing with; it interrupts and bypasses the verbal processes that

keep her relating to her experience on a more surface level (“I just got to the heart of what the issue was or what it was that I was feeling, what the core emotion was there.... and it sort of cut through the verbal process that one engages in” MU 7). While focusing, she feels able to be with experiences effortlessly, without analyzing them. She is aware of a physicality and immediacy in her experiences that feels more vivid and genuine than when she attends to her experiences through the mediation of interpretation and explanation (“It felt like I could ... let go of analysis, Um, that I could let go of trying to figure something out.... here was something more physical and immediate and I was embodying it in some way” MU 18).

Yolanda perceives great psychological impact or “power” in her focusing. This power is centered in her discovery that she can connect directly with her childhood experience, so that the distance of time is bridged and she vividly re-experiences what it was like to be herself as a child (“It felt as if I were still having that experience of the small child. I mean that was my experience, and um... she was me, and um, she became a vehicle to express whatever I was feeling at that time.... as if I were speaking through her voice or from her, from her place as opposed to seeing it from a distance” MU 20). This bridging and re-experiencing of her child-self unfolds with the support of greater perspective, maturity, and compassion that Yolanda has as an adult. She is deeply moved by her discovery that she can communicate with this small child and let her know that she is not alone, and acknowledge the child’s suffering. By moving back and forth between awareness of her experiencing as an adult, and awareness of what herself as a child feels, Yolanda feels both the pain as it was experienced by the small child, and feels comforted by her ability to extend attention, warmth, understanding, and care to the child (“She was

only part of me, and so I was also able to see, too, to see other parts of myself that could step in and reach out to her, and, and, care for her” MU 20).

At the end of this session, Yolanda is left feeling sensitive, vulnerable and sad. She also feels relief and sweetness at her new ability to gently regard and attend to what she feels. The session helped her give explicit form to what had before been an unformed inner strength. By discovering the image of herself as a suffering child, she also discovered herself as an agent of strength. Rather than the strength having a vague, perhaps passive quality, she discovered that by giving the strength a form that she could actively reach out to give comfort to her vulnerable self-experience. In this way, her strength takes on a concrete form that allows her to relate to it and rely on it (“it’s the first time that I found...it gave me a form for a kind of strength that I knew I had.... that session really tapped into that for me. It gave me a form for that...a more specific gesture or y'know sort of physical and visual reality to attach to” MU 29).

Participant Four: Sophie

Modified Descriptive Phenomenological Structure

Sophie was a 63-year old bilingual (Spanish/English) divorced woman who identified as European American and “half Jewish, but not raised Jewish.” She worked as a focusing teacher and eco-travel consultant, and identified her spiritual/religious practice as “focusing, chakra meditation, walking, praying.”

Sophie took her first focusing class in 1989. After experimenting with the practice without much social support for the next 10 years, she took a 6-month training course to become a focusing trainer. At the time of our interview, she was currently taking a phone course with Eugene Gendlin about focusing with dreams. She was also involved with

teaching nonviolent communication using a focusing approach in a Central American country.

I met with Sophie at her invitation in her home in New England. I was planning on making the long drive back to Pittsburgh after our interview, so when I was able to meet with her earlier than planned, I was eager to do so. Prior to beginning our interview, she made a delicious hot lunch for us of soup and tortillas. We talked and ate for a long while before we began the interview; the sense of time pressure I had carried with me into our meeting had melted away in her company. As she shared her account, which had happened the day before, I had the feeling of re-living it with her, as if she had welcomed me first into her home, and then into her dream and her focusing about it.

For Sophie, focusing is a process in which she moves into a dialogical relationship with a constellation of experiences in order to discover their concealed meanings. Focusing begins with the assumption that an experience, specifically a dream, may have its own inherent meaning, despite an initial appearance of meaninglessness (“‘Nyehhhh... there’s nothing here,’ you know... ‘Why don’t I have interesting dreams?’” MU 50; “So I was on my way there and I was thinking, ‘Well, what was that dream about?’” MU 15). Accepting the possibility of meaning that is both intended and concealed fosters curiosity and openness that motivate the inquiry. The discovery of initial meaning is accompanied by happiness and a sense of excitement, which deepens curiosity for further exploration. This cycle of touching a partial piece of meaning, and bringing the excitement of that small insight back to her consideration of the overall meaning of the dream occurs throughout her process. Additionally, Sophie is motivated by her belief that when focusing with dreams, an initially disclosed meaning indicates the

presence of another, deeper meaning (“I started feeling so happy like “Wow!” I’m so happy that I know about this two stage thing because I got this- I don’t have to stop right th[ere]!” MU 51).

The focusing process unfolds in a dialogical manner in which Sophie addresses questions to herself, and receives as responses narrative or fragmented memories, feelings, or body senses that inform her understanding of the whole experience and her relationship to it (“I thought, ‘Why was he there and what was... why was I so mad at him?’ and so I got a felt sense of what he means, what he represents for me” MU 29). Focusing requires an open, receptive attitude toward associations that arise and a willingness to take time exploring the relevance of associations, especially ones with notable feeling tones (“I really liked that feeling, like...[big sigh] you know like this calm peaceful...everybody together, everybody feeling safe to be in the street....It’s like, ‘Ah!’ It’s just like, ‘mmmm!’ Felt all warm and fuzzy and like {honey}” MU 22). This initial attitude of openness facilitates further opening and sensitivity to the emotionally felt significance of subsequent associations (“I was kind of like crying as I went up to the... y’know crying from being touched in my remembering this song” MU 61; “So, um, then I went into the therapists’ office I was really in this beautiful space” MU 62).

Focusing requires time and space that is relatively uninterrupted; unsolicited contributions from a supportive other may be experienced as intrusive (“It was a case of me doing focusing kind of on my own, but with someone—a skilled person—who listened to me....she only intervened as a therapist in one place and I kind of found it helpful what she said, so...” MU 3; “But I didn’t—it was like...it was like I didn’t have to go in—I didn’t have to stop her, I didn’t have to say, well, ‘Don’t intervene in my

process” MU 64).

Despite the possibility of intrusiveness, the other’s contributions to the process are important, and consist mainly of providing an appropriately supportive space for exploration (“And this therapist, I mean we love to laugh and so she was... she’s very, she’s very fun—and um, so...well, I was able then to really get in touch...” MU 66, 67) or remembered instructions (“She said that and that felt right. Like, ‘ok, yeah, ok. So that’s the inner critic. So let’s get rid of him.’ So that’s who that was” MU 27). Explicit instructions or feedback are clearly regarded as subordinate to Sophie’s own intuitive and emotional responses. Deeper receptivity, emotional sensitivity, and reverie are encouraged, while emotional contraction or criticism are acknowledged but avoided when possible (“And Gene said, ‘If you can find a baby, that’s great!’ but I said, ‘No! This does—this does not feel good, this whole thing about the baby. So I-I can’t go there” MU 21; “Gene says, too, like, ‘Oh, you see the inner critic and then you keep walking you walk past that and you go somewhere else’ And I thought, ‘Oh, ok. Great! That-that makes sense” MU 64).

Focusing concludes when Sophie discovers in the symbolic phenomenon its central meaning; in this instance it is the possibility of transforming a frustrating relational dynamic into one that can serve as an encouraging model for change. Novel ways of relating to deeply personal challenges present themselves and Sophie feels joy and relief at the prospect of moving into new patterns from old stuck ones. (“I just started getting just ebulliently happy—it was like ‘Wow!’ y’know? This gives me something to work on- gives me something to notice of myself” MU 74).

Participant Five: Eliza

Modified Descriptive Phenomenological Structure

At the time of the interview, Eliza was a 63-year old European American married woman who worked at the time as a faculty member and artist. She was also developing a life coaching practice. She identified her religious/spiritual practice as Protestant. Eliza learned focusing in 1997 from a therapist, and went on to be certified as a focusing trainer. Recently, relative to when we interviewed, she had become a focusing coordinator to lead in the organization and teaching of various focusing trainings.

Eliza had responded enthusiastically when she heard about my intended research at a focusing conference where we were first acquainted. When circumstances brought me to be in her area of New England, she was not only very accommodating to my limited schedule, but referred me to other focusers whom she thought might be interested. She welcomed me at her home, where we interviewed in her office. She was generous with her time and thoughtful about the account she shared from recent weeks, reading parts of it from a journal entry so as to describe it as vividly and completely as possible.

For Eliza, focusing is motivated by awareness of an obstruction in her willingness to follow through with consciously valued goals and projects (“Now this was a more deliberate campaign to see if I could make some shifts in the place where I’m stuck in my life” MU 13). Focusing begins with setting aside time during which she intends to experience and observe self-parts that are typically overlooked or wholly unregistered in day-to-day functioning. These parts are understood as having meanings for the focuser that are initially concealed, but may be disclosed if she attends to and inquires of these parts patiently and receptively (“What I was looking for when I started the session was

the parts that didn't want to do the website. I wanted to be with them... and see what they would like to tell me" MU 43). Eliza simultaneously holds an intention to achieve a distinct change in reference to the situation she is exploring, as well as an actively receptive attitude toward whatever she experiences in the session ("And to my surprise I couldn't find them!...I was kind of fishing around inside... inviting the parts that didn't want to, to come on up! 'Is anybody home?' And they weren't there" MU 44). In short, Eliza both anticipates and hopes that focusing may bring some change in an area where she feels stuck, while also accepting the situation as it is. Situated in this attitude, Eliza attends to her experience with respect to a specific situation, and dwells with whatever thought, image or feeling emerges ("*I couldn't find the part that didn't want to do the website. All of the parts are trying to get me to go forward...were like little bull dogs-*" that's right—bull dogs or pugs '*Straining at a leash. I can really feel the tugging in my body*'" MU 15).

Eliza pays particular attention to visceral feelings or images, which may be mutually evocative. As she shifts her attention between these images and her felt reaction to them (e.g., the feeling of tugging and the image of pugs), they emerge in greater detail and complexity (a leash restraining the pugs, and ultimately a man holding the leash). She engages dialogically with salient others in these images, treating them as distinct from her subjective sense of self and questioning them in order to evoke further development or clarification (" '*So I asked him*' and this is an IFS {internal family systems} move—'*I asked him to step outside where I could see him more...then he was sitting, facing me, in a modern, clean line brown leather chair, and the dogs were relaxed next to him, no longer pulling on the leash. But the man continued to hold the leash. I asked him to show*

me what he was not wanting” MU 19).

What Eliza receives in dialogue are words and wishes that she may have for herself. Once these are expressed by the “other” as image, Eliza is able to move quickly into a different relationship with these feelings and thoughts, acknowledging them as her own (“ *‘So he was not wanting me to puff up artificially, making big claims regarding my services, and then have to struggle to meet. He also did not want me to have to do things that aren’t fun, that feel like pressure and anxiety’*” MU 21; “ *‘And all I want to do is name out loud what I already do, not make it some big blown up heavy thing that will make me feel small, inadequate, or anxious, or work too hard, or be a phony’* ” MU 24).

Participant Six: Ila

Modified Descriptive Phenomenological Structure

Ila was a 53-year old European American married woman who worked as a "teacher/healer" at the time of our interview. She identified her spiritual/religious practice as the following: "multi-religious practices originating in Catholicism and recently returning to there as a space for me to be still and explore the symbols further, from a different perspective after coming to Buddhism, Yogic philosophy, and Native cultural practices and beliefs."

Ila began focusing in 2003 and took various retreats and workshops over the next few years, training through one of the advanced levels in 2008, at which point she decided to complete her training as a focusing trainer. She has been focusing twice a week with one partner since 2008.

Ila welcomed me to her home in New England on a snowy January night. She had graciously agreed to meet with me when a turn of events serendipitously brought me to

town. The quiet presence of her family and the glow of holiday decorations created a warm and comfortable atmosphere. We interviewed in an office area closed off from the rest of the house, and were visited by a big friendly cat who piped up occasionally.

For Ila, focusing occurs when sustained, patient, and deliberate attention on a somatic feeling allows that feeling to emerge clearly into a movement, word, or other meaningful expression (“So I came into the focusing session... realizing that there was a tightness—yeah—in my lower abdomen [places hand on lower abdomen]” MU 4; “and from there I stayed with the sensation of tightness” MU 5; “I put my hands on my lower abdomen to really just acknowledge the tightness” MU 7). Remaining with sustained attention on the initial feeling results in an eventual relaxation of that sensation (“I was aware within me that there was this place of the anxiety, of the tightness, of the tension... it just appreciated me being with it. So there was a sense of... relaxation maybe even? A kind of spaciousness? A tension gave way a bit. It let loose a bit” MU 13).

During focusing multiple bodily feelings or urges arise; each of these is acknowledged and received with patience (“I can just...acknowledge within me that this part of me is anxious. There’s tension in my body.... I don’t have to understand exactly why in this moment; I can just be with it” MU 12). Sometimes several conflicting senses are engaged in dialogue, though Ila does not regard each sensation equally as it arises. Instead, she prioritizes attending to the series of sensations that open from the first body sensations noted in the session. She attempts to return her focus to this series of sensations, even if momentarily pausing to take care of a distracting or obtrusive feeling or urge (“But letting it know at this point—I was asking it to sit aside, so I could just stay with the tension a bit more” MU 15).

The intensity of the distractions increases as she moves deeper into the session. She moves repeatedly between initial awareness of body sensations, to a patient and often renewed attitude of curiosity about these sensations, which ultimately results in their disclosure of deeply seated patterns in Ila's way of being. As this happens the distractions that arise become increasingly urgent, and she pauses briefly to attend to them ("And there also at that point I believe may have appeared another place in me that didn't like the whole staying with the tension—that wasn't comfortable with that: 'It's time to kind of move out of here! Let's move!'" MU 14; "So I paused to acknowledge that part and how much it wants me not to be in this tension—not wanting it—not wanting to just sit with it. Wanting to resolve, move on" MU 15).

Moving between the distractions and continued perception of her intended bodily sense is an iterative process where each return to the primary sense of exploration brings a further elaboration or distinction ("So um being with the tension... So, a sense that my body actually splits [moves her left hand from the center of her chest up to her chin, while moving her right hand from the center of her chest down toward her pelvis] when I'm anxious. So this tightness forms in my lower abdomen [gestures to abdomen], and then I come up here [gestures to area above her left hand], um, and there's a separation. And that's where I had a lot of a sense of how that felt" MU 11). In this case, the iterative process reaches its conclusion when Ila recognizes a profound wish in her body for a different way of being that is more supportive to her ("My whole breath moves up. It's like I'm not- not living from the bottom heart any more, it's—where the feelings and things are, my instinct, y'know all those things—but y'know I've put them away, so I think that part of me that was expressing that... it it was almost like a 'tired.' I'm tired of

this pattern, I'm tired of living this way. I don't want this constriction, this tension, this closing down, this living from up here" MU 25.5). As if in response to the acknowledgement of need, Ila feels a sense of support spreading out beneath all of her experiences, both proceeding from her whole sense of being, and also coming from outside herself ("It wasn't so much coming from it but it was coming underneath [gestures to space in front of, and extending past her low pelvis]. It was like I—what I'm needing is support, so I can relax. I need—and what I was feeling was a place in me of support, underneath. Um. I think I remember saying to my companion, 'It feels like a net.' And then this tense part of me relaxed even more" MU 16; "And somewhere in continuing...came a place of... such a deep level of support. Like not from me, y'know, it's like me supporting me. It's all of me, but it's something bigger than me" MU 21). The feeling of support stays with her after the focusing session, resulting in a marked shift in her experience of her breath, her body, her mood, and her thinking ("It's like it shapes the rest of the day. I'm not where I was....I have a different way that my whole body feels like it's moving through the day, because I do feel like my whole body has shifted its focus and its way of being. I also have... more clarity I think about that specific situation" MU 23).

Modified Descriptive Phenomenological Structure Across Participants

Focusing is a practice that unfolds in a supported space and a protected time. While some specific qualities of support offered by other people are valued differently, focusers uniformly benefit from an unwavering nonjudgmental stance from the other person present, if there is one. Focusing is experienced as a reliable way to discover something new about oneself or one's situations; the encounter with the genuinely

unknown makes focusing a potentially risky process. Trusted listeners reduce the experience of risk and increase the experience of safety in a number of ways that depend on the personal needs and preferences of the focuser, as well as the listener's understanding of the process (or lack thereof).

Specific functions of how the listener creates a feeling of decreased risk and increased support vary. The principal variations concern how directive the listener is within each focuser's process, for example, how much the listener talks and what kind of responses are offered (reflective vs. directive). Other variations include whether they are in person or over the phone, what specific kinds of interventions are offered, and the degree to which the focusers rely on the presence of a listener to focus. In sum, the nuance involved in each person's needs from the listener reveal focusing as a process that is highly responsive to the interpersonal field.

Focusing involves a willingness to be open to whatever discloses itself, including aversive reactions to the very feelings or thoughts of principle interest in the focusing session. Focusing is characterized by the willingness of the focuser to enlarge her scope to accept all of what arises, as well as her reactions to what arises. Dwelling with both of these and the tension between them allows for the emergence of ambivalences that may not ordinarily be experienced and explored.

Focusers approach a discrete instance of focusing with implicit or explicit ideas about the content or goal of a session, and the same focuser may use different approaches at different times. The main difference in approach concerns the degree to which the focuser anticipates or intends a shift or insight in a particular area of her life, versus beginning without specific intention for exploration.

Without exception, focusing involves a heightened experience of the feeling of bodily space centered on the torso, and an awareness of how certain words, images, etc. correspond to this space. For four of the focusers, the experience of her body extended beyond her physical form. Each focuser's experience of her lived visceral space is returned to again and again throughout the session, and responses perceived are appreciated as very valuable information—more valuable than thoughts, images, etc. that do not correspond to, or evoke, a palpable response from the “inside”—noting that “inside” often refers to a lived bodily space of which the skin is not a clear boundary.

Each focuser experiences the relationship between these visceral responses and other components of affective, cognitive, or gestural content in a unique way. While the visceral component was present in some degree in each of the accounts above, one focuser was more attuned to imagined images or scenes, whereas another explored gesture. Awareness of this bodily sense also seems more or less diffuse for different focusers. For example, Pleck, Eliza, and Ila experienced nuanced “internal” visceral sensations in very specific areas of their body, whereas Anna experienced a yearning to perform an “outward” gesture, which satisfied a more vaguely articulated “inner” sense. Yolanda and Sophie talked in more general terms about the quality of their lived bodily senses, while describing more concretely the emotional meanings that arose in relation to the felt bodily sense.

In each description, focusers experience a felt “shift” that is genuinely surprising. Even though focusers expect some kind of shift may occur, the specific content of the shift is wholly unexpected. There is the experience of something new; this is true even in cases where the content of the shift referred to something of which the focuser was

previously aware (e.g., Yolanda's experience of strength or Eliza's protection from inauthenticity). Part of the impact of the shift across protocols is the emergence of a clear, compelling, concretely experienced truth with a deep sense of meaning for the focuser. The shift comes with a feeling of profundity. Even if it is unclear what, if any, lasting impact the insight will have on the focuser's life, the experience of discovering something deeply personally relevant is accompanied by a sense of profound appreciation and revelation.

The relationship participants have with the shift they experience varies in terms of how they hold it in memory and what actions they take in response to it. Participants described experiences ranging from years to hours old, so it is difficult to ascertain what the long-term impact might be. Nevertheless, their accounts reveal that the shifts that occur are highly responsive to how each individual receives and reacts to them. Focusing shifts bring a new experience, but the impact of that experience is shaped by whether the focuser writes about it, initiates new behaviors, returns to work with it further, etc.

At the heart of focusing is the deliberate movement into relationship with one's experiences. Each focuser positions her sense of self as a curious observer of her own experiences, rather than being identified with them. This is accomplished through the attitude, described above, of nonjudgmental curiosity toward everything that arises in experience. The focuser shifts her attention back and forth between the emerging experience and her understanding and description of it. Both the perceived experience and its meaning move from initial vagueness toward increasing clarity until she has a satisfying sense of having arrived at the wholistic meaning of the particular experience that disclosed itself in the session.

Though many of the focusers reflectively assert that all the “parts” are also themselves, the lived relationship to these parts reveals that they are experienced as having a sense of agency differentiated from their own. Parts are routinely experienced as “wanting” or “needing”; they are experienced as responding to the tone and content of the focuser’s interchanges with them. The unexpected and mysterious—but ultimately meaningful—nature of the gestures, images, words, etc. that arise while dialoguing with the parts support this sense of a genuine “otherness” in the dialogue.

While the sense of contacting an otherness within oneself is characteristic of focusing, the intensity and interpretations of this otherness vary across focusers, and across focusing sessions for the same individual. This sense of perceived otherness that emerges is in some cases understood as a transpersonal otherness—an otherness that is so beyond the scope of ordinary experience that it is not clear from where it arises, whether within or beyond the self. At other times, the otherness is perceived as a profound but more recognizable manifestation of the focuser’s own wisdom.

3.3 Interpretive Phenomenological Thematic Clusters

Participant One: Pleck

Interpretive Phenomenological Thematic Cluster

Focusing for Pleck begins with a preliminary reflection on the quality of his attention. He first recognizes the lived body sensations of his head, before proceeding to attend to the sensations associated with the visceral core in his trunk (“if I try to bring this attention [still as if holding the ball] to these places [brings hands to abdomen] there’s this really tight attention that ends up doing this [fingers touching around invisible ball, touching the small aperture to several points over his mid and lower abdomen] and it’s

like—the field’s too small” MU 9; “I’ll actually start [returns hands, not touching but palms facing and hands rounded toward each other on each side of head] by just kinda being with what’s the quality of my attention [hands still there] or what’s the felt sense of my attending.... rather than just assuming that my attending is this [moves hands loosely out and inward over abdominal region] unencumbered, clear, unbiased, open spaciousness which it almost never is” MU 11). Constitutive of Pleck’s focusing practice is the recollection throughout the process of sensations and habitual modes of relating to those sensations that he has learned are likely either to impede or to facilitate movement toward novel insights and experience (“I just noticed that: “Oh, tight. Ok, that’s where I am. I’ve done this 40 times before; let’s just be with that [fingers up to touch forehead]” MU 36; “What else is goin’ on? I know I have a place here [gestures to low abdomen] I just can’t feel it yet.” MU 37; “focusing is a lot of remembering....being sensitive to qualities of attention, because I’m realizing now that this is a kind of really small attention [pointer finger touches thumb, making a circle] that I’m bringing into my being” MU 40).

Focusing for Pleck involves his sustained attention on visceral sensations and accompanying images or words that are sensed primarily as interior to his lived body, but that also are experienced as an extending beyond his corporeal limits (“I can kind of feel my attention kind of [brings both hands up toward head, one on each side, palms facing one another and fingers inclined toward each other and draws them together in front of his face as if closing an aperture] tight and here [indicates closed hands]” MU 8; “Then it would kind of come up here [indicates about eight inches behind and above head]” MU 20).

This experience of his body space as rooted in and extending beyond the corporeal form seems to parallel the flexible and sometimes ambiguous understanding of the other in dialogue. Sometimes the dialogue is rooted in an intrapersonal relating (“You know so it’s like, ‘Wow, I’m feeling about this tight-[pointer-thumb loop to forehead]. Oh, I wanna try to fix it.’ Oh, you know, then there’s another part: ‘I don’t like this,’ ‘Let’s make myself be more open,’” MU 34”). At other times experience seems to reach beyond the intrapersonal; he addresses parts that feel more profoundly other, and seem to be experienced as more than simply part of himself (“It was like, ‘here I am! [arms open from waist and eyes look up beseechingly] What d’you wanna do?’ MU 16; “-- I kind of asked into that space, ‘Why are you showing me this then?’ like, ‘Why are you showing me this if I’m not supposed to do anything about it?’ Right?” MU 26).

For Pleck, the lived experience of focusing is a process that has evolved out of, and in some cases in distinction from, focusing as he understands it to be generally described and taught. This experience of focusing is “different for him” in several ways. The most explicit of these differences is evident in his description of the process (“trying to get into this part of my body, which is often how focusing’s described, doesn’t work too well for a whole bunch a reasons” MU 7; “I’m sure this is taught in focusing and good focusing teachers help people do it—but it’s not really described clear like, you know, when you say put your attention here [gestures abdomen] you might want to check and see what that attention feels like before you bring it down here!” MU 31).

The awareness of difference in his experience also contributes to the experience of focusing as a practice that sometimes opens up deeply profound experiences that he implicitly both yearns to share and is also wary of disclosing. This yearning is perceptible

in his evocative gestures throughout, his careful and earnest efforts to articulate his experience, his allusion to having many more interesting stories to share (“—I have three—I’m not gonna tell you three stories. Um, no, course I think they’re fascinating but hey!” MU 4; “which is a different wild adventure story that I... won’t tell— [laughs] least not right now!” MU 7), and the care he takes to share general information about his process that he feels is necessary to understand the instance he is about to describe (“that’s the introduction, now hopefully this’ll make sense...” MU 14). His commentary also suggests that he is wary of sharing these experiences with others, and is perhaps concerned about how people will assess and judge him and his experiences (“this was kinda strange, but’s ok, ahm...” MU 18; “it’s, y’know, one of these interesting things that, y’know, I can write about and be labeled all sorts of things, or I can leave it on my computer! [slow, building laugh] along with a bunch of other unusual experiences!” MU 61). Thus, the description of this experience of focusing is woven with some tension for Pleck as his excitement and intrigue with the practice is complicated by questions about his own safety in speaking openly about what it has meant for him.

Pleck’s account of his experience of focusing also suggests that focusing is a heterogenous practice for him, with some focusing sessions characterized by intentional inquiry into a specific issue, and others proceeding in a more open-ended fashion (“...usually I just kinda hitchhike when I Focus... over the last year and half I think I’ve actually just Focused on specific issues but for the first 20 plus years, um, I think it was like, ‘here I am! [arms open from waist and eyes look up] What d’you wanna do?’” MU 16). Additionally, Pleck describes broad trends in the kind of content that has arisen in his focusing sessions over the years (“In my earlier days of focusing I had

really...unusual or nonordinary or whatever experiences. Over the last year and a half in my focusing I've had incredibly ordinary experiences as if, um, 'It's ok, now you see how the universe works, now get off your ass and do your own personal growth work!' MU 65). While Pleck values the process irrespective of content, the hint of longing for his earlier focusing experiences suggest that these were particularly cherished ("...it would be interesting to see, I don't know maybe they'll open up again some day but at least for the last couple of—last year or two it has taken a very very personal, very much issues—stuff with me, with my kids, with my wife, w' my job, rather than 'how's the universe work?' Though that's a really fun thing t—and I didn't try, I didn't set it up—I wasn't trying to... Focus into how the universe worked. It just..." MU 66; "I'd have, oh, gosh, 20, 30 pieces of 'this is how the universe works; this is what it feels like- you can get an energy hit off it' [laughs] kind of like you feel the connection to-y'know, Whaaaow!" MU 66).

Participant Two: Anna

Interpretive Phenomenological Thematic Cluster

Focusing is constituted for Anna by the ability to shift attention to her bodily sensations for either brief (i.e. "informal") or extended ("formal session") periods of time. During these times, sensations are observed without any deliberate attempt to interpret their meaning ("there's like a lot of spaciousness, it's like me feeling the ability to give myself more permission of... seeing what comes and having something come that... doesn't at all, doesn't have any intellectual content to it, doesn't have words, doesn't have thoughts and, just kind of going with it, being really curious" MU 54). Anna is open to the possibility that after some time, what is observed may develop into some

representable form, such as a movement, word, or image that has personal meaning and relevance for her understanding of an issue or experience in her life. Importantly, Anna does not experience a sense of her own agency or directedness in the emergence of symbolic representation (“But I wasn’t intending to do anything about it. I was just going in to do my focusing turn” MU 6; “It apparently felt kind of...disconnected, like I didn’t know what the meaning of it was” MU 7; “after doing it, I had this insight that, ‘Oh, this connects to... the... issue that... I’m working with!’” MU 8).

This shift from the urge to enact a movement to understanding of its meaning is iterative and moves from complete opacity toward profound meaning over the course of her session. Initially there is no meaning assigned to the movement, but as she returns to perform it repeatedly, she is aware first that it may have meaning, and then her understanding of the meaning and its importance for her emerges with increasing clarity.

This process requires support, either interpersonal, intrapersonal, or both. Anna’s degree of openness to what arises in her experience is influenced by her subjective feelings of safety, trust, and acceptance (lack of judgment). This is especially so when being guided by another person, although intrapersonal suspension of judgment is also necessary (“I guess I just feel like it’s a very sensitive interpersonal space that if the person who’s listening to me and thinking, you know, ‘What the heck is this person doing?’ It’s like, you know, if there’s sometimes a place where I can feel somebody else’s thoughts or, y’know, sense their skepticism...” MU 66; “In fact, I think I probably even gave myself permission to not have anything to do with whatever. ‘Well, I don’t—it doesn’t have anything to do with, but it was good to do it!’” MU 15).

As sensations arise, Anna relates to the emergent felt experiences as quasi-

subjects with a sense of intentionality and logic that are disclosed in response to the focuser's receptive and patient stance ("A wonder-filled discovery rather than a colonizing...Not trying to immediately figure it all out" MU 26). This stance is at the heart of the practice, and includes acceptance of the possibility of encountering an image, gesture, feeling, or thought that does not bring with it any particular relevance or meaning, but is nevertheless valued, carefully attended to, and possibly performed in movement or speech ("I just... [sigh] like I just want to do [exhale] and then I just kind of want to explore.... it was just movement, it had no conceptual thing to it, until it was out there, and then it was just like, 'Ok, how does that feel?'" MU 13). Focusing involves acknowledging the possibility that new, surprising understanding or insight may or may not result and that the significance of whatever appears may emerge unexpectedly in the moments, or much longer, after it is perceived ("I might be, you know, curious and welcoming and whatever, but there's ... what happens from the other side is kind of dependent ... like I could be sitting here for hours just kind of observing and just kind of seeing little things poking out..." MU 28).

Any meaning or insight that arises is experienced as significantly separate or differentiated from the focuser's sense of self ("that felt like to me like a pretty sizeable display of... I don't know that- that- that other thing that y'know...can't put any words to it—but deep wisdom, or larger knowing that's outside of what's—cuz y'know I didn't have a clue of what this was. It was really clear that it was coming to me from outside" MU 30; "It's like that sense of like a larger intelligence that has nothing to do—not nothing to do, but—very little to do with our conscious mind and our control and our intention" MU 23). The "where" of the arising insight is difficult to locate; on one hand

the process refers to and works with sensations arising within the immediate embodied context, and yet there is also a sense of otherness that seems more distal to her embodied experience of herself (“It was really clear it was coming to me from outside”).

For Anna, the value of focusing is related to her experience of it as the enactment of a “non-colonizing” relationship with her experiences (MU 26). Anna’s description of this particular source of value suggests that the focusing stance itself is a healing one for her insofar as it shifts her relationship to her own experiences toward greater openness and acceptance. By affirming and exploring her spontaneous urge to move in a very particular way, Anna encounters her experience as a respected other with meaning beyond her conscious grasp. As she lets this movement disclose itself in relationship to her body and her relational history, its meaning emerges as a bodily-lived sense of a concept that she had logically understood, but which was empty of personal meaning or comprehension (“...all of a sudden it was like I got in this instant that it’s like, ‘Oh! This is this is not some abstract, disconnected thing! This is something to do with how I’m feeling inside, how much space I am wanting and needing” MU 11; “It’s not like in the moment I got any insight into my family of origin or dynamics or anything like that but I... it was just a really deep reconnection in a physical sense” MU 32-33).

While the constitutive role of gesture in this focusing session was of clear explicit importance, Anna’s reconnection to it and reenactment of it during the interview opened up an evocative space in which the theme of that old session felt reawakened for her (“I haven’t done this [repeats movement], but I feel like I should do this ten times a day—like this should be part of my tai chi or whatever, y’know? It’s- it’s important. (mmm) IT is important” MU 36). Her demonstration of this gesture, and her connection to it, was

evocative for me and informed my sense of the power of the movement to describe a boundary. Additionally, her account was not a fixed telling, but opened up again a space in which the distinction between memory and new experience seemed blurred (“I think that this is not just what happened then... when we’re studying past experiences about focusing, in a focusing-sensitive context, it almost seems like invariable it, that there will be a present ongoing of that past experience... I’m realizing that the big surprise for me was just how much more present unfolding this would be” MU 43). In this way, I felt drawn into a shared space where the meaning of the session described came alive in a new way; talking about the session became talking from within an ongoing connection to the session, or even its continuation. This was also facilitated by Anna’s spontaneous reference to her felt sense, and use of silence to give herself time in forming her descriptions, (“But this were just pretty...pretty vivid, um, and they were kind of ... disturbing isn’t quite the right word, but...oh... (sigh)...[17 sec silence]... it kind of fits...[20 sec silence]... it was kind of like a ... a knowing from the inside about certain...psychological wounds that I’d experienced, it was... it was just, again, I was just so...[8 sec silence]...” MU 49).

Participant Three: Yolanda

Interpretive Phenomenological Thematic Cluster

Focusing is a process through which Yolanda experiences aspects of herself that are ordinarily inaccessible or unrecognized (“That—there’s a part of me that’s like that Gollum figure and shut off in the cave and, so...focusing is a way of being with that part of myself that doesn’t get recognition very often” MU 22). As these parts emerge into awareness, they are experienced as both an object of attention (as an image, sensation,

and/or emotion) as well as related to as a quasi subject (“Sometimes in a focusing session I will acknowledge the resistant part and find out what that part of me needs and—does that part of me need to be acknowledged?” MU 28; “...having an opportunity to go down to that pool where he lives and sit there and offer um offer a hand or extend... concern or support is very powerful” MU 24). This awareness of the quasi agency, and object-status of parts occurs in quick succession, if not simultaneously (“Feeling that pain of a small child that suffers but also comforted by knowing that I could comfort her...” MU 5; “She was only part of me, and so I was also able to see, too, to see other parts of myself that could step in and reach out to her, and, and, care for her” MU 20). Emerging parts may interact not only with Yolanda as the primary subjective agent who Focuses, but with each other, so that the focuser must negotiate between parts vying for her attention (“...she wants my attention; she wants my reassurance. And it’s always so powerful to do it, although there’s another part of me that resists it” MU 25; “...sometimes in a focusing session I will acknowledge the resistant part and find out what that part of me needs and—does that part of me need to be acknowledged” MU 28). Over the course of one or many focusing sessions, the focuser becomes aware of new aspects of experience (“There’ve been times when I have felt—if something has been really challenging to me personally—frustrated that I have to go back and comfort that child again!” MU 25). She also becomes familiar with recurring or habitual self-parts (“comes up again and again and it’s always, ah, it’s always a wonderful reminder, “Oh, yes, that part of me needs ta—for me to let her know that I know she’s there” MU 10.5). The relationships the focuser cultivates between her subjective self-sense and these various aspects emphasize acceptance and support, as the self-parts disclosed are often associated with significant

vulnerability (“and so it gave me a sense of it’s ok to have parts—places in my emotional life that need attention...It sort of relieved me of some pressure to enter the world with the sense that I had to be strong ... it allowed, uh, it allowed me to accommodate a part of myself that was tender or vulnerable” MU 33).

In focusing Yolanda lets go of analysis and engages directly with the most salient affective, visceral, or image features of a given experience (“I just got to the heart of what the issue was or what it was that I was feeling, what the core emotion was there and it sort of cut through the verbal process that one engages in” MU 7). This direct engagement leads to a sense of heightened reality and more concrete understanding of her experiences, present and past, as well as an increased attunement to the physicality or embodiment of her experiences (“because I was able to... be the suffering child but I was also able to be the one reaching out to comfort then that grounded me in a strength that I knew on some level that I had, but it it gave it a more specific gesture or y'know sort of physical and visual reality to attach to” MU 29). For Yolanda, over time this attunement increased her feeling of being profoundly grounded in her own bodily experiences, whereas previously she had experienced this support primarily through connection to the surroundings of the natural world (“I had some connection with nature, with Being that was profound and really grounding and that was, um, that gave me strength. Um and in the focusing session it was similar—that same kind of feeling that um there was a strength here {in herself} that I hadn’t really articulated but this was a more um concrete manifestation of that” MU 30).

Focusing is supported by the presence of a trusted individual or individuals who guides the focuser and provides support and feedback when necessary (“I was focusing

with [names two focusing instructors] and um, uh, they were they were both very experienced trainers, focusing trainers so I was in good hands” MU 2; “I can remember a specific focusing session with [focusing trainer] during my training where she’s like holding out the two sides: the one that’s resisting offering that support or acknowledgement, and the one who wants it” MU 25). Additionally, observing others’ focusing process provides a sense of normalcy and permission to acknowledge and engage with the intense vulnerability that arises (“I had the opportunity of um of witnessing their [focusing instructors’] process, um, then I became aware that everybody has some exiled part of themselves or um everybody, uh, so I felt less alone in that” MU 32).

Yolanda’s relationship with her own practice is deeply embedded in a social context that extends beyond the direct contact with a focusing guide during the experience itself. Yolanda is aware of her focusing practice in reference to how she understands others’ practices, and there is a sense of tension around the differences she observes between her practice and others’ (“I—a lot of what happens to me in focusing is that I that my... focusing responses are—yes, they’re physical but they’re also image based” MU 4; “... there have been times when I have wondered ‘Am I doing it right?’ because it’s always so visual and um as opposed to—and um in the process of the training when I would guide people through it many people’s experience of it is much more physical” MU 35). On one hand, Yolanda values her practice and what it adds to her life, and in this sense the perceived differences in her practice are noted simply for the sake of description. On the other hand, she is aware that she has some judgment about her process—not only because of its differences, but perhaps some second order

judgment around the fact that she has not accepted it for what it is (“...but, that seems to be the way it is!” MU 35).

Yolanda’s understanding of focusing is informed by comparison with other practices that aim to increase awareness, specifically various methods of Buddhist meditation. For her, focusing is a way of actively engaging with salient aspects of arising experience, rather than remaining detached from them (“...with meditation I don’t usually focus on images. I don’t, I don’t meditate on images I—more just try to observe what’s happening in my body, in my thoughts, um, I let them come and go...” MU 15).

Participant Four: Sophie

Interpretive Phenomenological Thematic Cluster

For Sophie, focusing is a way of attending to and learning from an initially obscure or unintelligible phenomenon, in this case a dream. The process requires an attitude of curiosity toward the phenomenon (“I thought, ‘Why was he there and what was... why was I so mad at him?’ and so I got a felt sense of what he means, what he represents for me” MU 29). This curiosity is supported by the assumption that the phenomenon (dream) has an inherent meaning that can be disclosed (“and I was thinking, ‘Well, what was that dream about?’” MU 15; “There’s two stages to um finding out what a dream was about” MU 5). Sophie participates in a relational stance toward the phenomenon in which it intends its meaning to be discovered; it is regarded as being for her (“...before going into the new part that the dream is trying to tell you” MU 6).

Prior to moving into the necessary attitude of curiosity, Sophie’s initial assessment of the phenomenon as trivial or meaningless is put aside (“‘Nyehhhh...’ there’s nothing here, you know. (laughs) ‘Why don’t I have interesting dreams? Why

did I have a dream about throwing up? Why don't I have..." MU 50; "So I was on my way there and I was thinking, 'Well, what was that dream about?'" MU 15). Once begun, focusing unfolds as a conversation between her sense of self and alternately, the feelings, images, and thoughts that constitute the dream and that arise in association to the dream. Sophie attends especially to the human figures, their apparent relationships, and emotions in the dream. She asks questions that are answered by her own memories and associations ("So I was on my way there and I was thinking, 'Well, what was that dream about?' And then I remembered..." MU 15). The meanings suggested by these memories are then tried out in the context of the dream, where they may or may not fit ("I don't know I kind of compare it to—let's see... the felt sense of— I don't know if I ... let's see... um...[4 seconds] well, the main thing is that it's—I'm trying to give attention to the tourism, the community tourism baby that I have... before I...before I get pregnant with the focusing/NVC teaching baby—although I'm already doing that, but um..." MU 26). Sophie recognizes fit according to her bodily and emotional response to hypothesized interpretations; fitting interpretations are recognized by a sense of surprise, sudden excitement, or positive feelings about the connection ("I started feeling so happy like 'Wow!' y'know, I... I'm so happy that I know about this two stage thing because I got this- I don't have to stop..." MU 51; "And and and so I just started getting just ebulliently happy—it was like 'Wow!' y'know? This gives me something to work on-gives me something to notice of myself" MU 73). In this case, her fitting interpretations bring a deep feeling of insight or change that is accompanied by concrete ideas about how to address a difficult situation ("So it's like, somehow it was showing me a persona that I can develop and a and a part of me that was like y'know frustrated because it

doesn't have this but it's something that I can develop and and own" MU 48; "... to just notice the persona of [person in her life] and how I could incorporate that more—like how I could just say, 'Oh, yeah, I know it's hard for you to talk, ok, whatever—' and then,' just pretend you're [person in her life] and—cause he thinks the baby's gonna be beautiful!" MU 76).

Although Sophie's focusing account is a self-directed process of discovery, it is facilitated by the presence of a supportive other whose interventions are extremely minimal, and who primarily provides a permissive and playful space in which Sophie can explore. Sophie's implicit trust and reliance in her own focusing process is evident both in her explicit reference to it ("I didn't have to stop her, I didn't have to say, well, 'Don't intervene in my process'" MU 64), as well as in the way she negotiates remembered instructions during the focusing session. Recalled instructions function as highly valued guideposts that she trusts to lead her more deeply into the experience. At the same time, when conflict is encountered between the focusing instructions and her felt sense, she readily prioritizes her strongly felt emotional responses over the specific instructions and instead follows instructions in spirit rather than by the letter ("And I remembered Gene had just said, 'OHHH! I know what this dream is about!' ...I started feeling so happy like 'Wow!' y'know, I... I'm so happy that I know about this two stage thing because I got this- I don't have to stop" MU 51; "And Gene said, 'If you can find a baby, that's great!' but I said, 'No! This does—this does not feel good, this whole thing about the baby.' So I I can't go there" MU 21). Thus, focusing for her is a movement toward new knowledge that is guided primarily by her emotional and visceral feedback, and where others' contributions are accepted only when they elicit a positive sense of moving forward.

Focusing is a process that both depends on and elicits a mood characterized by heightened emotional receptivity and appreciation of significances. Sophie's recollection of a song that opens her heart with its beauty, sadness, and deeply felt sense of personal meaning facilitates her movement into deeper focusing work ("And so I was kind of like crying as I went up to the... y'know crying from being touched in my remembering this song" MU 61; "So, um, then I went into the therapists' office I was really in this beautiful space" MU 62). Relatedly, her decision to bypass exploration of the critical content of the dream suggests an inhibiting quality of threatened emotional tones.

Sophie's use of recent instructions in shaping how the meaning unfolded was quite explicit. Less explicitly, Sophie's enthusiasm for sharing this particular experience seems implicitly tied to her surprise and satisfaction at finding recently received didactic instructions as being so unerringly appropriate and predictive of the way the meaning of this dream unfolded for her. Evidence for this implicit meaning of this experience was primarily intersubjective, in the way I experienced and shared her sense of amazement, enthusiasm, and intrigue as the dream's meaning seemed to unfold in multiple layers.

Perhaps even more implicit in her account was a sense that for Sophie, focusing is a practice of hospitality. This was evident not in her explicit language but came through in several implicit and themes that ran powerfully through her account, as well my own striking experiences of her. Foremost among these was my experience of her way of relating with me as a guest in her house, and in particular a guest in her focusing. In sharing an account of a focusing session, I was invited into Sophie's experiences, not to observe but to participate as she relived in memory that focusing experience. Sophie took the time to explain to me the full significance of thoughts and associations that would

have been known almost instantly to her as she focused, so that I could feel something of the profundity of the shifts with her as she related them.

Participant Five: Eliza

Interpretive Phenomenological Thematic Cluster

In Eliza's detailed account, the meaning of her focusing practice revolves around the teasing out and resolution of ambivalences regarding an important life issue ("My objective was to find what was blocking and have that block dissolve" MU 60). This is achieved by allowing multiple dimensions of her experiences, thoughts, fears, etc. to manifest as internal parts separate from her sense of self ("I wanted to be with them and see what they would like to tell me" MU 43). In order to facilitate the appearance of these parts in forms that she can interact with—primarily as distinct images that are connected to distinct moods or somatic sensations—she attends to felt experiences that are rooted in, but not bound by, her body sense. She experiences movements that refer to spaces outside her literal corporeality ("I could feel the impetus [puts hand on chest and moves torso forward in chair] to do the website, and that was those dogs straining at the leash" MU 47; "I can really feel the tugging in my body" MU 15; "I could feel the caution in my chest, [puts hand on chest]" MU 26). Her "internal" bodily space is characterized strongly by a feeling of unknown depth, from where thoughts and images emerge ("all of the answers and theories that've surfaced earlier" MU 10; "Nothing is floating right up..." MU 3; "It's not about my deepest darkest secrets. I'd prefer to work with something a little more-- closer to the surface here" MU 7).

Eliza relates to the parts that emerge from this sensational depth as distinct entities with intentionality, experienced generally in terms of what they want or do not

want for Eliza (“It feels like a part that wants me to do other things, like my art projects, and it doesn’t want me blurting off in another direction, abandoning those projects midstream.... It worries my child artist would be shut to the side once more” MU 32).

While Eliza reflectively understands these parts to be part of herself, and they may sometimes be familiar, she relates to them as significantly distinct points of view (“if you can find a part, often you can find out what its not wanting to experience? It’s a way of finding out how it’s protecting you in some way” MU 20).

In focusing, these parts of her emerge in images, imagined actions, and relationships with each other that describe her relationships to her experiences and projects. These descriptions indicate the emotional, intellectual, and spiritual substance of conflicting impulses or goals. By allowing them to emerge in forms that are distinct, meaningful, and memorable, Eliza is able to discover metaphors that gather together complex, mooded, often previously unknown aspects of her experiences. In focusing, fleeting or vague thoughts and feelings become more substantial, more “real” as they emerge in a form that can be named or described (“I could feel the impetus [puts hand on chest and moves torso forward in chair] to do the website, and that was those dogs straining at the leash. I could sense that there was a lot of power, a lot of pushing to do it, but they weren’t going anywhere because they had this leash on them” MU 47). This also allows meaningful symbols to be remembered, returned to, and worked with over time, whether in a single session or multiple sessions (“My goal was, I guess, to hear from the parts that didn’t want to. And just understand better what was in me that was oh... concerned about that particular activity” MU 62; “but what’s coming up is fresh—now in this moment, and it’s a curiosity about those dogs and wanting to go back in and finding

out more about them—how they’re feeling” MU 67). Insofar as felt experiences become recognizable as images or words, changes in how they appear (or don’t appear) or relate to other images can also offer important insight about how Eliza’s relationship to her situation may have changed.

By exploring the relationships in which her parts emerge, including the changes in relationships between parts or vis a vis her core self, Eliza gains insight and understanding into her own nuanced relationships to her projects (“I notice that my real life of coaching and focusing, which is so soft, loving, humble, relational, is not in those bulldogs at all” MU 34). This may result in the emergence of a new perspective or priority with respect to her project, or (as in this case) the ambivalence may not be resolved, but instead she may come to an increased sense of patience with the whole situation, and a greater sense of peace about allowing it to remain unresolved (“I feel, just sensing it now it’s kind of a softer, more accepting [moves hand, palm facing her chest, in a circular motion in the air a few inches from her body] feel to the whole dynamic. There are parts that would like to and there are parts that really have reasons why they don’t want me to. And that’s where it is right now” MU 64).

Informing even the condition of the interview situation is Eliza’s valuation of the focusing practice. As an experienced practitioner and instructor, Eliza has devoted countless hours to the practice and exudes enthusiasm for teaching it and discussing it. In this sense, Eliza’s appreciation is very explicit both to herself and to me. Emerging from her description of a particular focusing experience, as well as in the additional vignettes she volunteered, are several implicit themes that seem to contribute to the high value she places on focusing. The first of these is knowing and integrating aspects of herself that

are often quiet or silenced (“ ‘*At the end of the focusing, I asked the part with the leash what it was wanting for me. It wanted me to be to feel free spontaneous, light...*’” MU 29; “ ‘*It worries my child artist would be shut to the side once more*’” MU 32).

The second implicit theme contributing to her high valuation is her experience of a connection with a supportive presence, a more profound sense of reality than she ordinarily experiences (“ ‘*There’s another presence I’m feeling now. A white glowing woman. The light of true self, of love there*’” MU 35; “*There is one other focusing session that um I’m going to mention just because it’s very powerful and it goes way back to when I was in therapy and I don’t remember the whole thing, but it felt very um— spiritual*” MU 73; “*I could feel the presence of something there, but I couldn’t see it, touch it, or feel it cause I was sitting in this deep fog...and when I was able to put my hands on it, in imagery, and move it, ahm, I had this—this feeling like I was connecting to my true self, or to god, or something- it was very...*” MU 77).

While she was sharing her account, Eliza explicitly qualified her focusing situation through reference to an additional framework that was in play. She offered it as an example of focusing, while highlighting features that set it apart from other approaches to focusing. Implicitly, this seems to suggest an understanding of focusing as a category of practices with some shared essential elements, as well as important differences (“*This was a long focusing session... but I was using an IFS {internal family systems} approach where I was identifying different parts of me that were coming up, so it’s um, it’s it’s not—it’s focusing, but focusing with a map*” MU 6). She also differentiated between two of her own styles of focusing, suggesting that the meaning of practice shifts with the intentionality or directedness of the focuser’s attention (“*It’s what*

I would call ‘project focusing,’ rather than sort a dip-in, ‘how am I right now?’” MU 11-12).

Additionally, Eliza’s “slippage” back into a previous focusing session—both within her account, and then again with me—raises questions regarding the focuser’s access to the “focusing space” over time and what the designation of a “session” means (“And then I wrote, *I got an aha as I wrote that.*’ So as I was writing about the session that had taken place the day before, it was taking me back into my focusing space and I was getting shifts as I was writing... So I’m back, dialoguing with this male figure with the dogs. *I could feel the caution in my chest,*” [puts hand on chest]” MU 26).

It also raises questions about the importance or utility of deliberate focusing “sessions” relative to a more diffuse, ongoing shift in day to day ways of relating to experience that practiced focusers like Eliza experience.

Participant Six: Ila

Interpretive Phenomenological Structure

For Ila, focusing is a practice during which she turns her attention to the sensations that are present in her body but which are often out of awareness until she looks for them. She meets these sensations with an attitude of active curiosity, intending to understand what arises in its own right, as something differentiated from and communicative toward her self, as if with its own point of view (“What was it like from that point of view? Y’know from that tense point of view, that part of me, that aspect of my being?” MU 9; “‘How do I be with you? How would you like me to be with you?’Where is this part of me-- understanding that the part is me” MU 9). Her dialogue with the parts of herself is firmly rooted in her attitude of patient waiting, and allows

responses to come forward (“And I said I just want to sit with it. Um...[6 seconds]...What came was two things. One, a sense of this part of me that it’s tired of being this way” MU 20).

When the sensation clarifies (in any number of ways— words, movements, images, etc.) she acknowledges this by describing or performing what was offered until what she is reflecting back to herself fits exactly with the corresponding physical sensation (“and then what happened was that my body did really convey it clearly. I got a sense of um pulling— my hand started moving out [pulls hand out from abdomen slowly, then puts the fingers of both hands together and pulls them apart, as if stretching an elastic.] A tightness, an elastic band...” MU 8). Only after full acknowledgement of what the sensation or part is showing her might she perceive a deeper or differently nuanced iteration of what it has to show her. Full acknowledgement is marked by feeling that her attention is being valued or appreciated by the part toward which she attends (“It just appreciated me being with it. So there was a sense of... relaxation maybe even? A kind of spaciousness? A tension gave way a bit” MU 13).

Throughout this process, Ila, with her companion’s assistance, maintains partial awareness of her own emotional responses to the unfolding dialogue. Especially when the sensation becomes uncomfortable, Ila shifts attention briefly to what she experiences as her subjective sense of self in order to ask whether it feels alright to continue attending to the sensation and dialoguing with it (“Did I want to just be with that place in me that was anxious?...And I remember sitting for a few moments and just saying, ‘Ok. I can do that. I can just...acknowledge within me that this part of me is anxious. There’s tension in my body.... I don’t have to understand exactly why in this moment; I can just be with it...”

MU 12).

During the whole focusing dialogue with the main sensation or part, Ila responds with curiosity to obstacles such as feelings of aversion to perceiving the sensation or dialoguing with it. This curiosity is similar to that with which she regards her main object of attention (“So I paused to acknowledge that part and how much it wants me not to be in this tension—not wanting it—not wanting to just sit with it. Wanting to resolve, move on” MU 15). She is genuinely open toward whatever is occluding or distracting her from her initially pursued sensation, and may even intend to return to focus on it later (“Well I don’t want it to go away, I’m just not ready to deal with it right now, but at some point it would be good for me to go back in the next few days and really sit with that part. Y’know? ‘What were you afraid of?’” MU 57). In this session, however, she does not encourage it to open further, but tries to move beyond it (“I was asking it to sit aside, so I could just stay with the tension a bit more. And it was ok with that. It was like, ‘Ok I can hold you here’ [curls her arm as if holding someone next to her]” MU 15). She acknowledges the resistance to what she is trying to attend to, and offers enough reassurance to the objecting part so as to allow her to renew her attention on her primary object, the sensation or part that she feels has some new meaning to offer her (“oh, ok, but now... now I’ve heard that; I understand my mind is trying to figure this out, trying to help me out and here’s this other part that wants to help out too, and move on, but now I want to come back to that sense and I want to just be with it because that’s what it’s wanting” MU18).

Ila’s account suggests that focusing is a phenomenon that is difficult to articulate for others while it is not being experienced. Ila shifts her attention to the experience of

her lived body on the way to finding words for the experience (“Let me just see if I can go back to that” MU 3; “...Being with the tension... I just want to see if my body will take me back there a little bit. ...[10 seconds silence]” MU 11). Similarly, Ila brings both herself and her listener into more direct contact with her meaning, by enacting the meaning (I got a sense of um pulling-- my hand started moving out [pulls hand out from abdomen slowly, then puts the fingers of both hands together and pulls them apart, as if stretching an elastic]. A tightness, an elastic band” MU 8; “It was like, ‘Ok I can hold you here’” [curves right arm around open space at side hip, where some small being might sit beside next to her or possibly on her hip]” MU15).

Implied in Ila’s account is that focusing involves a special attunement to feelings in the torso, especially the lower torso. Furthermore, it appears that it is partly focusing’s emphasis on awareness in this space that provides a sense of centeredness, openness, and groundedness—qualities which are experienced as beneficial (“So it told me a lot about where my body was feeling, where I was holding the tension from that, and what I was wanting was support to really hold, y’know all of it...Stay centered I think enough to resolve or work through it” MU 17; “...where my anxiety comes up is um... I kind of lose my ground, I come up” [gestures upward to her head] MU 17; “I don’t want this constriction, this tension, this closing down, this living from up here” MU 25.5). It seems that part of this value comes through contrast with the felt space of the head, which it seems may have been a space which was more familiar for Ila before she started focusing. It is important to note, however, that this “head space” is not only a “constricted” or ungrounded place, but it is experienced positively as a site of discursive thinking which is especially helpful when done in temporal proximity to experiences of

the lower body's groundedness, as evidenced in the dialogical pieces of the focusing process.

Interpretive Phenomenological Thematic Clusters Across Participants

Focusing is characterized primarily by intrapersonal dialoguing between different aspects of the focuser's experiences of herself. The possibility of real intrapersonal dialogue is premised on an attitude of curiosity regarding the responses to inquiries posed, and a sense of otherness in the responding part of self-experience. Attentive waiting is central to the practice, and the focuser anticipates a response (in any of various forms) without anticipating the content of response. This attitude of open, anticipatory patience contains within it a preemptive acceptance of whatever might respond. In particular, focusers are sensitive to the possible emergence of feelings, images, gestures, etc., that are associated with more vulnerable, generally concealed aspects of themselves. Accordingly, the attitude of waiting takes on a particularly gentle, even protective stance toward the readily silenced self-experiences that arise.

While the focuser asks questions or waits in silence for replies from an interoceptive feeling that has emerged as the principle "other" of the dialogue, other parts may arise as distractions or obstructions to the dialogue underway. Thus, focusing also includes mediation between conflicting parts that arise. For example, while the focuser adopts a position of open, patient waiting and acceptance vis a vis experience, she may experience an upsurge of impatience (in the form of, e.g., a nagging pull toward analytic thought) or other forms of distraction. Focusers notice these distractions and respond to them gently (repeatedly, if necessary) before reengaging in the attitude of open waiting.

While somatic experiencing is an element for all focusers, the modalities in which

the meanings of these experiences are perceived are flexible. Practitioners become familiar with their own attunements and ways of engaging with and expressing their experience in the world. Some are more disposed to receiving images, strong palpable sensations, movements, etc.

In addition to the development of unique relationships to particular sub-processes within focusing, the meaning of practice also becomes individualized through the accretion of past focusing experiences. While focusers approach their sensing with an open attitude, their interpretations often involve and are aided by recognition of familiar images, feelings, urges that they have previously experienced. Familiar sensory features that repeat across time inform ongoing focusing sessions.

The constitutive elements of focusing can be performed across a wide range of situational affordances and needs, and focusers categorize instances of focusing according to these variations. For example, focusing can be practiced as a brief, informal intrapersonal exchange without a separate listener, or as a sustained period of practice lasting any number of minutes in the presence of another person. In the case of longer, typically other-supported focusing “sessions,” focusing is supported by another person who is attuned to the particular needs and style of the focuser. While the presence of another person, in person or by phone, is not essential to focusing, the quality of the relationship between the listener and the focuser is of critical importance if there is someone else present. The explicitly valued features of participation of the listener varies somewhat among participants. While one participant’s account of the role of the listener suggested a degree of passivity and interchangeability, others highlighted specific kinds of involvement and feedback by which they felt supported. Listener actions that were

experienced as helpful varied. Some of these include the communication of non-judgmental, self-disclosure that normalized the process, non-interference, or offering specific suggestions or insights.

Focusing involves a nuanced and enculturated set of specific meanings and valuations concerning the “body.” Generally, the participant’s use of the term “body” refers to the whole of the neck, torso, abdomen, and pelvic area—the areas in which the felt sense is most likely perceived. While the rest of the body is implied and often relied on for gestural articulation of the felt sense, the trunk space is experienced as holding a special value. Words, images, movements that are perceived in correspondence with feeling in the body space are experienced as more real and thus carry more of an impact than words, images, or movements that arise without a felt connection to this area of the body. Experiences that include awareness of the bodily space are regarded as more steady and reliable—more “grounded” and more “open” to engaging in an unguarded, receptive, and relaxed manner.

For all focusers, the body space mentioned above is rooted in feelings located “inside,” but for some focusers (Pleck, Anna, Eliza, Ila) these feelings and images are experienced as extending at times beyond the corporeal body, as indicated by gestural and verbal description.

The head is sometimes experienced as felt space, but usually considered more in terms of thoughts without awareness of sensations. In so far as it refers to a space in which thoughts are without somatic correlates, experiences of the head carry a lower value in focusing than experiences of the body. Images or thoughts that are in the head and are not felt in the body, at least for four of the focusers, are experienced as less

persuasive or compelling. They may be obstructive to the experience of the bodily space. For two of the participants (Pleck and Ila), however, the head is associated with a feeling space. For these participants, this head space is characterized by feelings of constriction; being “in” the head is an experience of being cut-off from the open, receptive, relaxed feelings associated with being in the body. When awareness remains rooted in the body, however, this implies an inclusion of the head space as a source of reflective thoughts.

Across participants, the practice of focusing is entwined with a powerful emotional sense of value that comes across in the description of the situated account. In particular, what is finally disclosed in the session—the experience of a shift in how the participant views herself and her situation—is regarded as profoundly meaningful as it concerns the individual’s fundamental experience of herself and her life. In the shift, what is discovered about one’s particular situation is experienced as also relevant and true in a more general sense; one’s singular experience or struggle is experienced in reference to a more global meaning. Shifts in focusing are characterized by a conviction of meaningfulness, importance, and even awe. This conviction is expressed primarily in the feeling tone as participants struggle to find words adequate to describe the experience.

Each of the participants described a situation in which visceral experience and verbal articulation were yoked. In recounting—or reenacting—these experiences, the use of gesture had an evocative effect on me as the interviewer as I listened and participated in the recounting. The meaning of gestures that I perceived were registered interoceptively in my body, increasing my appreciation for the increased impact—the increased sense of “realness”—that bodily experience confers on associated meanings.

3.4 Reflexive Analysis

Summary of Researcher Assumptions and Biases

From the inception of this project, I was aware of wanting to balance my genuine interest in phenomenological, Buddhist, archetypal, and transpersonal psychologies with my awareness of the marginalization of these approaches within the broader North American psychological discourse. The professional marginalization of ideas which I hold dear contributed subtly and to a large extent unconsciously to doubts about my own legitimacy as a psychologist in training. This project came with an agenda, or perhaps a wish: to contribute to the knowledge base concerning focusing in a way that elucidated the contribution I believed focusing could make to the “broader psychological community.” I initially began my research looking at literatures concerning insight and implicit learning; I was convinced (and remain so) that focusing had something very important to contribute to natural science research on these phenomena, but that first it would have to be articulated in a way that could be “heard” by a research community that I imagined would roll its collective eyes at the first mention of the “wisdom of the body.”

It was only in the last stages of analysis that I came to terms with the role of my own figurative eye-rolling in maintaining my biases. I held multiple conflicting assumptions about what focusing “was,” and these stilted my progress by generating of implicit self-conflict. I believed that focusing “was” a legitimate and reliable method for training individuals to generate insight experiences. I also believed that this characterization, while good as far as it went, was not capable of articulating the experiences of depth, mystery, and awe that focusing seemed to elicit. The primary

evidence of how these assumptions played out in my research is found in the tone of my structures, particularly in my treatment of the dialogical process.

As I participated in these interviews, read and re-read them for months, and wrote about them for months more, I found myself wrestling with how to talk about the dialogical process. Throughout my results, I chose to refer to the dialogue as an “intrapersonal process.” This seemed to reflect the explicit reflections on the part of the focusers that the “parts” they were talking to were parts of themselves. However, this framing failed to capture the paradoxical quality of profound otherness and deep intimacy that was suggested by each of them in their descriptions. Furthermore, the language of the intrapersonal failed to convey the surprise and wonder each of the participants expressed at the deeply personal relevant, yet wholly unexpected experiences and meanings that unfolded in their focusing.

In retrospect, I realized that I too labored under similar concerns hinted at by some of the participants: what would others think of these experiences? How could the genuine quality of the dialogue be described when genuine dialogue is generally assumed to involve two corporeally distinct human persons? Is it safe to talk about such ambiguous perceptions of, and dialogue with, an indeterminate otherness?

The question of how to describe the complexity and paradoxical nature of what I was understanding in the participants’ accounts gestated for months as a murky, sometimes tense, slowly rotating cloud in the area of my solar plexus (the awareness of which I owed to my own experiences focusing). What would ultimately appear to me as a productive framing occurred to me one or two times during these months, not as the solution, but as an off-hand thought: wouldn’t it be interesting to think about the focusing

dialogue in terms of personifying? When this occurred to me in its full force, it was as if all the murky cloudiness collapsed in on itself leaving a single drop of luminous clarity that energized my writing of the discussion. Taking up an archetypal lens (see Hillman, 1975) through which to understand the lived experience of the participants, especially with respect to the dialogue, allowed me to fruitfully distinguish between the real and the literal, in Hillman's sense (see Chapter 4). Not only did this help me find a way to articulate the tensions between the lived and reflective experience of the dialogue suggested by the participants' responses, but it shifted my relationship to the phenomena in a way that felt much more authentic and more respectful. I am very aware of having introduced ideas and frameworks to amplify the descriptions of the phenomena that form the backbone of my research. Nevertheless it is as though focusing—as it is for me, informed and perhaps inextricable from what I have learned from the participants' descriptions—has taken on a life of its own. In the service of understanding, I had to expand my capacity to imagine; in response to this opening, ideas rushed in to fill the space. This will be explored further in Chapter 4.

Reading Against the Grain: Challenging Alignments between Key Researcher Assumptions and Results

One key assumption I carried into my work was that focusing is a practice that has profound value for its practitioners. As a practitioner of focusing myself, this is perhaps the most pervasive assumption influencing my research and my analysis. I communicated the appreciation that I have for focusing in my recruitment of participants, which I did through the focusing community. I did not seek individuals who had tried focusing without having experienced an impact, or ones that had once practiced focusing

and decided to stop. While my recruitment messages might have reached such people, it would seem far less likely that former focusers would be receiving, let alone reading, focusing related bulletins from the Focusing Institute. Similarly, my participant criteria required significant experience with focusing, and at least half of my participants taught focusing in some capacity. In addition to these recruitment and selection biases, the individuals who responded to my requests likely self-selected on the basis of their motivation to talk about focusing. In short, my research may present six instances of outlying focusers with extraordinary experiences who are highly motivated to share these with others.

Another assumption that informed my research concerned my beliefs in spiritual or non-corporeal intelligences. I considered it within the realm of possibility that focusing could open up communication with wisdoms generally considered beyond human experience.

Four participants referred to experiencing something from a spiritual, transpersonal, or somehow beyond ordinary human space or being, but they each qualified this in some way. I have dedicated a large portion of the discussion to the question of how we might understand the nature of the dialogue in light of the tension between reflective and pre-reflective references to the dialogue. I have worked hard to find a way of holding open the possibility of communication with a profound other, without offering closure regarding how this other is understood. It is meaningful that this tension is one that is very salient for me outside of my research, and I would guess my ambivalence may have influenced what the participants were willing to share. Another researcher with less interest in the transpersonal (by which I refer to the “upper” positive,

altruistic reaches of human capacity and experience) or the spiritual (by which I refer to a noncorporeal realm of sentient being) might not have dwelled so pointedly on what could be interpreted as merely passing references. Still another researcher who was committed to the belief in literal other realms populated with communicative beings might have asked different follow up questions in order to draw out the participants more on these points and amplify the relationship between the lived experience of focusing and spiritual experiences.

CHAPTER FOUR: DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction: Reflection on the Purpose of the Study and Overview of Discussion

As stated in the introduction to this study, it was designed in and carried out with the hope of making two contributions to the focusing literature. First, I hoped “catch sight of the meaning of the experience of focusing as it is lived pre-reflectively by practitioners.” Second, I hoped to “explore how this pre-reflective experience might differ (or not) from didactic and theoretical descriptions of the phenomenon” (see Chapter One). The first section of this discussion, in which I explore the contributions of the study, are dedicated to the first goal of “catching sight” of the lived experience of focusing. In this section I will offer discussion of several findings that have the potential to contribute to the understanding and practice of focusing across the diversity of approaches. These features include: the dialogical nature of focusing; the importance of social support, especially as it relates to the paired experience of profundity and ineffability; differences, and attitudes towards difference, in the processes of focusing practitioners; and the heightened attunement to the lived body by some of the participants.

The second section is devoted to the goal of exploring the intersections of participants’ lived experience of focusing with theoretical descriptions of the phenomena. In this section, I will briefly address how the initial rationale for this study was shaped by personal biases and assumptions, and how my shifting relationship to focusing has changed my understanding of this rationale. Motivated by this new understanding, I will return to the results to attend in more detail to what has emerged for me as the most intriguing and challenging aspect of the results: the disclosure of focusing as a dialogical

process. I will consider the reflective understanding of this dialogue suggested by the theoretical descriptions referenced by the study participants. Additionally, I will suggest a framework that is positioned to productively add to the diversity of thinking and practicing of focusing. My initial framing of this goal as an “exploration” is apt for this second section is about setting off; it is an embarking on a journey that has its beginnings at the end of this study.

In the third section, I will address several limitations of this study, including the role of researcher bias and participant religious and spiritual practices in shaping the results and the discussion of those results. In the fourth section, I will offer some methodological considerations regarding the two-tiered phenomenological analysis. I will present a comparison of the two approaches with particular attention to the way the “descriptive” and “interpretive” approaches to phenomenological research evoked markedly different relationships with the data. I will then offer brief recommendations for future research and a final reflection.

4.2 Contributions of the Present Study to Focusing Literature

Selected Convergent Thematic Findings

Dialogue

The experience of focusing as a dialogue constitutes the chief finding of this study and provides an organizing structure for several other convergent themes that will be explicated below. The focusing dialogue is indeed paradoxical. Although focusing generally involves the support of another human listener, the listener is not one of the participants in the dialogue; rather, she appears to listen in on it like a supportive mediator interested in helping the parties involved express themselves and be heard,

rather than injecting her own position. The focusing dialogue looks to the external observer like a monologue insofar as there is one apparent human participant.

Each of the participants had a way of referring to the other with whom they were in dialogue, more or less explicitly. For example, Pleck “asked into that space,” or heard from “another part: ‘I don’t like this,’” (MUs 26, 34). In Anna’s situated description, she avoided referring to the respondent to her questions by name, but described herself experiencing both the questions and the felt responses “ ‘Ok, how does that feel?’ ‘Well, that feels good’ ”; “ ‘Does this movement have to do with this issue that I’m working on?’ and then ‘Yes!!’ ” (MUs 14, 16-17). At other times she referred to the “inner landscape” or to “something” that responds (MUs 26, 29). Yolanda referred to the others of her dialogue in terms of specific representations that arose such as the “small child”; she also referred to “parts” (MU 10). Sophie’s account was distinct insofar as she was working with a dream; she appeared to relate to the dream as the chief interlocutor: “It was just the genius of the dream! Like, how would it know...” (MU 67). Eliza referred repeatedly and consistently to parts of herself, e.g. “At first I couldn’t find the part that doesn’t want to do it. I kept finding the manager parts...” (MU 10). Similarly, Ila also used the language of parts, but in a way that stood in for the concrete descriptors of the felt sense experiences she was having, and as interchangeable with expressions that differentiated the other from the part of her that was observing, while identifying it as part of herself, for example “that tense point of view, that part of me, that aspect of my being” (MU 9).

Pleck, Yolanda, Eliza and Ila converged around naming this interlocutor as some variation of a “part” of themselves, a description which offers an initial level of

clarification by identifying participants' understanding of the process as "intrapersonal" in nature and setting it meaningfully apart from other everyday categories of "dialogue" that might be carried out, from externally observable viewpoints, by one human person. In contrast, Anna and Sophie referred more vaguely to the other in the dialogue, relating with the responses that came without articulating their reflective understanding regarding where or from whom they came.

The uniqueness of the features that characterize the focusing dialogue, which will be addressed later, are perhaps more salient when considered in broad comparison with other everyday understandings of intrapersonal dialogue, or ways of talking to oneself. Talking or conversing with or to "oneself" has multiple meanings, suggesting, for example, a person speaking a single stream of thought aloud to herself as she works through steps of a problem, or taking up (in speech or in thought) multiple, alternating perspectives as one might when laying out pros and cons of a given situation. The dialogue described by the participants is distinct from these forms of self-directed speech primarily with regard to the attitude with which the self-talked engages in the task. Non-focusers (by training or disposition) engaged in narrating their actions may use verbal language to help maintain concentration by hearing their thoughts as they think them. Conventional "pro/con" dialogues may bear slightly more resemblance to focusing as a person takes up multiple view points with respect to a situation, though rather than dialoguing with distinct pro voices or con voices, ordinarily both sides of the debate are experienced as "belonging" to the subject working through the issue.

Ordinary self-directed speech can also include evaluative or interpretive commentary on one's experiences, more or less conscious, as in concept of "self-talk."

Individuals often respond, either silently aloud, to their moment-to-moment experiences in a way that is, for example, self-soothing or self-attacking. One hallmark difference between this sort of dialogue and focusing is that the commentary is generally experienced as coming “from” one’s own head, and is directed “at” oneself. While the experience of distinct self-parts is implied by the prepositions, these are often unconscious in nature. For this reason, an important part of the task of therapies attending to this kind of intrapersonal talk is to bring these internal statements to awareness. When individuals choose to consciously assess and change the commentary with which they provide themselves, they may identify the commentary as originating with someone else—e.g. a critical other from their past— but the “other” of the self-talk is generally not engaged, except to challenge or dismiss.

The conventional kinds of self-talk described above share the following in common: the “thoughts” with which the person is engaged are generally regarded as such; they are understood as verbal content of reason or memory, part of one’s own mind. The ordinary relationship between the thinker and her thoughts is as between a subject and her object: she has her thoughts; she may like or dislike them, they may inspire or oppress her, but ultimately they are or should be subservient to her conscious intentions with regard to them.

In stark contrast, the idea of “talking to oneself” can also suggest a person participating in conversations with unseen others or voices that are experienced as literally real and unquestionably distinct, though they are not observable to others. A prototypical example would include a hallucinating individual, who likely is experiencing a range of other distressing experiences. Alternately, a mystic or medium who is not in

distress may experience the presence of another subject whose communications she receives. In either of these distinct cases, the hallmark of this kind of dialogue is the literal perception of another with a distinctly non-identical relationship to one's sense of self.

Neither of these everyday categories of “intrapersonal” dialogue adequately describe what is lived by focusers, and each of the participants' accounts suggested implicit and in some cases explicit concern that their dialogue could be mistaken for one of the categories described, though they understood it as importantly distinct from those categories. Some participants showed awareness of potential social judgments associated with these kinds of intrapersonal dialogue, and attempted to differentiate from those categories. Pleck differentiated between participants in the dialogue that are “me” and ones that seemed less closely connected to himself; he referred to a transpersonal aspect, but with some hesitation and joking that suggested self consciousness about the kinds of experiences he was describing (“kinda strange,” references to unusual experiences best kept to himself, MU 18). Anna talked about a “sense of like a larger intelligence that has nothing to do—not nothing to do, but—very little to do with our conscious mind and our control and our intention” MU 23). The instance of focusing she described concerned an arising of a felt urge to make a particular movement, and yet she experienced the meaning of this as coming “from outside.” Yolanda referred to parts of herself that she experienced as both objects of her attention, and also subjects with desires and reactions (“she wants my attention; she wants my reassurance. And it's always so powerful to do it, although there's another part of me that resists it” MU 25). Of all the participants, Sophie referred least to “parts” but her natural way of talking about her dream conveyed

a similar relational stance toward the phenomenon; her dream intended its meaning to be discovered. She regarded it as being *for her* (“the dream is trying to tell you...” MU 6). Eliza reflectively understood the parts with which she was in dialogue to be part of herself. Though they were sometimes familiar, she related to them as significantly distinct points of view (“... I was using an IFS approach where I was identifying different parts of me that were coming up” MU 6; “I you can find a part, often you can find out what its not wanting to experience? It’s a way of finding out how it’s protecting you in some way” MU 20). She also referred to encounters that seemed distinct from these self parts, similar to Pleck’s experience of something that might be thought of as spiritual or transpersonal (“(I could feel the presence of something there[...] I had this—this feeling like I was connecting to my true self, or to god, or something” MU 77). Ila also explicitly understood her dialogue to be occurring with parts of herself (“What was it like from that point of view? Y’know from that tense point of view, that part of me, that aspect of my being?” MU 9). At the same time, in the midst of focusing, her interactions with the part suggested an experience of the “part’s” subjectivity, for example, she sensed that her attention was being valued or appreciated by the part toward which she attended (“It just appreciated me being with it” MU 13). Tension in how she understood the experience of the dialogue was suggested by the paradoxical ways she described the part that she ultimately felt contact with: “And somewhere in continuing—even after that, to just sit with it—came a place of [6 seconds silence]... a sense within me of feeling such a deep level of support. Like not from me, y’know, it’s like me supporting me. It’s all of me, but it’s something bigger than me. And I don’t know how, it almost y’know goes onto a spiritual realm or a—I don’t even know. I don’t know the word for it” (MU 21); “it

is a connecting with my own wisdom, my own healer, my own counsel, my own own inner being. I don't know. It's so deep" (MU 31).

The experiences that the participants described in the context of dialogue—feeling supported or informed, encountering a presence that felt both personal and beyond the personal—cast focusing in the light of a transformative practice. The focusing dialogue revealed itself as a lively and seemingly reliable site at which the participants encountered a sense of “otherness” that defied easy characterization. As such, the focusing process presents an intriguing opportunity for further research concerning the experience of dialogical encounters that diverge from interpersonal conversation. The results here raise questions about the limits of how we understand dialogue, and what the implications might be of accepting the subjective experience as primary in this understanding, rather than dismissing the possibility of genuine dialogue on the basis that it is not objectively available to observation. I will explore various ways that the focusing dialogue is conceptualized later in the discussion, and offer my own interpretation for consideration.

The focusing dialogue was also distinguished by its synesthetic quality: it was not simply an interchange of words, but a back and forth that included images, words, visceral sensations, moods, and gestures. In response to Pleck's attention to physical sensations, a vivid and dynamic image emerged; when he addressed the “space” associated with the image, an unsounded voice responded. Anna was moved to make a gesture, and as she gave expression to it with her body, laden verbal meanings emerged. Eliza's dialogue involved both distinct visceral sensations as well as vivid images that corresponded to these. While Yolanda's physical experience was second to the clarity of

the images that responded, these images were generally felt in distinct areas of her body. Ila used gestures and words to acknowledge and amplify visceral sensations as she followed their movements through different areas of her body. Sophie's dialogue with her dream images was associative and fluid; it was motivated by vivid moods that were gathered in warm dream scenes and remembered melodies.

While the focusing sessions culminated in the genesis of verbal expressions that conveyed something of the whole experience, the synesthetic structure of the process was revealed in the inclusion of these nonverbal dimensions in the description of the session. Participants did not simply relate a verbal synopsis of the session, but seemed to relive parts of it: they saw images again in order to describe them, they felt and evoked moods, they enacted gestures. It was, as if in order to get back to the meaning of the sessions, these synesthetic experiences needed to be renewed as surely as the words they recalled.

The participants' experiences revealed the wide ranging possibilities of non-verbal symbols to evoke new meanings. Within focusers' intrapsychic and embodied space, nascent, unformed meanings can begin in subtle perceptual stirrings, they can develop in the multiple nurturing folds of private associations, sensations, images until they are ready to be offered (or offer themselves) to the more public mode of verbal expression. Or, they can begin as a spontaneous upsurge of expression into the shared world, present immediately with others and only later unfurling private meaning to the focuser, as with Anna's graceful gesture. In either case, the possibilities of discovering meaning appeared multiplied by the focuser's psychological capacity to perceive fluidly and integratively across distinct sensory modalities in the service of new expressions of significance.

The synesthetic style of dialogue that is highlighted in focusing is, of course, part of interpersonal dialogues as well—perhaps most typically with respect to gestural or mooded expression. The enhanced range of possibilities for meaning making given by the synesthetic structure of the focusing dialogue suggest a potential benefit in exploring possibilities related to more synesthetic exchanges between human beings. The synesthetic structure also raises questions regarding the limits of what constitutes meaningful dialogue, whether between two or more humans, or between a human and other sorts of beings.

Ambiguity between “self” and “other” in the focusing dialogue

My consideration of the dialogical quality of focusing is primarily concerned with how the other of the dialogue was experienced and understood in the accounts provided; I have highlighted the tensions between understandings of focusing as a reflexive “self” practice and the striking sense of other-than-me-ness that participants encountered and described. As noted in Chapter 3, some of what participants responded to felt more familiar, more closely aligned with “me” while other parts seemed more radically other. This suggests fluidity in the lived distinction between the experience of self and other that raises questions about the meaning of that distinction for focusers and perhaps in general. Given the foundational and often controversial status of the construct of the “self” in psychology, the relevance of focusers’ experiences for considering these questions cannot be overlooked.

The findings suggest three distinct positions or perspectives experienced during the course of focusing that seemed to fall on a continuum of self-other identification. Throughout their descriptions, the participants referred to an ego-identified sense of

themselves; throughout this discussion I use “self” to refer to the one who does the focusing, who interacts with the “other” parts or agencies. This self seemed the most squarely identified as the focuser’s “me.” In addition to the ego-identified self, there were two categories of “agencies” that were described in reference to the primary “self” (most clearly in the accounts of Pleck, Anna, Eliza, Ila). One category involved the “parts” that were associated with particular bodily sensations—parts that emerged when the felt sense was attended to, of which there were at times two or more vying for attention. These parts seemed fragmentary, and when they were experienced as multiple and distinct (most clearly articulated in the accounts of Pleck, Eliza, and Ila) they appeared connected to aspects of the focuser’s ambivalent way of relating to her experiences or projects. When referenced in the interview, these were reflectively owned as parts of the self. While the focusers responded with a gentle attitude toward each of these smaller parts, the often-renewed stance of open, active curiosity was reserved for the part associated with the felt sense that was the focus of the session.

The second category of non-ego identified agency was associated with the shift that occurred in the focusing session and the meaning that accompanied it. Whether referred to as “a wisdom,” as a “voice,” as something “spiritual” or something “transpersonal,” this agency was experienced as one that sometimes included but always extended beyond the focuser’s sense of ego personality. This sense of larger agency was associated with the sense of profound, difficult-to-language meaning that the focusers described in their shift. It was one that, as an interviewer, I perceived most clearly in the sense of awe, reverence, and appreciation that exceeded participants’ words but was felt in the sincerity of their efforts to describe it.

These reflections on the fluid relationship between self and other in focusers' experiences seem to support Gendlin's (1993) phenomenological understanding of the body-self as situational—an ongoing process comprised of “implicit intricacy” (p.24). Seen in this light, the sense of “otherness” that comes with the shift might be re-thought as an experience of self that differs in its relationship to the implied intricacy of the situation. A preliminary interpretation of the moment of the shift, in contrast with the processes leading up to it, will elucidate this point.

Throughout their accounts, the participants were often in touch with the felt presence of something more than they were able to say, indicated by their halting speech, gestures and silences. This sense of aliveness in their description came from their sense of the implicit—as yet unformed, but leading them forward toward a fuller experiencing of the situation they were working with (Gendlin, 1996). At each step, their embodied responsiveness to their entire implicit situation allowed them to proceed in a deeply meaningful direction, whether in speech, image, or movement. Their experiences related to the shift, however, seemed marked by a different relationship with the whole of this implicit.

In describing Gendlin's idea of “the more,” Todres (1999) writes: “This ‘more’ in which the body intimately reveals a world is never completely in view—it is not an object that is presented in front of us—it is always dispersed—we are ‘in it’” (p. 290). Perhaps the experience of otherness that occurred with the culmination of the focusing sessions at the moment of the shift can be thought of as a reversal of habitual self experience in relation to “the more.” Whereas usually one is primarily identified with the partial figural components of her existence, perhaps the profound experience of the shift

derives from a momentary awareness of being “in” the whole implicit ground of her existence. In this state the vastness of “the more” that she is “in” is foregrounded—a paradox that exceeds concepts. At the same time, the intimacy of being profoundly connected in a fundamentally shared situatedness provides a sense of relief and support so that what is experienced, as Ila reflects, is “all of me, but it’s something bigger than me” (MU 21).

The ambiguous self-other experiences that occurred in focusing raise questions that can be considered in a variety of philosophical and psychological frameworks; another interpretive model rooted in archetypal psychology will be offered later in the discussion. These diverse reflections spring from these central observations of the findings at hand: for at least four of the participants in this study, their practice of focusing brought them to the edge not only of what they knew about a situation, but to the edge—or multiple edges—of their sense of identity, to the edge of the distinction between their “selves” and “others.” Their accounts provided a differentiated description of multiple non-egoic forms of consciousness that bridged a gulf between ordinary ego-reflective perceptions/thoughts and perceptions/thoughts that are experienced as coming from outside or beyond the limitations of the ego-identified self. Participants’ familiarity with a differentiated range self-other experiences suggests that the phenomenon is ripe with possibilities for further investigation into the phenomenology of the self. Focusers’ experiences are especially relevant to transpersonal psychology’s focus on the exceptional, beneficent reaches of human experience, given the profound, transformative quality of the shifts that are a hallmark of the practice.

Importance of social support

Some manifestation of social support appeared to be a necessary and constitutive aspects of the participants' focusing experiences. Each of them referred to the presence and in some cases contributions of a listener who shaped their focusing experience in a wide variety of ways. These included the following: holding time and space (Pleck); permission giving (Anna); normalizing expressions of vulnerability (Yolanda); making concrete suggestions or interpretations that influence the direction of unfolding focusing dialogue (Sophie, Eliza); and helping the focuser stay in the process rather than reverting to defensive patterns (Ila).

Focusing does not require the presence of a "listener" however; it may be that, analogous to the internalization of the therapist, the contributions of the listener are, over time, learned and carried out by the focuser's ego-identified self. Several of the participants (Pleck, Anna, Sophie) said they had experimented with focusing prior to being connected with the community or having a listener to work with. These participants' descriptions of their focusing before having the opportunity to practice with another present suggested that, at least initially, having a skilled listener deepens and clarifies the process. As noted in the results, focusing entailed a genuine encounter with the unknown, and it appears that having a companion in this process allows for a greater sense of safety in opening to profoundly undetermined "spaces" of experience, and navigating them fruitfully.

Beyond the dyadic feature of social support in focusing, the supportive presence of the broader focusing community also appeared to be an important feature of participants' experience. Each of the participants, when asked to describe how they

learned focusing, named the names of specific teachers; who they learned from appeared meaningful to them.

More implicitly, it was my reflexive sense that listeners—and perhaps myself as a researcher—were appreciated as manifestations of the broader focusing community writ large. From my initial contact with the focusing community, I perceived enthusiasm and shared values within the community that seemed to exceed what I had experienced in other professional organizations. This sense of enthusiasm at connecting with other focusers was present in the interview scenario as well.

It seems that at least part of this strong sense of community appreciation is related to the combination of deeply valued meaning and ineffability that appeared constitutive of the experience of focusing. In each the accounts shared, the participants experienced a deeply personal, profound sense of meaning that appeared to arise in response to some vulnerability or need. At the same time, this profound sense of meaning exceeded the participants' ability to express it to their apparent satisfaction. As a researcher and a focuser, I was able to draw on my own experiences focusing and my ability to resonate empathically in order to feel with them the sense of ineffability and profundity, and to share my appreciation for the unspeakable depth of their experience. I believe that they were able to trust that I was also moved by their experience and genuinely appreciated its importance for them beyond what they were able to articulate. Perhaps the presence of other focusers, whether immediately at hand as a listener or interviewer or more distally as a loosely organized community, validates the legitimacy and reality of these experiences in an ongoing way.

The importance of having focusing experiences validated by a community of

supportive others is suggested by several comments made that imply awareness of the illegitimacy of their experiences from the perspective of the broader materialist culture. Pleck alluded to his self-censorship when he remarked, “It’s, y’know, one of these interesting things that, y’know, I can write about and be labeled all sorts of things, or I can leave it on my computer!” (MU 61). Similarly, even while asserting her experience, Ila made caveats that qualified her authority: “And I’m not a scientist or anything but I think—it feels like it really is a whole body experience and it really does shift things in a whole way and I don’t have the science for it, I have the sense in my body of what it’s experiencing” (MU 45). Eliza’s assertion about the reality of her experience suggested her anticipation of assessments to the contrary: “So I know something’s really happening, because you can experience it. I know it’s not just figments of your imagination” (MU 87). Anna, too, conveyed her sensitivity to others’ assessments regarding the legitimacy or worth of her experience: “I guess I just feel like it’s a very sensitive interpersonal space that if the person who’s listening to me and thinking, you know, ‘What the heck is this person doing?’ It’s like, you know, if there’s sometimes a place where I can feel somebody else’s thoughts or, y’know, sense their skepticism...” (MU 66). In the face of anticipated social-cultural sanction, other focusers provide the social support necessary to delve into modes of experience not generally supported by the broader culture.

These findings—the unique importance of social support in validating experiences that appear to be highly valued and resistant to clear articulation—offered insight regarding my initial perception of a gulf between the focusing community and other communities that I imagined might be interested in the phenomenon. I have frequently heard the admonition that focusing must be practiced to be understood, and

this suggested itself as the chief barrier to its being more broadly studied. The accounts given here suggested that the deep personal meaning of the process, often entwined with experiences of vulnerability, may also contribute to protectiveness or discretion that shape the ways in which focusing is developed and/or shared.

Additionally, these findings may speak to a more general issue among practitioners of any transformative practice regarding the importance of a community to encourage and validate practices for which the experienced value exceeds what can be articulated. Without some kind of social support that normalizes this tension, the discrepancy between the meaning ascribed to an experience and its inaccessibility to others could result in experiences of profound isolation.

Selected Divergent Thematic Findings

Difference in perceptual modes

The tradition of split instructions (i.e., offering several options for each step in the process, for example looking for a word or image or movement that best fits a sensation) within focusing pedagogy suggests that individualization of the process is a priority. It was somewhat surprising, then, that several of the participants appeared to harbor ambivalence about the idiosyncracies in their own focusing process, whether with respect to characteristic content (e.g., images rather than somatic sensations, Yolanda) or in their practice (e.g., frequency or consistency, Anna). Although this ambivalence appeared slight, it stood out relative to other accounts in which adaptations to the process in order to suit individual need were owned without apology (e.g., Pleck, Sophie). While this may be more indicative of individual differences with respect to confidence in their practice or in other domains, it highlighted the potential for the social context of focusing to afford a

subtle comparative pressure for individuals who are not aware or trusting of the validity and importance of their individual processes.

Indeed, the unanimous explication by participants of some individual differences in content and/or practice suggests that familiarity with one's own proclivities in focusing may be a hallmark of experienced practitioners. In addition to demonstrating familiarity with the sensory modalities that they were prone to experience most vividly in the focusing session, participants drew on past experiences to inform the focusing sessions they were describing. It appeared that developing familiarity with characteristic bodily tensions, images, emotional reactions, movements of attention, etc. allowed experienced fociers to relate to potential obstacles in a more patient and skillful way. In other words, expertise in focusing is not only a function of developing familiarity with the process "in general" (as perhaps may occur through practice as a listener with various partners) but also of becoming intimately acquainted with the characteristics of one's sensual proclivities, the push-pull of cognitive and affective attractions and avoidances, and the "terrain" of one's visually, somatically and/or proprioceptively experienced preconceptual and symbolic landscape.

Because the split instruction tradition as I have encountered it in my training is explicitly very affirming of differences in practice, it is unclear whether some of the self-consciousness suggested by the participants was a function of my presence as an unfamiliar person, or a more general personality feature. However, if split instructions are not enough to assuage concerns about "doing it wrong" when developing stylistic idiosyncracies in focusing practices, focusing pedagogy could benefit from greater explicit emphasis on the range of styles of practices that can develop for individuals.

Perhaps framing the development of a trusted, individualized process as a marker of an established focusing practice would provide additional permission for focusers to make their process their own.

Experience of the lived body

Merleau-Ponty's discussion of the synthesis of one's own body (1962) provides a useful conceptual framework for understanding the apparent variation in bodily experience during focusing sessions. According to Merleau-Ponty, "our body is not primarily *in space*: it is of it" (p.171); the experience of the body's synthesis is one of a "nexus of living meanings" rather than an assemblage of discrete sensory perceptions (p.175). As such, the experience of the body is not bound by its objective conditions but can, for example be experienced as "vast or minute despite the evidence of my senses...because there exists an affective presence and enlargement for which objective spatiality is not a sufficient condition" (p. 172). This distinction informed my understanding of descriptions of felt experiences in which spatial locations beyond the skin boundaries of the body were referenced. For example, when Pleck referred to the sensation/image of reflectors behind his head or the sense of a continuity of his experienced body below his pelvis into undetermined depths, I understood this description in terms of the view that his existence is indistinguishable from the "affective presence" being expressed in the particularities of that spatial perception.

I am intrigued by the idea that the practice of attending to the subtle sensations of bodily experience might function in a way analogous to sight as the "coming into possession of a world" (p. 176). Merleau-Ponty writes, "The gaze gets more or less from things according to which it questions them, ranges over or dwells on them" (p. 177); it

may be that by practicing focusing participants learn to “get more” from the “inward” gaze and feeling by cultivating a more patient, curious style of questioning and dwelling with sensations and their associated images.

Based on participants’ accounts alone, it is unclear how to understand the apparent variation in the enlargement or vividness with which the lived body was experienced; perhaps the participants with more expansive bodily experiences began the practice already attuned to the sensitivity of the lived body. My own experiences as a beginning focuser were characterized by a surprising and somewhat startling shift from unconsciousness of the experience of my body’s spatiality to a vivid awareness of it—an awareness which continues to develop as I deepen my own understanding and practice of focusing. Because I experienced focusing as the key method through which I came into intentional awareness of my bodily existence, I am excited by the idea that others could make a similar leap through the practice. For it is not only “my body” that seems to have come into my awareness, but through this awareness the bodily coexistence of the rest of the world has begun to open to perception in new and still forming ways.

4.3 An Archetypal Psychological Interpretation of the Focusing Dialogue

Revisiting the “Issue” of Diversity in Practice of Focusing

In the initial literature review (Chapter 1), I devoted much attention to the challenge involved in communicating how to understand the practice of focusing. I wondered, how can someone unfamiliar with the practice tease apart the multiple and apparently contradictory ways that focusing is discussed and conceptualized in the varieties of literature that address the practice? While the results of this study do highlight important constitutive features of the participants’ experiences that add to the

focusing literature, I am not convinced that, in the end, this study produced a more precise or clear articulation of the practice such that would benefit the hypothetical “someone unfamiliar with the practice.”

In retrospect, it appears clear to me that this question was very much informed by a nexus of tensions surrounding my future professional identity: I was intrigued by focusing, but uncertain about my relationship to it. I respected some articulations of the practice more than others, and I was threatened by the prospect of being identified professionally with a practice that, in some of its articulations, seemed susceptible to being dismissed as a new-age feeling experiment. Implicit in this study question was a concern about what non-focusers think about focusing, and a desire to articulate it in a way that would be clear, insightful, rigorous... and perhaps, *acceptable* (this concern is further detailed in my reflexive analysis).

Over the last two years, my concern about others’ interest in focusing has decreased in proportion to my increasing clarity about my own interest in the practice. Additionally, attendance at two focusing conferences has afforded me the opportunity to observe first hand the futility of trying to understand focusing through description alone; the best way to inform someone who is “unfamiliar with the practice” would be to lead them through a focusing session. This is not to undermine the importance of clearly articulated conceptual frameworks, but to emphasize that in focusing, these frameworks are worth very little if they are not tested against individuals’ practice for their applicability.

In short, variety in focusing approaches may indeed present challenges for understanding the practice from an observer’s point of view, as this variety arises from

and speaks primarily to other practitioners. Trying to understand focusing without practicing it is like listening in on a conversation: the meaning is only disclosed *as it is for others*; discovering the meaning *for oneself* requires participation. Perhaps the theoretical and clinical focusing literature is best thought of as an open conversation between focusers that, in its diversity, provides many access points for interested parties to join in.

Informed by this shift in understanding, the diversity in descriptions and approaches to focusing appears differently to me now. As discussed above, the results of this study suggest that it is precisely the nuanced adjustments that each individual learns to make in her practice that indicates her at-homeness with it. If focusing can be usefully summarized as a practice of an exquisitely sensitive dialogue between oneself and what arises in one's experience, then like other dialogue, the greatest part of the process will vary depending on the interlocutors. Even when the constitutive attitude of patience, openness, and curiosity was brought to bear, each of the participants was drawn to some experiences more than others; they had habitual tendencies toward shutting down or moving away from engagement in the conversation that they all learned to recognize and negotiate. In order to do this, they brought to bear a variety of conceptual frameworks that they recognized as meaningful for them. The introduction of new conceptual frameworks is motivated by the perceived inadequacy of existing ones to articulate the nuances of newly observed experiences. As a researcher and as a co-participant dwelling with and amplifying the meanings conveyed in the interviews, it seemed that the dialogical quality of focusing invited the introduction of such novel a conceptualization.

In this section of the discussion, I will explore the intersection of the pre-reflective experience of this focusing dialogue and the frameworks referenced by various participants that structure their reflective understanding of this dialogue. After detailing the contributions and limitations of these frameworks for describing the explicit and implicit dialogical experience of participants, I will suggest a framework for understanding the lived experience of dialogue that draws on James Hillman's archetypal psychology, which suggests itself as capable of productively holding some of the tensions less clearly addressed in other frameworks.

Preliminary Conceptualization of the Focusing Dialogue

The dialogical aspect of focusing was revealed in participants' accounts as the most natural, taken for granted features of the lived experience of focusing, as well as the most mysterious. Careful attention to explicit and implicit features of their situated descriptions revealed important tension between how this dialogue was named, or reflectively described, and how it was experienced in the moments of focusing.

As I participated in these interviews and read and re-read them for months, I found myself wrestling with how to talk about the dialogical process. I was aware of wanting to balance my own interest in transpersonal psychology, which I expected to influence my analysis, with a characterization closer to the bulk of the descriptions, choosing to refer to the dialogue as an "intrapersonal process" carried on between "parts" of the subject and her sense of "self," or between multiple "parts." Given the central importance of the dialogue to the meaning of focusing, as well as the sense of ambiguity and uncertainty about how best to language this dialogue, it was parsimonious during

analysis to defer to the language used by the participants, which was a shorthand I also used and which was used, from my observation, broadly among focusers.

This choice aligned with the explicit reflections from the participants that the “parts” they were talking to were parts of themselves, but it has not been able to capture important constitutive elements of the experience of the focusing dialogue that were suggested in the findings for this study. These included the nuanced attitude of focusers that suggests awareness of both profound otherness and deep intimacy with the “part,” and the surprise and wonder at the uncannily relevant, yet wholly unexpected experiences and meanings that unfolded in their focusing.

*Conceptual Frameworks that Inform Participants’ Reflective Understanding of Dialogue:
a Brief Sketch*

One tenet of Gendlin’s (1962) philosophy of the implicit is that the relationship between concepts and experiences is mutually and iteratively enhancing and clarifying; this understanding is central to the theoretical underpinnings of the focusing practice as described by Gendlin. The conceptual frameworks referenced by the participants shaped their reflective understanding of the focusing dialogue, which then influenced the experiences that were consciously available to them. In order to explore the ways in which their lived experience appeared to exceed these frameworks, it will be helpful to briefly review the constructs often employed to describe the “other” in the focusing dialogue.

First, it is important to note that I have observed great variation within the focusing community on this point. In practice (in keeping with Gendlin’s phenomenological view, as will be described below) the question of the other’s objective

existence is generally suspended in favor of perceiving it as it discloses itself. However, the question of what the dialogical other is understood to be by focusers and by the community has real implications for the focusers, which will be further explored below. Several participants' unprompted explanations of what they understood the part to be suggested that this question was a salient one. Here, I will briefly address the theoretical contributions that appear to most directly shape the participants' reflective understanding of the other(s) of the dialogue.

Gendlin (1996) describes the felt-sense as “at first unclear, murky, puzzling, not fully recognizable”—a vague sensation which is clearly felt in the body, typically between the neck and pelvis (p. 26). Because the felt sense often comes to awareness initially as a diffuse and vaguely perceived sensation, Gendlin introduced the distancing language of the “it” or the “something.” This apparently facilitates focusers' ability to differentiate the felt sense from their observing selves, as well as to distinguish it from other somatic and/or emotional experiences (though the felt sense can include all of these, especially early in practice). Reference to “something” appears to have remained relatively constant in focusing instruction, despite the diversity of approaches that others have introduced (see Chapter 1). Differentiation from the ego-identified self is constitutive of the experience of the felt sense and is what makes it possible to perceive it as a discrete phenomenon in the context of “interior” perception, which can range from a chaotic pell mell of somatic and emotional experience to a quiet, empty space. In the case of the former, the “something” or “it” is the object of focusing that is chosen or emerges from many possible options; in the latter, it evokes an object where otherwise there is none perceived. In either case, the “something” introduces a distance between the focuser

and her “interior” object that allows her to direct her attention toward it rather than pre-reflectively identifying with it. Through designation as a “something,” the felt sense or the interior phenomenon in question is marked as an object toward which to direct curious attention while intentionally suspending pre-formed perceptual judgments and attributions of meaning.

While participants use the language of the “something,” several of them also use the language of “parts” which in focusing is often associated with the therapeutic framework of Internal Family Systems (hereafter, IFS), conceptualized popularly by Schwartz (1995). The crossing of focusing with the IFS approach situates the “others” of the dialogue within a clearly delineated theoretical framework in which the “others” are understood as intrapsychic entities. Schwartz’s framework is built on a psychological paradigm at the core of which is the “multiplicity of the mind,” which is comprised of various “inner personalities” and an overarching “Self.” This “Self” is regarded as a transcendent witness, a quality of mind that Schwartz characterizes as “‘centered,’ a state of calm well being and lightheartedness,” and as being connected to the experience of being “confident, free, openhearted;” “being in the present,” with an absence of a “sense of separateness” and feeling an “exhilarating connection to or merger with the universe” (p. 37). The goal of the IFS approach is to differentiate the Self from the multiple parts, freeing it to “balance and harmonize the internal system” (p.85).

Schwartz’s theory begins to suggest elements of otherness that are consonant with the archetypal view that will be discussed below. For example, IFS is explicitly less interested in the objective identity or genesis of the parts than the way they appear to individuals who perceive them. Schwartz designates the term “part” in following with

common client usage, but asserts that elements of the multiplicity of mind could also be thought of as “archetype, subpersonalities, subselves, internal characters, internal objects, ego states” (p. 34), a conflation which proponents of any of the collapsed theoretical models might find problematic.

IFS relies on shorthand characterizations of commonly encountered internal parts (e.g., the “Striver,” the “Evaluator,” the “Asserter,” the “Caretaker,” the “Passive Pessimist”). However, Schwartz suggests thinking of parts as internal people, in order not to mistake an observed action of the part (which may be what it has been “forced” into) for its essential nature (p. 35). Interacting with a part as a person allows one to be “interested in its other feelings and in helping it discover its preferred role” (p. 35).

The influence of the IFS framework appeared particularly evident in the descriptions offered by Pleck, Yolanda, Eliza, and Ila. While only Eliza referred to the IFS model explicitly, Pleck’s, Yolanda’s and Ila’s references to the various parts in play--and at times in tension--in their focusing suggested the IFS language. Although the extent to which IFS is systematically integrated with focusing is unclear, it has clearly contributed to the language used by many focusers. It may be that participants who referred to this model of “parts” are experiencing the dialogical relationship through the explicit lens of IFS; alternately, perhaps IFS has resonance precisely because it further articulates the relational experience in the focusing dialogue. In any case, the implicit and in some cases explicit reference to this approach appears to have shaped how participants relate to the felt sense by turning toward the emergence of a “someone” from Gendlin’s original “something.”

Part of the difficulty of characterizing the dialogue that unfolded for participants relates to the experience of profound meaning that they struggled to articulate, and which seemed to exceed their available conceptualization. Several participants referred to a spiritual or transpersonal quality to the shift that came in their focusing experience, but their struggle to find the right words suggested that this conceptualization was not adequate. For example, Eliza began relating several focusing experiences by referring to them as “very um—spiritual... I had this—this feeling like I was connecting to my true self, or to god, or something...” and proceeded to emphasize both the intensely embodied nature of these experiences, as well as elaborate on the “spiritual” quality of them: “And my body went through real strong visceral, almost like convulsions... Symbolic, or archetypal. Stripped down.... So I know something’s really happening, because you can experience it. I know it’s not just figments of your imagination” (MUs 73, 77, 78, 82, 87). Ila, while talking about her experience of the focusing session, noted, “it almost y’know goes onto a spiritual realm or a—I don’t even know. I don’t know the word for it” (MU 21). Pleck used the word “transpersonal” in a natural way, but humorous comments about his “transpersonal” experience suggested possible wariness about how these experiences would be regarded by others: “This is probably one step away from schizophrenia but I’m very functional...I can write about and be labeled all sorts of things, or I can leave it on my computer! [slow, building laugh] along with a bunch of other unusual experiences!” (MUs 65, 24, 61).

The absence of references to specific transpersonal constructs, spiritual entities or religious associations, along with possible ambivalence about use of that language, suggested to me that references to the transpersonal or spiritual were intended primarily

to describe certain qualities of the focusing experience rather than literally invoke a specific transpersonal, spiritual or religious framework. For example, the Pahnke-Richards Mysticism Scale rates experiences on scales including the following: “internal unity,” “external unity,” “transcendence of time and space,” “ineffability and paradoxicality,” “sense of sacredness,” “noetic quality” and “deeply felt positive mood” (cited in Griffiths, 2005). These descriptive criteria of mystical experiences overlap with the descriptions spontaneously offered by participants; in the case of ineffability and paradoxicality, perhaps it is more apt to say that this criteria was evident in what participants were not able to express.

The need for—and adoption of—multiple or shifting conceptual understandings of different aspects of focusing is suggested by participants’ references to transpersonal or spiritual elements alongside references to the process as primarily intrapersonal. The profoundly surprising and utterly unpredictable—yet nevertheless deeply personal—qualities of the experience apparently demanded this flexibility and multiplicity. The tension in the participants’ descriptions of the other suggested that the spontaneous experience of the “other” in dialogue at times exceeded the conceptual frameworks discussed above.

An Archetypal Interpretation of the Focusing Dialogue: Personifying

The archetypal psychology of the late James Hillman (1975) has not previously been brought into conversation with focusing, and it offers relevant ideas for describing and holding some of the tensions suggested in the participants’ responses. Foremost among these tensions is the contrast between the lived experience of the profound “otherness” in the dialogical partner and the reflective subordination of this otherness

under the category of the intrapsychic, a “part” of the focuser’s “self.” As discussed above, the difficulty and at times self-consciousness with which focusers appeared to characterize this other seemed to proceed from habitual entrenchment in literalism from which both Gendlin’s phenomenological language and archetypal psychology offer a way out. But while the “something” or “it” of Gendlin’s original formulation facilitates the distance necessary to let the felt sense be observed as a phenomenon increasingly distinct in the field of the lived body, it does not necessarily convey the relational quality of the participants’ experience. An archetypal approach amplifies the importance of the simultaneous experience of genuine otherness and profound recognition in the dialogue. At the same time, an archetypal approach calls for a participatory rigor that is appropriate to the phenomenological basis of focusing. This rigor is achieved by the surrender of the dialogue to the realm of the imaginal and by the unqualified recognition of the other in dialogue.

This recognition of the other is achieved through personifying, which concept gathers a nuanced description of the kind of relationship between the “self” and the “part” that appears to form the heart of the focusing dialogue. According to Hillman (1975), personifying is the concrete process by which we “enter into another psychological dimension” in which “the noun takes on consciousness” (p. 2). In order to understand this concept as it is intended, Hillman notes that it is necessary first to uncover it from the “shadow cast upon it” by the “Christian worldview” in which subjectivity is restricted to the human person, and the human person’s subjectivity is further constrained to that which is identified with the “ego personality.” The conventional literary understanding of personifying involves the projection of subjectivity from a human person into the

personified object, discounting the possibility for non-human entities to have subjectivities that are not “merely fictional or imaginary.” It is perhaps more difficult to conceptualize than it is (at least for focusers) to *experience* that “imaginary persons could possibly *be as they present themselves*, as valid psychological subjects with wills and feelings like ours but not reducible to ours” (p. 2).

Personifying in the archetypal sense must be distinguished from similar concepts such as anthropomorphism, or the “ ‘the attribution of human form or character... ascription of a human attribute of personality to anything impersonal or irrational’ ” and animism, “ ‘the attribution of living soul to inanimate objects and natural phenomena’ ” (1975, p. 12). Both of these terms, according to Hillman, enter the language in order to describe practices of cultural others, and thereby fail to convey the “native validity” of the experiences to which they claim to refer. That is, those who pre-reflectively perceive subjectivities in the nonhuman world do not need to name the attribution of subjectivity because subjectivity is not attributed, but recognized. “Personification” is considered by Hillman to be a “psychologism,” implying “a human being who creates god in human likeness as much as an author creates characters out of his own personality” and which “cannot imagine that an author, say, is driven to bear the messages of ‘his’ characters...” (p. 12).

Personifying, by contrast, is less a device than it is a subtle shift in perception; it requires a profoundly receptive attitude--a process of clearing, rather than projecting, thought. Personifying is:

...the spontaneous experiencing and envisioning and speaking of the configurations of existence as psychic presences... Personifying is a way of being in the world and experiencing the world as a psychological field, where persons are given with events, so that events touch us, move us, appeal to us (1975, p.13).

The events in focusing, usually reflectively understood as given by “parts of the self” may disclose deeper significances if they are instead understood as being given by persons. The “gifts” of focusing—the results of the sessions described by participants—are regarded with surprise and gratitude that reflect the unexpected but deeply felt meaning of the gift. This coincidence of the intimate familiarity and surprising spontaneity of what comes in the focusing dialogue supports the perception of an otherness that challenges the clear distinctions between “self” and “not self.”

Several of the participants referenced the development of familiarity with their process over time. For Pleck, Anna, Yolanda, Eliza, and Ila, knowing more about their internal space and their habitual ways of reacting to discomfort increased their ability to relate skillfully with what they experienced during the focusing session. Each of the participants described a particular attitude of relating with the “other” of the dialogue that was characterized by patience, gentleness, and interest—a “clearing” rather than a “projecting” of expectations and a willingness to be moved and touched. It seems that the recognition of a “person” rather than a part suggests an understanding of the dialogue that matches the concrete ways in which the dialogue is experienced as *between* multiple subjectivities rather than *within* one. Understanding the other as a “person” rather than an intrapsychic “part” would require the acknowledgement of the primacy and legitimacy of the subjective perception of another “person,” regardless of whether this was perceived by a third party (i.e., an interviewer).

This is not merely a proposed substitution in terms. Though I suggest that the focusing dialogue as it is lived in these accounts is more adequately accounted for as a

conversation between persons than within one person with many “parts,” personifying is not an end in itself. Rather, its relevance for the understanding of focusing lies in its status as a foundational concept that undergirds a different kind of seeing and feeling, an entry point into a relationship with the world that is replete with presences that people our perception. Viewed in this way, the practice of focusing can be seen as a cultivation of sensitivity and responsiveness to the presence of other nonhuman subjectivities—an archetypal practice that cultivates human perception and appreciation of the souls of the world, not simply the “self.”

The archetypal vision—the restoration of soul to experience—“cannot be enacted unless archetypal persons strike us as utterly real” (Hillman 1975, p. 42). Personifying, implicitly experienced in the dialogue of focusing, lays the groundwork for a broader archetypal understanding of the practice in which the experiences, images, movements that emerge in focusing can be considered as persons-in-themselves. They emerge in the moment to encounter us, but they neither belong to nor are controlled by us. The visions of the subtle body’s organization, the space-creating gesture, the outcast inner child, the dream figure, the gesture of exhaustion and the supportive net that spreads beneath it: all these appear for the focusers, but perhaps do not belong exclusively to their intrapsychic world. It is at least in part the “all of me, but it’s something bigger than me” (Ila, MU 21) quality of these imaginal persons that elicit the sense of profundity and relief that they describe.

Hillman’s description of the archetypal is echoed in the expressions of the participants, who refer to the “gifts” of focusing, the paradoxical me-and-yet-more-than-me quality of the lessons discovered, as from another wisdom. Hillman (1975) writes,

“The more profoundly archetypal my experiences of soul, the more I recognize how they are beyond me, presented to me, a present, a gift, even while they feel my most personal possession” (p. 48).

The addition of an archetypal conceptualization to the variety of focusing approaches introduces the possibility of reflectively teasing apart the “real” from the “literal.” Focusing is regarded as a “paradoxical” practice, and the introduction of the archetypal distinction between the real and the literal names a central aspect of that paradox. The genuineness of the focusing dialogue suggests that the persons that emerge with the dialogue indeed strike focusers as “utterly real.” As imaginal persons, the interlocutors and images in focusing are experienced as real, and yet the participants’ recourse to explaining the dialogue in terms of self-parts suggests that they are not taken literally. The ordinary conflation of the “real” with the “literal” may encumber the participants’ reflection on their experiences by bringing into mutually exclusive relationship the lived experience of the other in dialogue with their reflective comprehension of it. Though the experience is very real, they are hesitant to endorse it as literal. It is a nuanced distinction the importance of which cannot be overstated; without it, taking the imaginal as real likely comes with the social liability of supposed psychopathology. To avoid this, focusers implicitly distance themselves from what appears to be their lived experience in order to assure themselves and others that, in the end, it’s all “me”— even though a constitutive aspect of the power of focusing lies precisely in the fact that what is experienced is importantly distinct from the ordinary experience of “me.”

Perhaps this distancing introduces a subtle pressure to hold their belief in the reality of their dialogical exchanges in abeyance, at least reflectively, or in conversation with others. Naming the distinction could give focusers an increased sense of safety to explore the imaginal real, without implying an abandonment of the ability to join with the shared conditions of everyday life that are accepted as literal. With social and conceptual support in place to frame the outreaching to the imaginal and to secure the pathway home, what other depths might open, what silenced persons of the soul might find their voices?

4.4 Limitations of the Study

Researcher Bias

This project was motivated by my assessment of focusing as a practice that had had significant impact on my personal and professional life. From the first framing, this research bore the bias of admiration as well as a deeper intrapersonal conflict surrounding my perception of the legitimacy or lack thereof of this practice within a broader scientific and clinical community. As a beginning focuser, I also struggled with the legitimacy of my own practice and initial lack of relationship with the focusing community. I was aware at various points in the research process of feeling drawn to overcompensate for my uncertainty by making sweeping claims, at times critical and at times laudatory. While my awareness of the bias incurred by my uncertain social and developmental position as a beginning focuser and clinician has increased dramatically, I have been aware throughout the writing of this discussion of the occasional resurgence of these pressures. It may be that the impact of my personal relationship with the practice is more evident to readers other than myself.

On the other hand, my status as a beginning focuser (and as a clinician) positively contributed to my ability to establish rapport with interviewees. It is my impression that my student focuser status elicited a willingness to participate that perhaps might not have been as forthcoming in someone without any experiential practice, or alternately with someone regarded as an authority on focusing.

While I am convinced that my own experiences focusing allowed me to resonate with the participants' valuing of their experiences, it is possible that this process occurred as much in reverse: that perhaps some of the ineffability and profound value I heard expressed and experienced in the process of interviewing was primarily my own, and that it was my desire to hear these expressed that caused them to ring so decisively in my analysis.

In addition to my investment in a developing identity as a focuser, my research was also informed by my general interest in a wide array of transpersonal subjects, especially but not exclusively various forms of meditation including mindfulness meditation, insight meditation, and deity visualization. The weight of this known bias initially shaped my analysis by putting me on guard against accepting or making much of references to spirituality or transpersonal experiences, since I anticipated that these would hold particular interest to me.

My critical review of these results in light of these known biases has not caused me to jettison or tone down these elements of my final interpretation. In the case of my avoidance of transpersonal interpretation, early awareness of this potential bias caused me to attempt to self-check throughout the process in a way that I ultimately challenged as over-compensatory. In other cases, the combination of explicit references in the texts

to these features—whether regarding the experience of profundity, ineffability, or general transpersonal themes under a variety of names—held up under my view, though feedback is welcomed.

After having completed the analysis of results I gave myself free reign to consider possible implications of some of the findings that could be interpreted as transpersonal, devoting a large part of the discussion to these ponderings. I chose to delve and dwell with a limited subset of the findings rather than offering a more systemic consideration of each finding. There are numerous findings that I have chosen not to discuss in detail, including but certainly not limited to the following: the varying roles of the focusing companion; the distinctions several participants made between kinds of focusing (e.g. Eliza “dip in” vs “project” focusing) and the status of the experience of somatic sensations around and in the head relative to the neck and trunk.

Implications of Interviewing Adept Practitioners

The choice to interview accomplished focusers with an established practice was made primarily to support my interest in studying the phenomena as it is lived. This meant that it was important to interview people whose practice had become integrated such that it was performed with a sense of natural unfolding, if not ease. I was concerned that novice practitioners may not understand or be proficient the nuances of the practice, and that their practice might rely heavily on reflective application of the process steps as taught by Gendlin or others, rather than being lived prereflectively.

The (perhaps predictable) consequence of this participant criteria is that certain elements of the practice that are considered fundamental—theoretically and didactically— are presumably lived, but not described by the participants. This is

particularly true with respect to the characteristic movement from vague perception to increasing clarity of sensations, images, etc. and their meaning. The very name of the practice refers to the coming into focus of initially vague bodily sensations and their meaning, which is said to occur in iterations as one moves, for example, between a sensation and one's reflective attempts to find a word or image that fits it (see Chapter One). Participant descriptions of encountering this initial lack of clarity and the trial and error of finding a "handle" are generally lacking. In their descriptions, participants emphasized waiting and staying with the somatic experience that they were focusing with, and then their affirming receptivity of whatever emerged.

The understatement of explicit descriptions of moving from vagueness to clarity – the handle and resonating steps so important in the pedagogy—can be understood in light of the more implicit themes that emerged. That is, perhaps the measured trying out of handles and checking with the felt sense can be thought of as a way of teaching people how to carry on the focusing dialogue. Especially with individuals who may tend toward intellectualization, this checking and resonating is a way of reminding beginning focusers that their intellectual concepts pertaining to their experiences are only as good as their fit with the felt sense. The results suggest that more experienced focusers have developed such a familiar relationship with the other in the dialogue such that these thematized steps are less necessary. The movement from "totally obscure" to "clear meaning" may occur in a qualitatively different way that involves less explicit trial and error and instead, a more skilled capacity to wait with the sensation or image until it shifts more spontaneously toward the next step. Alternately, it may be that the steps of trying out

handles and resonating occur more automatically such that experienced practitioners only pause to notice or name fitting words or images to which the felt sense responds.

While these are interesting questions and perhaps a direction for future research, the lack of representation of novice focusers' accounts provides a more limited view of the phenomenon that may be considered a limitation of the current study.

Participant Religious/Spiritual Practices

Ongoing engagement in a spiritual or religious practice was not a participant requirement; in fact, this demographic data was not formally collected until after the analysis had been completed. I included a prompt asking for “religious/spiritual affiliation/practice (if any)” in my communication with participants precisely because of the transpersonal ideas and references to spirituality in the accounts.

All six participants endorsed some spiritual or religious practice. Of these, four included some form of Buddhist meditation in their practice, and another included a different form of Eastern meditation in her spiritual/religious practice. It is unclear how these other practices change or inform how these participants experience focusing, but it seems reasonable to suggest that their generally extensive interest in and experience with various domains of spiritual or religious practice contributed to the allusions to or comparisons with spiritual or transpersonal experiences in their description of their focusing experiences.

This raises a question about the generalizability of the findings in this study. Specifically, would other interviewees without separate interests in spiritual, religious, or transpersonal practices have provided as many allusions as this set of participants did? To what extent are my findings regarding dialogue influenced by my participants' familiarity

with different forms of prayer or experiences outside of focusing in which they wait in anticipatory, accepting openness for whatever arises?

4.5 Methodological Considerations: Review of the Two Tiered Analysis

The two-tiered method that I introduced for this study—two complete sets of data analysis rather than one—emerged from the different modes of research that descriptive and interpretive methods seemed to call for, despite their shared phenomenological basis. In this section, I will briefly outline some of the similarities and differences between the approaches, followed by a discussion of the relative merits of each approach for studying focusing.

Both descriptive and interpretive analyses required “bracketing” of assumptions, an open attitude to the data at hand, and attention to and amplification of details. However, the interpretive model placed a greater emphasis on the relationship between the researcher and the participant than on the researcher’s effortful bracketing of her prior assumptions; Smith, Flowers, and Larkin (2009) assert that “skillful attention to the former inevitably facilitates the latter” (p. 35). The interpretive approach’s emphasis on nested levels of context and the hermeneutic process of tacking between the parts and their greater context resulted in a more open, associative, holistic style of handling the participants’ communications that included awareness—but not exclusion—of the contributions of my own context and assumptions. In contrast, Giorgi’s descriptive method was characterized by stricter parameters regarding what was considered an appropriate protocol, by more nuanced dwelling-with each detail of each meaning unit, and by an emphasis on excluding as much as possible the biases of the researcher.

In advocating for a descriptive method, Giorgi (2009) emphasizes the importance of contained, “adequate” descriptions of “sufficient depth and detail” so as to reveal something psychologically novel about the phenomenon. It is a conservative approach that acknowledges the density of meaning in even a brief account; it values descriptive fidelity of what is stated clearly, and avoids the often unwieldy and uncertain territory of implicit context. The descriptive method relies on finished descriptions, not meanings in the process of being made. The interview protocol is intended to be an “‘already accomplished’” expression, in Merleau-Ponty’s terms, in which meanings “‘correspond point for point to figures, forms and established words’” (cited in Giorgi, 2009, p. 125). In Giorgi’s method, the onus is placed on the interviewer to elicit a very specific kind of “‘already accomplished’” description; the newness is meant to come from the phenomenological analysis of the researcher, not from the participant in the moment of description.

In retrospect, this approach appears antithetical to the spirit of the focusers, who, even in relating accounts that they have related multiple times before—or fixed in writing—tend habitually to lean away from what has been “‘already accomplished.’” The phenomenon itself is constitutively oriented toward the unknown, and the focusers’ protocols reveal this in their own tendency to find the unfinished edge of otherwise familiar focusing experiences. Their descriptions—or at least aspects of them—are precisely the sort that Giorgi’s method seeks to avoid, which Merleau-Ponty refers to as “‘expressions which are in the process of being accomplished’” whose meaning “‘runs between words’” (p. 125). Giorgi notes that “a description portrays figural aspects of an experience, but there will always be embedded parts of the lived-through experience that

do not get portrayed. The relationship is more like ‘figure-ground’ and, in principle, not all of the ground can ever be expressed” (p.125). By acknowledging that “not all of the ground can ever be expressed,” the method appears to divest the researcher of attempting to understand and articulate much, if *any*, of the ground that lies between concrete descriptive elements of a phenomenon. Indeed, Giorgi suggests that “if the interviewee responds properly,” to carefully crafted interviewer prompts, very little of this ground will be suggested at all in the protocol (p. 124).

When formulating the interview question, I labored to create a prompt that would elicit such a detailed situated description as Giorgi prescribes; I modeled it on prompts used in other descriptive analyses, and I did my best as a novice interviewer to direct participants back to the concrete descriptions of their experiences. The participants, however, did not respond “properly” in Giorgi’s sense. It was clear from the first interview that they felt I needed to know things about them and their experiences across time in order to understand and appreciate what I was about to be told about their experience living through an instance of focusing. It became clear that these instances did not exist for them as finished; therefore an “accomplished expression” was out of the question. Rather, the novel or freshly experienced gestures, silences, interjections, tangents and associations— important features of these protocols which the descriptive method attempts to avoid—all suggest expressions in process.

The initially intuitive, associative thematic analysis that constituted the interpretive approach admitted all of these unfinished features into analysis. Their meanings were hermeneutically interpreted as carefully as possible in light of the relationships suggested by the immediate and broader contexts, first within the interview,

then across interviews. The integrity of the interpretive approach consisted of the continued reference to participants' expressions—whether verbal or non-verbal—in the articulation and grouping of themes. The necessity of substantiating intuited interpretative themes through reference to the participants' words balanced the loose, at times playful way of moving through the account. Even when the rationale for interpretive decisions was intuitive and resisted verbal articulation, the method still required identification of the textual moment that prompted the interpretation. At times during the analysis, when moving “between” the concrete figures of expression, it was the best *I* could do to point wordlessly in the transcript to what was evocative for me, whether word, silence, or gesture, and trust the reader (as I had been trusted by the focusers) to try to make the leap with me to meaning. This was only possible because the context included my own nascent understanding of focusing, and my participation in and perspective on the focusing community.

On the level of the whole, the interpretive approach was more appropriate for handling the variety of sprawling, associative, explanatory, nonverbal, and descriptive data that my interviews yielded. Additionally, because themes were drawn from the whole account rather than from a circumscribed structure, the experience of focusing that was represented was broader than one specific instance. Given some participants' references to the impact of previous focusing sessions on their experience and navigation of the situated account described, incorporating these reflective or elaborative parts of the account into the thematic clusters seemed to more accurately capture the experience of focusing practice over time.

The descriptive method, however, complemented the interpretive approach by providing a more rigorous handling of concrete points of “figured” detail. This approach emphasized closeness and precision of reading; each meaning unit was considered with utmost patience and attention in order to grasp its most relevant details and amplify these in psychological language. The mental exertion of holding my assumptions in abeyance, of staying alert to the tendency to slip into familiarity with the material of a meaning unit made this a tiring process. This method called for meticulousness that I experienced at times as restrictive; during my analysis of each meaning unit, bracketing my assumptions involved an ongoing vigilance for fast-forming hypotheses about implicit themes within and across accounts. These hypotheses, at least initially, had to be acknowledged and laid aside in favor of devoting my attention entirely to one meaning unit at a time.

Since I completed the descriptive analysis first, it is impossible to say how my interpretive analysis might have looked without my having been first laboriously immersed in these figured details. I suspect, however, that the practices of patient dwelling with, amplifying, and imaginatively varying sensitized me to the nuance of certain figured meanings that I then carried “as if” intuitively into the interpretive analysis. By the time I finished the descriptive analysis, I knew the figured descriptive portions of the protocols very well; when I turned to the interpretive analysis, the contrast created with the less finished aspects of the account helped highlight implicit meanings. Paradoxically, it may be that completing the descriptive analysis first established a level of familiarity with the figured meanings that allowed me to fix my gaze more clearly beyond them—to let the figures recede so that the meaning that ran “between words” to emerge more clearly for consideration.

4.6 Suggestions for Future Research

The finding to which I have devoted the most time relates to the experience of focusing as a dialogue. As highlighted in the discussion, this emphasis was prompted by the salience of this aspect of the lived experience in the accounts of the participants, and by the apparent tension between the lived experience and the reflective characterization of the process. The significance of related questions concerning how constructs of “self” and “other” are conceptually understood in light of participants’ accounts were briefly addressed in the discussion as well, but these questions remain a rich ground for further research.

Additionally, it is unclear whether or how the specific attitude toward the experience of the “other” that is cultivated in the ongoing practice of focusing (open, patient, curious, etc.) may be generalized to other interactions, whether with other humans, animals, or environments. Future research might consider how substantial experience focusing impacts focusers’ habits of relating in other areas of their lives. As in the case of the present study, there are many first person experiences available, but rigorous phenomenological studies of multiple cases are lacking.

The results of this study suggest a relationship for some focusers between the sensations of the lived body and the images that emerged as they clarified the location and quality of their lived body’s sensing. That is, some focusers (especially Pleck, Eliza, and Ila) described a reciprocal disclosure of the felt sense and the image, with each sensory modality further disclosing the other so that the felt and the seen were perceived inextricably. Considered in light of Merleau-Ponty’s (1968) description and exploration of the entwined relationship between the visible and the palpable, this raises interesting

questions about the relationship between the phenomenology of perception and the imaginal. For example: how are phenomena available to shared vision in the material world related to those sensed images that emerge in focusing, especially if sensed and “seen” by a resonating listener? What would an applied phenomenology of the imaginal look like, and what might it contribute to our understanding of the human being? What might it contribute to our understanding of spiritual practices that use visualization to create alternate, co-existing realities? More importantly, what contribution might such an exploration make to the way we perceive and respond to the other beings in our literal, ethically challenged, and ecologically threatened world?

4.7 Closing Reflection

This study reveals focusing as a practice that is characterized by a dialogical process that is adapted significantly across participants. These adaptations include the development of special attunement to bodily and sensory modalities, as well as helpful strategies for negotiating relationships with and between particular qualities of felt senses, bodily areas, thoughts or images, especially when reluctance, avoidance, or judgment arises. The basic steps of focusing appear to be like guidelines for getting a conversation started, but after a time the “steps” seem to recede into the background as the conversation picks up its own momentum. The theory remains helpful for negotiating points when the conversation seems to get stuck, but this study revealed focusing among experts as guided primarily by the needs and particularities of those in dialogue and less recognizably by the codified steps offered by Gendlin and others.

Thought of as a real, fundamentally dialogical process, the necessity of diversity in focusing takes on a new light. Like in any conversation, the process is an ongoing and

spontaneously manifested interaction between perspectives, and any articulation of how such a conversation unfolds is deeply indebted to the moods, needs, and interests of the interlocutors. The diversity of approaches to focusing reflect the diversity of the persons involved as each cultivates relationships with typically silenced voices and experiences, which I suggest might be thought of as silenced persons of the soul.

The findings here underscore a crucial distinction between the experience of this dialogue and its objective appearance: though carried out by one human person at a time, this dialogue is not experienced as merely rhetorical. Questions posed are real questions. They are asked because there might be an answer, one that is wholly unknown, but which might be offered. Answers are received by listening carefully, with a practiced attention, to images, feelings, words, movements offered as gifts from persons that can only be heard because they have become known, acknowledged, respected, and perhaps loved.

I have suggested that further research might shed light on how the specific attitude that is cultivated in the ongoing practice of focusing may be generalized to other interactions. This question is one that is left humming for me as I conclude this study, for the process of listening that I have had to cultivate in order to enter into the descriptions of the participants has elicited changes in my own perceptions of beings around me. During the process of attending to the subtle meanings and experiences of the participants, I found my attention spontaneously shifting with respect to other phenomena in the world around me. I became increasingly aware of the bodily sensations involved in writing, of felt places opening and beckoning me forward, or alternately resolutely clamping shut. I often felt stunned by the intensity of animal and atmospheric activities outside the window by which I wrote; these appeared surprising and mysterious in their

evident independence from my activity, and yet somehow deeply familiar when they filled my perceptual awareness and crowded out my private thoughts. Outside the sliding glass doors beside my writing desk, a large willow tree spoke in a soothing motion while I thought and wrote. The ever swaying tendrils reminded me of the constant presence of the unseen, and of the possibility of letting myself relax and be moved—shifted—and of the balance between gravity and levity. The shifts I experienced in my view demonstrated how even thinking about and trying to understand others’ experiences of focusing spontaneously moved me into a closer awareness of my own informal version of a focusing space, and suggested its benefit even outside focusing “sessions.”

Perhaps the steps as Gendlin described them and others subsequently modified them can be likened to maps insofar as they provide varieties of instruction, information, and orientation, but are far removed from the experience of being “on the ground,” in the felt body, where each person discovers her own terrain and style of encountering the landscape and its denizens. Perhaps the varieties of steps are also like so many iterations of a pocket translator, providing helpful phrases and insights into the customs of the locals, though the nuances of usage can only be learned through practice.

If these metaphors are apt, perhaps what is most striking about focusing and its varieties is that they are necessary at all. How are we to understand the fact that we should require such assistance in discovering our own experiences of the world, and the intricate relationships with countless others in which we find ourselves when the fullness of our own situated perception begins to dawn? Of course, this and related questions have long been the purview of phenomenology (in particular, see Romanyshyn, 1989; Abram 1996).

As a phenomenological practice, focusing contributes to the restoration of this fullness of subjectivity and intersubjectivity and is regarded with something like reverence (e.g., awe, respect, appreciation, love) by those who experience such a restoration. Prior to setting out on this project, I understood the reverence that I perceived in the focusing community to be directed primarily toward Gendlin. While he may garner a share of this feeling for his work and his generosity with it, I now understand this sense of reverence as a response to—and perhaps a strengthening condition of—the process of focusing itself. Each of the participants experienced profound feelings—appreciation, relief, joy, etc.—in response to what was given to them in the focusing dialogue they described. Something or someone—an other part or a person of dream, body, or image—knew something that they did not, and by attending in just the right way, they were able to hear these precious, hidden messages.

If we err on the side of the participants' interpreted experience rather than participants' reflective explanations, we may understand that focusing is rooted in the experience of something or someone that feels very real, very other, and yet ultimately very intimate. The experience of engaging in real dialogue with this otherness allows practitioners to discover a new depth, complexity, and satisfying *rightness* of subjective experience. In this context, their deepest experiences appear at least in part as given to them by "others." If it is yet unclear how to conceptualize and understand these others in the context of this practice, the lived experience of focusing nevertheless seems to call into question the usual distinction between self and other. Even when used as a method for individual healing or insight (i.e., not explicitly as a spiritual practice, as in

biospirituality, see Campbell and McMahon, 1985) it appears that focusing is structurally constituted to amplify dimensions of interconnectedness through its reliance on dialogue.

Could it be that the sense of rightness and the relief experienced by each of the participants in the course of the focusing dialogue had not only to do with the personal satisfaction and relevance of what arose from the dialogue, but also with a profound sense of rightness in listening and hearing with such exquisite attentiveness? What might be discovered by turning this immense receptivity and keen attention toward the beings and presences that are less retiring, those who offer themselves more readily in our day to day lives? These questions are suggested by the findings at hand, but are not answered by them. They are wonderings that I invite to echo inward and outward, waiting for other replies.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Participant Recruitment

Introductory Notice

Published online in the Focusing Gazette, September 19, 2010

Focusers Sought to Participate in Dissertation Research

Would you like to contribute to advancing Focusing research? I am a beginning Focuser and Clinical Psychology doctoral candidate at Duquesne University and I am seeking participants for my dissertation research on Focusing. If you are interested in learning more about participating in this research, please contact me at [email noted] or call [phone number noted] Thank you!!

Response to Replies of Interest (Participant Screening Letter)

Hello!

Thanks VERY much for your response; I appreciate your interest and support! I'd like to ask a couple of questions in order to get a sense of whether you fit the participant criteria my committee and I decided on. Once I have a sense of whether you are a "fit", we can talk about the next steps, and I can give you more info about the research!

For my study, how long you have been Focusing is a factor for participation, so could you please tell me how long you have been Focusing, and how much, if any, training you have received from a Focusing Institute trainer?

Secondly, how familiar are you with phenomenological research approaches?

Finally, where are you located? Because I'm conducting in-person interviews, I am trying to find a number of people within a couple of hour driving radius from one another. If you know anyone else in the area who might be interested, feel free to forward my contact info along!

Again, thank you for your response to my call! I look forward to hearing back from you regarding the questions above. I'll be in touch shortly after you respond to let you know the next steps!

With appreciation,

Sarah Malach

Appendix 2: Consent Form

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY

600 Forbes Avenue Pittsburgh, PA 15282-0202

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

TITLE: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL-HERMENEUTIC STUDY OF PRACTITIONERS' EXPERIENCE OF "FOCUSING"

INVESTIGATOR: Sarah H. Malach
328 South Aiken Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15232
(585) 730-9076

ADVISOR: (if applicable:) Russell Walsh, Ph.D.
Psychology Department

SOURCE OF SUPPORT: This research is being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for Clinical Psychology doctoral degree at Duquesne University.

PURPOSE: You are being asked to participate in a research project that seeks to clarify how Focusing is experienced by individual practitioners. You will be asked to participate in one interview with the researcher.

During the interview, you will be asked to recount one significant Focusing session that you participated in as the Focuser. After you have responded to the researcher you may be asked follow up questions to clarify your previous responses. The interview will be approximately 1-2 hours in length, and will take place in an agreed-upon setting that is convenient for you.

This is the only request that will be made of you.

This interview will be video and audio recorded and transcribed.
The transcription will be used as a research protocol.

After your protocol has been transcribed and analyzed, the transcription and my comments pertaining to your protocol will be available to you electronically. If you desire, you may respond in writing with any thoughts about these materials. Your transcript and any comments you offer will be included in the final dissertation appendices, after all identifying material

pertaining to you or anyone you talk about has been deleted or disguised. If you do not wish to read or comment on these materials, simply do nothing.

- RISKS AND BENEFITS:** There are no known risks beyond those of everyday life. A potential benefit is increased insight regarding your Focusing practice, and contribution to the Focusing research literature.
- COMPENSATION:** You will not be compensated for your participation in this study.
- CONFIDENTIALITY:** Your name will never appear in any of the research documents, including the transcribed protocols for this study, their interpretations, or in any part of the final dissertation document. You will be referred to by a pseudonym. If you refer to any persons during the interview, they will also be referred to by a pseudonym in all written documents. Any other identifying material of you or anyone you talked about will be deleted or disguised.
- Audio and video recordings will be used by the researcher for the sole purpose of aiding transcription of verbal and nonverbal contents of the interview. All audio and video recordings, consent forms, and written documents will be stored in a locked file in the researcher's home. All material will be destroyed after seven years.
- RIGHT TO WITHDRAW:** You are under no obligation to participate in this study. You are free to withdraw your consent at any time.
- SUMMARY OF RESULTS:** A summary of the research results will be supplied to you at no cost, upon your request.
- VOLUNTARY CONSENT:** I have read the above statements and understand what is being requested of me. I also understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw my consent at any time, for any reason. On these terms, I certify that I am willing to participate in this research project. I understand that should I have any further questions about my participation in this study, I may call Sarah Malach, M.A. (585) 730-9076, Dr. Russell Walsh (412-396-5067), or Dr. Paul Richer, Chair of the Duquesne University Institutional Review Board (412-396-6326).
- SIGNATURES:**

Participant's Signature Date

Researcher's Signature Date

Duquesne University
Institutional Review Board
Protocol #10-81
Approval Date: August 13, 2010
Expiration Date: August 13, 2011

Appendix 3: Reflexive Working Notes

Reflexive Working Notes Associated with Analysis of Pleck's Protocol

Reading for whole

His elaborate set-up—prepared to be misunderstood, distinguish his process from what most people do. Is he easing in, checking to see how I'll respond? Apologizing for unorthodoxy? He starts to describe (gets quiet) and then pulls himself out to tell me a bunch of conceptual framing.

Response to the whole:

I am trying to read for a sense of the whole, but almost immediately the following challenge presents itself: what is “the whole” here? I am reading the transcript of this interview, looking for a descriptive telling of a particular focusing experience. There is the sense throughout of his shifting into and out of telling me about that specific experience. He began to relate the story as he remembers it, but then shifts into speaking commentary about the particular experience. This takes the form of “Often this is what happens for me” and sometimes what he is telling me about will turn out to be his general articulation of the specific experience within, and sometimes what happened in this lived experience is distinguished from that in some way. In the first case he is still telling me about that experience, but doing so in a way that communicates that a part of the experience is of ongoing thematic relevance for him, that this one instance was an iteration of a larger pattern. The second case, he is telling me about what happened through contrast with previous cases- what happened cannot be easily described in its own terms, but must be understood in opposition to the usual experience.

I think it will make sense, before breaking it up into meaning units, to experiment with editing the transcript two more times. The first time, I will simply add punctuation to make the transcript more readable and clear up some of the speech ambiguities that I believe I understand, but only because I heard the tape. The second time I will go through and tentatively reduce the font size on what seem to me to be extraneous comments....

This second part does not set well with me. I have the feeling that perhaps what seems extraneous is actually important in the telling, or some of it may be. SO: concrete experiences that he presents as generalities but then uses to describe what happened in this instance—either as example or by contrast-- I will keep in regular font. I will underline, for now, any statement he makes that relates the more general experience to this particular lived experience. Side comments, general opining about focusing, and anything that does not seem to me to reveal explicitly the meaning of this particular lived experience, I will minimize to 8 pt. font, and perhaps consider when I am looking at the implicit meanings of focusing for him.

12/5/10

Ok, so I am trying to break into meaning units. Tentatively bracketing off commentary that is outside the description of the experience for later interpretation. If Dr. Walsh

thinks I should include these, the brackets serve as mu marks, with possible further demarcation needed within them.

12/6/10

I'm surprised how much I have to extract the lived experience from the ongoing commentary, hedging, etc that comes with telling. I am struck by how often "kind of" "almost like" etc, are repeated. His remarks acknowledging the fact that maybe he should censure, that he is taking a bit of a risk in telling me. This is all very explicit, insofar as it is clearly and repetitively expressed. His enthusiasm about the experience is also explicit. What is perhaps implicit are his anxieties about sharing it, about being misunderstood. Actually, does this count as implicit? His words are explicit, but the meaning and motivation, that is implied. Seems like there are multiple layers of implied: that which is clear to me based on his comments, and then perhaps there are more global meanings in this experience that are pointed to cumulatively, of which my interpretation will lean more toward conjecture.

It's a little bit of a challenge when trying to the first transformation of some of the more difficult to express parts, not to jump right into drawing out the psychological significance.

1/28/11

Because some time has elapsed since I worked on this, I am going to read it through again for a sense of the whole.

2/2

Finding it really hard to just let myself flow and "freely" note comments/thoughts w/ respect to the MUs. Russ encouraged me to write all over everything, to use different colors to note different themes. It seemed like he was really encouraging an organic, free response. But my tendency is to get overwhelmed by how complex the data is, and my comments lean toward a critical questioning of what is meant by x comment, rather than interpretive guess about what I think it means. I find myself handling and rehandling the data, trying to make it more manageable, yet I don't want to lose the connection with the whole. The process is like this: attend carefully to a MU, start to try to language it psychologically, paying attention to what was revealing itself to the participant in the unfolding situation he describes. I try to allow my intuitive understanding (arising from having shared a conversation) to inform my treatment of each MU, while also (or alternately) trying to allow the MU to be fresh, to suspend the automatic sense that, yes, I know what he was talking about. I keep feeling the tension and anxiety build in me while I try to hold this fine balance. One moment I am struggling to try to figure out the best way to express what I think he was experiencing, and the next it's like I fall away from it, want to just let it be as he put it, doubting my ability to magnify and thematize such a difficult and murky process...

SLOWING DOWN ALLOWS PERCEPTION OF OTHERWISE TOO SUBTLE BODY CUES.

NEXT, Pleck IS NONREACTIVE IN A WELL PRACTICED WAY. He remembers, fleetingly, prior experiences relating to how he feels, and these memories importantly shift how he is able to respond to the interoceptions that arise, and the judgments and thoughts about them (many of which are informed by how “other people” focus.)

How do prior focusing experiences inform and or inhibit present focusing? How does Pleck and others refer to previous experiences in the current experience, not to explain it to me, but as a guide for their reaction to current experiences?

2/5

Pleck takes great effort to explain how what happened in that session was extraordinary. There are lots of attempts (how many) to impress upon me that what he attended to in the energy loop had—a life of its own? There was a realness to it which is really important to him. Also, with the different voices. There is something constitutive about this experience that has to do with the presence of some voice, wisdom, insight that does not feel self-produced. This is interesting. I think of what I have heard about the way top down practices like meditation eventually result in brain changes that support bottom-up experiences. Is this similar?

Question: how to language Pleck’s internal experiences? Just as I believe he experienced them. So no “it is as if he receives the instruction” if I think he experienced it as an instruction, coming from somewhere different from his experience of himself. Be true to my understanding of how he experienced it.

Key in Pleck’s account are the different voices. One is “him”—the voice of guidance? And the other? This is a point of confusion, which voice feels more like him. IT makes me wonder about the top-down/bottom up thing. What if part of what happens in focusing is that the internalized perspectives to which people usually relate implicitly becomes explicit? In other words, there are the internalized objects, say, to which we relate, though usually so habitually that we do not distinguish between them. For p1, he has gotten to know one of those voices well; it is a supportive voice that makes an appearance with some regularity. I wonder whether the other voice—the 10 commandments voice, might become the same, over time? As in, I wonder whether the new voices that emerge initially seem strange—they move from being unheard, unthematized, but nevertheless related to, to being able to be perceived in their distinct desires, fears, and pressures, at first as if “other” but then over time, recognized experientially as part of oneself...

3/9/11

So many themes around sharing with others—both an eagerness, and challenges. I feel like I understand freshly why the FOLIO is what it is, and also why the focusing community has an insular feel. The combination of urgency to share, to have one’s experiences validated, and to validate others with fears or anxieties about being perceived as crazy or otherwise unusual means that focusers must turn primarily to other focusers for their support and mirroring. This is a relatively “safe” space in which to acknowledge experiences that are profound and life changing, to reconnect with those experiences in

the telling, to even move further with them as some of the participants do. Clearly the community draws on multiple frameworks through which to understand what is happening (Buddhism seems like a big one in particular, as well as other forms of eastern meditative or body work?). It's not clear to me at this point what would be gained by attempting to dialogue outside the "initiated," since it is a broadly understood hallmark of the practice that it works on the edge of language, people have to do it to understand it, etc. It's almost as if, by definition, you have to do some focusing in order to be able to talk about it.

Is this really true? Is there no way to bridge the nuanced and highly developed practitioners' understanding with a more general audience who might be interested in what comes of it?

**think I may want to root out the Pahnke Richards or other mysticism scale for language pertaining to transpersonal themes

Might self/not self ambiguity relate to internal or external unity scales in Pahnke Richards?

Ah, the Giorgi-esque descriptive piece is much more fine-grained. With each of those MUs I did spend much more time slowing down and dwelling. The circumscribed focus allowed me to do that without totally getting lost in the woods as I would have if I tried to do that level of analysis on the whole. (But should I be trying to do that level of analysis on the whole? It is a potentially endless project viewed that way... I think this works close to the point of diminishing returns...)

3/10/11

Note the potential relationship between his surprise at the felt image that emerges—something that seems really spontaneous to him and unprecedented in his imagination or anticipation, with the reference to two books dealing with what sounds like similar ideas or systems. I have the feeling that, since I will be writing this with all my participants in mind, there will be a lot of floating multiple interpretations of such observations. It also brings to mind how much checking such writing will require—how much care is required in offering an interpretation and explicating what seem to be the supporting pieces of evidence...

Reflexive Working Notes Associated with Analysis of Anna's Protocol

Reading the whole:

Why does she tell me about the posing therapist? How does the power dynamic play out here? She's MSW and working professional, yet she seems unsure of herself and the legitimacy of her experiences sometimes. Note where. Maybe anytime someone talks about distrusting a therapist, I might think they are speaking in part of me...

Lots of explanation about why it took so long to get into focusing. Is she anxious about not being able to give me what I want, especially compared w/ her husband? I think after

my first elaboration question, she might be telling me what she knows about focusing in general, not so much what happened at that point.

There's that larger intelligence!

Lots of effort to explain the sense of how what appears does so on its own—it has its own experienced agency. The surprise—similar to Pleck—at what came is related to the sense that it came on its own. The focuser has a role, but what comes that is surprising comes in a way that is not anticipated or expected. There is less of a sense of me-ness—of course these are not her words, they are mine, but that seems really important in what feels so profound about focusing. Something manifests that does not feel like it came from me, but came for me.

It's kind of interesting, now that I am into analysis in earnest, that I feel myself counterbalancing some of my earlier reluctance to handle my participants' accounts with much agency as a researcher. Less than a week ago I was really concerned about the implications of lifting mus out of their greater context. Was I edging on the sentimental, handling with kid gloves? The thing that appears to me now is informed by seeing how much work all of this takes, and discovering the kind of care and attention in my own approach to translating MU's. It is as if I wasn't sure how to be respectful with what the participants had shared... while I am still working out how that respect is manifested in different parts of the analysis, I guess I feel like I don't have to handle the account with kid gloves. Like with Anna, there is a sense of pragmatism: I want to take the time with her situated description but the majority of the interview is not a situated description, so—ok, I'll just put the description as I discern it into a new document and work with it there, somewhat isolated from the whole, to see what it reveals. I guess I feel more confident that I am not ripping their accounts apart, like I felt initially. My reading of a portion cannot help but be influenced by my reading of the whole, by the return to the whole after I do the Giorgi-style analysis. By keeping them connected in my mind and in my process, I am on guard against trying to artificially manipulate the account. OF course I'm manipulating it—that's how I am aspiring to learn something more from it than is immediately apparent! What do I mean by artificial?... (feeling inward) I guess dishonest, like I am trying to make their account reveal things according to my own agenda, and so running whatever procedural steps that will increase my ability to read these accounts as I might want to, rather than foregrounding what the experiences themselves reveal.

After I did the initial collection of 10 MUS for p2, I had an uneasy feeling like I was leaving something out. It had to do with the part where she is describing how what came seemed to come from the outside. This is important and interesting to me, but also I was thinking about how in the interview she acted out how something comes into the frame. I realized that I have to figure out somehow how to put the context in there, in the meaning units, so that the last piece makes more sense. I left it out initially because it's very much a talking about focusing and her general experiences of focusing, but leaving it out seems like a mistake in terms of representing what she means by the sense of something coming from outside her. Going to have to include that context.

2/7

One theme that I anticipate working with and that seems to be coming up is the experience of an otherness—a “not me” component of what comes in focusing. This seems important for the participants, too. In this particular account, it seems like part of the not me element comes in the sense that while she was not focusing into boundaries or anything, still the movement that came accessed that issue for her, which was implicitly present (we think) in whatever it was she was talking about. Why is it so important to her in telling me for me to know that she wasn’t intentionally attending to boundaries? I think because for her, part of what is amazing is that that gesture arose FIRST. She wasn’t looking for an understanding of boundaries, and then a gesture that performed and described it came up. No, the gesture came, and it opened up in an instant what had been this super tough nut for her to crack! There’s something so precious about her willingness to let it come and play with it, and then the revelation of something that was so huge for her.

I think my MUs in this protocol might be too big. As I reviewed them after a brief break, it seemed that I might be able to magnify some of the meanings more effectively if I work with some smaller MUs.

4/14

As I am doing the second analysis theme grouping, I am struck again by how repetitious are Anna’s claims about not intending what came. I believe that this is the crux of her amazement. What I am wondering about this go round is what her amazement reveals about her assumptions about what arises in experience—does she expect a more conscious, deliberate, less surprising process, such that what unfolded there really amazed her? It sounds like she was working on something that had to do with her personal relationships, and therefore probably involved boundaries, without ever using that term. I relate with her amazement at the intelligence of what came, but I tend to see that it was perhaps not wholly unanticipated by her exploration. What was missing was the word. It is as if she was discovering the idea for the first time without the word, and when the word came it became personally relevant to her, as opposed to being confronted by the word without having had a chance to stay with her own experience of relationships without labeling them in terms of boundaries. As if the word triggered in her that confusion, that sense of misunderstanding and yet importance—maybe even interrupting her ability to feel into her own experience. The only way she could get inside the word was to embody the idea first, then recognize it?

4/18/11

As soon as I feel I have picked up a thread of the A2 structure, I begin writing and realize, again, I am describing something like the phenomenological attitude toward experiences... a very warm version of the phenomenological attitude, almost more like personifying in the hillmanian sense. Honoring the presence of the undisclosed as another, intending a relationship with it and assuming its capacity to move, shift, want, need, etc. as a function of its independent being...

This is the thing: I observe from the protocols that it is a practice that is very relational, nonjudgmental. I do not necessarily see “what they are doing” when they are focusing because they are silent. But does it matter? It seems as if all the instructions are geared toward teaching one how to cultivate and maintain this certain stance of curiosity and gentleness. There can be many instructions to that end; the instructions are not the end, they are the means. Does focusing refer more to the end—this way of being with and listening—than the codified means?

Focusing is not the result—the insight... this is a tricky thing, because many people want to tell me about the result, what came, but it seems that focusing is leading up to what came or what happened afterward when the “process” is begun again in order to carefully inquire into the new content...

Should I say anything about the quality of insight? Is it part of focusing? It is, after all, the pay-off, and thus why people do it—and probably why they want so much to tell me about the insights. I ask about focusing, and they are able to tell me most clearly about the insights that came.

I get the sense that they focus BECAUSE of the insights, but the insights only arise when they let go of that expectation and attend only to the arising sensations, etc. This seems really key.

Working Notes Associated with Analysis of Yolanda’s Protocol

Reading the whole:

There it is again: they come as if from nowhere. We are so surprised by the appearance of things in ourselves that do not follow along with what we know we know. We are so surprised by the possibility of finding in ourselves something truly unexpected. We experience it as not ourselves, and we feel therefore accompanied, held, joined, visited, something. Maybe we should not be so surprised to be surprised by our responses. I wonder if some of the hesitation to refer to spirituality or some transpersonal something is due to the fact that maybe they do actually begin to recognize that this is me, even when it feels foreign. There is enough me-ness in it to hold off attributing to another party... or and is itself consciousness about how they will be taken up?

“I’m sure, I’m sure”-- this sounds like talking about the session, reconstructing based on general experiences rather than specific memory of the one session...

She isn’t really giving me a situated instance, but rather letting me know something about the practice in general that’s been really helpful for her—making contact and establishing ongoing relationships with parts of herself that have otherwise received little acknowledgement or attention.

2/8/11

I've tried to be pretty narrow in terms of which MU I have considered directly referring to that first session, relying on explicit reference to that first session. Yet even with some of the expressions about the first session, I have the feeling that there is some conflation with overall impact of focusing going on, since the overarching theme of this first session seems to be about communicating how healing the practice has been for accessing her own emotional life and history.

She was really impressed by that first session; a lot happened in terms of putting her in relation with a part of herself that would continue to be important to her as she developed her sense of self-support.

Also, one thing I want to note ahead of time for A2 is that I was having a similar experience doing this interview and these interviews in general as she describes when discussing the social factors in her first focusing: that there was something healing about discovering that very functional people have these split off places and what not...

7/6

Back to this after some months. Watched a TED talk recently about the difference between the experiential and the remembered self (specifically, about how, e.g., measures of pain/happiness taken periodically as one is having an experience often do not correlate very neatly with their remembered pain/happiness). This is an issue that is really rampant here, in some of these interviews more than others. Here, in this interview there is much more of that remembered piece happening, in contrast to interviews where it appeared that people were re-experiencing the session they describe, or at least getting back into it. Of course I can't know what resemblance the retelling bears to the initial experience, but at least there is with some a feeling of connectedness that is largely missing here. The connectedness helped convey the sense that it was a spontaneous, felt telling. I'm reminded of what Eliza suggested—that a better way to get at the lived experience would be to tape a session. And yet I don't necessarily think that is so, unless the person made a point to narrate everything that was happening, rather than attend in silence to the shifts, and even then the act of describing everything may interfere with the focusing process itself. (I think the best way, although probably unfeasible given my time and resource constraints, would have been to video tape a focuser and a listener, and then watch the tape with them and transcribe their description of what was happening for them.) At least the way I am doing it, they had a focusing session that was spontaneous, which they then described, more or less...

7/11

Multiple comments that bring into question the remembered accuracy. This could be a question of her own assessment being more critical than others, rather than an indication of the actual shakiness of the memory. (However, other textual indicators (must have been like that, probably, would have happened kind of talk) supports that she is drawing on a very general memory.)

7/13

Yolanda's discussion of the power in the experience is explicit; it forms the basis for the instance she decides to tell me about. However, it also seems to have implicit dimensions—she doesn't actually remember the particulars very clearly, rather, she seems to remember the feeling of power, of importance that that first experience had. She knew *immediately* that it was a powerful way to access her feelings. I think it opened up something for her that she then continued exploring, but it was the opening that impressed her as transformative. She doesn't use the words transformative but I wonder whether it would be fair to... her repetition of powerful seems to suggest something to me in an embodied way. It was powerful, powerful, powerful...there is a quality of ineffability in how she repeats it. Additionally, the other words she uses, describing how it cut through words, got to the heart, connected her with a part of herself... all of this suggests a contact with reality—her own reality—in a more direct and unmediated way than usual. It wasn't just that she felt something; she wasn't just emoting, but connecting to that small part of her allowed her to know it and be present to it with compassion—to be both, simultaneously. Was this akin to something nondual? A touch of it? This may be overstating the case; what resonates for me here is her sense of certainty, and wanting to share this story, the one where she met this practice that she knew immediately... this sounds like recognition, and perhaps my interpretation is influenced by my own experience of recognizing the power in something. It is not an ordinary feeling, but like something becomes instantly clear and you feel deeply and intuitively the worth, value, and power of what you have encountered.

7/15/11

[How to articulate my understanding of this tension, based on more than her account, which is that the focusing community explicitly accepts and encourages differences, yet everyone must have an instructor or point of reference for what it is?

Also, she does not find focusing strong enough to address her very physical performance anxiety. I wonder if I am seeing a difference in development of practice here: to the extent that she does not fully trust her process, or perhaps unwittingly draws away from the somatic aspects of it, does this lessen focusing's potential to catalyze shifts on a physical level? In other words, the practice is only as strong as you let it be?

Working Notes Associated with Analysis of Sophie's Protocol

Reading the whole

So she IS giving me an example of a focusing experience, AND it's nuanced in that it is an application of some new ideas to a process she feels comfortable working with on her own, and teaching in quite difficult situations.

In doing the MU analysis, how do I handle the dream? It was the object of the focusing session, so I think I have to include it, translating the MUs as best I can for their psych significance. I suspect that this means that a lot of dream description will be translated for the dominant feeling tone, which helpfully Sophie is very attendant to.

OR do I lift out just the focusing moves, with enough context so that what they refer to can be psychologically amplified? How much do I need to understand the whole context to understand how she experiences the focusing? I think this is where moving away from the detail toward psychological generality might be crucial.

This is an instance which she is sharing with me, and which she first shared as an example of a particular application of focusing with her classmates in Gendlin's class. It fits precisely into what Gene had described, but there is nothing contrived feeling about her telling of it to me.

It's really hard to read this whole thing without losing myself in how interesting the story Sophie tells, and remembering her telling of it. She was so great, so funny, and so lively and inspiring. I have so many particularly positive feelings about her that it's a little harder to put myself at an appropriate distance for the analysis! I love that her felt sense shouts "SHUT UP!!" That just cracks me up. It seems so at odds with the whole "wisdom of the body" rhetoric—and yet this WAS the wisdom of her body!

Also laughing out loud when she says, "His new idea is no longer turkeys." It just strikes me as so funny in such a warm way. She is so earnest and enthusiastic about her work, which I think is very profound, and I guess I can relate to the comical disproportion of how people can get SO into something that is so simple, as if it's REALLY an innovation. I think that's why that statement is so funny to me—as if turkeys are his idea.

I tell myself to keep from getting overwhelmed: I can describe the psychological experience of the focusing session without all the details. The idea is to come back to what her experiences reveal about focusing—the rest of the story is so interesting it's possible to lose that, but for example I don't think, to examine her account vis a vis focusing, I need to maintain the level of detail about the dream, that neat story about the dream. I guess that is something I am sorting through as I read the whole: I feel kind of attached to representing the neatness of the whole scenario—I find myself joining with her story and the very sweet way all the little elements combine to bring her to a new relationship with her own expressiveness or lack thereof. What I mean is, I am so interested in what she has to say, all of it, as a person in general. I find myself wanting to be a champion for her story—not just about focusing, but also for her being heard for her own sake!

6/24/11

This continues to be perhaps the most challenging and interesting protocol. After writing up my notes, I find that many of them consist in connections between images, words, themes in her life and in her dream: the tension between fecundity, bringing forth, and holding back described on so many metaphorical and psychological levels that I have been moved to comment at several points that I feel like I am learning about dream interpretation as much as focusing here.

For the sake of transparency, I will include all of these in the themes as raw comments, but not work with them on the level of grouping and developing super ordinate themes, except where they appear to be relevant to her experience of focusing. As with other protocols, the implicit themes to which I will attend will have to do with the interview context as it unfolds; in this case I anticipate that much of this will have to do with the care and time she took to share enough context with me so that I could really feel the significance of the ultimate shifts that came for her. Perhaps what was most striking about this protocol was how FULL it was of detail, context, back story. As previously noted, this was overwhelming. But as I read again and again the transcript I began to feel like these shared details, associations, and histories, e.g. the song she references, or her story about her last pregnancy and her reaction to it, allowed me to join much more closely with her experiences so that when she shared the ultimate insight of this session, I felt it very deeply with her, appreciated its importance, and genuinely shared her joy.

6/25

The gist of the shift seems to be that by taking the time to feel and understand her own negative reaction to him in the dream, she became aware of how much her perception of him—in life/in dream—was colored by her own frustration with herself. As she explored the depth of her antagonistic responses, the acknowledgement arose that he really is a kind person and hasn't done anything to deserve her reaction. (Especially because she is working in a gestalt understanding of dreams?) she is able to see him for his own qualities, and imagine identifying with the qualities she admires, developing them in herself. He becomes a positive role model as she acknowledges that his qualities arise from something good and rich in himself that can be emulated, and need not simply reflect to her own difficulties.

Re: 55, just as in the song, the siesta gives a child for her loneliness, so does Sophie's dream give her a child for her loneliness. Like the woman and the child walking together, she is comforted by the thought of her friends in the south, and the image of everyone in the streets together was so warm and free for her. The song really had very strong resonances.

7/1

A pause for interembodied responsiveness as I work on the implicit horizon of Sophie's account. What does her storytelling and my being drawn into it tell about focusing? How she lives it?

A vague, thick feeling of searching for what to say is strong in the area right in the front center of my torso, between heart and stomach. I sit with it—it is partly the desire to get it right, because I care about Sophie, and I am touched by her openness, vulnerability, strength and humor. She shared herself with me in that interview, yes. And so it has been so hard for me to separate where her talking about focusing and her talking about herself end and begin. The words, "She is focusing, she embodies focusing" come. I think about the liminal and rich space I felt with her throughout the interview, the way reading her account touched me every time, opened me up into the focusing space—both about the interview, but also I went off into my own matters at times.

Thinking more about the interview situation, I recall the wonderfully wholesome meal she shared with me before we began. I felt a real sense of being cared for, not personally, but just that this was the sort of person who has a deep sense of hospitality that is natural for her to extend. I was almost uncomfortable with it at first because I wanted to interview her and get on the road home, and yet she drew me in, invited a relaxed space, and really offered me a lovely afternoon.

Hm. focusing is hospitality for her? This seems like it might fit. focusing is a practice of hospitality toward ones experiences. This was evident not in her explicit language (unlike many other focusers) but came through in my experience of her way of relating with me as a guest in her house, and a guest in her focusing. This gives expression to the way I felt so drawn in, invited in not to observe but to participate as she relived in memory that focusing experience, taking the time to explain to me the full significance of thoughts and associations that would have been known almost instantly to her, so that I could feel something of the shifts with her when they came. Yes, as I expand on that, hospitality really conveys at least some part of what I felt focusing was for her, specifically.

Working Notes Associated with Analysis of Eliza's Protocol

Could I consider Eliza's description one session, with her writing about the session evolving into a continuation of that particular instance?

Journaling takes her back into the focusing space of that session, and continues it. I think what comes for her—comfortable in her own skin—is a continuation of her work with that session, as she reflects on it.

Re: to get journal or not: what is that negotiation about?

2/12

I am thinking about whether or not to consider the second part of her account as one session. On one hand, she is clear that she has worked with the same issue over multiple sessions. One can focus and focus again on the same thing. That seems to suggest I should just end the session where she ended it, with the store front. On the other hand it seems like part of the broader focusing process is building a familiarity with sometimes recurrent images, feelings, persona, parts, and that focusing becomes richer in a different way when you are familiar with certain areas of the terrain, and yet totally new things come up. The question is: will it be useful in my analysis of the phen to include one of these multi-part sessions? Part of me simply wants a longer session from her... but, it's not one session. Rather, it's a session with a partner that reopens when she is journaling about it. I am really not sure how to handle that. Multiple people have given me a session, and several pieces of another session. Perhaps I ought to consider this like that, and address what comes up in the broader analysis. On the other hand, she read the whole thing to me, kind of treating it like one session, and the content is directly continuing thematically from the previous one. Hm.

4/8

As I work on the A1 structure, I revisit this question. It becomes clear on this reading how much shifts between the recounting of the session, and the journaling about it. Undoubtedly, she is shifting back into focusing, but notably this shift is characterized by memory and association arising from the content of that session, corroboration for the concerns of the part that is restraining her grandiose impulses. Since I am doing all of A2, and there are many more themes in that, then I don't feel as strongly about trying to have a longer session as the "situated" description. In A2 I will deal with the themes that arise cumulatively across her many snippets, so that's where this session "post script" belongs.

Reflexive Working Notes Associated with Analysis of Ila's Protocol

More than any before, she really talks about the experience as if she is teaching it. It's like she giving me a demo of how she moved from step to step, narrating the questions.

Seeing all parts of arising experience as fundamentally helpful, wanting to be supportive in their own way, though we do discriminate regarding who we might listen to when and how—who gets to be heard, and who is held and told that we heard them, and we want to hear this other part. How is it focusers decide which part gets the main focus and which parts are gently asked to go aside?

For all of these: what is the experience of noticing a part wants attention?

"Go back to it" People mean a somatic memory, I think. How do we know if the sense that arises is really the same as what arose then? How do we understand people's sense that they know when they are going back to something, versus when they can't find it?

Most people know what it's like to have little debates in their head—should I wear this or this? Eat this or this? We experience both point of views as coming from ourselves, and yet they are distinct enough to conflict. If we slowed down we might say something like this part of me wants to dress up because it's a special occasion, and this part of me wants to dress more casual because it's cold out and I want to be warm. So, it isn't strange for people to say "this part of me appreciated me being with it." What is that like though? There is the experience both of attending, of calm regard or curiosity, and (then?) relief coming from the area to which we are attending. I think what's important is not the question, "Well, how do different parts of yourself interact?" but rather to look a little more broadly at what is happening in the experience: that whatever language is being used, what's being experienced by the subject is the movements, feelings, thoughts of each or all of them. Naming them parts may just be a simple device to overcome the western prejudice that we have one sense of self and it "should" be unified and unconflicted all the time. Naming them parts perhaps allows people to notice the subtle movements of their experience without expecting cohesion or consistency. Perhaps in ordinary experience we tend to want to iron out the multiple selves, multiple voices; there is pressure to choose the stronger sense or voice and acknowledge or act on it, often

meaning we need to disregard the other in order to make a choice. In all these accounts people have freed themselves to some extent from those expectations and are used to experiencing the variety of motivations, ambivalence, etc. In fact, hearing from the parts of ourselves that we usually ignore seems to be an important part of it in many cases.

Yolanda and Ila—maybe others—treat panicky places like children. Patience, warmth. Thinking of these as reactive patterns that are tied to our childhood memories, tied to feelings of vulnerability, dependence, need. We are our experiences, and in these fragile patterns we are still children. How to think about de-distancing with respect to time? We can be, existentially, children in a moment, our awareness thrown into another time, our bodies triggered by sense memories so that we flashback. IF for a flash or longer, in a sense we are children then—and we are adults, to the extent that we can bring to mind other experiences and perspectives.

5/12/11

I finally get—or re-understand-Eva's objection to language of inner and outer with respect to the lived body. In describing Ila's experience, to say that her shifting her posture in response to a felt shift is an "outer movement in response to an inner shift" sees her from the outside—my point of view. Inner and outer subscribe to the difference between unobservable and observable in a nat. science kind of way. What are other languagings that could work better to describe the difference? Gross and subtle, where gross is a larger body movement that she can put into words more easily: I moved my arm, shifted my weight in my seat? Versus subtle, which points to felt movements in the body that occur in less direct relationship to the surrounding environment? Shifting in the chair requires pushing against, friction, release into the chair. And yet sitting perfectly still, I know that the unfolding environment can be felt dramatically in one's viscera. A glance can send tremendous movement through one that is not subtle at all, and requires metaphor to depict an experience that may not be able to be observed. So maybe that gets closer: there are movements that we make that can be described literally, without metaphor: my leg twitched, I blinked, I turned, and movements that require metaphor to be communicated to others, or even made sense of oneself. A tunnel opened up under my heart and seemed to drop into my gut, which opened into a bottomless chasm. When I feel this but do not describe it, it is real but it is much more disturbing. Describing it to myself gathers it into meaning, the non/less traumatizing realm of the understandable. If I experience something like this but do not note it consciously, it lives as a concealed experience to which I may respond unconsciously—simply by trying to move away from whatever has caused it, without being able to reflect either on the experience from which I seek relief, or my method of doing so. (acting out)

5/13

What is meant by "deep" and depth, phenomenologically? Near, fundamental? At our core, VERY important feeling?

5/16/11

Part of what seems to happen in focusing is that focusing become aware of their emotional reactions to having different feelings, and they learn to reduce the reactivity to

having certain emotions of experiences. The language of parts is very much implicated in this: “I” refers to the meta-capable subjective self that takes feelings as objects; the “part” is... an affective state? Oh, the morass of language when it comes to feelings, emotions, experiences, etc. This may be some thick muck to wade through in discussion.

Both Pleck and Ila characterize head space as tight, constricted.

Appendix 4: Modified Descriptive Analysis: Meaning Unit Transformation Tables

A4.1 Participant One: Pleck

Transformation to third person	Transformation to psychological meaning	Notes
<p>MU1 Pleck was in his house, Focusing by phone with one of four Focusing partners, all of whom live at some distance. He is not sure who his partner was for this Focusing session.</p>	<p>Pleck was in a private, familiar place. He was on the phone with one of several Focusing partners.</p>	<p>No mention of guide in all of transcript. –variation from other accounts. Interchangeability? Less relational interaction/focus?</p>
<p>MU2 Pleck began to be aware that his attention is on a sensation in the area of his forehead. As he becomes quiet, he becomes aware that his attention feels tight and narrow. He feels this tight, narrow attention as a somatic sense located in his forehead. His slowing down brings a tightening of attention in his head, instead of what he feels to be the opposite experience of an open spaciousness around his abdomen, which he says often happens (for him? At other times for other people?)]</p>	<p>Pleck begins to quiet himself down and notice what he is feeling. The particular sensation that appears is characterized by a sense of tightness, of active closing. This sensation is recognized and understood, at least in part, in contrast to other sensations he has felt before which were in a different part of his viscera and characterized by a more open, spacious feeling in his abdomen.</p>	<p>What would the tightness here mean, if not for the contrast of the open abdominal spaciousness? Bodily sensations understood relative to one another, so that as more sensations are experienced and explored, both familiar and new sensations may take on new meanings. Much of his A2 account tells the story of how he discovered what he needed to do in order to focus; how he needed to learn his own somatic tendencies and landscapes, and this was done in part through relative comparison.</p>
<p>MU 3 Pleck begins becoming aware of the quality of his attention. <i>He does not simply assume that when he slows down, his attention will be unencumbered, clear, open, or spacious. In fact, Wayne rarely experiences his attention this way when he begins to Focus. A2?</i></p>	<p>Pleck begins by turning his awareness to the quality of his attention.</p>	<p>This is really important and he feels differentiates his practice! A2. This is a mindbender: turning one's awareness to the quality of one's attention. It doesn't seem quite like thinking about thinking... more like feeling about perceiving? Need to spend more time with this one...</p>
<p>MU 18 <i>Pleck is usually pretty disconnected, so much in his head or in something or into doing something that he doesn't feel his body. A2</i> The first thing that happens when he slows down is often that he feels how bad it feels to be him. He actually</p>	<p>The first thing that Pleck is aware of when he slows down and begins to attend to what he</p>	

<p>slows down.</p>	<p>feels is that it feels bad to be him.</p>	
<p>MU 4 At times, Pleck has a tightness [in the front, upper part of his head] and after a while sometimes something loosens up and it will relax. He feels something [at his forehead], something [at his chest] which is often something and he feels something [around his lower abdomen]. This is the introduction for what happened in the session he is about to speak of.</p>	<p>Often the sensations that come to his awareness initially are tight sensations in various parts of his body that sometimes loosen up and relax over the course of Focusing. They have appeared frequently enough in particular places that they have become familiar features of his practice, at least around the time of the episode described.</p>	<p>Placement as “intro” suggests it’s important to the story he will tell that I know that there are these familiar tight places. He could have just mentioned them for the first time when describing the session, but the fact that these areas are “often something” is meant to communicate that they hold some particular significance to him. The WHERE of the tightness, and the appearance over time, perhaps makes them more real/independent of him somehow? Might this connect with the self/not-self theme?</p>
<p>MU 5 Pleck starts to quiet down and as [the area around his front, upper head] relaxed, he sensed into [his quality of attending]—because he does not want to be sensing with tight attention. He is aware that he is [holding a tight attention]. He notices that [and reminds himself] “ok, breathe,” and then he can feel that [his upper face, forehead] is tight, and he can feel other places that are tight. He just breathes with them.</p>	<p>Pleck is averse or finds it not helpful to sense with tight attention. He responds to the feeling of tightness with a reminder to himself to breathe. He maintains his awareness of the tightness in various places in his body while at the same time paying attention to his breathing.</p>	<p>Tightness=bad? It feels bad to be him, and what he finds is tightness when he slows down... so although he is kind of carefully nonjudgmental, I think it’s safe to note that the tightness is unpleasant in someway. And it’s different from what is “Assumed” – might there be a possibly defensive aspect to his emphasis on his differences? The lit is so non-judgmental about anything that comes up, and he is too, yet there are these moments when his judgment seems to be revealed—the possible badness of tightness, his “messaging” tendency to try to “do” with what comes up rather than the prescribed being with?</p> <p>** also: “breathing with” this seems important—it is perhaps a dual focus of attention, simultaneous. The breathing has an effect on the tightness;</p>

		breathing with them perhaps means holding both the tightness (negative valence) and the breath (neutral/positive) in the same attentional framework. I think the attention on breath also prevents judgment or analysis of the tightness.
<p>MU 19</p> <p>The first thing he does is [ask]: how is he attending? What’s happening? Where am i? Often he feels himself [tightly in front of forehead] so where is he? [He locates himself] Well, he’s right here. [He asks] Well, how big is he? [He gets a sense of how big]. Like this. [He asks] how do I feel? He asks Focusing questions of what feels alive or what it feels like to be him. [He discovers] He actually feels about this big, [a small space between his thumb and forefinger]. He feels he is right about in his forehead.</p>	<p>The first thing he does is direct his attention to his ongoing experiences by asking himself questions about what he is attending to, where his sense of self is being felt in his body, how big (spacious?) his sense of self feels. HE notices what he feels in response to these questions; in this instance, he notices that his sense of self is very small and restricted.</p>	<p>Implications of slipping into phen understanding—trying to stay psychological, but is “unreflected on” much more descriptive than prereflective?</p> <p>Mildly negative experience of self?</p>
<p>MU 6</p> <p>Pleck continues to feel [tightness in front of his face] and he feels tightness [at the back of his neck] as he continues to sense and he feels [something at his lower abdomen/pelvis] and he sits with it.</p>	<p>Pleck’s perception of one of the tightnesses in his body is sustained/renewed over a period of time. He pays attention for period of time to one sensation before moving on to check how he feels in other areas.</p>	<p>How to understand this in light of his elaboration wherein he could not really feel what was in his ab/pelvis, but waited for it to open up? What is the actual sequence here?</p> <p>Slowness—“continues to feel.”</p>
<p>MU 20</p> <p>In this case, just noticing that it is like that [that his sense of himself is so small] gives it some space. [He recognizes] that he is feeling about this tight [at his forehead].</p>	<p>Becoming explicitly aware of the tight sensation immediately brings some relief, though it does not resolve the tightness.</p>	<p>Relief in making the implicit explicit.</p>
<p>MU 20.5</p> <p>He wants to try and fix that. There is a part of him that says he doesn’t like this; he wants to</p>	<p>Pleck feels a dialogic reaction</p>	

<p>make himself be more open. He kinda smiles because he is used to this movie [sequence of events].</p>	<p>unfold in response to the tightness he has perceived: he feels judgment and dislike and feels an urge to force himself to be more open, followed by a sense of tolerance/wry recognition (?) at the familiarity of this judging response.</p>	
<p>MU 21 Usually he feels a discharge—some of the energy or fear or whatever it is that causes his sense of himself to be [so small and tight]. As he does that [noticing? Discharge?] he notices that he is tight. He notices where he is. [He remembers that this is often how he begins] and he is just with that.</p>	<p>Pleck remembers that usually he feels a discharge related to the sense of himself as small and tight that he is feeling right now. He continues to feel himself, his attention as unpleasantly small and tight, and remembers that often this tightness is how he begins. He stays with the awareness of tightness, and that this is often how he begins.</p>	
<p>MU 22 Pleck is interested because suddenly he has some space from that [tightness at his head]. He wonders what else is going on. He remembers that he has a place [in his low abdomen] and he cannot feel it yet.</p>	<p>As or after Pleck notices tightness, he is suddenly aware of himself and his bodily space existing beyond or outside the tightness. A heightened sense of interest comes with this awareness; though the tightness remains, he wonders what else may be going on that he has not yet noticed. He remembers a specific area that he often feels, and</p>	<p>Contrast with MU 20, 20.5</p>

	notices that he is not feeling it.	
MU 23 Pleck wants to make himself do that [feel the place in his low abdomen].	Pleck wants to make/force himself to feel the place in low abdomen that he expects to feel.	Is this evidence for his/others' prioritization of abdominal feelings over other places?
MU 24 Pleck tells himself, "Noooo!"	In response to the desire to make/force this perception, Pleck emphatically denies this impulse and tells himself he must not do that.	On one hand, perhaps he has learned that he "should" be in the spacious awareness of the belly, a prejudice that is supported in Focusing literature; on the other, the emphasis in the lit on nonjudgment and non-interference is a counterbalance to his desire to work/attend in the "right" places. Is he forcing himself not to force something? Or is the "nooo!" more supportively emphatic? Non-judgment as superordinate Focusing instruction?
MU 25 Pleck notices [the small quality of attention and his inclination to mess with what he notices] and he remembers [that this has happened many times before] and he knows that over a couple of minutes if he just breathes, he can't go down here [to his abdomen] but it will open up.	Pleck notices the unpleasantly small quality of attention and his desire to MESS. He remembers that this interaction between the unpleasant sense and the inclination, attraction, temptation to respond to that unpleasantness with force/intervention is a common scenario for him, having happened many times before. He knows or remembers that if he is patient (over a couple of minutes-substantial time when focusing) and	Key—is he noticing a characteristic relationship between the tightness/unpleasantness and the response of wanting to force that somehow not to be? Also, what is messing for him? Such a an important word for him! Messing is like tinkering—interfering, manipulating on a small scale somewhat idly. Knows—remembers? Trusts? Patience vs messing. Waiting vs. Doing Self/other What about the abdomen, re A2? Is there evidence of preference for certain kinds of self senses or experiences in Focusing?

	<p>if he continues to breathe (remain calm? Remain present to the unpleasantness—ie, <i>breathe with</i>, from A15), that while he can't willfully locate or feel his sense of self into his abdomen, that in time it will become perceptible to him.</p>	
<p>MU 7 Pleck is surprised by what happens next. He almost feels like there is an energy loop. It is some internal thing. He feels a blockage [around his low abdomen/pelvis]. Reflector is a nice word for it. There was something that basically said, "Don't go there!" [beneath/through/beyond the blockage or reflector]</p>	<p>Pleck is surprised by the sudden resolution of vague feelings into a vivid, viscerally perception of a energetic process/movement underway that is shaped, guided, and limited by felt blockages in the areas of his previously perceived tightness. It is evident to Pleck that he could bring his attention outside or beyond the energy process, though he feels a strong sense of prohibition that prevents him from doing so.</p>	<p>Why almost feels? Later on in the interview he is more emphatic. Was this initial telling a bit more hesitant, gauging me? I really struggle to name this—image is not right; it's more palpable. It's really a close entwining of the seen and the felt; both the image and the feelings, I suspect, strengthen and inform each other.</p>
<p>MU 8 Pleck guesses that beneath the blockage/reflector would be sexual energies, underworld, shamanic something. <i>He has not taken that kind of journey, but he's read about it A2.</i> He has the sense, "You're not going there [beyond that reflector]". The reflector kicks the energy this way [back in and up toward his body].</p>	<p>Pleck guesses that underneath the reflector he would contact sexual energy, underworld, shamanic realms of himself. As he notices the reflector and guesses what is behind it, he feels the reflector kick the energy back up from his pelvis into his torso.</p>	<p>Kick— (forceful! Active for a reflector!) I feel strongly he is talking about his own experience of these things—this is where they dwell for him in that interior landscape. (And maybe for others—there is the sense that some of his guess about why he is not to go there is informed by what he has read, but it also seems like a very natural, spontaneous prohibition that arises for him and is important with respect</p>

		to his own self experience. Maybe it's related to the comments about being labeled all sorts of things, the anxiety about the part of the account that is "Strange, but it's ok." Etc.
<p>MU 9</p> <p>Then the energy comes up [about 8 inches behind and above his head] and it is like, "No, don't go there!" [Something] kind of keeps the energy this way [between the top of his head and his lower abdomen] and then there is something [at the back of his neck]. He is not sure what the thing at his neck is, but it is as if you were doing a light show, and the [the reflector at his head] is kind of keeping it up here, and [the reflector at his pelvis] is kind of keeping it here, and [the reflector at his neck] is keeping it here so that some energy or something is flipping all through here [in a circle/loop between the three points]</p>	<p>Pleck follows the movement of the energy between blockages. Again, Pleck has the sense that he could bring his awareness beyond the energy, this time at a different felt blockage, and again has a feeling of being prohibited from doing so, which he does not challenge. He attends to the relationship between the blocks and the energy, and the configuration of the whole.</p>	<p>Am I going too far from the description?</p> <p>Or rather, am I mistaking his description of the scene for his experience of it?</p>
<p>MU10</p> <p>The energy is not quite his life energy, but those things [reflectors] maintained his sense of himself within the [energy loop]. He experienced the loop and the reflectors actual, almost energetic [phenomena], like a laser with mirrors and you do something.</p>	<p>Pleck understands the energy is not quite his life energy (too literal?) but that the reflectors maintain (and shape?) how his sense of self is manifested in his sensed experience. He experiences the loop and reflectors as actual, real, though insubstantial phenomena.</p>	<p>Is this is post hoc reflection? Maybe this articulation, a little, but I know what he means about having the sense of realness and insubstantiality at the same time.</p> <p>The relationship between the energy and the blockages is very clear to him, very evident.</p>
<p>MU 26</p> <p>Pleck actually <i>felt</i> [a circling roughly the height and depth of his torso] and he <i>saw</i> through the edges of [the mirrors].</p>	<p>Pleck's experience of the energy moving, circling and the limiting reflectors was literal and introceptively palpable, as well as</p>	<p>Actual feeling and seeing... so important that I understand this is visible and palpable.</p>

	visible.	
<p>MU 27</p> <p>[Now, Pleck calls this a felt image.] Then, he feels it differently from a disembodied image. This is like “whoa!” [arresting? Impressive? Stupefying?]. <i>At other times, Pleck has imagined or visualized stuff or remembered a theory that directs his felt sensing, but what he feels here is different. Anna?</i> He’s sitting there and he notices there’s this, and there’s this, and all of a sudden it lights up.</p>	<p>Pleck is surprised, perhaps shocked, at the way the image and feeling of the energy loop spontaneously appears. He has not imagined it, visualized it, or remembered it as a theory. Rather, he is absorbed in attending to the specific sensations of tightness, and then suddenly it lights up.</p>	<p>This MU is an effort to describe how what he experienced is different from other kinds of mental images. See reflexive note 2/5</p> <p>Self/other?</p>
<p>MU 29</p> <p>Pleck feels the experience as movement, with a stable pattern.</p>	<p>Pleck feels the energy loop as movement with a stable pattern.</p>	
<p>MU 28</p> <p>Pleck can <i>feel</i> and <i>see</i> the [energy loop and mirror/reflectors] in some level that he would draw if he were an artist. <i>It was something else—if he cut those little cords and pulled the wires out and [touched them together he would be shocked Anna?]</i> He can actually feel [the circulation]. It is a felt experience of the way that [the blocks/mirrors/reflectors] are.</p>	<p>Pleck’s can feel and see the energy loop and reflectors so concretely that he feels he could make it real to another, if he had the skills to depict it. It was something different from his usual experiences—he can actually feel the circulation of energy the way he can feel the reflectors associated with the areas that began as tight.</p>	<p>The energy felt so real and active—not just a picture of energy, but the real thing. If he could have cut the little cords and pulled the wires out, it would have a physical impact on him, just like ordinary energy. See comment in 2/5 notes</p> <p>But, don’t artists routinely depict things they imagined? He seems to be invoking pictorial representation as evidence of the concrete, stable quality of the experience—it was not a fleeting image or fantasy but something that revealed itself over time and with which he had a relationship of exploration and limitation.</p>
<p>MU 11</p> <p>So Pleck feels that and it feels like they [light/energy/laser and reflectors] are there and he notices a tinkering tendency to want to mess with all these things. He [what verb can I use?? Thinks?] Well, if he just gets rid of this block [by his pelvis], he would open up to the deep unconscious! If he opens up this block [by his head] he would open up into this kind of</p>	<p>The whole energetic process maintains a sense of stability so that Pleck can continue to observe it. AS he does so, he becomes aware of a familiar</p>	<p>“Tinkering tendency” is so great. What am I gaining or losing by putting my own language to it? His words carry important connotations that are not immediately evident, but which I am trying to unpack psychologically, in</p>

<p>wonderful [something]. Wow! It felt really strange.</p>	<p>inclination to explore the phenomenon in the service of satisfying his (idle?) curiosity. Specifically, he is drawn to the idea of altering the blocks from which he was prohibited from going beyond, feeling convinced that doing so would produce interesting and profound experiences for him.</p>	<p>order to reveal something possible more general in his account that his wonderful language here might actually conceal. There is a connotation of curiosity, meddling, pettiness, that is supported by his use of “messaging”. “Tinkering” is not generally productive, but arises from an abundance of curiosity about how things work and perhaps wanting to shape or impact how things work, presumably for the better.</p>
<p>MU 12 Pleck feels that if any of these things [reflectors] got moved a little bit, they would actually change the energetic personality. He realizes that if he could get in there and just tilt this one a little bit then he’d be this kind of person, but if he tilts it this way then he’d be this kind of person, if he tilts this mirror, he’d be this kind of person. He finds it really interesting!</p>	<p>Pleck realizes that he could act on the system he is witnessing in small ways and thereby easily and quickly produce profound and fundamental changes to his own personality. He is very interested in this possibility.</p>	<p>Realizes--this is an insight word-he takes this to be literally true.</p>
<p>MU 30 Pleck has a place in him that says, “I think I’d like to mess with this. Let me turn the mirror up and see what happens.”</p>	<p>Pleck feels a strong curiosity and the desire to act on the system and see what happens.</p>	
<p>MU 31 Then Pleck has a place that says, “Whoa, let’s just wait and check.” This is all him. Caution, or something. And then there is this kind of checking and he’s not even sure what kind of checking it is. It’s like “<i>maybe</i> he should <i>check</i> ...” That’s all <i>him</i>. That part was him.</p>	<p>In response to the desire to manipulate the loop, Pleck notices a contrary, cautionary urge to wait and check whether such interference is a good idea.</p>	
<p>MU 32 Pleck waits and checks [about whether he can/should mess]. There is a sense of rightness [about checking.]</p>	<p>Pleck waits and senses how he feels about the idea of messing. He feels some relief or assurance in response to his decision to check.</p>	

<p>MU 13</p> <p>Pleck sits with that for a little bit and he starts thinking about doing that [tilting]. He is fascinated to get these insights about the nature of some kind of energy level of being. And then there is a really strong sense of “Don’t mess with this! This is like doing plastic surgery.” He realizes, “Yes, in my position I could do plastic surgery I could make somebody’s nose better. I could just tweak the personality and you’ll be a little nicer, you could be a little more this, or you could do a little more--” It feels like [tilting the mirrors] was doing plastic surgery. It feels like it is messing in a way. It feels like it is a messing with. Pleck feels a sense that he often does [around his abdomen] that [says?] something like, “Uh, uh. You’re not supposed to mess with this. This is like tinkering with god stuff or something. That’s not what you’re supposed to use this for.”</p>	<p>Pleck feels fascinated to receive these insights about what appears to be the nature of some kind of energy level of being. He has a strong sense of the directive not to mess with it, that doing so would be like a cosmetic procedure of questionable value and possible risks. He feels that tilting the mirrors feels like messing— unwise interference. He has a familiar sense of admonition that instructs him that he is not supposed to mess with the energy loop, and that doing so is “god stuff, or overstepping his bounds. He feel sthat such interference is not what he is supposed to use the experience for.</p>	<p>Pleck is careful to note that he respects plastic surgeons and that he calls them in his work, but my sense is that there he’s referring to reconstructive plastic surgery. When he uses plastic surgery as an analogy for tinkering, I think he is keying into the pettier connotations of the practice, for vanity or curiosity. An interference that is not necessarily wiser or better than the current or natural state</p> <p>There is an analogue between what he can but does not do in his ordinary job, and the temptation here.</p>
<p>MU 33</p> <p>[In response to his checking] Pleck [perceives] a voice that it different from the guidance voice. It is kind of almost like a ten commandments voice. He doesn’t mean a deep [sounding]— he doesn’t mean Charlton Heston. He feels like it [messing] is a scriptural violation. He actually [thinks] “I think I’m messing with something.” He hesitates because it’s [messing] is almost like a scriptural injunction. It is like “Whoa!” It isn’t quite like “Don’t eat the apple!” It isn’t quite that strong but it is just like, “Oh, don’t mess with this. This is a waste of your life; that’s not why you’re here.”</p>	<p>In response to Pleck’s checking about messing, the internal voice he perceives is different from the more familiar guidance voice. It is not the sound of the voice that is different, but that it appears as a more definitive authority; the intuited consequences of heeding or not heeding the voice are partly what</p>	<p>I am really relying on my own bodily sense of rightness when trying to articulate how the voices differ.</p> <p>There is something about the relational quality of the voices that differ, and I’m remembering from the tapes. The guidance voice as he described it was more rote, routine: do this, don’t do this, this is what the dream means. Helpful, directive but not particularly forceful. The sense I got about the 10 commandments voice is that it really pulled him up short.</p>

	shape its difference. HE is surprised and impressed by the intensity of the voice.	The tarrying on scriptural injunction gets to this.
MU 34 Pleck [it's like] "You're not here to be—yeah, you can do plastic surgery, yeah you can get rich, you can open up your shingle. I'm sure you'd be really popular. You'd be really wealthy. People would be treating you.. yeah, great. Go do it." It feels like it is crossing some code, rather than some—and there's a felt sense of the "No" but that's a different felt sense...	Pleck continues to attend to the felt response to his inclination to mess. He experiences the response as being directed at him, seeming to call him out on the basis for his temptation to mess. He feels convinced that he could make concrete monetary and social gains, at the cost of violating a principle or code.	I am pretty sure, based on the overall dialogical nature of his representation, that he experienced these quoted pieces as contrasting perspectives arising in him in reaction to the inclinations of what he seems to identify as his subjectivity.
MU 35 Pleck continues to feel like he was sposed to mess with it. He [feels] "Oh, my God!" What a neat thing to—what a neat field to play in...	Pleck continues to feel drawn to messing with the energy cycle. He feels exhilarated with the possibilities, and a sense of playfulness about it.	
MU 36 Pleck wants to mess with it. He [feels] just like, "Wow!" [It is as if] somebody gave him a new toy; he wants to play with it.	Pleck feels about messing with the energy cycle the way he might if someone just gave him a new toy. He is excited, surprised, and eager to move from observing to interacting and exploring the energy loop.	Ah—that feels really right and important—the inclination he has to "mess" is about acting, not just looking. There is a "look but don't touch" quality to this whole experience, and the toy metaphor is really sweet and beautiful. Also a little sad/cruel, if you think of giving someone a toy and then refusing to let them play. AH—unless it is only perceived as a toy—like a child receiving something of great value and delicacy which is meant to be admired, but not played with. Self-other—who is giving?
MU 37 Pleck [experiences a response] that isn't like, "No!" but is like, "That's not really what you're here for."	Pleck receives a response that is directive but not	So much of these trans seem to be trying to articulate my understanding of the feeling

	<p>prohibitive; he is being guided according to what is best for him. He is getting the message that he <i>could</i> mess, but he is strongly cautioned against it; the quality of the voice is not like an authoritarian slapping his hand, but rather like a guide using induction and still leaving him choice.</p>	<p>tone of what came up for him in a process that is constituted of shifts in perspective, desire, and understanding, so much of which is happening in silent dialogue!!</p>
<p>MU 14 Pleck is fascinated by this whole experience. He asks into the space around his abdomen,</p>	<p>Pleck continues to feel fascination about the energy loop he has seen, as well as his urges to mess with it and the responses to that urge. He asks into the felt space around his abdomen “Why are you showing me this then? Why are you showing me this if I’m not supposed to do anything about it?”</p>	<p>Again, this is a good piece of evidence that he experienced this as a silent dialogue. He might even have said this aloud—go back to original and see if there is any hint of that.</p>
<p>MU 38 Pleck just kinda stopped for a little but and then after a while he’s looking at this [stable pattern of movement, reflectors, mirrors], he’s seeing this. It’s like he’s watching this thing [and it’s as if he asks] “Well, why’d you show me? Seriously, why did you show me this?”</p>	<p>repeat</p>	
<p>MU 15 Pleck gets quiet and has a very, very sweet kind of felt response. The response is “You always wanted to know this. Now you know. Be happy.” It says “no, you’re not sposed to mess with it—you wanna know how life works, this is a piece of it. Enjoy.” It says, “Don’t mess with it!” Pleck reaction is “Ok!” And that is it.</p>	<p>Pleck gets quiet, calms down from the excitement and anticipation that accompanied the urge to mess. He receives a clear answer to his question: “You always wanted to know this. Now you know. Be</p>	<p>I think the calming down can be implied by how many wows and whoas and all that while he was being tempted to mess. Something happens that calms down some of that excitement when he asks the question why. He becomes receptive for an answer? What is sweet? Gentle? Kind?</p>

	<p>happy.” “no, you’re not sposed to mess with it—you wanna know how life works, this is a piece of it. Enjoy.” This answer comes with a very sweet feeling tone. Pleck is satisfied by this answer and accepts it as final.</p>	
<p>MU 39 Pleck[receives/thinks/feels] that kind of thing where it is like, “Y’know, because you always wanted to know, you know? Now you know. Be happy!” It is like this, “You kind of have a deeper appreciation for something about how life works” and that is it. That has this other place [around the abdomen]</p>	<p>repeat</p>	
<p>MU 40 <i>Pleck realizes [in the interview] that there is a quality to the response [because you wanted to know] that he has not sensed into. He tries to do this while being interviewed. He always just says, “That’s my voice of guidance.” A2 IT’s really sweet, always really sweet, but it’s soft. It has a certain quality that he can best describe as “All’s well in the universe?”. It has that quality to it. It’s not just some neat voice. The ten commandments voice is like, “Don’t do it. It’s bad. You’ll cause trouble.” This is a different quality.</i></p>	<p>The response Pleck gets in response to his question has a feeling tone that is sweet, soft, and reassuring: “all’s well in the universe.”</p>	<p>I think that the quality of this voice is important in helping him have closure and accept that he will not mess with the energy loop. All’s well in the universe= everything is ok just the way it is. Feeling this, maybe it was easier to let go of the urge to try and improve upon things.</p>
<p>MU 17 So he does not explore how to tinker with the human energy field.</p>	<p>Pleck accepts the experience without tinker with what was revealed to him.</p>	
<p>MU 16 Pleck feels a kind of flush like when he sees something about how life works. He really likes getting “Oh, that’s how this works, that’s how this works...” and it is just thrilling for a while.</p>	<p>Pleck is thrilled by the insight that came to him in this session. He continues to enjoy the thrilled feeling for sometime after the session.</p>	
<p>MU 41 Pleck feels really thrilled. It is fascinating. It is like, Oh my god, wow, that’s really neat. <i>And</i>, there’s something more. In other words, knowing that opens something for him. He’s not sure what it is; it’s maybe an appreciation that</p>	<p>In addition to feeling thrilled, Pleck is aware that something is different for him</p>	

<p>we're like this and his reflector might be this way [holds hand in reflector position] and [the interviewer's] reflector might be this way [tilts hand] and talk about "There but for the grace of God go I, right?" If the reflector just tilted two degrees then he woulda been... y'know, but instead it's like this.</p>	<p>after having experienced what came in that session. He is not sure what has changed, but he feels appreciation for the way small differences in how those reflectors are tilted have profound results for who each person is. HE is sensitive to the small margins that separate who he is from being someone very different or more unfortunate.</p>	
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A 4.2 Participant Two: Anna

Translation to third person	Translation to psychological meaning	Notes
<p>MU 1 It was when she was in the Changes group, so it was not a person who she had Focused with a lot before and she thinks it was a person who said something about how he often got things to respond here; his body would say things. And she can't remember exactly whether maybe she was Focusing with him, or whether she had heard from this person who was a member. But it wasn't like she was trying to do anything in that regard, but she does feel like he kind of gave her a certain kind of permission, because she does love movement. She thought, "Oh! Movement is another venue through which Focusing can come!"</p>	<p>Anna had learned from someone in a group of focusers that he sometimes had responses in the form of body movements. Although she did not intend to seek a similar experience for herself, she was surprised and excited to think that movement was another venue through which Focusing could occur.</p>	
<p>MU 2 But she wasn't <i>intending</i> to do anything about it. She was just going in to do her Focusing turn. And so in her Focusing turn—she doesn't remember what the issue she was working on was—but she was exploring something and what came—and it apparently felt kind of...disconnected, like she didn't know what the meaning of it was. But there was something about just wanting to go like <i>this</i> [lifts shoulders, then arms up from her body so that they are about half way between her waist and shoulders. As she lowers both arms, she lifts her palms up and pushes out away from her body. All of this is done in a fluid, expressive motion, like a dance move, but without feeling choreographed]... just wanting to go like this. It's like, ok, she's just feeling like she needs to [repeats]... [sigh] yeah... [sigh]</p>	<p>Anna cannot remember specifically what she was exploring, but what came seemed disconnected from what she was exploring. She felt a strong, spontaneous inclination to make a very particular body movement, which she did even though it did not make sense to her. She repeated the movement several times, and felt a sense of release/relief.</p>	<p>Release as evidenced by sigh, yeah.</p>

<p>MU3 And so she did it a couple of times and <i>after</i> doing it, she had this insight that this <i>connects</i> to the issue that she’s working with! When it first came, it was just her body’s wanting to do this. That feels good. And now she’s wanting to do this... and then it was like,... “ohhhhh! Maybe <i>this</i> is what people mean by boundaries!”</p>	<p>After these repetitions, she was suddenly aware that the motion was related to the general issue she was working with.</p>	
<p>MU 4 That was a word that had <i>always</i> mystified and puzzled her. It was like, “there is some abstract line that should be drawn and how do you know where it should be drawn and where is it supposed to be drawn?” And someplace inside her panicked about, “Well she has no clue about this!” and all of a sudden it was like she got in this instant that it’s like, Oh! This is this is not some abstract, disconnected thing!</p>	<p>An idea which previously had aroused anxiety in her (because of its perceived weight combined with its total obscurity in reference to her own life) suddenly took on a deep and personal relevance.</p>	<p>Mystified—struck by mystery, closed off from knowing Look for this theme: understanding moving from surface or conceptual, to deeply personal, felt understanding.</p>
<p>MU 5 This is something to do with how she’s feeling inside, how much space she is wanting and needing, and there was even this part of the gesture that had come, and sometimes it’s <i>here</i> [elbows bend to bring hands, palm out, drawn closer to her body], and sometimes it’s <i>here</i> [straightens arms and pushes palms out further] and it’s kind of connected to her! And it’s just a really amazing... thing!</p>	<p>Anna realized that the gesture she had been moved to make was a spontaneous description of the difficult concept, as well as an enactment of a variety of ways she could relate to it, use it, and of the central place of her own agency in relating to the idea. She felt amazed at this insight and how it came to her.</p>	<p>I think she means that the whole situation is an amazing thing—the motion, how it relates to the insight.</p>
<p>MU 6 The person she was with wasn’t trying to teach her about boundaries, or wasn’t saying anything about boundaries. They were like, totally just listening. She wasn’t in the situation... she wishes she could remember what the context of the Focusing session was—but it wasn’t like there was one part of her that was thinking, “Well, where should her boun—“ It’s like the word was not even... the word was not in her consciousness. Then when the movement came she didn’t even think that the movement had anything to do with the thing she</p>	<p>The explicit context of Anna’s Focusing had nothing to do with boundaries. Although she cannot remember what the context of the session was, she was not working with the idea of boundaries. The word was not in her consciousness. When the movement came, she could not make a connection between what she had been exploring and that movement.</p>	<p>It’s important to understand what she remembers happening in that session that I understand that “boundaries” was not something she was focusing on or otherwise being discussed. The intense meaningfulness of this account has largely to do with the way the movement came, without thinking or planning, of its own accord—and THEN, only after she allowed it to be there, explored it, felt it, did the concept of boundaries flash to her, and she found the spontaneous movement to perfectly describe</p>

<p>was talking about. <i>It was just really memorable for her A2.</i></p>		<p>what she really needed and wanted and had not been able to understand for so long.</p>
<p>MU 7 She thought she didn't know what this, but she wanted to just feel it. She just feel like, "Ah!" She just wanted to do the movement, and then she just kind of wanted to explore... and it was <i>just movement</i>, it had no conceptual thing to it, until it was out there, and then it was just like, "Ok, how does that feel?" " Well, that feels good" She wondered what that was; it probably doesn't have anything to do with her thing, but-- <i>In fact, she thinks she probably even gave herself permission to not have anything to do with whatever A2.</i> "Well, it doesn't have anything to do with, but it was good to do it!"</p>	<p>Anna felt a sense of satisfaction and pleasure in repeating the movement, paying full attention to what it felt like to make the movement, without thinking about what it might mean.</p>	
<p>MU 8 And then it was in the next moment there was like "Oh! Wait a second! Maybe this does have something with the issue she was talking about!"</p>	<p>Then it occurred to her after she was simply enjoying that the movement WAS connected after all to the issue she'd been working with.</p>	
<p>MU 9 She processes very quickly, so she'll get a sensation and then she'll see the connection right afterwards. It was [really odd], because there was a little bit of a time line between what came and then the meaning of it. It's like that sense of like a larger intelligence that has nothing to do—not nothing to do, but—very little to do with our conscious mind and our control and our intention.</p>	<p>The time lapse between the movement that came to her and its revealed meaning contributed to her feeling that the movement came from an intelligence that has very little to do with her conscious mind, control, and intention.</p>	<p>Did she experience that then, or is this reflection, a way of making sense of her sense of amazement which might not have had any words at the time?</p>
<p>MU 10 ... sometimes there can be a pretty sizeable display or something and <i>that</i> felt like to her like a pretty sizeable display of... She doesn't know-- that other thing that ...can't put any words to it—but deep wisdom, or larger knowing that's outside of what's—cuz she didn't have a clue of what this was. It was</p>	<p>What came in this session—the gesture and the suddenly revealed meaning for her—was a significant example of an experience that is hard to give words to, but that feels very clearly like it is coming from outside her; it's wisdom or larger knowing that is outside</p>	

really clear that it was coming to her from outside. It wasn't even like she was saying, "well, Maybe she needs to have more boundaries in here and what would that feel like?"	of what she could have planned, anticipated, or looked for intentionally.	
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A4.3 Participant Three: Yolanda

Translation to third person	Translation to psychological meaning	Notes
<p>MU 1 The one that stays with her is her very first session.</p>	<p>The session she is going to talk about made an impression that has lasted.</p>	
<p>MU 2 It was during a writing retreat, and she was Focusing with very experienced trainers. She felt like she was in good hands.</p>	<p>She was in a situation that allowed her to devote her attention to a writing project, while receiving ample support from people whose skills she trusted.</p>	
<p>MU 3 It was powerful because she was in the process of writing a memoir which she was just in the beginning stages—she doesn't know if she knew that's what she was working on at that point. But she was writing about childhood, from childhood memories.</p>	<p>Part of the power of the session came from what she was working on at the time. She was writing about her childhood, from childhood memories.</p>	
<p>MU 4 And in this Focusing session, as in many Focusing sessions, her Focusing responses were physical but they were also image based. She gets a lot of images. So she had in this process a sense that there was a small child in her, and I was as if she could envision this small child inhabiting her body. The child was down in her stomach, and that place where emotions live.</p>	<p>In this Focusing session (and in general) her experiences have a physical component, but they are primarily image based. This session brought the sense and image of a small child in her. She could imagine this small child living inside her body, in particular the space felt around the stomach, and areas around there where she experiences her emotions.</p>	<p>I got the sense when she was talking, and from her comment later on in A2 about wondering if she is doing it wrong because she gets so many images, that the physical aspect was much less key for her. I had the sense that she was mentioning the physical in the sense that of course she must have physical responses, everyone does, but what's important for HER are the images that come.</p>
<p>MU 5 It was powerful for her to communicate with that small child and let her know that she was there, let her know I was hearing what her experience was, what her suffering was. And she remembered feeling comforted. Feeling the pain of a small child that suffers but also comforted by</p>	<p>Yolanda was deeply moved by her discovery that she could communicate with this small child and let her know that she was not alone, to acknowledge the child's experiences and suffering. Yolanda felt comforted by her relating to this child. She felt both the pain as it was experienced by</p>	<p>Powerful... changing? Impacting? Impressing? Profound.</p>

<p>knowing I could comfort her.</p>	<p>the small child, and comforted by her ability to extend attention, warmth, understanding, and care to the child.</p>	
<p>MU 7 She remembers saying at the end of her session that it felt more powerful than any therapy she'd had at until that time. The more traditional therapeutic process wasn't as immediate and did not feel as direct. In this Focusing session and in others since, she just got to the heart of what the issue was or what it was that she was feeling, what the core emotion was there. It cut through the verbal processes that one engages in in a more typical therapeutic session.</p>	<p>Yolanda found her first session more profoundly moving and impacting than any previous therapy she'd experienced. Her session was more immediate in its results, and accessed what was emotionally important to her very directly. In this and subsequent sessions, Yolanda was able to discover the emotional center of whatever issue she was dealing with. It interrupted and moved beyond the verbal processes that kept her relating on a more surface level.</p>	
<p>MU 10 She knows that there was a shift at the end of session. She felt like she felt that shift during the session of feeling that sense of compassion or acknowledgement of the small child part of her. And that stayed with her certainly.</p> <p>MU 11 She accessed a different kind of knowing about part of her emotional life that she hadn't accessed before. She thinks that immediately after that first session, although she felt sort of tender and raw and sad, probably because it brought up a lot of feeling, she also felt like she had a way of addressing it and it was relieving and sweet.</p>	<p>During this session, Yolanda discovered a capacity to acknowledge and feel compassion for her own experiences of what it was and is like to be a small child, to feel like a small child. That capacity has stayed with her.</p> <p>Yolanda discovered a different way to connect with parts of her emotional experience that had been unavailable to her before. This permitted her to feel herself and her pain in ways that she hadn't before, and she was left feeling sensitive and vulnerable and sad. At the same time, she also felt relief and sweetness at her new ability to gently regard and attend to what she felt.</p>	
<p>MU 13 One [image of] a gesture from that first session was her reaching out to walk on a road with her, holding her hand.</p>	<p>At some point in the session, Yolanda had an image of herself reaching out to hold the hand of the small child as they walked together down a road.</p>	
<p>MU 18 She felt like she could let go of analysis, she could let go of trying to figure something out because</p>	<p>In the session she felt she could be with her experiences effortlessly, without analyzing</p>	<p>Pause on let go—release? Freed? Give up? Surrender? Stop grasping?</p>

<p>that's always her tendency. And there was something more physical and immediate and she was embodying it in some way. And so it felt more real, it felt more authentic than an explication or a more cerebral intellectual interpretation of what her experience had been or was.</p>	<p>them. She was aware of a physicality and immediacy in her experiences that felt more vivid and genuine than when she attended instead to her experiences through the mediation of interpretation and explanation.</p>	<p>Let go of trying. Effortless.</p>
<p>MU 19 It felt as if she was still having that experience of that small child. That was her experience... she [small child] was Yolanda, and she became the vehicle to express whatever Yolanda was feeling at that time, as if she was speaking through her [the small child's] voice or from her, from her place as opposed to seeing it at a distance.</p>	<p>Yolanda experienced the child's point of view as her own. The child was Yolanda, and lived as a child would whatever Yolanda was feeling. The experiences of the child were Yolanda's own experiences expressed through the child's voice. The relationship of identity brought Yolanda intimately close to her own experiences as voiced by the child.</p>	<p>This is a tough one. I think she means that the child spoke her own past and current experiences in a child's voice, which is also how Yolanda experienced them. I get the sense that hearing her own experiences in a child's voice emphasized for Yolanda the innocence, vulnerability, etc. involved in her own pain, and allowed her to react with compassion, and to experience them immediately rather than through intellectualization...</p>
<p>MU 20 The small child was only part of all that Yolanda experienced. She was only part of Yolanda, and so Yolanda was able to see other parts of herself that could step in and reach out to her and care for her.</p>	<p>For Yolanda, the small child was her, but Yolanda was at the same time aware of and able to bring to mind experiences, roles, perspectives from which she was able to offer support to herself as a child.</p>	
<p>MU 29 It was the first time that she was able to articulate or give form to a feeling that she's had that... it gave her a form for a kind of strength that she knew she had in periods of time when she's been suffering about one thing or another. She's known that she's been able to get in touch with an inner strength and that session really tapped into that for her. It gave her a form for that because she was able to be the suffering child but she was also able to be the one reaching out the comfort. Then that grounded her in a strength that she knew on some level she had, but it gave her a more specific gesture or physical and visual reality to attach to.</p> <p>MU 30</p>	<p>The session helped her give explicit form to what had before been a unformed inner strength. Before the session, she knew she had inner strength because of her experience of it when she was suffering. By discovering the image of herself as a suffering child, she also discovered herself as an agent of strength. Rather than the strength having a more vague, perhaps passive quality, she discovered in giving it form that it could actively reach out to give comfort. In this way, her strength became more real, something that she could relate to.</p>	<p>What's interesting here is it seems like part of what gave form for the strength was that the suffering also got a form. This is implied at best, but it seems that's important. The small child calls forth a particular kind of care for her; the strength is shaped by what it's called to do, here, responding with a particular kind of comforting.</p> <p>It's like the strength changed from something that was there, formless, to something that was an agent and proactive. She did not have to rely on her inner strength to keep her together when she was suffering, but it could be something that came out to meet and hold her (even if the need was less dire?)</p>

<p>Before she started Focusing she knew that she could turn to the natural world—for example if she was upset about something, that she could go for a walk in the woods and feel everything was fine or would be fine because... she had some connection with nature, with Being that was profound and really grounding and that gave her strength. In the Focusing session it was similar—that same kind of feeling. There was a strength there that she hadn't really articulated but this was more a concrete manifestation of that.</p>	<p>In the Focusing session, her strength took on a concrete form that allowed her to relate to it and rely on it. Just as she trusted her connection to the natural world as a tangible source of strength, giving form to her own strength allowed her to develop a similar kind of relationship.</p>	
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A4.4 Participant Four: Sophie

<p>Translation to third person</p>	<p>Translation to psychological meaning</p>	<p>Notes</p>
<p>MU 1 Well, first of all, what it was like to be me generally—wake up with a dream it’s like... “Nyehehhh...” there’s nothing here, you know. (laughs) “Why don’t I have interesting dreams? Why did I have a dream about throwing up? Why don’t I have—“ y’know like-</p>	<p>Upon awaking, Sophie recalls her dream and regards the remembered content as meaningless. She feels disappointment about the apparent banality of her dreams in general, and wishes for dreams with more meaningful content.</p>	
<p>MU 15 And then I was walking on the way to the therapists cause I see her at nine oclock in the morning... So I was on my way there and I was thinking, “Well, what was that dream about? Why was K there? And then I remembered the last conversation that I had with her...[lengthy relation of conversation and significances apropos to the dream]</p>	<p>After a short interval, she returns to musing about her dream, asking herself questions about specific aspects of the dream. In response to these questions, memories arise of real-life interactions with individuals in the dream. As she remembers, she recognizes connections between life and the dream, and perceives a symbolic expression in the dream pertaining to real life events.</p>	
<p>MU 19 And so I thought, “Wow!” and this is just like what Gene said—“Wow! I know what that dream was about!</p>	<p>Sophie feels surprised and excited at her sudden comprehension of the dream’s sense and meaningfulness.</p>	
<p>MU 51 And I and I got that feeling about, “Oh!!!” And I remembered Gene had just said, “OHHH! I know what this dream is about!” I started feeling so happy like “Wow!” y’know, i... i...’m so happy that I know about this two stage thing because I got this- I don’t have to stop right th— with the thing like “Oh! It had something to do with th—with K being pregnant and me being pregnant and then I ... and then I got—ok so then I was walking along and I and i said, I don’t have to stop here.</p>	<p>Following directly her sense of comprehension is recognition of that comprehension as a response described in a dream workshop. She remembers learning, and believes, that her response indicates a <i>first</i> stage of understanding in her dream, and that there is more for her to understand. She feels happy that she learned to see her comprehension as only the first stage, so that she knows she can find more in the dream.</p>	

<p>MU 52</p> <p>But this...this is so interesting because he was just talking about this last night and I can see that there's. I see that there's—y'know and I went to the part about the baby, and should I use the baby as an ally and that's definitely not! No, no, no, no—that's not where to go!</p>	<p>Sophie's interest becomes greater as she appreciates the precise match between the instruction she has just learned and what is unfolding in her own experience. She attempts to precisely follow another instruction in order to move deeper in to her dream, but feels powerful aversion when she tries to do so and prioritizes her aversion over the instruction.</p>	
<p>MU 53</p> <p>And then i- -and then I got the good feeling about the crowd and the being in the street and the young people participating and it was like ahhh! and so I was – I was like feeling, “wow, this is neat!”</p>	<p>She lets go without hesitation of trying to follow the exact instruction, and instead follows its general idea. She recalls a very positive feeling in the dream and brings it to mind and feeling. Emphasizing positive mood as background/support of exploration.</p>	
<p>MU 54</p> <p>And then I—and then I remembered this song... and I started crying on the way, um, and I didn't quite know... I just started thinking over and over again of this [artist--- Sosa] song... and I... um ... and I knew that –I just felt like—wow this just—this is my song. This dream is... is just telling me something about how I'm going to be given a baby.</p>	<p>Paying close attention to the details of associations that arise, especially ones with strong feeling tones.</p>	
<p>MU 59</p> <p>And um, I just said, “Y'know I think this dream is about—I just kept repeating the song and I actually stopped before I went out—I had my iphone and I stopped at this place where I know there's wife and I just looked up the words to it really, really quickly cause I wanted to see... I wanted to make sure that I understood the words... cause that is weird, you know, “[Quiesco la siesta ponerle la nina es el soledad]” if that's what she was saying. And um, cause I thought maybe I would work on that with the therapist and I wanted to... make sure that I</p>	<p>Sophie regards the dream, and now the song, as potential content to discuss in therapy and she wants to be sure she accurately understands the words. She is moved to tears by the song's portrayal of suffering, and the sweetness of its relief; she is reminded and feels her own suffering, as well as the incredible comfort that she feels.</p>	<p>Perhaps what is really key here is the need and the fulfillment of need, or the sad feeling, and the corresponding relief. This goes along with the importance of holding apparently contradictory positions simultaneously.</p>

<p>understood—yeah—that I understood the words—and so I'm kind of singing it to myself and I, I'm just crying because there's a certain loneliness that I have as...of being... cause I'm alone...</p> <p>MU 60 But, there's also this... oh, there's this incredible way that I feel accompanied by my friends in ___ that we're really working on something together.</p>	<p>Comfort, support of her friends emerges.</p>	
<p>MU 61 And so I was kind of like crying as I went up to the... y'know crying from being touched in my remembering this song. And all the times that I've heard it but I've never, I've never taken it in as relating to me and that's the way of the dreamness of it too because I thought, "Wow! Now that's a – that's a song that I can really identify with!" I never never thought of it, and then it just all came to me...[gets additional tissues]</p>	<p>Sophie is emotionally moved by her identification with the song, as well as by her experience of suddenly perceiving deep meaning where she had assumed there was none, both in the dream and the song.</p>	
<p>MU 62 So, um, then I went into the therapists' office I was really in this beautiful space about "Wow, y'know, there's something about this song and this child that [blows nose] there's something about this song and the child that has to do with this dream, too. And that's all i—that's as far as I got.</p>	<p>Sophie feels herself in a beautiful, emotionally open state in which she is aware of a heightened attunement to the significances of her dream and the song, though they are not all clear to her yet.</p>	
<p>MU 63 And so then i got up there and [blows nose] and uh... yeah,. And then she, y'know, and then she intervened and what she said, "Oh, obviously that's your inner critic" Well, I mean, the inner critic is a big deal in Focusing too so I... I thought, "Wow! Ok..."</p>	<p>As she is telling a supportive listener about her dream, her listener offers an unsolicited interpretation, which Sophie accepts.</p>	

<p>MU 64 But I didn't—it was like...it was like I didn't have to go in—I didn't have to stop her, I didn't have to say, well, "Don't intervene in my process" because—that's another thing that gene says, too, like, "Oh, you see the inner critic and then you keep walking you walk past that and you go somewhere else" And I thought, "Oh, ok. Great! That—that makes sense. I don't have to figure out who that was—that was the inner critic. It's obvious! Ok, so fine.</p>	<p>Whereas Sophie might otherwise have experienced such an intervention as intrusive otherwise, the particular interpretation allows her to easily clarify part of her dream, allowing her to attend to the more uncertain parts. Sophie trusts her own process and is not looking for feedback or intervention.</p>	
<p>MU 65 So, I'll move on to the more interesting part which is what was my friend the doctor doing there?"</p>	<p>Sophie brings her focus to the person in the dream whose presence she least understands.</p>	
<p>MU 66 ... And... And this therapist, I mean we love to laugh and so she was—I say things and she just bursts into laughter (bursts into laughter) [laughs]</p> <p>MU 67 but I was like saying that the the y'know that KN was like the buddy of the landlord... anyway, she's very, she's very fun—and uhm, so...well, I was able then to really get in touch—and it was just the genius of the dream! Like, how would it know that i—y'know that I did all these searches on line and seen—I'd gone to the people's houses and seen all their weird goats and chickens and... and y'know that this one person in my life, KN kind of symbolizes this</p>	<p>Throughout her focusing, Sophie feels supported in her exploration by the playful and enjoyable relationship that she and her listener have previously established.</p> <p>(back ground context—decided not to translate)</p>	<p>It becomes very difficult to tease out her experiencing of Focusing as she is relating it, to the recapitulation of narratives that convey the specific symbolic meaning of the dream. Although I often have a hard time articulating to myself why I do not want the latter in this analysis (because it is a highly discursive reflective assessment, rather than a description of a prereflective experience...) I feel my reading and attempting to translate veer off into a big mud ditch when I hit these portions... I am trying to square my sense that all that detail was important for understanding what Focusing means to her, with my sense that, for this project, or at least for this part of the analysis, it actually obscures what Focusing</p>

		<p>means for her. On the one hand, through her elaborate storying in between telling me about moments in the Focusing itself, I was able to glimpse the magnitude of the importance of the shift in her life; it is an example of the many threads of experience being gathered in an image, an emotional interaction, whether dreamed or imagined in a more conventional Focusing session. On the other hand, too many particularities pull attention away from the phenomena as she experienced it (with all of this background unfolding for her much more quickly than she can relay it) into a symbolic narrative space that is more removed from her prereflective lived experience.</p>
<p>MU 68 and also—I mean I remember being in a meeting with him once too where he’s talking about the revolution like—and that’s for him the revolution, is the giving them lamas and animals to the people and and that’s what excited people y’know and- and you know so it’s like he—just getting into what he symbolized through my felt sense and and and gene’s—and my sort of ignoring him and saying “well, what the hell’s he doing there?” y’know gene’s saying, well, ask: what , y’know, what are these people doing here?</p> <p>S: Did you actually ask that of yourself, while you were--?</p> <p>MU 69 Sophie: Oh yeah. Yeah, why is he there?</p>	<p>As she wonders about the presence of a dream figure, Sophie experiences a variety of memories of her past interactions with him. These gather into general themes that express who he is for her, who he is as a symbol. She inquires of herself what he is doing in this dream.</p>	
<p>MU 70 And then I went into the felt sense of it which is [voice dragging] “ohhhh, I’m alone, there’s no place for me here</p>	<p>Sophie attends to the somatic sensations that arise in her body as she asked about the figure’s presence. She is aware of a characteristic feeling tone that she</p>	

<p>and I can't even speak and I have to kind of ask for the right to speak and then it kind of drops and then I don't know it just..." Just visibly depressed, out of place, y'know in the midst of very nice (mmhmm) wonderful people. It's just kind of... alone and this kind of wall between me and expressing... what's so exciting to me,</p>	<p>experiences around this figure—a slow, flattened, dulled sense of herself as not fitting in with his other friends, not having a way to offer what she has as valuable. She feels a barrier between herself and her expression of what is exciting to her.</p>	
<p>MU 71 and also frustrating boredom—just BOREDOM! With what they're talking about! (laughs!) [laughs!]</p>	<p>Emotional response takes on added complexity. Sophie feels frustrated and bored around this figure.</p>	
<p>MU 72 So it was—the felt sense took me immediately to that.... Kind of shut down part of myself that I actually had—have trouble with and need to learn about and have more confidence in. and here he was coming over to visit his buddy the inner critic and saying, "Hey, you know. Forget the vomit all over everything. The baby's gonna be so beautiful, amazing, and perfect! [laughs] (awww).</p>	<p>Recognizes the constellation of emotions as characteristic of a way she experiences herself in certain contexts, generally. The figure's meaning in her dream is revealed in light of the totality of the dream situation and relationships and the waking life to which it refers.</p>	
<p>MU 73 And and and so I just started getting just ebulliently happy—it was like "Wow!" y'know? This gives me something to work on- gives me something to notice of myself—like like Gene said and I get into that space where I feel like "Ohh, I can't talk about this" "Well, just pretend you're KN and start talking about it (laugh) [laugh]!!"</p>	<p>Sophie experiences an upsurge of great happiness as she realizes another possibility for how she could relate to herself and others. She realizes that the figure in her dream could stand as a role model for confidence.</p>	
<p>MU 74 I mean, I would never go—I would never go and just start talking about what I had for lunch so what about much more interesting for me to talk about something that really is interesting—of interest, y'know</p>	<p>Sophie realizes that even a modest emulation of the dream figure would be a significance challenge for her. She is aware that this is a part of herself that she really wants to develop.</p>	

<p>like? And so that's like a growing place for me.</p> <p>S: Yeah, so it brought you—I was gonna ask what happened afterward but you're kind of answering that. I mean would you say that that's a good answer to that question, "What happened afterward?"</p>		
<p>MU 75 Sophie: It gives me something to—the action step for me is to be aware of the part of me that gets shut down in expressing the things that are really of interest to me,</p> <p>MU 76 and to and to see and to just notice the persona of KN and how I could incorporate that more—like how I could just say, "Oh, yeah, I know it's hard for you to talk, ok, whatever—" and then, "just pretend you're KN and—cause he thinks the baby's gonna be beautiful (awhhh) and he's telling your inner critic the baby's gonna be beautiful so why not give it a try?" (Oh...that's lovely!) [laughs] Yeah!</p>	<p>Sophie becomes reflectively aware of what it feels like when she shuts down from expressing her interests, and she realizes that the dream figure could be an ally for her in challenging that tendency. She imagines encouraging herself, when she is shutting down, to try to get in touch with the confidence demonstrated by the figure, and feeling that, to try to live from it.</p>	

A4.5 Participant Five: Eliza

Translation to third person	Translation to psychological meaning	Notes
<p>MU 13 Now this was a more deliberate campaign (ah) to see if she could make some shifts in the place where she's stuck in her life.</p>	<p>Awareness of something stuck. Meeting this stuck place with another round of ongoing effort (campaign, previous sessions.) Perhaps subtle or implicit anticipation, expectation of some change or relief.</p>	
<p>MU 43 Eliza: She wanted to go in and sense what it was—and actually what she was looking for when she started the session was the parts that didn't want to do the website. She wanted to be with them and see what they would like to tell her.</p>	<p>She is familiar with/remembers with feelings in her that get between her and working on her project. She wants to take time here to be curious about those feelings. She wants to experience those feelings and invite them to communicate with her.</p>	
<p><i>At first she couldn't find the part that doesn't want to do it. She kept finding the manager parts that were puzzled about why she couldn't get going... all of the answers and theories that've surfaced earlier seem so easily rebutted. She can do the technology because she's done it for so many other people, she would only be advertising what she already does, she doesn't have to take on more work than she wants to..."</i></p>	<p>When Eliza brought her attention down into her viscera with the intention of finding the project-aversive feelings, they did not come forward. Instead, she encountered familiar thoughts and feelings about why getting started should not be a problem. Instead of perceiving the feelings of not-wanting-to start, she encounters responses to her hesitation, which she is familiar with from previous Focusing sessions. The litany of reasons for doing the site repeat in her awareness.</p>	<p>Puzzlement, frustration, reason?</p>
<p>MU 44 And to her surprise she couldn't find them! She was finding—because she'd done so much work on this already she wasn't finding the parts that didn't want to. Um so then she forgets how she moved from that place of realizing she was kind of fishing around inside... inviting the parts that didn't want to come on up! "Is any body home?" (laughs) [laughs]. And they weren't there.</p>	<p>Repeat; not translated</p>	
<p>MU 45 And then these voices that had all</p>	<p>She experiences the rebuttals and</p>	<p>What can disembodied mean</p>

<p>these rebuttals, all the different arguments that she's heard from them about what they are trying to protect her from, all those arguments sort of floated up. Ah, so she heard those answers, sort of disembodied.</p>	<p>arguments for working on the site as disembodied. They are floating up into her awareness from inner conversations she has had before.</p>	<p>here? I think it means she is not sensing them freshly; they are not connected to any live felt sense in her right now; they are just words that she's heard before. Empty thoughts without a lot of emotional anchoring.</p>
<p>MU 15 <i>"and so she couldn't find the part that didn't want to do the website. All of the parts that are trying to get her to go forward were like little bull dogs—" that's right—bull dogs or pugs "Straining at a leash. She can really feel the tugging in her body"</i> [pulls forward in chair as if straining forward]</p>	<p>As she attends to the different reasons coming up for going forward, the image of multiple bull dogs or pugs straining against their leash comes to her. She can feel in her chest and mid torso the sensations of pulling forward. She really feels a sense of tugging within her.</p>	<p>Seems like there is something missing here? And yet, these pulling forward thoughts become substantial? Sio what happened? The tugging is strongly felt—really.</p>
<p>MU 16 <i>"She can see the old brown leather leash and the hand—and the hand holding it"</i> [holds hand up with invisible leash closed in grasp] this was the image that was coming up, was this hand. A firm hand, and this leather leash and these bull dogs that were trying to move forward, but they were restrained... [does the pulling forward with her body.] You can see the body movement! [laughs]</p>	<p>Details emerge and strengthen the felt significance of the image. She notices that the leash is aged brown leather, and she notices one firm hand grasping the leash against the bull dogs' straining. She identifies/feels more closely the strong pulling forward.</p>	<p>This more broadly is a relationship of tension. Some single unmoving, commanding force is anchoring multiple smaller, eager, straining impulses forward. They are connected by something that is both worn and strong.</p>
<p>MU 47 But then—but then she did discover—she could feel the impetus [puts hand on chest and moves torso forward in chair] to do the website, and that was those dogs straining at the leash. She could sense that there was a lot of power a lot of pushing to do it, but they weren't going anywhere because they had this leash on them.</p>	<p>She is a bit surprised to find the feeling of forward motion when she'd been looking for the reluctance. This forward motion is strong—straining, pushing—but it is insignificant compared to the anchoring force.</p>	
<p>MU 17 Oh, this was actually a Focusing partner with a friend. ___ was actually partnering with her. Rarely does he make an intervention; usually he'll just mirror what she's saying but here</p>	<p>Usually this particular Focusing companion supports her by reflecting back to her what she is saying. On this occasion, he did something unusual and intervened, directing Eliza's attention to a specific part of</p>	

<p>he had this—made a little suggestion, which she found brilliant. He said, “Focus on the leash.” (Hmm)</p>	<p>the image.</p>	
<p>MU 48 And then but for ___’s intervention, “Why don’t you focus on the leash?” She’s not sure she would have gotten to the man.</p>	<p>Before this suggestion, Eliza had not felt particularly drawn to this part of the image (the leash), or its connection to the hand and implied presence she was not picturing.</p>	
<p>MU 49 Because she could see—she could feel the dogs, she could see the leash, y’know very graphically, and there was this hand. It was almost like a –like a picture where it was just the hand holding the leash and the dogs were in the picture. Clearly somebody was connected to the hand, um, and it’s when ___ said, “Why don’t you give some attention to the leash?” that the whole thing—person came up...</p>	<p>The image (of the dogs, the leash, the hand) appeared to her as if it was a picture, so that the hand was at the edge of the image. When Eliza attended to the leash (And the hand?) a person appeared to complete the picture.</p>	
<p>MU 18 So, she did that. And what she could get the sense of was there was this large male figure that was holding the leash, and he was very solidly planted. He wasn’t straining with the leash at all. But he wasn’t budging either. He was just holding the leash while the dogs were pulling against it.</p> <p>MU 19 “So she asked him” and this is an IFS [internal family systems] move—“she asked him to step outside where she could see him more,” and um, “then he was sitting, facing her, in a modern, clean line brown leather chair, and the dogs were relaxed next to him, no longer pulling on the leash. But the man continued to hold the leash. She asked him to show her what he was not wanting,”</p>	<p>Eliza got the impression of a large, immovable male figure effortlessly holding the leash as the opposing forces (the pugs) pulled against it in vain.</p> <p>Eliza did not have a clear image of the man, so she asked the image to move so she could see him better. The whole mental image suddenly altered. She saw him in a relaxed posture in a comfortable, sophisticated and stylish chair. The dogs were also relaxed beside him, no longer pulling forward against his strength, though he continued to keep them in his control by holding the leash. Eliza asked him to show her what he was opposing. Refusing? Holding back?</p>	<p>? Not wanting—again, these figures as power and force relationships seem important—little enthusiastic and shallowly powerful, almost comical beings compared to this incredible, established, patriarchal image.</p>
<p>51 That’s when she began to get a lot more content about what it was concerned about. [He sat in a] brown scandinavian, very modern</p>	<p>Repeat; not translated</p>	

<p>brown leather chair. Sitting like that with his legs crossed, holding the dogs. He's relaxed—holding the leash but the dogs kind of y'know sat down next to him and they were relaxed but he still had the leash. And then they talked about it!</p>		
<p>S: And when you talked about it, what was that like? I mean, were you imagining yourself there, sitting across or— how did that?</p> <p>MU 52 Eliza: No, I was in me, not not the picture of me. It wasn't like a movie (mmhmm).</p>	<p>Eliza did not see herself in the image; rather, she interacted with the man in the image as if he were before her. She was not in the “frame”.</p>	
<p>MU 21 <i>“So he was not wanting her to puff up artificially, making big claims regarding her services, and then have to struggle to meet. He also did not want her to have to do things that aren't fun, that feel like pressure and anxiety.”</i></p>	<p>The man in the image disclosed protective wishes for her. She heard from him the caution that inflated claims would result in difficulty and stress; she also heard (his) reluctance for her to take on projects that are not fun, but are pressured and anxiety provoking.</p>	<p>Struggle, pressure, anxiety. All such good words for those little dogs. I am struck again and again by the aptness of the image.</p>
<p>MU 22 <i>He's restraining opposing parts that are grandiose in their pretensions. He can sense those parts cover up and protect other parts that always feel that they're not enough.</i></p>	<p>Eliza recognizes that the man is restraining her conflicting impulses toward grandiosity (the dogs). She feels his attunement to the way those impulses conceal feelings that what is there is not enough on its own.</p>	<p>The part of her personified by the man?</p> <p>She is aware through his image? She is aware through the sense of him? She knows in his voice that?</p>
<p><i>Then toward the end of the session she got an image of an old store front like her husband's grandparents” had a “little cigar store in east boston. And it was as if she'd been doing business in this little shop for years but she hadn't yet hung out a sign telling the world what she does.”</i> That image is kind of like this old fashioned store.</p>	<p>...And image appears of an old-fashioned, well-used but anonymous family storefront. She feels a relationship to this image as if she had been doing business in this place (in this way) for a long time, without making her or her practices known to those who did not already know.</p>	<p>Perhaps we are skipping something? OR the skipping is a shift in image, not a substantial missing. OR perhaps this is in direct response to the concerns voiced by the male.</p> <p>Old- husband's grandparents. Family, modest (little), anonymous, established?</p> <p>The world—strangers, those with whom she does not have a relationship.</p>
<p>MU 24 <i>“And all she wants to do is name</i></p>	<p>Eliza just wants to say what she has</p>	<p>I get an image of a simple,</p>

<p><i>out loud what she already does, not make it some big blown up heavy thing that will make her feel small, inadequate, or anxious, or work too hard, or be a phony.”</i></p>	<p>been doing, simply so that others can hear. She does not want to inflate what she does or give it undue weight that will make her feel small, inadequate, insincere, anxious, or pressured to realize the claims.</p>	<p>lovely little wooden shingle with her name and work carved in. Tasteful, clear, simple.</p> <p>I wonder about the difference between a web page, and everything that goes with that, and this image of a brick and mortar store. The web feels so much more exposed, smaybe competitive, versus relational and local.</p>
<p>MU 25 <i>And she wrote, “I got an aha as I wrote that.” So as she was writing about the session that had taken place the day before, it was taking her back into her Focusing space and she was getting shifts as she was writing. It was like there was a—one of those kind of openings that come from Focusing. [5 sec] “What else does he want to tell her?”</i></p>	<p>After one day, Eliza journals about the session above. In relating it, she has a feeling of insight. She feels like she is entering again the felt space of the session, picking up where she left off the day before. She has a sense of opening, of more that may be there for her to perceive from the content of the session. She has the sense that the man image may have more for her.</p>	
<p>MU 26 <i>So she’s back, dialoguing with this male figure with the dogs. “She could feel the caution in her chest,” [puts hand on chest] “and then she got a flash on her as a high school and college student, always striving to be tops. Not just good—the best. Yesterday she remembered herself sitting for hours with boring studying to make sure she got an a.</i></p>	<p>Awareness of possible danger arises as sensation in her chest. She has a sudden memory of herself as a younger person, always pushing herself toward maximum possible achievement. She remembers persisting for long hours in tasks that she doesn’t enjoy in order to meet these expectations.</p>	
<p>MU 27 <i>She also remembered all the effort that she put into running for class office, and how she really didn’t enjoy the activity that much after she won the election. This part doesn’t want her to do that again...that being going after some goal that fills some need for recognition but really doesn’t give her activity that is truly authentic, fun or fulfilling.”</i></p>	<p>She remembers other times when she has pushed herself and put great effort into achieving a goal for the sake of recognition, but finding the goal itself to be empty for her of genuine value or enjoyment.</p>	
<p>MU 29 <i>“At the end of the Focusing, she asked the part with the leash what it was wanting for her. It wanted</i></p>	<p>Eliza asks the figure what it is wanting for her; she receives its wish for her to feel spontaneous,</p>	<p>Ok, this must have been at the end of the first session.</p>

<p><i>her to be, to feel free spontaneous, light—</i></p>	<p>unpressured, easy and light.</p>	
<p>MU 30 <i>and then now,” in the moment when she was journaling, “Comes ‘comfortable in her own skin’” that phrase ‘comfortable in her own skin’—“satisfied. And,” comments in the margin, “she never really got that—what that meant until now.” That whole sense—comfortable in her own skin. She’d heard that phrase, but she had a body feel here for it—that was a shift for her. “Oh, is that what that means!”</i></p>	<p>As Eliza recounts this response, she is aware of a new sense arising. The idea comfortable in my own skin and satisfied arises, and she feels a new depth of understanding and appreciation for what it means to feel comfortable in her own skin. It is like connecting the idea to what it feels like in her body, and she feels surprised to find this new understanding.</p>	<p>Should I be more general—a familiar phrase arises, etc? New understanding of a common, oft-heard phrase?</p>
<p>MU 31 <i>“So she just imagined myself going to her computer and working on the website. She felt something pushing back like on her chest,”</i> so here she was, in the moment, trying see where this was going to lead.</p>	<p>She imagines herself directed at the project she’s been avoiding. She is aware of a sense of being pushed back on her chest, away from the project.</p>	
<p>MU 32 <i>“It feels like a part that wants her to do other things, like her art projects, and it doesn’t want her blurting off in another direction, abandoning those projects midstream. It sees the website development task as some huge, all enveloping task that will put all else aside. It worries her child artist would be shut to the side once more.”</i></p>	<p>She attends to the feeling of being pushed away from the project. She feels that this sense wants her to move toward other projects that are underway. Through that pressure she is aware of seeing project as an enormous, all consuming task that requires her to put other important projects to the side. She is worried about taking up an old pattern of ignoring her vulnerable, expressive, creative urges.</p>	
<p>MU 34 She’s feeling into the bulldogs again. <i>“The bulldogs have a should quality to them. she notices that her real life of coaching and Focusing, which is so soft, loving, humble, relational, is not in those bulldogs at all.</i></p> <p>MU 35 <i>There’s another presence she’s feeling now. A white glowing woman. The light of true self, of</i></p>	<p>Turns her attention toward the part of the image that wants to go forward; attending to them she is aware of a sense of external, judgmental motivation. She contrasts this feeling with what she feels when she is doing her current work, which is softness, love, connection, humbleness.</p> <p>As she notices these positive feelings, an image arises that personifies and amplifies them, and</p>	<p>The should is external, even if it is internalized?</p> <p>Moves between the pressured, judgmental feelings associated with the image and highly contrasting positive feelings from her daily life.</p>

<p><i>love there. She's showing her how wonderful she feels when she teaches Focusing, when she works one on one with someone in Focusing oriented coaching.</i></p>	<p>refers Eliza to the circumstances in which she feels them.</p>	
<p>MU 36 <i>Just let that expand.” So she sat with it and let that feeling try to come, more and more.</i></p>	<p>Eliza wants to welcome as much of that positive feeling as possible. She keeps her attention lightly on it and pauses to feel it more fully.</p>	
<p>MU 37 <i>“She can feel some sort of constraining walls around her [the white woman], like she's in prison. There's a biblical image of an angel visiting one of those saints in prison” That was the association—“It feels like a wall of a cave, but it is cracked open so that the light shines through...”</i></p>	<p>Eliza is aware of a force that is limiting the expansion of the love feelings. The image shifts to show the bearer of those feelings in an oppressive circumstance.</p> <p>The circumstance is dark but with a ray of hope.</p>	<p>She has had this wonderful affect come; she pauses to wait for it to fill her, and the next thing, the image associated with that affect is seen imprisoned.</p> <p>Biblical image—scriptural, archetypal? Important and weighty. Connects her experience of the true self feelings with struggle between good and evil, the righteous and the oppressed? Also, cave is like a natural confine, can be a site of meditation, development, voluntary confine.</p>
<p>MU 39 <i>“[the woman]’s in a cave! Like the exiles in ted holmes’ book” that’s an IFS book—“Her, finally what she was born to do, joyfully creating, empowering others with love, receiving love and knowing she is worthy enough for me. Follow her bliss.”</i></p>	<p>Despite the sense of imprisonment or confinement, the image and the good feelings do seem to expand. Eliza feels herself intending toward her wished-for and long-delayed destiny.</p>	<p>Finally doing born to do— fulfillment after much struggle, achieving the ultimate destiny.</p>
<p>MU 55 So she'd had all those pieces, but this part about it really wanting her not to kind of puff up and...be pretentious or build a website that she'd then have to live up to the—purple prose in the website—that was new. And that was important. And that was a very important gift from that session.</p>	<p>Eliza felt impacted by one particular insight of the session, which clarified a part of her ambivalence about her task, alerted her to specific potential threats to self-experiences that she treasures.</p>	<p>What came out the the session appears to her as very important. It reminded her of her own proclivities and past behaviors, and the negative impact these have had on her capacity for spontaneity, connection, and ease in her work...</p>
<p>64 so she feels, just sensing it now, it's kind of a softer, more accepting [moves hand, palm facing her</p>	<p>After the session, she feels differently about the situation that she has been wanting to resolve. She</p>	

<p>chest, in a circular motion in the air a few inches from her body] feel to the whole dynamic. There are parts that would like to and there are parts that really have reasons why they don't want her to. And that's where it is right now.</p>	<p>is more accepting of her difficulty moving forward on the project. She can identify and understand her reasons for wanting to move ahead, and the legitimacy of her hesitation.</p>	
<p>MU 65 It will continue to shift, she's sure, but right now there's in a way more comfort with that inner tension, so it's interesting. It's a little bit feeling like there's something in process, and just waiting to see what comes next—trusting that something, in its right time it will happen.</p>	<p>Rather than resolving the inner tension, she has changed her relationship with that tension. She is less eager to get rid of it, and more interested in observing what happens as she continues to live with it. She trusts the situation (And her relationship to it?) and she is willing to wait for it to change, rather than to try to make it change.</p>	

A4.6 Participant Six: Ila

Translation to third person	Translation to psychological meaning	Notes
<p>MU 64 And so sitting today—both of us said in different ways—it was interesting cause we—it’s been a while since we, um, focused in person. Probably a good 6 months or something? So maybe 8 months? I mean it’s been a while, and yet, we do so much over the phone. There was something about the ...presence of the body actually for a moment was like in the way—it was like, I know this person on a whole different level or maybe there was even a vulnerability, um... but just for a moment I had to like—when I started—I had to kind of just like, “Ok ___, um... it doesn’t really matter whether it’s on the phone or not. Your eyes are closed. You recreate the same—“</p>	<p>Ila begins the session with keen awareness of being physically present with her focusing companion, feeling a little uneasy or vulnerable at being seen. She reassures herself by emphasizing to herself the similarities between Focusing on the phone and in person, especially with respect to her closed eyes.</p>	
<p>MU 4 So I came into the Focusing session... realizing that there was a tightness—yeah—in my lower abdomen [places hand on lower abdomen] so that’s how it began. And then i realized there was some tightness in the right side of my jaw... so it began with a sensation, y’know kind of vague sense of tightness, ummm</p>	<p>When she turns her attention to her body, she notices a vague feeling of tightness in her lower abdomen, and then she notices tightness in the right side of her jaw.</p>	
<p>MU 5 ... and from there I stayed with the sensation of tightness because I wanted – I wanted to be curious about, or I was curious, feeling curious about what that tightness was. Y’know tightness is kind of a vague word. So as I sat with that...trying to kind of get a handle on it, um...</p>	<p>After she notices the sensations of tightness, Ila continues to keep her attention on them with an deliberate attitude of curiosity. She waits.</p>	
<p>MU 7 Um... so in this tightness--I do authentic movement as well and that can create body senses in my</p>	<p>Ila places her hands on her lower abdomen (where she feels the tightness) in order to support her awareness of that tightness.</p>	

<p>body so sometimes my body actually moves so... I put my hands on my lower abdomen to really just acknowledge the tightness. (I'm gonna take a couple of notes of your gestures.) Mmm. Just to get a sense of that tightness</p>		
<p>MU 8 and then what happened was that my body did really convey it clearly. I got a sense of um pulling-- my hand started moving out. [pulls hand out from abdomen slowly, then puts the fingers of both hands together and pulls them apart, as if stretching an elastic.] A tightness, an elastic band-- and my jaw actually tightened so it was really... It was really interesting because it was so physically in my body at that point. And at that point I realized that the word I wanted was "tense". I wanted "tension." Tension came first when my hands were pulling apart, and even my jaw. Tightening. And that led me then to the word tension. SO as much as the other came, that then followed.</p>	<p>With her hands on her abdomen, the sense of vague tightness becomes much more clear to her. She feels pulling, and she responds to that clearer sense with a spontaneous gesture, pulling her hand out away from where it had rested on her abdomen. She has the sense that the tightness is active, like an elastic being pulled. She feels her jaw tighten. She feels interested in the sensations arising because they are so visceral in particular parts of her body. The word "tension" presents itself to capture the energy/anticipation/suspense of the specific tightness she feels.</p>	
<p>MU 62 There was a place where I just get teary for a tiny bit and that's what I'm just trying to take a minute to... go back to it and see where that was, if I can... 13 sec... I think it may have been—just around the time of the feeling, so when I was talking about y'know I couldn't actually—my hands started pulling apart and... I could feel it in my jaw that's when the sense of that in my body of the emotion came up with it I think, for a few seconds there of just... (mmm) yeah of this is just really intense and real. And if it didn't come up there, then the other thing that occurs to me is somewhere in the place in me where I'm tired, I'm tired—that also happened so there may have been one or both of those areas a</p>	<p>As she pulls her hands apart and feels the tension in her jaw, she feels sudden strong emotions, and tears in her eyes at the intensity and the realness of the physical sensation she is experiencing. (She thinks this is a point at which she grew tearful, though in recollection is not positive.)</p>	

<p>little touch into the emotional piece as well, yeah. So that's if that's helpful...</p>		
<p>MU 9 And then I just waited with that. Y'know just waited with that sense... Um. What was it like from that point of view? Y'know from that tense point of view, that part of me, that aspect of my being? What was it like y'know acknowledging it: ok I get it. I get uh what this is now—the tightness feels more like tension. And now how—how do I be with you? How would you like me to be with you? (mmm) What is what is what is it like to be you? Where is this part of me-- understanding that the part is me.</p>	<p>Once she is aware of the specific feeling of “tension,” she waits and notices what the tense feeling is like. She directs her continued curiosity at the tension, inviting it to become even clearer by wondering about its relationship to her broader sense of self.</p>	
<p>MU 11 So um being with the tension... I just want to see if my body will take me back there a little bit. ... (10 seconds) What I had a sense of... I'm trying to think of the flow of this for you... there was a sense then of um... mmm... a place of anxiety. So, a sense that my body actually splits [moves left hand from the center of chest up to her chin, while moving right hand from center of chest down toward pelvis] when I'm anxious. So this tightness forms in my lower abdomen [gestures to abdomen], and then I come up here [gestures to area above L hand], um, and there's a separation. And that's where I had a lot of a sense of how that felt, uh... (5 sec)</p>	<p>As she keeps her attention on the tension, she becomes aware of anxiety and the accompanying feeling that her body is split at the center of her chest, her awareness is divided. She feels (remembers, too?) how she responds to tightness in her abdomen by shifting her awareness away from the sensation, up to her head, so she does not feel the tension.</p>	
<p>MU 24 Ila: I'm probably referring to my body- my body's way of holding something in. My body is saying: I don't like the holding of the tension, I don't like how it separates [again, brings one hand from mid chest up to chin, and the other hand from mid chest downward] when I'm really holding it in, and I'm working</p>	<p>Ila feels the separation as forceful. Her body holds something out of awareness; the separation and her moving to her head keeps her from feeling what her body is holding, and it forces her to work from a restricted space in her head.</p>	

<p>then from way up here. It's almost like a...um, it's almost like it's suppression? Like you would suppress the feelings... (mmhmm) It's suppressed, and then I'm living from up here. Y'know I'm not--- I'm actually almost living from here, up. I'm moving from my head...I'm um...</p>		
<p>MU 25.5 My whole breath moves up. It's like I'm not- not living from the bottom heart any more, it's— where the feelings and things are, my instinct, y'know all those things—but y'know I've put them away, so I think that part of me that was expressing that... it it was almost like a <i>tired</i>. I'm tired of this pattern, I'm tired of living this way. I don't want this constriction, this tension, this closing down, this living from up here.</p>	<p>The separation disconnects her breath and her living from her chest and abdomen. It feels constricted and closed down.</p>	
<p>MU 12 My companion at that point may have asked if I wanted to just be with that separation? Did I want to just be with that place in me that was anxious? Did I want to stay with that? Was it ok to just be with that? I think I remember her words. And I remember sitting for a few moments and just saying, “ok. I can do that. I can just...acknowledge within me that this part of me is anxious. There's tension in my body.... I don't have to understand exactly why in this moment; I can just be with it...” What that did is that it allowed me to just stay with the feeling and not go to my head, not start figuring it out, analyzing it: What's the story behind all of this? What's causing all of this? But to just sit with it.</p>	<p>Ila hears her companion ask whether she wants to let her attention stay with the sense of separation and anxiety. Ila pauses for a few moments, unsure. She decides that she can recognize the anxiety and the tension without trying to explain, and so she is able to keep her attention on the physical sensations as she feels them. She resists shifting her awareness to her thoughts or questions about the sensations.</p>	<p>Separation anxiety?</p>
<p>MU 13 And as I did that, I was aware...I was aware within me that there was this place of the anxiety, of the tightness, of the tension... it just appreciated me being with it.</p>	<p>As Ila continues to attend gently to the difficult, tight sensations, she feels appreciation from these areas and they relax slightly under her attention.</p>	

<p>So there was a sense of... relaxation maybe even? A kind of spaciousness? A tension gave way a bit. It let lose a bit.</p>		
<p>MU 14 And there also at that point I believe may have appeared another place in me that didn't like the whole staying with the tension—that wasn't comfortable with that: "It's time to kind of move out of here! Let's move!" Um... "Get back to work, get back to life, get back to my head, y'know, figure it all out! Let's move on!"</p>	<p>Ila feels clearer resistance to staying with the tension. She feels an impulse to pull her attention away, to go back to her everyday way of being, to regard the sensations as problems to be figured out.</p>	
<p>MU 15 So I paused to acknowledge that part and how much it wants me not to be in this tension—not wanting it—not wanting to just sit with it. Wanting to resolve, move on. But letting it know at this point—I was asking it to sit aside, so I could just stay with the tension a bit more. And it was ok with that. It was like, "Ok I can hold you <i>here</i>." [curves right arm around open space at side hip, where some small being might sit beside next to her or possibly on her hip] Like there's almost that bodily sense of ok I'm holding you here—I'm not sending you away. But I want to just be with this. (mmm) Cause it feels important for me to just sit with this."</p>	<p>Ila shifts her attention to that impulse to move away from the discomfort. She notices the strong aversion to staying still and the desire to move forward. She acknowledges this aversion, and then asks it to move aside so that she can continue to attend to the tension. The strong impulse softens, and Ila imagines inviting that feeling to stay beside her. She feels as if she is physically holding that contrary urge, and it quiets down as she acknowledges and allows its presence, and states her intention to continue attending to the tension.</p>	
<p>MU 16 Um, as I sat with it... even longer... what I realized was not really words... y'know sometimes you get a sense from that part of you that is speaking what it needs or wants—it wasn't so much coming <i>from</i> it but it was coming <i>underneath</i>. [gestures to space in front of, and extending past low pelvis] It was like I—what I'm needing is support, so I can relax. I need—and what I was feeling was a place in me of support, underneath. Um. I think I</p>	<p>Ila returns her attention to the feeling of tension and separation in her body. She waits and feels the sensations, wondering what they need or want from her. Rather than receiving a response from the tense feelings, Ila becomes aware of a deeper need for support that would allow her to relax. Her awareness of needing support and the feeling of support both arise from a space felt underneath the tension. As she senses underneath the tension, she is aware of something spread out protectively under all of it, like a net. She feels the tension relax even more in response to this</p>	

<p>remember saying to my companion, “It feels like a net.” And then this tense part of me relaxed even more, um.</p>	<p>discovery.</p>	
<p>MU 17 And within that place—from that point...um... from that point there may have been... two things that came. One, I may have gone up into my head for a bit? Umm, to bring it into a story, um, cause there’s a situation with my husband where we’d had a disagreement and there was tension around it, so... that’s part of the story that was coming through and where my anxiety comes um is up I kind of lose my ground, I come up [gestures upward to head]. So it told me a lot about where my body was feeling, where I was holding the tension from that, and what I was wanting was support to really hold, y’know all of it—hold where I was, y’know? Stay centered I think enough to resolve or work through it. So part of me went back to my mind to kind of uh.. allow some of that to come and to sense into that, yeah. How—what’s that like and, “Oh, is that so? IS that part of this? IS that what’s part of this going on?”</p>	<p>Ila shifts her attention to her thoughts, and the recent events that she associates with the feelings of anxiety and tension. She relates the sensations she has been feeling to the events, and understands the tension and anxiety in terms of the specific events. She relates the need for support to her wish to be supported in this situation, so that she could resolve it. As (or intermittently?) she works with her thoughts about the specific events that were associated with these sensations, she checks back with the sensations about whether her narrative understanding resonates with her physical experience.</p>	<p>She did not lose herself in head thought, or so it seems. Maybe she did for a little while, but the “Is that part of this?” suggests that she was doing the storying in reference to the feelings, without losing her connection to or experience of them.</p>
<p>MU 18 AND then to say, “oh, ok, but now... now I’ve heard that; I understand my mind is trying to figure this out, trying to help me out and here’s this other part that wants to help out too, and move on, but now I want to come back to that sense and I want to just be with it because that’s what it’s wanting. It’s wanting me to simply sit with it, be with it, um... is what it really felt like.</p>	<p>Ila recognizes and appreciates the impulse to figure out what she experiences, and then also recognizes again the impulse to move on and away from paying attention to the sensations. She renews her full attention on the feeling of tension and the underlying support, and recognizes that she is still drawn to stay in contact with it.</p>	
<p>MU19 The beauty that then came, Sarah, and often comes in Focusing, is if I allow myself to simply be with it, I actually—my whole body shifts, and the shift for me today is</p>	<p>Ila waits and attends to the tension and the underlying feeling of support. She recognizes that when she is not feeling support, that this is where her body holds the built up tension. She knows this</p>	

<p>more of a um...5 sec... It's a place of grounding. It's a place of feeling supported myself, and... y'know whatever the situations of life might be. It's a place of acknowledging that when I am not feeling that, this is where the tension builds, where I hold it. (mmmm) And... um, I know that, but there's also what came was sitting with it.</p>	<p>intellectually, but it reveals itself again while she sits with it.</p>	
<p>MU 20 As I sat with it for... oh, a while y'know-- a couple minutes at least. And my companion was very quiet in that time. And I said I just want to sit with it. Um... 6 sec... What came was two things. One, a sense of this part of me that it's tired of being this way. Like this is a pattern; it's tired of this pattern. It does want something different. Um... it wants to <i>be</i> in a different way. And that was, um, just good to acknowledge, y'know that this is a pattern; this is an old pattern—this whole issue of support, all of this, and... there's something wanting to change.</p>	<p>Ila continues to sit with the tension for several minutes, without interruption. She becomes aware that part of her is tired of repeating this pattern (of separating, holding tension, living from head) and wants to experience things differently. Ila feels satisfaction acknowledging that this is an old pattern, and that part of her wants it to change.</p>	
<p>MU 21 And somewhere in continuing—even after that, to just sit with it—came a place of...6 sec... a sense within me of feeling such a deep level of support. Like not from me, y'know, it's like me supporting me. It's all of me, but it's something bigger than me. (mmm) And I don't know how, it almost y'know goes onto a spiritual realm or a—I don't even know. I don't know the word for it.</p>	<p>As Ila continues to sit with the whole sense in her abdomen, she becomes aware of a profound feeling of support underneath the feeling of tension. She feels the support both as part of herself, and also as something more than herself in which she can rest. The support feeling is so profound it seems to transcend ordinary experience and is difficult for Ila to name.</p>	
<p>MU 22 It happens sometimes for me when some part of me – um I think it came up today because of the pattern. Y'know the realization that this is a pattern, this is something long standing. And it's something in me that <i>is</i> wanting to change or shift, somehow just to</p>	<p>When Ila notices the patterns in her way of holding tension and the deep desire for changing that pattern; as she notices these things, her breath shifts and she feels spaciousness, relaxation, tranquility, and a sense that “all is well,” and she has a sense of support beneath her again.</p>	<p>Not quiet sure what the relationship is between the awareness of the pattern of how her body holds things and the opening out into support. I think it's that she was attending</p>

<p>sit with that-- this sense came... and I'm trying to give words to it, um...13 sec... it's like my whole breath changes. There's space, there's...there's a y'know there's a relaxation, there's a..."all is well", tranquil, any—y'know it's like I have my ground back again... I have my focus, my center. I have <i>life</i> supporting me, y'know. It's like... so what whatever was clogging that in the altercation with my husband or the unresolved situation—not really a fight, but a prolonged discussion that didn't really work out easily... so that was like two or three days ago, but my body's still carrying it.</p>	<p>She is aware that her body is carrying tension from a past argument.</p>	<p>to the deep desire to change that pattern of holding onto.</p>
<p>MU 40 And then today, not always—sometimes that will be where it ends, but this particular day there was that added place of actually there's something more here. There's something more. My body's feeling this net of support. It's feeling really grounded. It's feeling held, and something in the part of me that was feeling my body sensation of that it helped me to relax even more. So it helped me to open and let go even more. (mm) And all of that comes in a bodily sense.</p>	<p>In addition to the release or relaxation that comes with deep acknowledgement of how her body is holding her tension, of the pattern, in this session Ila also experiences something more, beyond that loosening. She feels a broader net of support that helped her open and let go more profoundly.</p>	<p>Oh—maybe that what is typical is that when she sees how her body is holding tension, acknowledges that, it relaxes. What is different in this session is that broader support.</p>
<p>MU 23 So coming to that place not only helped me in that moment, to again have more understanding of my body and what it's carrying and what it's wanting to move forward, but I also have felt it the rest of the day. It's like it shapes the rest of the day. I'm <i>not</i> where I <i>was</i>. I'm not—I have a different way of --that I'm even looking at—I have a different way that my whole body feels like its moving through the day, because I do feel like my whole body has shifted its focus and its way of being. I also have... more clarity I think about that specific situation so my mind has then taken that further and</p>	<p>Ila experiences a deeper understanding and appreciation for her body and how it carries tension she is not aware of, as well as its desire to move out of that pattern. Additionally, after the Focusing session she feels a global shift in perspective—her whole day takes on a new form; her body feels like she is relating with the events of the day differently. She is aware of her mind having taken what came in the sensations and worked it further into clarity regarding the particular story.</p>	

<p>worked that, so... I don't know if that's helpful, but that's kind of... it's kind of an example.</p>		
<p>MU 45.5 (Yeah.) Yeah. And my mind doesn't ... my mind holds things—the whole experience differently, I think, in terms of where I then move through the day. Somehow my whole mood, my whole mind frame is different. I'm in a different place. I'm walking with a different... way of being... There's more space in me. There's more possibility. There's more energy... there's... I don't really know the word for it, what the more is. But there's something that...[7 sec inhale, exhale]...</p>	<p>She felt more energy afterward. Her mood was different (improved, presumably). She felt like her physical comportment was alstered. She felt more space and more possibility .</p>	<p>More world spanning openness!!!</p>
<p>MU 46 I'm trying to just get a sense of where I am now, just to let you know because it's been hours after. Where am I now? ...21 sec... I don't know how to put it, the words, Sarah, but it's still there. This space, this sense of...and my breath, all of that's still there. And even if I think of something that's... I'm not thinking about it in the same way. My body's not holding it in the same way. I can go back to the tension, because of course this is a long standing pattern, yeah, so (you've had a lot of practice)... it isn't like it's magic, it's not like it's not gonna come up again for me. And I know that. But I <i>also</i> know <i>now</i> that I have a different sense that I can go back to.</p>	<p>Now, a day later, Ila still feels that her breath has deepened and a sense of more space in her being. The tension is still there when she attends to it, but she is not locked into the same relationship with it. She can experience the tension and the pattern, and also experience the other possibility of support that she discovered.</p>	
<p>MU 57 And that little part that wanted to run in me—the part I was kind of holding under my right arm--at one point I told my companion cause she said, "Is it still there?" "Yeah, it's right here," I said, "I'm just kind of holding it."</p>	<p>At some point in the session, Ila became aware that the urge to stop paying attention to the tension was still there beside her. She was still holding it.</p>	

Appendix 5: Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis:
Thematic Groupings with Excerpts from Transcripts

A5.1 Participant One: Pleck

Working themes shown in italics

Working implicit themes shown in bold, in brackets

Textual support cut and pasted from transcript, shown below initial themes

Superordinate themes shown in bold, underlined

Acknowledging categorical variations in own focusing practice

Formal/informal focusing

“there were things that happened that were formal focusing sessions that I formally was focusing”

“I used focusing because it came in the middle of a meditation thing and I shifted into focusing”

“issues” vs. “hitchhiking” focusing

...usually I just kinda hitchhike when I focus... over the last year and half I think I’ve actually just focused on specific issues but for the first 20 plus years, um, I think it was like, “here I am! [arms open from waist and eyes look up] What d’you wanna do?”

[possible ambivalence about the loss of unusual focusing experiences?]

--is in my earlier days of focusing I had really...unusual or nonordinary or whatever experiences. Over the last year and a half in my focusing I’ve had incredibly ordinary experiences as if, um, “It’s ok, now you see how the universe works, now get off your ass and do your own personal growth work!” [laughter in voice] It’s like, “Now you know the transpersonal piece, now you gotta do the personal piece!”

-- it would be interesting to see, I don't know maybe they'll open up again someday but at least for the last couple of—last year or two it has taken a very very personal, very much issues—stuff with me, with my kids, with my wife, w’ my job, rather than “how’s the universe work?” Though that’s a really fun thing t—and I didn’t try, I didn’t set it up—I wasn’t trying to focus into how the universe worked. It just...

Perception of significant differences between own and others’ approaches to focusing focusing backwards/opposite

--compared to a lot of peoples’ descriptions I do it kind of backwards.

--So it, become very... personal over time, it’s actually kind of opposite. A lot of people come the other way—they start with the personal and it opens up, but ah, in my particular case, it – in terms of a spectrum—I hardly ever have anything like that anymore. Whereas I’d have, oh, gosh, 20, 30 pieces of “this is how the universe works; this is what it feels like- you can get an energy hit off it” [laughs] kind of like you feel the connection to-y’know, “Whaaaow!” (S: laughs). And then now it’s mostly like, “Nope, ya gotta grow up!” [laughs] So it’s kinda in a continuum... That’s not about this experience, but I just wanted to- to put this into

context because um as I said, a lot of times I do things backwards, and I guess this is my... my doing things backwards

Generally distinguishing between his approach to focusing and his perception of others' approach

--trying to get into this part of my body, which is often how focusing's described, doesn't work too well for a whole bunch a reasons
--and it's really interesting because if I try to bring this attention [still as if holding the ball] to these places [brings hands to abdomen] there's this really tight attention that ends up doing this [fingers touching around invisible ball, touching aperture to several points over his mid and lower abdomen] and it's like—the field's too small. I don't know how to describe it—um...”
--{there should} be focusing for head-types or something like that
--So, a lot of times I'll actually start [returns hands, not touching but palms facing and hands rounded toward each other on each side of head] by just kinda being with what's the quality of my attention [hands still there] or what's the felt sense of my attending or what's the ... best way to describe it. Um, rather than just assuming that my attending is this [moves hands loosely out and inward over abdominal region] unencumbered, clear, unbiased, open spaciousness which it almost never is.
-- I'm sure this is taught in focusing and good focusing teachers help people do it—but it's not really described clear like, you know, when you say put your attention here [gestures abdomen] you might want to check and see what that attention feels like before you bring it down here!
- -So I'm kind of asking focusing questions of what feels alive or what feels like to be me.
-- In this particular case just noticing that it was like that gave it some space, right? Classic focusing.

Desiring to share his focusing experiences with interested others

Alluding to intriguing experiences/ Exciting curiosity

--I shifted into focusing and... all hell broke loose!
--I have three—I'm not gonna tell you three stories. Um, no, course I think they're fascinating but hey!
which is a different wild adventure story that I... won't tell-- [laughs] least not right now!
--I had a pretty overwhelmingly intense experience shall we say
--I lost the capacity to do a whole bunch of really--*cute* things I used to be able to do
--I mean I could try to find it on my computer and try to dig out my notes from whenever that was but I think that's probably...
Whereas I'd have, oh, gosh, 20, 30 pieces of “this is how the universe works; this is what it feels like- you can get an energy hit off it” [laughs] kind of like you feel the connection to-y'know, “Whaaaow!”

[Using gesture to evoke bodily understanding in the listener]

--[moves hand palm down to level of head]
--[brings palm downward toward abdomen]

--[places outstretched palm on mid abdomen]
 --I feel this [closes eyes and places hand, fingers pointing toward him, in front of face] as I get quiet I can kind of feel my attention kind of [brings both hands up toward head, one on each side, palms facing one another and fingers inclined toward each other and draws them together in front of his face as if closing an aperture] tight and *here* [indicates closed hands].”
 --“it’s almost the opposite of this [brings hands together over lower abdomen and opens them outward] and open spaciousness”
 --Then it would kind of come up here [indicates about 8 inches behind and above head] and it was like, “No, don’t go there!” [laughs] kind of keeps the energy this way [holds one hand at head level, one at lower abdomen] and then there was something back here [gestures to back of neck]—I’m not exactly sure what that one was but there was like the energy was being almost like—if you were doing some kind of light show this [holds one hand, palm down, around forehead] was kind of keeping it here, this was kind of keeping it here [the other palm up by pelvis], and this was keeping it here [shows flat hand around neck] so that my [moves lower hand in a circle/loop between three points sense of self] — some energy or something was flipping... all through here [looping gesture ends],
 --[many more examples]
 --This [brings hands back up in front of upper face/forehead, like before, shaped as if holding a ball right in front of his face] kind of like a—aeceeeee... um... that’s I guess about the best way I can describe it

Struggling with the limitations of available language

-um, and that was like myyyy.... ah... I don’t know quite how to-- my life energy that’s... not quite the best fit, um, s—it—
 -- if I was an artist, which I’m not, what it would be, would be like three things [places hands as reflectors] with actually a light going through them [rapidly circles hand in front of him]

Emphasizing the reality of the experience

-it felt like *there* [brings hands low to pelvis, palms up] was actually a
 -But anyway, they were there as actual, almost-like energetic
 -what I felt, what I actually *felt* was *this* [circling motion] and I kind of *saw* though the edges of *this*
 - I can feeeell [finger making energy loop] and seeeee it in some level that, yknow, if I was an artist I’d draw it. It was, uh, something else—I, if I cut those little cords and pulled the wires out [gestures as if touching two live wires together] ERNGH! You could actually feel it—
 --what a neat field to play in!...I mean, y’know--you’re a psychologist!

Possible ambivalence/anxiety about sharing focusing experiences

Self consciousness and self-reassurance about being perceived as weird

--this was kinda strange, but’s ok, ahm
 --it felt like (this is probably one step away from schizophrenia but I’m very functional)
 --um, I respect plastic surgeons; I call them in all the time to sew up things.
 --I mean it’s a weird way to say it but it felt like it was crossing some code,

-- it's, y'know, one of these interesting things that, y'know, I can write about and be labeled all sorts of things, or I can leave it on my computer! [slow, building laugh!] along with a bunch of other unusual experiences!

[pervasive use of hedging language]—how to formulate relationship between hedging and insistent language? How to present supporting quotes (maybe wait until transcript has line numbers)

[referencing diverse explanatory paradigms-to legitimate claims/himself as a trustworthy/educated source?]

--I don't know enough traditional Chinese medicine to be able to say much about macrocosmic and microcosmic orbits

--I mean I could give all sorts of psychodynamic reasons why I've got *this* [gestures flat hand as if slicing to pelvis], I've got-- I can tell you why this [back of neck], *this* [hand in front of face] is not wanting to see things, *this* is not—Like, the whole, analyze the heck out of it!

--I usually am pretty disconnected or depends on what language you want to use—am often so much in my head [gestures to head] or in something or into doing or something that I guess--in IFS, internal family systems, you call it one of the manager parts—

--dynamic stabilization almost? Like, yknow, if you look at a wave, [traces deep, even parabolic waves in the air before him] like a standing wave—not in the ocean wave but a standing wave in whitewater— it looks like it's just a wave but obviously that's water moving, right.

- it's pretty clear in all the religious scriptures right, first Corinthians 13... or in the Buddhist stuff about the way of power or the Jewish

Noetic... what? (quality? a la Pahnke Richard's mystical experience scale—need to track down. Something like intuitive certainty?)

Extraordinary experiences arising from focusing

--I shifted into focusing and... all hell broke loose!

--which is a different wild adventure story that

--I had a pretty overwhelmingly intense experience shall we say

Whereas I'd have, oh, gosh, 20, 30 pieces of “this is how the universe works; this is what it feels like- you can get an energy hit off it” [laughs] kind of like you feel the connection to-y'know, “Whaaaow!”

Conviction of profound nature of experience

--It was almost like whoa! if you realize—if you get in there and just tilt...

--it's just kinda fascinating to get these insights

--I could feel this kind of flush like when you see something that—how life works.

-- there's times when I'll imagine stuff or I'll visualize stuff or remember a theory and it often directs my felt sensing but in this case it wasn't, it wasn't the case I just... It just—I'm sittin there and well, there's this, and there's this and all of a sudden it lights up [flashes fingers open in front of him].

--. it felt like it was like a scriptural violation... it's almost like a scriptural injunction... it wasn't quite like “Don't eat the apple,” but there was [laughs]

(S:laughs)-- It wasn't quite that strong but it was just like, "Oh, don't mess with this. This is a waste of your life; that's not why you're here."

-- it kept feeling like I was sposed to mess with it and I'd be—"Oh, my god!" I mean, y'know, what neat thing to—what a neat field to play in!

Certainty about the experience having “more” than is grasped

-- It was fascinating. It was like, Oh my god, wow, that's really neat. *And*, Um, there's some—and there's something more. In other words knowing that opened something. I'm not sure what it is; it's maybe an appreciation that we're like this and my reflector might be this way [holds hand in reflector position] and your reflector might be this way [tilts hand] and talk about there but for the grace of God go I, right?

-- There's something that happens in that and it's really exciting

-- somehow I still carry with me as some *knowing*; I don't really know what its purpose is. It's the piece of a puzzle; the puzzle is not yet together and yet I know I have a bunch of pieces, maybe they'll... (yawns)... maybe they'll come together someday.

Ambiguity in experiences of self/not self

Dialoging with self-parts

-there was something that basically said, “*Don't go there!*”

Then it would kind of come up here [indicates about 8 inches behind and above head] and it was like, “No, don't go there!” --You know so it's like, “Wow, I'm feeling about this tight-[pointer-thumb loop to forehead]. Oh, I wanna try to fix it. Oh, you know, then there's another part: “I don't like this.” “Let's make myself be more open,”

--“Oh, I wanna make make myself do that!” Noooo!” [does ‘time out’ gesture].

-- Um... this other one was kinda like a place in me that kinda said “I think I'd like to mess with this. Let me turn the mirror up and see what happens.” And then the place that says. “Whoa, let's just wait and check.” This is all me. Caution, or something. And then this kind of checking and I'm not even sure what kind of checking it wasss, um, ...it was like a “*maybe* I should *check* [laughs]...” That's all *me*. That part was *me*.

-- the ten commandments voice is kinda like, “Don't do it. It's bad. You'll cause trouble.”

Experiencing/relating to a intra/[quasi-?]transpersonal other...Or should this just go under dialoguing with self parts? TBD.

--it was like, “here I am! [arms open from waist and eyes look up] What d'you wanna do?”

--“Uh, uh. You're not supposed to mess with this.” This, you know, it's almost like, this, this is, I don't know. It's like—tinkering with god stuff or something; it's like “That's not what you're sposed to use this for.”

-- I kind of asked into that space, “Why are you showing me this then?” like, “Why are you showing me this if I'm not supposed to do anything about it?” Right?

-- So I got quiet and I had a very, very sweet kind of felt response um, and it was um, it was, “You always wanted to know this. Now you know. Be happy. “

[laughs] (S:laughs). It was like, “no, you’re not sposed to mess with it—you wanna know how life works, this is a piece of it. Enjoy.” It was like, “Don’t mess with it!” It was like, “Ok!”

-- I wanted to mess with it. I mean it was just like “Wow!” It was really far-- I mean somebody just gave you a new toy, let me play with it!

-- it’s kind of like, “Well, why’d you show me? [laughs] Seriously, why did you show me this?” [looks upward]

--It has a certain quality that like the best I can describe it is “All’s well in the universe?”

-- is in my earlier days of focusing I had really...unusual or nonordinary or whatever experiences. Over the last year and a half in my focusing I’ve had incredibly ordinary experiences as if, um, “It’s ok, now you see how the universe works, now get off your ass and do your own personal growth work!” [laughter in voice] It’s like, “Now you know the transpersonal piece, now you gotta do the personal piece!”

Moving fluidly between identification with and objectification of experiences

--how am I attending, what’s happening, oh, I don’t... where am I? I often feel me here, which is often (instructive/destructive) so where am i? [invisible ball in front of forehead, tighter] Well, I’m right here. Well, how big am I? Like this.

-- Pardon the choice of I and it words; even within 5 minutes it feels like “I-it,” then it feels like I, then it feels like it, then it feels like I. At this point I don’t care. [chuckles]

Perceiving agency outside experience of conscious “I” self (language/terminology... TBD)

- “where I did some focusing, where some focusing happened”

- This [pointer-thumb loop to forehead] is small for a reason—it’s got a reason. And if I try too hard then the trying of course contaminates the field so
- over a couple of minutes if I just breathe *I* can’t go down here, but *it* will open up.

--it came in the middle of a meditation thing

--there’d be this tightness here [holding invisible ball w/ both hands] and after a while sometimes something would loosen up and it will relax

Experience of own subjective agency w/r/t inner relating

—“Well, if just got rid of this block, I would open up to the deep unconscious! [gestures downward and outward]If I opened up this block I would open up into...”

-- if you realize—if you get in there and just tilt this one a [commences tilting hand reflectors] little bit then I’d be *this* kind of person but if I tilt it this way then I’d be *this* kind of person

--And that was, you know, and so I did not, I have not explored how to tinker with the human energy field [laughs] and whatever... “look, you have a change in personality!” so... obviously I haven’t gone there.

Importance of waiting, observing

-I just kinda sat with it

-so I sat with that for a little bit

-I just kinda stopped for a little bit and then after a while I'm lookin at this, I'm seeing this, it's kinda like you're watching this thing

Importance of familiarity with one's bodily themes (past focusing) in understanding current focusing events

Relating sessions across time

--"Um, this is kind of the intro to what happened here."

--"that's introduction, now hopefully this'll make sense..."

--The first part, the first part was kind of-- I usually am pretty disconnected... so what the first thing that happens when I slow down often is I feel...

-- Uh, I mean what used to happen was there was this... what used to happen was that there were a whole lotta words that would happen and sometimes, it depends—

-- there's a felt quality to that which I'm realizing I haven't really sensed into so I'm trying to do that a little bit while I'm talking to you. I always just kind of say, "Oh, that's my voice of guidance." It's really sweet, y'know, just always really sweet, but it's soft. It has a certain quality that like the best I can describe it is "All's well in the universe?"

-- Sometimes I'll go back over an experience I had years before and I'll try to sense back into it and there's certain experiences—maybe it's the handles, maybe it's because the experiences were deeper or something where it feels like they're, even years later, they're an entry point where you can actually go back in there and reaccess something.

-- is in my earlier days of focusing I had really...unusual or nonordinary or whatever experiences. Over the last year and a half in my focusing I've had incredibly ordinary experiences as if, um, "It's ok, now you see how the universe works, now get off your ass and do your own personal growth work!" [laughter in voice] It's like, "Now you know the transpersonal piece, now you gotta do the personal piece!"

Developing familiarity with own tendencies and characteristic focusing experiences

--I—noticed the usual—see if I can find a *kind* word to it—um, tinkering tendency to want to mess with all these things—

-- like, just this like, ok, just you kinda smile—after a year, a few years, you kinda get used to this: "OK, I know this movie!"

--I used ta... slow down [gestures brief to chest] but a lot of times what would happen is when you read focusing instructions you put your attention on something. My really very highly efficient manager would- my caretaking part—would then go out and try to take care of all these other parts [indicates several small areas on mid abdomen] but it really wasn't you know what, you know, what's supposed to happen.

-- I've been through that movie [laughs] (S: laughs) for years, right, so it's like "OK."

-- I just noticed that: "Oh, tight. Ok, that's where I am. I've done this 40 times before; let's just be with that." [fingers up to touch forehead]

-- What else is goin on? I know I have a place here [gestures to low abdomen] I just can't feel it yet.

-- often times for me, a lot of focusing is a lot of remembering-- actually being sensitive to *messing*, right, with; being sensitive to qualities of attention, because I'm realizing now that this is a kind of really small attention [pointer to thumb loop] that I'm bringing into my being

-- That one has thisssss familiar sense of what I would just call--what I use, my handle for that's just the "voice of guidance". It's something that speaks to me in a certain tone of voice that I've had in dreams over years. (Hmmm. In dreams and in focusing...)

Thematic presence of tightness

--I lost the capacity to do a whole bunch of really--*cute* things I used to be able to do—I kind of reclaimed a dissociated part is probly what would best say happened, um, and so since that time I've often felt tightness in certain parts of my body

--I didn't want to be sensing with this [invisible ball gesture in front of his face] tight attention,

--I could feel this was tight [fingers of both hands to upper face/forehead], and I could feel that thhhere were these other places that were tight, um and as I um, kind of breathed with em I just—

-- So sometimes I'd feel this ---[hands fighting to close around invisible ball] and sometimes there'd be a lot of--- [balls hands into fists and they tremble in front of upper chest] ...tightness, or if I'd hit mute on the phone I'd scream a little bit.

[possible judgment about his process/inclinations]

--I—noticed the usual—see if I can find a *kind* word to it—um, tinkering tendency to want to mess with all these things—“

--It's like, “Yes, in my position I could do plastic surgery I could make somebody's nose better. I could just tweak the personality and you'll be a little nicer, you could be a little more this, or you could do a little more--” It felt like it was doing plastic surgery. It felt like it was messing in a way—

--”You're not here to be—yeah, you can do plastic surgery, yeah you can get rich, you can open up your shingle. I'm sure you'd be really popular. You'd be really wealthy. People would be treating you.. yeah, great. Go do it. [slightly sarcastic tone].”

[The urge to mess with/play and the injunction to look but not touch]—*NOTES- Where is the relevance in this for understanding focusing? Clearly this is an important theme for him—to act or to observe? Wanting to mess/play and feeling a scriptural injunction not to. Can it be that this is such a deeply felt, experientially (but perhaps unthought-of?) known truth for him psychologically that its appearance here lends the feeling of literal truth to the experiences constellating around this theme?*

--Um... this other one was kinda like a place in me that kinda said “I think I'd like to mess with this. Let me turn the mirror up and see what happens.”

--And then the place that says. “Whoa, let's just wait and check.” This is all me. Caution, or something. And then this kind of checking and I'm not even sure what kind of checking it wasss, um, ...it was like a “*maybe* I should *check* [laughs]...” That's all *me*. That part was *me*.

--it kept feeling like I was sposed to mess with it and I'd be—“Oh, my god!” I mean, y'know, what neat thing to—what a neat field to play in!

-- It'd be neat if some way you could energetically sense "I can feel that you're, y'know, there's this block in this—" Kind of like this Caroline Lace stuff is in *anatomy of the spirit* stuff which, I don't know, I don't... Barbara Brendon's work with energy fields, "Let's just adjust your energy field a little bit and let's just adjust your energy field a little bit." Ahm, but I'm not sure what people are using as their... reference point to know when you're messing and when you're not messing, right? It's a big question.
-- I wanted to mess with it. I mean it was just like "Wow!" It was really far-- I mean somebody just gave you a new toy, let me play with it!

[magnitude of expression → laughter]—not sure this reveals focusing, as much as some discomfort/tension release after he alludes to something really big

Points of confusion:

The guidance voice, and the other voice. They seem really distinct for him but every time I read the transcript I get kind of confused about which is which...

W: you know, the um... this one wasn't as... the the "don't mess with it" wasn't as strongly different as um, "You always wanted to know this. Now you know. Be happy." That one has thisssss familiar sense of what I would just call--what I use, my handle for that's just the "voice of guidance". It's something that speaks to me in a certain tone of voice that I've had in dreams over years. I've had dreams and at the end of the dream it would tell me what it was about. Like this voice would come from behind and, "Don't break the bottle." "Take your time, take a breath, do this, this..." this kind of voice. Um and so that voice I would kind of... this other one was kind of part... this other one wasn't that.

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis:
Thematic Groupings with Excerpts from Transcripts

A5.2 Participant Two: Anna

Working themes shown in bold

Working implicit themes shown in bold, in brackets

Textual support cut and pasted from transcript

Superordinate themes shown in bold, underlined, italicized

Concern/self-consciousness about ability to recall details of focusing session

Struggle/ doubt about answering correctly

I'm feeling really, um, I... I don't have a very good memory, and a lot of my particularly memorable focusing sessions were a while back, and so I feel it would be easier to give you highlights of a few but I feel like, like I can choose one but I wouldn't have that much—

Self-consciousness about performance recalling

so I have a real high, high standard for myself about doing that and so—your question, I'm sitting here going, “Oh, my god, am I gonna be able to do that? Am I gonna be able to pull...”

Anxiety about pleasing/disappointing researcher

but... [sigh] so I'm feeling a little anxious about not being able to give you what you want.

Concern (but not anxiety?) about usefulness to researcher

I just hope that you can get something—I still hope that you can get something useful from it,

Wanting to share focusing experiences

-Well there's one that I want to share with you just because I h-- ... it's a... [8 sec silence]

-The second thing is a fragment, and I don't know if it'll be useful at all but it it did pop up when you said “memorable focusing experiences

Self conscious about disclosing

[5 sec]...like...I don't know it's really weird but I'm gonna like go for it

Negotiating power differences, self assertion

In interpersonal/professional relationships

--y'know I'd done all kinds of peer co-counseling and then peer focusing

--It was when I was in the...being part of the changes group

In the interview context

-I was asked to write a lot of process reports. So, like, I know what you mean. I mean, this is a little from the other side of it, but as a therapist to try to describe a session

-I'm going to need some time to squawk about the question.

-Well, before we go there, I just want to say

--I think...I [5 sec]... don't know, I mean... h-... 5 sec... I think that I want to stick with the question I asked you a moment ago which was—I think what I'm talking about is beyond variation. (ok)

--and I don't know if this was part of the design—which is fine, if it wasn't or whatever but I just want to point it out that I think that this is *not* just what happened then, and how that fits with whatever your initial ideas were

In relation to experiences

focusing is a way of developing a non colonizing relationship with one's own inner landscape

Empowerment through permission

-but I do feel like he kinda gave me a certain kind of permission [mmm] cause I do love movement.

-I think kind of the fact that this person did a lot of movement or did a lot if movement kind of gave the *permission* for that to come

In fact, I think I probably even gave myself permission to not have anything to do with whatever. “Well, I don't—it doesn't have anything to do with, but it was good to do it!”

Role of the listener/guide in facilitating focusing of different depths/initial obscurity

--this gets into an interesting thing about how much space another person is holding... Um. Often times when I'm focusing in other contexts, it's like I might have a little bit of a feeling and then I'll wonder, y'know, “Oh, what might that be about? Maybe it's about this, lemme check that feeling—go back in, check the feeling, y'know, like that. SO it's kind of oscillating pretty much back and forth between physical, bodily felt sense and... sometimes in the context where there's like a lot of spaciousness, it's like me feeling the ability to give myself more permission of... seeing what comes and having something come that... doesn't at all, doesn't have any intellectual content to it, doesn't have words, doesn't have thoughts and, just kind of going with it, being really curious...

importance of nonjudgment

I guess I just feel like it's a very sensitive interpersonal space that if the person who's listening to me and thinking, you know, “What the heck is this person doing?” It's like, you know, if there's sometimes a place where I can feel somebody else's thoughts or, y'know, sense their skepticism,

How the relationship with listener opens up possibilities of different depths

--This is all pretty sensitive for me, pretty deep stuff, um... what I was saying before about... the container of who is listening to us and the kind of space that's created. That's been wonderful, and it's very different experience to do focusing in the context of an interpersonal relationship, where...[mumble] you know, and this was a wonderful focusing partner that y'know was lived in another state and we weren't in one another's' live and we were in this deep process of of ... um treasure maps. And, were just doing so very deep holding space for each other and had developed a relationship where she was pretty trusting of my idiosyncratic focusing style of going wherever it was that I needed to go and like that, so I felt like I could just really...explore some unknown places and be open to some very things coming out that I didn't understand at first.

-- I guess I just feel like it's a very sensitive interpersonal space that if the person who's listening to me and thinking, you know, "What the heck is this person doing?" It's like, you know, if there's sometimes a place where I can feel somebody else's thoughts or, y'know, sense their skepticism, so y'know it's just...it's ...I mean I think that there is useful work that you can do with anyone, pretty much, er, but it'll be different and I think that—I think that different people shape different—different focusing partners shape different listening fields in which different things are possible.

Variety of approaches to focusing

Formal/informal focusing

it's mostly informal and so it's not, you know, it's not like we're gonna do a whatever session,

reference to formal focusing

that's where the going back and forth comes in. It's like, "Oh, I wonder if that has something to do with the issue?" And it's like you get this little idea light bulb going off in your head, and you get this thought, and you go back and you check it. It's like, "Gosh, let me take that in." Does this? Does this movement have to do with this issue that I'm working on?" And then, "Yes!!"

- so then in the focusing process itself as I started to focus more I got a chance to develop more of the connections between the movement and the idea of boundaries and how to apply it in the situation I was working in, and like that.

Familiarity with and Variation in own focusing practice

Typical/a typical focusing

-often I do get ideas popping into my head and then I check them, y'know, um... I tend to get more images, I don't often get movements... um...

--also I process very quickly, so like I'll get a sensation and then I'll see the connection right afterwards so it's very... but it just, because it's like, well that's [really odd], because there was a little bit of a time line between what came and then the meaning of it

ordinary vs. exceptional focusing

often I will get ideas and words and then I go back and I check them and see if they're right, but this is more like what comes, in an image, or what comes as a physical sssssensation, then I go back and I check it, "Body, is this a relevant thing?" "Yes, yes, this is-- this is important," but I don't have the meaning until much later.

-... the other kind of focusing is useful, too. It's like, "Oh, I have a hunch that this is here and I can see how this might be relevant. Let me—let me check in and... you check in and fine tune it and all that. I find it very useful for whatever it does, but these are kind of like, kind of like deep sea diving focusing (laugh) or something that just seem startling, um, yeah

Idiosyncratic focusing style

she was pretty trusting of my idiosyncratic focusing style of going wherever it was that I needed to go and like that,

Emphasizing the importance of the spontaneous, unintended quality of focusing movement

Absence of intention

-But it wasn't like I was trying to do anything in that regard

- but it's not like I was *trying* to get that to come,

-But I wasn't *intending* to do anything about it. I was just going in to do my focusing turn.

--it apparently felt kind of...disconnected, like I didn't know what the meaning of it was

--*after* doing it, I had this insight that, "Oh, this *connects* to... the... issue that... I'm working with!"

-Because the person I was with wasn't trying to teach me about boundaries, or wasn't saying anything about boundaries, I mean they were like, totally just listening

-it wasn't like there was one part of me that was thinking, "Well, where should my bound—" It's like the word was not even... the word was not in my consciousness, it was just... it,

exploring the movement and experiencing bodily relief

]... just wanting to go like this. It's like, ok, I'm just feeling like I need to [repeats]... [sigh] yeah... [sigh] And so I did it a couple of times and ... sigh...

- When it first came, I--it was just, "My body's wanting to do this... oh, that feels good. And now I'm wanting to [sigh] and I'm wanting to do this..."

Experiencing transformation in relationship to an important idea

Distress re: disconnection from meaning of important concept

that was a word that had *always* mystified and puzzled me. It was like, "there is some abstract line that should be drawn and how do you know where it should be drawn and where is it supposed to be drawn?" And someplace inside panicked about, "Well I have no clue about this!"

Changing relationship to an idea from oppressive/elusive to supportive

realizing that there's a whole inner dimension to the experience of boundaries, that it isn't something purely externally determined, something that one should have but that it has to do with... one's own comfort, you know.

Relief at spontaneous discovery of concept's personal meaning

all of a sudden it was like I got in this instant that it's like, Oh! This is this is not some abstract, disconnected thing! This is something to do with how I'm feeling inside, how much space I am wanting and needing, and...

Instructiveness of spontaneous gesture

and there was even this part of the gesture that had come, and sometimes it's *here* [elbows bend to bring hands, palm out, drawn closer to her body], and sometimes it's *here* [straightens arms and pushes palms out further]

Gesture as healing reconnection

- it's kind of connected to me!"

-it was important because I think it was a way of me beginning to physically embody a sense of having the space the affirmation, the right--that seems a little less because it's so abstract, but still it's part of all of that, but it's not-- of the possibility of [sigh] setting boundaries.

Understanding concepts from the inside

-say you have the, y'know, the psychological concept of learned helplessness or something like that and say that I were to get a physical image of: what is this, and what is this? And then afterwards kind of go, "Oh!!! That's what that whole construct that other people out there have created about this thing... feels like from the inside!"

-It's not like in the moment I got any insight into my family of origin or dynamics or anything like that but I... it was just a really deep reconnection in a physical sense

Changing relationship to issue, even if issue isn't resolved

It doesn't mean that I am perfect in my life about setting boundaries or that I... have done all the work I need to do around that issue in my life, but maybe it just gave it a real...inner dimension

Valuation of this particular instance of focusing

Amazement

--And it's just a really amazing... thing! Because the person I was with wasn't trying to teach me about boundaries,
--then when the movement came I didn't even think that the movement had anything to do with the thing I was talking about, so it was. It was just really memorable for me

Repetition of this particular focusing story

it stayed with me. I mean, this is a story I've told different times.

Shifting from obscure to clear, personal meaning of gesture

Initial lack of meaning of gesture

I was, "Well I don't know what this—but let me just feel it.

I just feel like, "Ah!" Y'know, I just... [sigh] like I just want to do [exhale]

and then I just kind of want to explore, just like, well, maybe it's y'know...

and it was *just movement*, it had no conceptual thing to it, until it was out there,

and then it was just like, "Ok, how does that feel?" "Well, that feels good"

I wonder what that was; it probably doesn't have anything to do with my thing, but—

-I had *no clue* about the connection or the meaning for a while?

then the meaning of it

-it was surprising when it happened and it... there was an element of s-s-surprise, puzzling, kind of a mystery of. A, "geeze, I don't know what..." y'know,

so, and then having..

--Like, at first it was like this other thing where I was just kind of getting this...

this...image and it something felt important about it but I didn't know what the

connection was, and then as I was with it more, it kind of unfolded along those lines that there was a powerful message in it.

Particular context illuminating more general issue

-it addressed the situation that I was in in the moment, but it also like shed light on this conceptual category that I had always had a hard time understanding.
-it was expressing itself in that situation. It's this situation that is an instance of this... [sigh] of this larger... way that I am experiencing things and able to experience things now, or... larger insight about how I've been holding myself -back from experiencing things, or something that's going on in my life that's being expressed in this instance, but that isn't just contained to this instance...

Experienced agency of self in focusing

I might be, you know, curious and welcoming and whatever, but there's ... what happens from the other side is kind of dependent ... on its all things and to have, from the other side, like I could be sitting here for hours just kind of observing and just kind of seeing little things poking out,

Agency in focusing process

And, I'm just realizing that, y'know this whole process of creating touchstones it's like ... there's an active thing about what we do afterwards. It's like a dream, y'know. I had this wonderful dream the other day... and I did tell my therapist about it and I have written down parts of it and I did take a certain action based on that and I could even do more. Like I could paint a picture of it or something y'know. But it's like—the kinds of things that we choose to do afterward can ... strengthen the gift of it, that touchstone part of it.

Experience of active receptivity in focusing

there are these gifts that focusing gives to us then, there's this other level y'know of what do we choose to do with them and some of them we end up ... doing things that allow us to receive the gift more fully and other ones we just kind of lose because our hands are full and they just fall through our fingers.

Experience of agency removed from conscious sense of self in focusing

Agency of the “other side”

-- but at some point I might actually- - something from here might come out and do this thing and I might go, “Oh, my gosh!” y'know?... it's kind of, um, it's just the manifestation—like a big manifestation from the other side.
-- The other side can be kind of y'know giving you little trickles or little things or like that but sometimes there can be something that feels really big... I mean, *it's* big anyways, whether I have a sense of it being big because of all the little pieces add up; I know there's a lot there, but sometimes there can be a pretty sizeable display or something

coming through of something outside self

--*that* felt like to me like a pretty sizeable display of... I don't know that- that- that other thing that y'know, ... can't put any words to it—but deep wisdom, or larger knowing that's outside of what's—cuz y'know I didn't have a clue of what this was. It was really clear that it was coming to me from outside.

Conscious vs. “larger” intelligence

it's an experience that kind of particularly... um...it's like that sense of like a larger intelligence that has nothing to do—not nothing to do, but—very little to do with our conscious mind and our control and our intention and, y'know, just kind of that.

contradiction (see line __) inside/outside

it was coming from inside...

Importance of allowing experiences to stand outside of language in wonder

Not trying to figure experiences out

Not trying to immediately figure it all out

Wonder vs. power

A wonder-filled discovery rather than a colonizing

Ineffability of experience

-It's just like, yeah.

- a pretty sizeable display of... I don't know that- that- that other thing that y'know, ...can't put any words to it—

-I had some... images of ...[16 sec silence] there were three. One of them was ...[10 sec]...it was like...there was a sssscene I don't know there was this image... there was something about the quality of the light...in the image, and...the solidity or the density of the light or the space... I think I'm mixing two different ones up because there was one that was like, there was like, you know how light shifts when it goes from like air to water... it was like it was like that kind of ... and then.. another one where I think it was..it was like a...[sigh]... it was more like a... y'know how light has certain colors at times of the day, it's like.... But where... where the really strong thing that was coming up had to do with these qualities of light in this image. It was like very subtle things in a certain way, yet I could feel it really strongly.

Process and form of gesture contribute to impact

I think it's part of *how* it came, and then also *what* came that I think is part of what makes it so- so significant.

Impact over time

--And it's not, like, everything changes over night or anything like that, but it becomes a touch stone, you know? It's... something that one can go back to...

-- I guess I don't feel it's ever too late, but I don't feel like I've harvested fully the gift of that—that session, yeah

focusing over time

- what the interview process now helps in the carrying forward of what happened then, (yeah) so...

-And I'm just realizing, when you are doing something like this in focusing how... kind of inevitable it will be not necessarily that it's going to have something—well, yes. It will have something positive. But my emphasis isn't on the positive my emphasis is on the ongoingness of it—that some ongoing will come from it, or it will be part of it

Speaking in a “focusing-sensitive” context

Using silence and searching in interview speech

--But this were just pretty...pretty vivid, um, and they were kind of ... disturbing isn't quite the right word, but...oh... (sigh)...[17 sec silence]... it kind of fits...[20 sec silence]... it was kind of like a ... a knowing from the inside about certain...psychological wounds that I'd experienced, it was... it was just, again, I was just so...[8 sec silence]... p

Receiving in the interview

I'm getting two things. I'm getting—there's almost a sadness because I'm feeling like I could have gone further there; I could have...I don't know, written it down, taken a couple more steps with it, and then it would have turned into more of a touchstone, and it would have been useful. And also there's this thing of, um, a sense of, well y'know I can go back. I mean I can't go back in time, but whatever it was that's there I can—I can reconnect and and and um... and re and re- yeah. Retouch that.

Surprise re: insight in interview

I'm realizing that the big surprise for me was just how much more present unfolding this would be (yeah)

contrasting typical interview with focusing sensitive interview

... this isn't a judgment at all; I mean we do have past experiences and it can be very interesting to study them, it's just when we're studying past experiences about focusing, in a focusing-sensitive context, it almost seems like invariable it, that there will be a present ongoing of that past experience. And I'm not talking about... yes, we're re-remembering it, etc., but it's not even just the fact that we are... remembering it differently or having, whatever. But that it—some new steps forward will come.

Appeal to conceptual framework to support

I don't know, maybe it's a little bit related to what ... ___ calls a background feeling—do you know the work on the background feeling?

Visibility/invisibility, power and race

one of those images had something to do with issues of visibility and invisibility...um... like, I'm Latina and I'm light skinned and several members of my family are darker than I am and regardless of how light or dark I'm familiar with a certain kind of experiences that I had as a child, family members have had, other people in the world have had... And I can pass for white, and there's the visibility and invisibility of the dimension to all of that. And I know that one of those had to do with not just that in particular but also larger issues of visibility and invisibility. Something to do with... y'know about this whole thing about the light and the the way that y'know like sometimes when there's heat, and you know light curves, y'know and it's like, “Is there something there?”

Wishing for a deep, ongoing focusing space

-- I mean, I feel bad even saying this because I feel disloyal or something but I love my therapist who I'm working with. I really do; we do a lot of really good

work in certain ways and... she knows about focusing and she's very nondirective and I kind of made sure of that in a lot of ways and so I feel like I can do my own process, which is good, but I just ... I don't know! It's like I just not—and maybe it's just me but I don't think so, I think that there's something here—I just don't feel comfortable going to that kind of a deep space inside where these things... and it's partly because she doesn't know the focusing process...
- There's was something about that that kind of came out because I'm saying it, acknowledging it—the amazing space that was help for me by this focusing partner in which I had these really profound experiences and just realizing that partly I haven't had the space in which to do that....

Repetition of themes from first experience (not intending, disconnected thing, striking personal relevance to situation, and in general)

what was really intriguing about it was that it wasn't like I was going in and saying, "Oh, what does learned helplessness feel like on the inside?" or "What does a.. y'know, like, having a sense of having to have a false self in certain situations—how does that feel on the inside?" I wasn't—it's like I wasn't like I was asking that question, it was much more like, in ... in response to exploring a particular situation, I was getting this image... a felt image.. and... that I had no clue what it was about, and then as I explored the felt image, I ... got some kind of a deep sense from it that had to do not just with the situation which I was in now but with a more general pain in my life and it wasn't like the exact analogue of some external construct, but it was like... it was that rich, and it was that powerful, but it was... it was coming from inside...

Disclosing big changes in life vis a vis focusing

—_____ and I have been married for five years. I moved out here about a year and a half before that, and we were dating for about a year and a half before I moved out. We've known each other for a while but um when I moved out here I was initially going to start re-growing my _____ practice and then I realized I'm in a new role as a step mom and I don't want to be traveling, away all the time, whatever. So I ended up going back to school for an _____.

Gesture>language

[lifts shoulders, then arms up from her body so that they are about half way between her waist and shoulders. As she lowers both arms, she lifts her palms up and pushes out away from her body. All of this is done in a fluid, expressive motion, like a dance move, but without feeling choreographed]...

Self/other parts

but there was something about just wanting to go like *this*

Self-consciousness about focusing practice

-I do a lot of focusing related activities, but at this point, I-I... most of my focusing is with _____ and it's mostly informal and so it's not, you know, it's not like we're gonna do a whatever session,

-It's also a little bit complicated in that I- y'know, ___ has 4 different focusing partners that he focuses with weekly... ah...

possible Contradiction re: recall

I wish I could remember what the context of the focusing session was—

Situating comments vis a vis husband

[p1} has this question that he asks people sometimes...this is a response I used to give

wanting to share personal context

I don't know if this is the kind of stuff you want to get into in your interviews but I'll just go ahead and share it—you can mute whatever you don't use, whatever

Generalizing own experience

So I think it's a very it's a very vital thing for all of us

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis:
Thematic Groupings with Excerpts from Transcripts

A5.3 Participant Three: Yolanda

Working themes shown in bold

Working implicit themes shown in bold, in brackets

Textual support cut and pasted from transcript

Superordinate themes shown in bold, underlined, italicized

[challenges in working with remembered accounts]

[acknowledging uncertainty about remembered account]

--and the one that stays in my mind is my very first session, 1.5
which means it may be a little hard to remember all of the sensations, but—but I'd
like to talk about that

-- Well, memory is tricky, of course. [laughs] 36

[Relating generalities, perhaps not particularities—reconstruction vs. remembering?]

-but I I'm sure that in that session I started with the physical sensation of in my
gut, what was, what was I feeling there, was there an emotional quality to it, um.
And just that invitation perhaps to let that part of me know that—that I was aware,
then, brought images...But I'm sure that it started with the physical, you know,
getting into my body and seeing what was happening there. Um, because I'm
sure _____ led me through that process! 17

- I'm sure that um in those moments when I was sitting there focusing with
that, around that topic, that I came to a place of compassion. It's hard to hang
onto that. 43

[Experiencing memories of past self—reliving or remembering?]

, it felt as if I were still having that experience of the small child. I mean that *was*
my experience, and um... she was me, and um, she became a vehicle to express
whatever I was feeling at that time 19

- Uh, y'know, as if I were speaking through her voice or from her, from her place
as opposed to seeing it from a distance 19

***experiencing multiple positions of self/self-experiences in quick succession or
simultaneously***

-and I I remember feeling... comforted, I guess is the sense that I have. Feeling
that pain of a small child that suffers but also comforted by knowing that I could
comfort her, 5

- Because she was only part of all that I experienced. She was only part of me,
and so I was also able to see, too, to see other parts of myself that could step in
and reach out to her, and, and, care for her.

-that was astonishing in a way that I would be accessing a part of myself that was
that small child and be writing about my childhood at the same time.. 9

- Uh, y'know, as if I were speaking through her voice or from her, from her place
as opposed to seeing it from a distance 19

- it was, uh, a new awareness of of part of myself being suffering or exiled and part of myself being strong enough to be compassionate. 31
- felt like it was more about letting that part of me know that I knew it was there, um... did it want me to keep it company?

Learning to meet and care for one's own vulnerability

Permission to pay attention to one's own vulnerabilities

and so it gave me a sense of it's ok to have parts—places in my emotional life that need attention or y'know. (mmmmm) It sort of relieved me of some pressure to enter the world with the sense that I had to be strong and (huh!) Yeah. (Huh!... That's that's so interesting) SO it allowed, uh, it allowed me to accommodate a part of myself that was tender or vulnerable 33

Relief at meeting one's own sorrow and tenderness

So I think immediately after that first session, although I felt sort of tender and raw and sad, probably, it-- y'know because it brought up a lot of feeling—um, I... I also felt like I had a way of addressing it and um it was- it was relieving or it was, um, sweet, y'know?11

Moving from identification with pain to relationship with pain

It's kind of stepping back from the experience of pain and allowing myself to ... come at it from a point of view of compassion 12

Taking/imagining an active role toward vulnerable feelings

- imagining holding her or reaching out my hand to her or—
- that was a gesture from that first session, actually, it was my reaching out to walk on a road with her, hold her hand, so um, 13
- having an opportunity to go down to that pool where he lives and sit there and offer um offer a hand or extend... concern or support is very powerful. 24

increased strength in discovering/cultivating new self-capacities

- that's really wonderful information in itself to know that you are also capable of taking care of yourself, that you're also capable of...um... empathizing with a part of yourself that's been cut off...21
- it was, uh, a new awareness of of part of myself being suffering or exiled and part of myself being strong enough to be compassionate. 31
- I had some connection with nature, with Being that was profound and really grounding and that was, um, that gave me strength. Um and in the focusing session it was similar—that same kind of feeling that um there was a strength here [in herself] that I hadn't really articulated but this was a more um concrete manifestation of that. 30

encountering conflict between parts

resistance to caring for vulnerability

- And it has has been something that I continue to come back to in focusing that comes up again and again and it's always, ah, it's always a wonderful reminder, "Oh, yes, that part of me needs ta—for me to let her know that I know she's there. 10.5
- ... there've been times when I have felt—if something has been really challenging to me personally—frustrated that I have to go back and comfort that child again!

[laughs]. focusing is the way to do it for me. It always—it always becomes apparent, to me, that's what is needed, um, she wants my attention; she wants my reassurance. And it's always so powerful to do it, although there's another part of me that resists it. 25

expectations as obstacle to self-care

It's almost as if I have felt, um, since the first session or the early sessions, um that progress needed to be made. I mean like I was gauging it in some way like I needed to be growing or outgrowing this need or... um and so there's been some resistance or a... wish to deny that the small child is still there needing my attention.27

Meeting resistance with acknowledgment

sometimes in a focusing session I will acknowledge the resistant part and find out what that part of me needs and—does that part of me need to be acknowledged and... yeah.28

focusing as staying with images or sensations rather than watching

-focusing is much more for me an opportunity to dwell with a particular image or a particular sensation and be with it, um, and stay with it. 15

- I had an image of the shape of the anxiety, um, and what was going on with my pulse rate and everything I was sort of able to just watch that, um, physical process of it. But then I realized I was shifting into focusing and it was more—really staying with that part of my body where I was feeling that as opposed to... I don't know there's a subtle difference there and so focusing is more guided. 38

Imagining gesture

--that was a gesture from that first session, actually, it was my reaching out to walk on a road with her, hold her hand, so um, 13
Something I saw happening—the image of that gesture came to me,14

importance, power of connecting with childhood self-experiences

Power in communicating with an internal “part”

--so it was powerful for me to communicate with that small child, 5
--I'd like to talk about that one because um I was just so immediately convinced that it was a powerful way to access my emotional life. 1.5
- it was, uh, a new awareness of of part of myself being suffering or exiled and part of myself being strong enough to be compassionate. 31
- empathizing with a part of yourself that's been cut off... 21

power heightened because of intentional dwelling with emotionally salient memories

Um, and it was powerful, um, I think because I was in the process of writing ah, memoir, which I was just in the beginning stages—I don't even know if I knew that that's what I was working on at that point. But I was writing about childhood, from childhood memories. 3
--that was astonishing in a way that I would be accessing a part of myself that was that small child and be writing about my childhood at the same time. It was very powerful. 9

Cutting through to the heart, core of experience

Getting to the heart, the core

I felt like, in that focusing session—and I have felt it since then—that I just got to the heart of what the issue was or what it was that I was feeling, what the core emotion was there. 7

cutting through words

(mmm) and it sort of cut through the verbal process that one engages in in a more typical therapeutic session. Um. 7

letting go of analysis

it felt like I could ... let go of analysis, Um, that I could let go of trying to figure something out, or...18

Realness, authenticity in bodily-felt experience (vs. cerebral, mediated)

- here was something more physical and immediate and I was embodying it in some way.

-Um, and ...so it felt more real, it felt more authentic than an explication or, uh, y'know a more cerebral intellectual interpretation of what my experience had been or was.18

-I had some connection with nature, with Being that was profound and really grounding and that was, um, that gave me strength. Um and in the focusing session it was similar—that same kind of feeling that um there was a strength here [in herself] that I hadn't really articulated but this was a more um concrete manifestation of that. 30

- it gave it a more specific gesture or y'know sort of physical and visual reality to attach to. 29

-empathizing with a part of yourself that's been cut off... 21

Role of listener

Guide as space holder for conflicting parts

I can remember a specific focusing session w ___ during my training where she's like holding out the two sides: the one that's resisting offering that support or acknowledgement, and the one who wants it. 25

Impact of listeners skill on the power of the session

the presence of whoever was—either ___ who was guiding me through the process, so... the person facilitating, guiding, leading, is really key in the process. I mean mostly what I do now is focus by myself, which is, uh... good, I think it's a little harder, uh, but, having a really skilled person to lead you through the process is...is huge.26

Importance of holding space/time

it was during this writing retreat, as I said, and I was focusing with ___ and um, uh, they were they were both very experienced trainers, focusing trainers so I was in good hands 2

Perception/evaluation of how her process differs from others'

-I—a lot of what happens to me in focusing is that I that my... focusing focusing responses are—yes, they're physical but they're also image based. (mmm) So I get a lot of images. 4

-I've sort of wondered if, um, there have been times when I have wondered "Am I doing it right?" because it's always so visual and um as opposed to—and um in the process of the training when I would guide people through it many people's experience of it is much more physical. It's here in my body, it's here in my body... and that was present for me but it it also became quickly very... almost like story like, um (mmm) but, that seems to be the way it is!

Awareness of focusing pedagogy

yes, they're physical but they're also image based. 4

[self consciousness/wondering about re: own focusing process]

I've sort of wondered if, um, there have been times when I have wondered "Am I doing it right?" because it's always so visual and um as opposed to—and um in the process of the training when I would guide people through it many people's experience of it is much more physical. "It's here in my body, it's here in my body"... and that was present for me but it it also became quickly very... almost like story like, um (mmm) but, that seems to be the way it is! 35

Tentative acceptance of difference

but, that seems to be the way it is! 35

focusing over time

Becoming familiar with focusing content over time

And it has has been something that I continue to come back to in focusing that comes up again and again and it's always, ah, it's always a wonderful reminder, "Oh, yes, that part of me needs ta—for me to let her know that I know she's there. 10.5

Developing familiarity with content

said I think I at other times have come back to that ... relationship that was established in that focusing session with um that small child, that part of myself,25

Perceived agency of experience

Images as if from outside self

I think that the images are always pretty fleeting. They come as if from nowhere 16

Personification of affective experience

It was down in my stomach and that place where emotions live. 4

Part's wants/agency of parts

-did it want me to keep it company? 38

-Whereas with the meditation it might so move off and then it'd be gone 39

-sometimes in a focusing session I will acknowledge the resistant part and find out what that part of me needs and—does that part of me need to be

acknowledged and... yeah.28

Use of images

Metaphors, images of experiences convey nuances in relationship

That—there's a part of me that's like that Gollum figure and shut off in the cave and, so, focusing—and it's similar to that small child experience—focusing is a way of being with that part of myself that doesn't get recognition very often.
(mmm) Yeah.22

Creating an image for previously unarticulated inner strength both to suffer and to comfort

it gave me a form for a kind of strength that I knew I had um that in periods of time when I've been suffering about one thing or another I've know than I've been able to um find a way to ah get in touch with an inner strength, um... It gave me a form for that—or it gave me—and because I was able to—also be, was able to be the suffering child but I was also able to be the one reaching out to comfort then that grounded me in a strength that I knew on some level that I had, but it it gave it a more specific gesture or y'know sort of physical and visual reality to attach to. 29

Impact of witnessing others'

So, that part of myself that was strong enough to be compassionate then... I became newly aware of that. 32

-And I think also, another thing that issss somewhat related is—because then I was a part of a small community of people who were focusing and y'know we were sharing the experience...um, not only did I focus but _____ focused everyday too so then I had the opportunity of um of witnessing their process

Normalization of exiled parts

I became aware that everybody has some exiled part of themselves or um everybody, uh, so I felt less alone in that. 32

focusing unable to shift powerful physiology—insight only (contrast w/ Anna)

. It's a hard thing to work with because it becomes physical. (ohhh) And I'm not sure that the focusing cured me of it [laugh] but it I guess I would have to say that it helped me understand the nature of it and, um, why it was an issue for me, right42

[focusing and Buddhism/meditation]

Retrospective Buddhist explanation

so it feels now to me now that I've studied more Buddhist meditation like it was a moment of compassion that I was able to extend to a part of myself that had been pushed aside or exiled 6

Reinterpreting meaning of focusing session through Buddhism

I felt like I felt that shift during that session of feeling ...um... feeling that sense of compassion or acknowledgement of the small child part of me 10

I I come at it from different ways now cause I have also practiced loving kindness meditation and so I – it's kind of the same.12

Relationship between focusing and meditation

that seems to make a distinction for me between focusing and meditation. y'know, with with meditation I don't usually focus on images. I don't, I don't meditate on images I—more just try to observe what's happening in my body, in my thoughts, um, I let them come and go 15

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis:
Thematic Groupings with Excerpts from Transcripts

A5.4 Participant Four, Sophie

Working themes shown in bold

Working implicit themes shown in bold, in brackets

Textual support cut and pasted from transcript

Superordinate themes shown in bold, underlined, italicized

Role of present other in focusing session

working mainly alone, with a non focuser holding the space

-she's not a focuser but I was able to work with myself...um... y'know I'm able to work with my felt sense as a focuser with her, and she pretty much gives me the space to do that...

importance of other's silence, non-interference in her process

it was a case of me doing focusing kind of on my own, but with someone a skilled person who listened to me, um, and I could have told her to be—she was kind of—she only intervened as a therapist in one place and I kind of found it helpful what she said, so. 3

- But I didn't—it was like...it was like I didn't have to go in—I didn't have to stop her, I didn't have to say, well, “Don't intervene in my process” because 64

Accepting contribution from listener as a focusing intervention

-and so she said that and that felt right. Like, “ok, yeah, ok.” So that's the inner critic. So let's get rid of him. So that's who that was. 27

-that's another thing that gene says, too, like, “Oh, you see the inner critic and then you keep walking you walk past that and you go somewhere else” And I thought, “Oh, ok. Great! That-that makes sense 64

Communicating importance of sense of humor/playfulness

-And this therapist, I mean we love to laugh and so she was—I say things and she just bursts into laughter (bursts into laughter) [laughs] 66

-anyway, she's very, she's very fun—and uhm, so...well, I was able then to really get in touch—67

Guiding assumptions about dreams

relating to the dream as other/agency

-before going into the new part that the dream is trying to tell you. 6

-and it was just the genius of the dream! Like, how would it know that I—y'know that I did all these searches on line and seen—I'd gone to the people's houses and seen all their weird goats and chickens and... and y'know that this one person in my life, KN kind of symbolizes this 67

[experiencing latent as discrete, stable and waiting to be uncovered]

there's two stages to um finding out what a dream was about 5

Moving from assumption of meaningless to curiosity and exploration initially assuming meaninglessness

- so I woke up and I thought, oh, I was throwing up all over everything, ok, ah... whatever. (laughs!). 14
- “Nyehhhh...” there’s nothing here, you know. (laughs) “Why don’t I have interesting dreams? Why did I have a dream about throwing up? Why don’t I have—“ 50

Proposing or perceiving an “aboutness” or purpose of dreams

- So I was on my way there and I was thinking, “Well, what was that dream about? 15

receiving associations and memories as reply

- ? And then I remembered the last conversation that I had with her which was two months ago 15
- Then I was walking along and I remembered [her interactions with friend, and issues re: pregnancy] 50

Developing curiosity about dream figures

- And then I thought, “well, why was KN there? What was he doing there and why was I *so mad* at him for talking about how beautiful the baby was?” 28
- my sort of ignoring him and saying “well, what the hell’s he doing there?” y’know gene’s saying, well, ask: what , y’know, what are these people doing here? 68

discovering insight about dream’s meaning

- And I and I got that feeling about, “Oh!!!” 50
- And so I thought, “Wow!” 19

Dialoguing with self

Asking first broad, then more specific questions asked of self about dream

- Well, what was that dream about? Why was K there? 15
- And then I thought, “well, why was KN there? What was he doing there and why was I *so mad* at him for talking about how beautiful the baby was?” 28

receiving associations and memories as reply

- ? And then I remembered the last conversation that I had with her which was two months ago 15
- Then I was walking along and I remembered [her interactions with friend, and issues re: pregnancy] 50

Felt sense arises as answer to questions posed

- I thought, “Why was he there and what was... why was I *so mad* at him?” and so I got a felt sense of what he means, what he represents for me. 29
- And then I went into the felt sense of it 70

following trail of first insight through self-questioning/dialogue

- and I said, “Well when is a time when I when I was pregnant but didn’t know I was pregnant?” 23

dialoguing with another aspect of self

- “Oh, yeah, I know it’s hard for you to talk, ok, whatever—“ and then, “just pretend you’re KN and—cause he thinks the baby’s gonna be beautiful (awhhh) and he’s telling your inner critic the baby’s gonna be beautiful so why not give it a try?” 76

[possibly glossing over details—expert’s blind spot?]

- and so I got a felt sense of what he means, what he represents for me. 29
- And then I went into the felt sense of it 70

Relating to her focusing dream experience in terms of a recent didactic session

[excitement about learning new application of focusing]

. I think the one I’m more attracted to doing is...the one I did on Thursday about a dream because I think that um because I think I really learned something about how to work with focusing with dreams²

formal focusing instructions --first insight satisfying but not truly new

there’s always that initial getting it is probably not really showing you something new that you didn’t understand before⁵

recalling focusing instructions to move from disinterest to curiosity

- my sort of ignoring him and saying “well, what the hell’s he doing there?”
y’know gene’s saying, well, ask: what , y’know, what are these people doing here?
68

importance of noticing and amplifying positive felt sense

-you need to first find something in the dream that is like a positive or something in the dream that you feel is helpful thing that can give you strength and energy for working with the rest of the dream.⁶

, find what it is in the dream that you can use that gives you a good felt sense that can ground you ⁶

recognizing similarity between own insight and description of process

that’s part one, like gene said. So, I said ok, I I I can see that. 20

Recognizing feeling of insight as a manifestation of the phenomenon which she just learned about

-and this is just like what gene said—“Wow! I know what that dream was about! We were both pregnant! 19

-And I remembered Gene had just said, “OHHH! I know what this dream is about!” 51

feeling excited about recognizing her response as the beginning, rather than the end, of the dream work

- I started feeling so happy like “Wow!” y’know, I... I...’m so happy that I know about this two stage thing because I got this- I don’t have to stop... 51

Integrating instructions with her own focusing experience

prioritizing own felt sense reaction over explicit instructions

-- And ___ said, “If you can find a baby, that’s great!” but I said, “No! This does—this does not feel good, this whole thing about the baby.” So I I can’t go there...²¹

- I recognize that I’m saying, “Oh, yeah, I know what this- thought” but there must be more, so, what’s the part that I can use to uh to be my ally as I go into the into working on the part that I don’t know about, that’s something new? ²⁰

-y’know and I went to the part about the baby, and should I use the baby as an ally and that’s definitely not! ⁵²

understanding instructions in spirit, not in letter

-that feeling of everybody being in the streets and feeling safe and calm and the young people participating and feeling that somehow this is a result of our efforts or something—that-that’s a wonderful feeling! 22

finding the internal motivation and support for further exploration

--! I really liked that feeling, like...[big sigh] you know like this calm peaceful...everybody together, everybody feeling safe to be in the street. The young people really participating and seeing how they can benefit from this. It’s like, “Ah!” It’s just like, “mmmm!” Felt all warm and fuzzy and like [honey] so... 22

developing association that opens up deep feelings of meaning-- dropping into reverie

--And then I—and then I remembered this song... and I started crying on the way, um, and I didn’t quite know... I just started thinking over and over again of this [artist--- Sosa] song... and I... um ... and I knew that –I just felt like—wow this just—this is my song. This dream is... is just telling me something about how I’m going to be given a baby. 54

--And um, I just said, “Y’know I think this dream is about—I just kept repeating the song... and so I’m kind of singing it to myself and I, I’m just crying because there’s a certain loneliness that I have as...of being... cause I’m alone.59... But, there’s also this... oh, there’s this incredible way that I feel accompanied by my friends in ___ that we’re really working on something together.

--And so I was kind of like crying as I went up to the... y’know crying from being touched in my remembering this song. 61

-So, um, then I went into the therapists’ office I was really in this beautiful space 62

letting waking associations enrich and deepen the felt significance of the dream

- that song appeared in my mind almost like the way a dream—(mmmm) y’know all the different... significances of that song. 60

- And all the times that I’ve heard it but I’ve never, I’ve never taken it in as relating to me and that’s the way of the dreamness of it too because I thought, “Wow! Now that’s a – that’s a song that I can really identify with!” I never never thought of it, and then it just all came to me 61

-“Wow, y’know, there’s something about this song and this child that [blows nose] there’s something about this song and the child that has to do with this dream, too.

Allowing ambiguities or contradictions

encountering the genuine discord between a strong negative reaction to the person, and her positive evaluations of him

- Let’s just give them the cows and chickens and then they’ll have more cows and chickens and that’ll solve everybody’s problems!” [laughter] (laughter) 41 ...42 So...I thought, “Wow, y’know” and yet y’know I mean this, this is a very lovable man.

Acknowledging both how her feelings may be distorted, and how they make sense

I mean his heart is as big as all outdoors and he's not—he doesn't deserve my wrath. But I could see how it—this cow thing cattle livestock kind of thing just ... 42

difficulty finding felt sense analogue in real life for what was shown in dream

--And... so that's.. it's kind of like... it's kind of- I don't know I kind of compare it to—let's see... the felt sense of— I don't know if I ... let's see... um...(4 sec) well, the main thing is that it's—I'm trying to give attention to the tourism, the community tourism baby that I have... before I...before I get pregnant with the focusing/ NVC teaching baby—although I'm already doing that, but um. 26

radical shift in mood with re-understanding of relationship

what was experienced as infuriating is experienced as supportive

- So all of the sudden I say, "Wow! I think what he's showing me is that... he's coming over and he's—he's like visiting his buddy the landlord and he's saying, "This baby that these women are going to have—it came out so beautiful and so amazing. 46

recognizing that her own anger obscured other's positive intentions

- And it was like he was advocating for me but I couldn't recognize it because of the of of the ...y'know because of this frustration that I have about where to find funding46

understanding/experiencing differences in assumptions about relationships with others

-Because he does it from this kind of richness of his own being. It's like, "Oh, let me share this with you because this is from the richness of my being" rather than...[sigh] "What do I have to do to get you to be interested in these things that only I am interested in and that you're probably not really interested in because you don't know anything about it and how do I start to explain it to you... [trails of dejectedly]" 86

Accepting other as role model rather than antagonist

deeply experiencing new possibilities for herself

- I can develop in myself that that sureness about the rightness of what I'm talking about and what I'm doing that he has-- 47

experiencing extreme happiness at the prospect of role modeling

- And and and so I just started getting just ebulliently happy—it was like "Wow!" y'know? This gives me something to work on- gives me something to notice of myself – 73

perception of possibility, imagining concrete steps of development

-So it's like, somehow it was showing me a persona that I can develop and a and a part of me that was like y'know frustrated because it doesn't have this but something that I can develop and and own. 48

-to see and to just notice the persona of KN and how I could incorporate that more—like how I could just say, "Oh, yeah, I know it's hard for you to talk, ok, whatever—" and then, "just pretend you're KN and—cause he thinks the baby's gonna be beautiful 76

Vicariously experiencing and subsequently adopting other's enthusiasm and unabashed confidence

--KN becomes like a living energy. He becomes a living felt sense that I can remember (ahhhh) and take into me... 87

[dream interpretation framework strengthens ownership/agency with respect to the internalization of the role model]

--It's like he—oh! Because in the dream everything is a part of you! So here he was... he was standing, he was showing me

impact of focusing session

experiencing increased self-efficacy shortly afterward

- Well, it helped me write something the next day. It gave me like energy. There's just this block I have about... ohh... It helped me write two things already. It helped me write two things yesterday. 79

- And so I wrote—I was able to have the confidence 84

- So I put it all together and I sent it out and I got into saying, "I can do this!" So it helped me with my—have more confidence in my written expression and I think it'll help me more...84

working and feeling a breakthrough with a long standing, important conflict

And so I've had this—it's like a miasm or something that prevents me from... getting out there and I think that this was another... this thing about seeing KN as a persona that I can take on or—or just kind of loosening up everything around all that... is...good. (mmm) Y'know, I mean loosening up maybe just loosening up everything around that whole thing of "I can't talk, I can't say what—I can't—nobody's gonna be interested. I can't I can't do this, whatever. (mmmm) 92-93

[surprise at the significance that came out of apparent insignificance]

-Right and it just sounded so kind of stupid at the beginning!

the felt sense moves between intraself experiences

the felt sense took me immediately to that.... Kind of shut down part of myself 72

interpretations opening up further interpretations

- and here he was coming over to visit his buddy the inner critic and saying, "Hey, you know. Forget the vomit all over everything. The baby's gonna be so beautiful, amazing, and perfect! 72

the felt sense of the dream triggers/is multilayered memory of complex feelings from multiple interactions 34, 37

encountering freshly the relevance and depth of her dream/real anger

And then that reminds me, oh, shit! In --- all the programs that are helping people are like, "Give a girl a cow or a goat! 38

[Encountering barriers in hearing and being heard by others]

[feeling her passions unheard, unappreciated interpersonally]

--And I remember at one point saying—and these are people I’ve known for years—I mean saying, “Um, could somebody ask me about what I’ve been doing? So I could talk about it?” 31

- And then the other thing is, he—y’know, this felt sense of “there’s no place for me, there’s no way I can be like that 34

- It’s just kind of... alone and this kind of wall between me and expressing... what’s so exciting to me 70

[feeling unheard on a global level]

-- And so now I go to y’know I’m looking online at all the funding... funding for teaching focusing in ---! [laughs!] (laughs!) Well, what category could that be in... well, there’s for cows and goats and chickens and uh emergency relief and police and uh... 39

[not wanting to hear]

- and also frustrating boredom—just BOREDOM! With what they’re talking about! 71

[feeling exasperated by the disparity between what she believes is helpful and what others believe is helpful]

- And then I go to the funding thing and – focusing, I just see the changes that it’s making in people’s lives, but... when I look at the funding it’s like it’s all for cows! [laugh!] (laugh!) The cows are [just nothing!] I mean they make the streets all dusty and --Oh, god! 40

[attunement to togetherness/power]

-they’re showing their power by being together out on the street 7

- it was a good feeling! It was something about the freedom... to...enjoy being peacefully on the street on a sunny day. Everyone together 9

[togetherness/aloneness]

- I’ve been doing my part all by myself...18

[identifying with the poor who experience internal barriers to working productively with opportunity]

- And there’s ways that I’m not able to take my *years* of focusing training and workshops and all this stuff that I’ve done and make it into me being able to teach focusing. (mmm) So it’s like I’m one of those people

[Offering elaborate context to support understanding/shared experience of the meaning of this focusing session for her]

[wanting me to understand how she has felt powerless and invalidated in this life so deeply that it feels like this invalidation has roots in annihilating violence in a previous life] 90-92

-[importance of sharing the *beauty* and meaning of this song for her, with respect to the dream. She wants me to understand why it’s so beautiful, and even without hearing it, I do find it very moving] 55-57

Reflexive note-- feeling the loveliness of this scene; she evokes a warm, open, and sunny felt sense in me, then and when re-reading] 7

[wanting to give fuller context]

can I do this, so you have some background?4

[offering rich situated context to illustrate the complex emotions and reactions summed up in the dream-felt rage] 29-41

Reflexive note: She is really taking me through the meaning of the felt senses. Striking absence of somatic description, but wealth of nuance wrt describing the whole contexts that are embedded in a feeling; she must give elaborate history so that I can understand the insight. It's not enough to tell me about an insight; wants me to come inside it with her] 17

[reflections on what focusing is]

- And then they're saying y'know—the Gnostics say, “Better to search for god, and ask more who y'know look at your own sorrow and anger and... and frustration and there you will find him! That's what the Gnostics are saying! And these quotes! And then the other thing in the Gnostic gospels they say Jesus said...bring forth that is within in, because if you do not bring forth that which is within you... Because what you bring forth from within you will heal you, and what you do not bring forth from within you will destroy you. (ahh!) There's that “Wow! Y'know this—talking about focusing.” 84

[literal real life analogue to dream]

-before I knew I was pregnant with this third pregnancy I was talking on the phone and I just had to say, “Excuse me!” and I just went to the bathroom and had to throw up like in this dream 24

[repetition develop/see]

It was almost like--now, I can develop in myself—I can see, y'know, I can see—I can develop in myself that that sureness about the rightness of what I'm talking about 47

[using focusing to find a session]

and, I don't know I just... ok I'll just see if there's any others in there... 6 sec.
1

[switching between dream telling and connection to recent life]

so I bought this white, sweet, milky dessert. In Spanish it would be called tres leches, which is a – y'know three milks. I had some, actually, the other day on... 8

[emphasizing gender/disgust]

“ohh! What have you women been doing in here? This is disgusting!11

[attunement to gender/power]

Very much an ally—getting right in there man to man with my inner critic 78

[feeling apologetic for own body function]

-“We'll clean it up. We're sorry, y'know, we didn't mean to, it just happened and we're really sorry!” 12

[not sure why laughter here—tension?] 13

[discrepancy in her experience and the telling to me. Her memory likely happened in an instant, but she must take time to relate it to me.] 15

[fruit of their work in tension with new gestation/ maintenance vs. new birth] 18

[great surprise and excitement at making this connection]

-“Wow! So that’s what it’s about!” 19

[dream tells directly about waking life]

- And we both just didn’t get it yet that we were --were were--actually ARE pregnant and we’re gonna have a baby and it’s gonna be great!” 19

[attending to the internal obstacles/lack of agency that obstruct success in humanitarian work]

- Some people that are good at raising cattle, it’s like great. Terrific. And there’s other people that their chickens die and “eeeeeh, my chickens died... this happened to me” Y’know it’s like there’s there’s more things going on inside of people that have lived through hard, traumatic experiences and the way they think about themselves that—isn’t gonna *let* them take that 25 dollars or that cow and make something out of it. 43

[meaning in dream regarded as something waiting to be uncovered, rather than, e.g., a dynamic interpretation of the current waking mind]

- And this is what was so interesting. What was so genius—dreams are so genius! 30

[so not all parts are worth being open and curious about?]

[acknowledging ambiguity, letting it not fit]

- So that part is not clear on a felt sense level 26

[in the retelling, includes much stronger affective reactions which were not in initial account]

-“Oh when KN said, ‘oh, the baby’s so perfect, so beautiful! So precious, so amazing!’ I felt furious—just like my felt sense was like ARRGH!! SHUT UP!” 21

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis:
Thematic Groupings with Excerpts from Transcripts

A5.5 Participant Five: Eliza

Working themes shown in bold

Working implicit themes shown in bold, in brackets

Textual support cut and pasted from transcript

Superordinate themes shown in bold, underlined, italicized

[Depth metaphor]

nothing rises to the surface right now

Nothing is floating right up,

it's not about my deepest darkest secrets. I'd prefer to work with something a little more-- closer to the surface here

as things arise

all of the answers and theories that've surfaced earlier

I didn't know that was-on my mind or in my body right now!"

I wanted to go in and sense what it was 43

I was kind of fishing around inside 44

I'm finding myself as I sit and ask if there is anything else that wants to come up, but what's coming up is fresh

Persistence of specific images

I remember images (hmmm) from focusing sessions 12 years ago

Recall difficulties with process

I have like bits and pieces but whether I can get the whole flow of a session...

[if she had a journal] I could give you a lot more in the moment kind of---

Ambiguity about what is a "focusing" session

this was a long focusing session... but I was using an ifs approach where I was identifying different parts of me that were coming up, so it's um, it's it's not—it's focusing, but focusing with a map.

Integration of various theoretical approaches with focusing

Internal family systems

At first I couldn't find the part that doesn't want to do it. I kept finding the manager parts

"So I asked him" and this is an IFS [internal family systems] move—" *I asked him to step outside where I could see him more,*" and um,

Treasure maps

- I asked him to show me what he was not wanting,"

-this is, uh, treasure maps kind of work—if you can find a part, often you can find out what it's not wanting to experience? (mmm) It's a way of finding out how it's protecting you in some way.

Variety in own focusing practice/experiences

Project focusing and dip-in, open focusing

-I've been working on this issue uh, in a number of sessions, so there is a lot of history to this focusing session. It's what I would call "project focusing" rather than sort a dip-in, "how am I right now?"

-I was deliberate, I had a project; it wasn't just open form focusing. 42

Variation in narrative/verbal content and bodily-experiential impact

-Symbolic, or archetypal. Stripped down. (yeah, stripped down) without so much story and understanding, but just yeah much more powerfully experiential.82

Role and limits of subjective agency in focusing

sense of subjective agency

-Now this was a more deliberate campaign (ah) to see if I could *make some shifts* in the place where I'm stuck in my life.

-- *I wanted to be with them.* (Hm) and see what they would like to tell me. 43

-my objective was to find what was blocking and *have that block dissolve.* 60

absence of subjective sense of agency, or sense of agency outside subjective I self

-- I wanted to be with them. (Hm) and see *what they would like* to tell me. 43

-*to my surprise* I couldn't find them! I was finding- because I'd done so much work on this already I wasn't finding the parts that didn't want to. 44

-I also know that if you go in with an agenda, your part isn't gonna talk back to you. So, you have sort of—it's a funny sort of—you *have to go in with a purpose, but then you have to let it go and let whatever's gonna happen, happen.* 61

Different ways of moving into focusing spaces

Intentional exploration

-work on this particular issue—it probably would have been the sixth, seventh session I've had over time, ahm...[

-It feels a little more archival at this point, but the bull dogs are pretty fresh. Um, but y'know if I went back to that, it's almost like in would be—it's like a situation that I would be going freshly to that situation and whatever carries forward would be now using that as the seed, so to speak. But I don't know if it would open in the same way. 81

Slipping back into a previously opened focusing space

-And then I wrote, "*I got an aha as I wrote that.*" So as I was writing about the session that had taken place the day before, *it was taking me back into my focusing space* and I was getting shifts as I was writing. (ahhhh.) It was like there was a—*one of those kind of openings* that come from focusing. [5 sec] "What else does he want to tell me?"

-So I'm back, dialoguing with this male figure with the dogs. "*I could feel the caution in my chest,*" [puts hand on chest] 26

Spontaneous shifts into surprising during ongoing process

--*and then now,*" in the moment when I was journaling, "*Comes 'comfortable in my own skin'*" *that phrase 'comfortable in my own skin'—'satisfied. And,*" comments in the margin, "*I never really got that—what that meant until now.*" 30

-but what's coming up is fresh—now in this moment, and it's a curiosity about those dogs and wanting to go back in and finding out more about them—how they're feeling. 67

Trends in focusing practice over time

back then I did get very—I'd get a visceral [moves hand up and down in front of chest, palm toward chest and fingers as if grasping something as she moved hand up and down] feeling and then it would um there would be like an image that would kind of hold the body feeling. 74

Relationships between “I” and “parts” (or non “I” identified thoughts)

Discovering the desire of the parts for the “I”/ Engaging a polyphony of parts, voices, intentions, and desires

-“and so I couldn't find the part that didn't want to do the website. All of the parts are trying to get me to go forward—“ oh- “All of the parts that are trying to get me to go forward were like little bull dogs—“ that's right—bull dogs or pugs -“Straining at a leash. I can really feel the tugging in my body”

-“What else does he want to tell me?” 25

-“It feels like a part that wants me to do other things, like my art projects, and it doesn't want me blurting off in another direction, abandoning those projects midstream. It sees the website development task as some huge, all enveloping task that will put all else aside. It worries my child artist would be shut to the side once more.” 32

-I wanted to be with them. (Hm) and see what they would like to tell me. 43

-I actually have more respect for the parts of me that don't want to. I think they have a really important, um, reason for holding me back. I mean, they're really guardians of my authenticity. (mmm)_ and I think that until I learned that in the session, um, other parts of me that were kind of disparaging, inner critic types—like, “Why can't you get this done? This is ridiculous. Just push through this! Just go out and do it!” That y'know those parts um were kind of I would say—just critical. Critical of the fact that I haven't been able to do this after many many false starts (mmm) ah,63

-and then we talked about it! 51

-I'm finding myself as I sit and ask if there is anything else that wants to come up,

[Discovering permission through the desires and aversions of non-ego identified self-parts- disowned parts reclaiming voice?]

-“At the end of the focusing, I asked the part with the leash what it was wanting for me. It wanted me to be to feel free spontaneous, light— 29

-“It feels like a part that wants me to do other things, like my art projects, and it doesn't want me blurting off in another direction, abandoning those projects midstream. It sees the website development task as some huge, all enveloping task that will put all else aside. It worries my child artist would be shut to the side once more.” 32

-if you can find a part, often you can find out what its not wanting to experience? (mmm) It's a way of finding out how it's protecting you in some way.

Identification with/[assumption of] “core” self

-I was in me, not not the picture of me. It wasn't like a movie (mmhmm).
Actually, I don't know if you've done any work in internal family systems but,
um, one of the things that's suggested is that if you see you out there, it's just a
part. (mmm). It's not really the core observer self. 52

-Well, it it it just felt more important to me to do the artwork than to build the
website. Then it still feels like an either/or kind of choice that I don't have
enough time in my day to to do both. 58

Shifting power differences between parts impact relationship to observer self (power differences shown in images, body sense of images, vividness, etc.

-And what I could get the sense of was there was this large male figure that was
holding the leash, and he was very solidly planted. He wasn't straining with the
leash at all. But he wasn't budging either. He was just holding the leash while
the dogs were pulling against it.

-I could feel the impetus [puts hand on chest and moves torso forward in chair] to
do the website, and that was those dogs straining at the leash. I could sense that
there was a lot of power a lot of pushing to do it, but they weren't going anywhere
because they had this leash on them. 47

Relationship between attention on parts and visceral presence/force

-it's almost like the parts that didn't want to have heard all of that before and are
beginning to buy it. (mmm) So they just weren't as strong? 46

-I could feel the impetus [puts hand on chest and moves torso forward in chair] to
do the website, and that was those dogs straining at the leash. I could sense that
there was a lot of power a lot of pushing to do it, but they weren't going anywhere
because they had this leash on them. 47

Parts themselves, vs. responses of parts

-And then these voices that had all these rebuttals, all the different arguments that
I've heard from them about what they are trying to protect me from, all those
arguments sort of floated up. Ah, so I heard those answers, sort of disembodied.
45

[Grounding herself in her reality, resisting the pressures of idealization]

- *And all I want to do is name out loud what I already do, not make it some big
blown up heavy thing that will make me feel small, inadequate, or anxious, or
work to hard, or be a phony.*

- *I notice that my real life of coaching and focusing, which is so soft, loving,
humble, relational, is not in those bulldogs at all. 34*

this part about it really wanting me not to kind of puff up and.. .be pretentious or
build a website that I'd then have to live up to the—purple prose in the website—
that was new. 55

[Memory issues (accuracy)]

-I was focusing with this long-term partner of mine. (mu 9)

-Oh, this was actually a focusing partner with a friend. ___ was actually partnering
with me. 17

[Life changing shift focusing is protecting]

I've been doing art for the last year. It's become a really big part of my life, after never having picked up a paintbrush in my life.... 33

[bordering on transpersonal]

-There's another presence I'm feeling now. A white glowing woman. The light of true self, of love there. She's showing me how wonderful I feel when I teach focusing, when I work one on one with someone in focusing oriented coaching. 35

-Just let that expand." So I sat with it and let that feeling try to come, more and more. 36

-“I can feel some sort of constraining walls around her, like she's in prison. There's a biblical image of an angel visiting one of those saints in prison” That was the association—“It feels like a wall of a cave, but it is cracked open so that the light shines through...” 37

- because it's very powerful and it goes way back to when I was in therapy (huh.) and I don't remember the whole thing, but it felt very um-- spiritual. 73

- it felt like I was sitting in a cloud. Knowing that there was something there—I could *feel* the presence of something there, but I couldn't see it, touch it, or feel it cause I was sitting in this deep fog. 76

-and when I was able to put my hands on it, in imagery, and move it, ahm, I had this—this feeling like I was connecting to my true self, or to god, or something- it was very... 77

Body feelings with very powerful corresponding images

-I'd get a visceral [moves hand up and down in front of chest, palm toward chest and fingers as if grasping something as she moved hand up and down] feeling and then it would um there would be like an image that would kind of hold the body feeling. So for example I might feel an amaryllis—a big amaryllis bulb growing in me [brings hand from low ribs, up, as if emerging at the top of her chest] or something like that. 74

-This one was ah... (exhale) the image was so strong—it was like a disc [holds hands, facing one another as if holding a round object, about a foot from chest], um, and it felt out here [moves the disc to nearly arm's length in front of her], like I was looking at it. And behind the disc was a light [keeps one hand as if holding disc, brings other hand to space behind it to indicate light]

Moving from concept to embodied understanding

“I never really got that—what that meant until now.” That whole sense—comfortable in my own skin. I'd heard that phrase, but I had a body feel here for it—that was a shift for me. (mmmm) “Oh, is that what that means!” 30

Evoking a body sense through visualization

“So I just imagined myself going to my computer and working on the website. I felt something pushing back like on my chest,” so here I was, in the moment, trying see where this was going to lead. 31

Visceral sensations/gesture

-“*Straining at a leash. I can really feel the tugging in my body*” [pulls forward in chair as if straining forward]

-they were restrained... [does the pulling forward with her body.] You can see the body movement

Role of other’s suggestion

And then – you know, but for ___’s intervention, “Why don’t you focus on the leash?” I’m not sure I would have gotten to the man. 48

Surprise at new content from well explored (but perhaps differently manifesting parts?)

-Actually when I get back to it, a lot of that—what it wasn’t wanting me to have to experience—was brand new! (Really.) Yeah, it was brand new. 54

Gift from focusing

-And that was important. (huh.) And that was a very important gift from that session. (wow.)55

Generalized attunement to body senses/ the focusing habit

-Well, it it it just felt more important to me to do the artwork than to build the website. Then it still feels like an either/or kind of choice that I don’t have enough time in my day to do both. 59

focusing shifts relationship with situation

Increased understanding and appreciation of obstacles

-My goal was I guess to hear from the parts that didn’t want to. And just understand better what was in me that was oh... concerned about that particular activity. So, I definitely got there! (laughs) I haven’t gotten to the goal of doing the web site, but maybe that’s not what’s right for me. 62

-I actually have more respect for the parts of me that don’t want to. I think they have a really important, um, reason for holding me back. I mean, they’re really guardians of my authenticity. 63

Renewed trust in process, ability to relax in relationship tension

-I feel, just sensing it now it’s kind of a softer, more accepting [moves hand, palm facing her chest, in a circular motion in the air a few inches from her body] feel to the whole dynamic. There are parts that would like to and there are parts that really have reasons why they don’t want me to. And that’s where it is right now. 64

-It will continue to shift, I’m sure, but right now there’s in a way more comfort with that inner tension, so.... (mmm) so it’s interesting. It’s a little bit feeling like there’s something in process, and just waiting to see what comes next—trusting that something, in its right time it will happen. 65

[The interpersonal evocation of cute little beasts]

-There was a real power in it—these little beasts, cute little beasts! [laugh]
(laugh) 68 S: So they're still very lively for you and waiting for your return at some point!
Eliza: Still there, still there!

Underlying energy (mood?) gathered in an image

-There's an energy behind each one that's unique, and yet they're connected. So...to inquire separately, and the whole—step back and get the whole of it. 72

[Wanting to share, connect about a focusing experience]

-You know there is--- there is one other focusing session that um I'm going to mention just because it's very powerful and it goes way back to when I was in therapy (huh.) and I don't remember the whole thing, but it felt very um-- spiritual. 73
-I remember one other focusing session.84

Vision-images

it was like a disc [holds hands, facing one another as if holding a round object, about a foot from chest], um, and it felt out here [moves the disc to nearly arm's length in front of her], like I was looking at it. And behind the disc was a light [keeps one hand as if holding disc, brings other hand to space behind it to indicate light] And I had the sense that if I could put my hands on it and shift the disc a little [mimes this]—the light behind it would be—I'd be able to see the light. 75

Acting on images

And I had the sense that if I could put my hands on it and shift the disc a little [mimes this]—the light behind it would be—I'd be able to see the light. 75

Emphasizing the visceral power and reality of body experiences

-And my body went through real strong visceral, almost like convulsions. It wasn't like I was laying on the floor having a fit, but like these strong visceral vibrations—almost like something was trying—y'know the alien—when that thing pops out of his chest it felt like something was really trying to come out. 78
-And um I remember my therapist was with me and when I opened my eyes it was pretty palpable what was going on. She was sitting like [pulls up in chair with look of surprise, concern and maybe fascination] [laugh] (laugh) 79
-But it was such a strong body shift, um, that I can—it's with me now, twelve, twelve-thirteen years later. And um... y'know there's not a whole lot of head understanding of that so much as that was a really powerful inner experience that came out of focusing, 80
-And when that happened, my whole body just softened and relaxed. It was like my bones had dissolved. I really felt like I was going to melt out of the chair. It was so... opening. (sigh) Whatever had been tightly bound up in there, it had been opened. It was a really very physical sensation, sort of melting (oh...) It was lovely. It was lovely. 86

-So when you talk about focusing bringing a sense of spaciousness inside, for me that can be very real. I mean it's a spatial thing, like there's less crud clogged up and more... [inhale] your lungs can expand more. So I know something's really happening, because you can experience it. I know it's not just figments of your imagination. 87

Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis:
Thematic Groupings with Excerpts from Transcripts

A5.6 Participant Six, Ila

Working themes shown in bold

Working implicit themes shown in bold, in brackets

Textual support cut and pasted from transcript

Superordinate themes shown in bold, underlined, italicized

Variation in how focusing stays with her in the short and the long term

Long term—losing the particulars while maintaining the conclusion of the session

y'know it it has informed some decisions I've made, informed all kind of things
but I'm not sure I could give you the specifics... 1

Short term—following the body sense back into the experience

--Let me just see if I can go back to that. 3

--So um being with the tension... I just want to see if my body will take me back
there a little bit. ...(10 seconds) 11

checking the body for after effects

[7 sec inhale, exhale]...I'm trying to just get a sense of where I am now, just to let
you know because it's been hours after. Where am I now? ...21 sec... I don't
know how to put it, the words, Sarah, but it's still there. This space, this sense
of...and my breath, all of that's still there.

Using gesture for perception and communication

Gesture used to connect with and amplify [internal] sensation

-realizing that there was a tightness—yeah—in my lower abdomen [places hand
on lower abdomen] 4

-I do authentic movement as well and that can create body senses in my body so
sometimes my body actually moves so... I put my hands on my lower abdomen to
really just acknowledge the tightness. (I'm gonna take a couple of notes of your
gestures.) Mmm. Just to get a sense of that tightness 7

--and then what happened was that my body did really convey it clearly. I got a
sense of um pulling-- my hand started moving out. [pulls hand out from abdomen
slowly, then puts the fingers of both hands together and pulls them apart, as if
stretching an elastic.] A tightness, an elastic band—8

-- It was like, "Ok I can hold you *here*." [curves right arm around open space at
side hip, where some small being might sit beside next to her or possibly on her
hip] Like there's almost that bodily sense of ok I'm holding you here—I'm not
sending you away. 15

Gesture to point to space in lived body

y'know sometimes you get a sense from that part of you that is speaking what it
needs or wants—it wasn't so much coming *from* it but it was coming *underneath*.
[gestures to space in front of, and extending past low pelvis] 16

spontaneous gross movement in response to[inner] shift

-- There's definitely in the felt shift--I think it may come different ways for different people but for me it's often in that body posture. If I'm sitting, I'll shift.44

emphasizing realness, palpability of somatic sensations

--... It was really interesting because it was so physically in my body at that point.
8
-- , a sense that my body actually splits11
----my body did really convey it clearly 8
--A tightness, an elastic band-- and my jaw actually tightened so it was really 8

Practicing a relational stance with own experiences as discrete subjective "parts" movement from identification to relationship with parts

-- it doesn't stop the emotional involvement and things if that comes, y'know if tears or whatever come, but it allows um just a little bit of a different stance.. 10
-no matter how hard a topic can come up, and um tears and y'know everything else, can bring a distance from it so you can really be with it 52
-I wanted – I wanted to be curious about, or I was curious, feeling curious about what that tightness was.5

Seeking to understand parts' perspectives

-- What was it like from that point of view? Y'know from that tense point of view, that part of me, that aspect of my being? 9
-how do I be with you? How would you like me to be with you? (mmm) What is what is what is it like to be you? Where is this part of me-- understanding that the part is me.

seeking permission/approval to stay in attendance of experience

--? Did I want to just be with that place in me that was anxious? 12
-- if I wanted to just be with that separation? Did I want to just be with that place in me that was anxious? Did I want to stay with that? Was it ok to just be with that? 12

tension between the urge to react to part and to maintain receptive observance

-- What that did is that it allowed me to just stay with the feeling and not go to my head, not start figuring it out, analyzing it: What's the story behind all of this? What's causing all of this?12
--And I remember sitting for a few moments and just saying "ok. I can do that. I can just...acknowledge within me that this part of me is anxious. There's tension in my body.... I don't have to understand exactly why in this moment; I can just be with it..." 12

Acknowledging each move of parts, however conflicting, and choosing which to attend to

-- AND then to say, "oh, ok, but now... now I've heard that; I understand my mind is trying to figure this out, trying to help me out and here's this other part that wants to help out too, and move on, but now I want to come back to that sense and I want to just be with it because that's what it's wanting.18

having genuine interest in all the parts

- Well I don't want it to go away, I'm just not ready to deal with it right now, but at some point it would be good for me to go back in the next few days and really sit with that part. Y'know? What were you afraid of? 57

limits on agency vis a vis returning to a previously disclosed parts

- And sometimes I think I can go back and sometimes I can't. In all honesty, sometimes I can't. It would be nice to say yeah I can easily go back all those times—go back to anything—sometimes yes, sometimes no. 58

hearing and accepting grievances from self parts

-.) Um, so, y'know when you get something like that, it's like "oohkay. I get you. I get that."

taking care of resistance

- And that little part that wanted to run in me—the part I was kind of holding under my right arm--at one point I told my companion cause she said, "Is it still there?" "Yeah, it's right here," I said, "I'm just kind of holding it." 57

Negotiating between opposing parts

And then it's, "Oh, okay. My mind is telling me it doesn't really want to deal with this, doesn't really want to feel this, doesn't want to take time for this." Whatever it is, and um "okay. What is it like to just sit with that? To just sit with the part of me that does..." cause you know there's a part of me then that says "I don't want to do that," What does it have to tell me? What does it have to say? (mmm). And sometimes, by looking at that then I can come back to the other part (mmhmm) y'know, eventually. 56

Perceived agency of part toward attending self/other part

Subjective "I" as object of a self part

-I was aware within me that there was this place of the anxiety, of the tightness, of the tension... it just appreciated me being with it. 13

-but now I want to come back to that sense and I want to just be with it because that's what it's wanting. It's wanting me to simply sit with it 18

Appreciation from self-part brings release, relaxation, spaciousness

--it just appreciated me being with it. So there was a sense of... relaxation maybe even? A kind of spaciousness? A tension gave way a bit. 13

sensing what a part wants

--And it's something in me that *is* wanting to change or shift, 22

dialoging with distracting/resistant part in order to clear way for attending to first part

-So I paused to acknowledge that part and how much it wants me not to be in this tension—not wanting it—not wanting to just sit with it. Wanting to resolve, move on. But letting it know at this point—I was asking it to sit aside, so I could just stay with the tension a bit more. And it was ok with that. It was like, "Ok I can hold you *here*." 15

--Like there's almost that bodily sense of ok I'm holding you here—I'm not sending you away. But I want to just be with this. (mmm) Cause it feels important for me to just sit with this." 15

-- AND then to say, "oh, ok, but now... now I've heard that; I understand my mind is trying to figure this out, trying to help me out and here's this other part

that wants to help out too, and move on, but now I want to come back to that sense and I want to just be with it because that's what it's wanting. 18

Finding it up to parts to appear in their own time

-when it's important again it will come back up. It'll surface. Maybe in a similar way, maybe in something new. Yeah, but it'll come back.

- Sometimes things would go away. (When you sat and waited?) Yeah. Y'know they'd disappear. It wasn't the right time. I wasn't sitting with it quite the right way. I didn't get it. Uh, there was a time when I had a little part of me uh was just really angry—y'know just like, “You're never there! You never pay attention to me! So why why why am I goin' sit here with you right now? You want me to come sit with you? You want to come sit with me? Hello!! Where have you been the last 50 years!?” y'know, that kind of thing. 55

resistance to staying with tension (hesitancy clarifying/intensifying in wake of acknowledgment?)

-- have appeared another place in me that didn't like the whole staying with the tension—that wasn't comfortable with that: 14

...” cause you know there's a part of me then that says “I don't want to do that,” What does it have to tell me? What does it have to say? (mmm). And sometimes, by looking at that then I can come back to the other part (mmhmm) y'know, eventually. 56

movement from identification to relationship

-- it doesn't stop the emotional involvement and things if that comes, y'know if tears or whatever come, but it allows um just a little bit of a different stance.. 10

- -no matter how hard a topic can come up, and um tears and y'know everything else, can bring a distance from it so you can really be with it 52

- --I wanted – I wanted to be curious about, or I was curious, feeling curious about what that tightness was.5

relating anxiety and tightness

-- So, a sense that my body actually splits [moves left hand from the center of chest up to her chin, while moving right hand from center of chest down toward pelvis] when I'm anxious. So this tightness forms in my lower abdomen [gestures to abdomen], 11

Role of companion

[repetition of questions taking different forms—or were these all the companion's words?]

-- My companion at that point may have asked if I wanted to just be with that separation? Did I want to just be with that place in me that was anxious? Did I want to stay with that? Was it ok to just be with that? I think I remember her words.12

companion possibly sensing intensity

-My companion at that point may have asked if I wanted to just be with that separation?12

supportive silence of companion

--And my companion was very quiet in that time. And I said I just want to sit with it. 20

deeply acknowledging bodily tension and needs related to the experience of support

--] It was like I—what I'm needing is support, so I can relax. I need—and what I was feeling was a place in me of support, underneath. 16

-- And it's something in me that *is* wanting to change or shift, somehow just to sit with that-- this sense came... and I'm trying to give words to it, um...13 sec... it's like my whole breath changes. There's space, there's...there's a y'know there's a relaxation, there's a...''22

-- It's a place of feeling supported myself, and... y'know whatever the situations of life might be. It's a place of acknowledging that when I am not feeling that, this is where the tension builds, 19

Ambivalence in relationship to head space in lived body

Shifting into narrative reflection as the felt space of the head

--I may have gone up into my head for a bit? 17

Reflecting on body senses in the head

-- So it told me a lot about where my body was feeling, where I was holding the tension from that, and what I was wanting was support to really hold, y'know all of it—hold where I was, y'know? Stay centered I think enough to resolve or work through it. So part of me went back to my mind to kind of uh.. allow some of that to come and to sense into that, yeah 17

Connecting immediate revelations to ongoing context

-- Umm, to bring it into a story, um, cause there's a situation with my husband where we'd had a disagreement and there was tension around it, so... that's part of the story that was coming through and where my anxiety comes um is up I kind of lose my ground, I come up [gestures upward to head]. So it told me a lot about where my body was feeling, where I was holding the tension from that, 17

losing ground= going into head

where my anxiety comes um is up I kind of lose my ground, I come up [gestures upward to head]. 17

Healing disconnect between body experiencing and cognition

It's suppressed, and then I'm living from up here. Y'know I'm not--- I'm actually almost living from here, up. I'm moving from my head...I'm um... 24

head living= constricted, closed down

I don't want this constriction, this tension, this closing down, this living from up here. 25.5

[context for relationship between body and mind experiences]

I'm a mind person so for me to have learned focusing, it isn't something that came easily to me to understand my body and what it conveys. I mean it's very easy for me to live apart from that whole sense of things. 50

Relationships between felt body and felt mind

Distress related to separation of bodily experiencing from thinking/mind experiencing

--My body is saying: I don't like the holding of the tension, I don't like how it separates [again, brings one hand from mid chest up to chin, and the other hand from mid chest downward] when I'm really holding it in, and I'm working then from way up here.24

. -- It's like I'm not- not living from the bottom heart any more, it's—where the feelings and things are, my instinct, y'know all those things 25.5

I'm not feeling heard, I'm not clear, what I'm saying isn't coming out--y'know those kinds of things. So you move my energy back down, move my whole body...it just feels like my whole body was so strongly telling me that today 26
--and then I come up here [gestures to area above L hand], um, and there's a separation.11

conceptual knowing and experiencing

--I know that, but there's also what came was sitting with it.

--And even if I think of something that's... I'm not thinking about it in the same way. My body's not holding it in the same way. 46

emphasis on cultivating bodily experiencing

--It wasn't coming from my head; it was my body. 26

--think over time that's been less and less of an issue for us cause.... Um....

Maybe because we've learned to wait for the body sense first and to really let it—
29

-- really it comes just by sitting. Waiting with it until um... and I had to learn that too, Sarah, because sometimes if you don't wait long enough or you don't wait with that sense and you go back into your head and you lose 34

--we've learned to wait for the body sense first and to really let it—knowing, really understanding now that it will convey. It will give us what we want. 29

-it's a it's a learned process it's really trusting um... trusting that what needs to come will come 34

-I think it um...comes in different ways. It comes in my body first. If there's a shift of some kind my body will find that first--so the tension or anxiety that I might have been feeling? I'm going to feel the physiology of that. I'm gonna feel my breath will shift, I'll feel some actual relaxation, space... 37

-- I can give words to it; I can give words of a net or things like that... in some ways that helps my mind. And my mind is carrying it, but my body's already feeling it. 41

- to trust that... um, just with my head... I could say sure, but y'know it didn't do a whole lot for me. It wasn't until I really did learn that if I kept working this I could work with my body and that's when I started... 53

-I can give words to it; I can give words of a net or things like that... in some ways that helps my mind. And my mind is carrying it, but my body's already feeling it. 41

- I think I managed over time, y'know, more and more to understand the power that our bodies have. 51

[Reflection on body-mind involvement]

--there's a people talk about it being a body modality and it think it definitely is. There's a body wisdom that comes through and at times the body actually can speak and convey that...27 and yet there almost inevitably at some point will be some involvement of the mind, um, to even appreciate or register or even remember it. (Right) SO it's not a matter of sending the mind away, but over the years that we've focused together I think both of us um there's times that we remind each other to stay in the body if we feel the person's really gone into their head 28

--I can give words to it; I can give words of a net or things like that... in some ways that helps my mind. And my mind is carrying it, but my body's already feeling it. So it's just giving some added ways for my whole body to connect with it. So then I have a mind-body connection, is how I see it. Yeah. 41

Shifting is a comprehensive subjective change

--is if I allow myself to simply be with it, I actually—my whole body shifts 19

breath-connection between inner and outer environment, life, psyche

-- it's like my whole breath changes. There's space, there's...there's a y'know there's a relaxation, 22

tranquility, all is well (trans?)

-- there's a..."all is well", tranquil, any—y'know it's like I have my ground back again... I have my focus, my center. I have *life* supporting me, y'know.22

impact of peace, support

So coming to that place not only helped me in that moment, to again have more understanding of my body and what it's carrying and what it's wanting to move forward, but I also have felt it the rest of the day. 23

whole existence shifted, changed

It's like it shapes the rest of the day. I'm *not* where I *was*. I'm not—I have a different way of --that I'm even looking at— I have a different way that my whole body feels like it's moving through the day, because I do feel like my whole body has shifted its focus and its way of being. 23

increase cognitive clarity

I also have... more clarity I think about that specific situation so my mind has then taken that further and worked that 23

[Assumption of basic support]

--. I have *life* supporting me, y'know. It's like... so what whatever *was clogging* that in the altercation22 emph mine

focusing as transformative/healing

... it is transformative and it is um healing, um... it's centering. 31

Connecting with own wisdom

Mostly it's a way of connecting...it is a connecting with my own wisdom, my own healer, my own counsel, my own own inner being. I don't know. It's so deep. 31

Bodily shift impact on cognition, mood, lived body

--It frames—it redirects my whole attention, my whole... ah... I think it must inform my whole way, my whole being. I think it must work at the nerve endings, it must work at the—all these different levels of um conveying information—sensory and otherwise, perception—all of it. 45

--Yeah. And my mind doesn't ... my mind holds things—the whole experience differently, I think, in terms of where I then move through the day. Somehow my whole mood, my whole mind frame is different. I'm in a different place. I'm walking with a different... way of being... There's more space in me. There's more possibility. 45.5

Fluid bodily location of subjective “I” sense

-My body is saying: I don't like the holding of the tension, I don't like how it separates [again, brings one hand from mid chest up to chin, and the other hand from mid chest downward] when I'm really holding it in, and I'm working then from way up here.24

--. It's like I'm not- not living from the bottom heart any more, it's—where the feelings and things are, my instinct, y'know all those things 25.5

- I'm not feeling heard, I'm not clear, what I'm saying isn't coming out--y'know those kinds of things. So you move my energy back down, move my whole body... it just feels like my whole body was so strongly telling me that today 26

--It wasn't coming from my head; it was my body. 26

-- really it comes just by sitting. Waiting with it until um... and I had to learn that too, Sarah, because sometimes if you don't wait long enough or you don't wait with that sense and you go back into your head and you lose 34

I can give words to it; I can give words of a net or things like that... in some ways that helps my mind. And my mind is carrying it, but my body's already feeling it. 41

--my body did really convey it clearly 8

--and then I come up here [gestures to area above L hand], um, and there's a separation.11

high value, beauty[Beauty as right order?]

-- The beauty that then came, Sarah, and often comes in focusing, 19

--it's very interesting what comes and how it evolves but it all has its... it's really kind of a inner beauty. 30

[focusing gives access to what many don't think is possible]

--so the beauty to me in focusing is no matter how hard a topic can come up, and um tears and y'know everything else, can bring a distance from it so you can really be with it and comfortably...52

--something scary, like I've had spiders that were really yucky looking up here, and I was like where are you coming from?! My body? Um, the beauty of all of those kind of things is that life is trying to express itself in some way and it's trying to move forward. 52

Waiting for and trusting in bodily response

--think over time that's been less and less of an issue for us cause.... Um....
Maybe because we've learned to wait for the body sense first and to really let it—
29

-- really it comes just by sitting. Waiting with it until um... and I had to learn that
too, Sarah, because sometimes if you don't wait long enough or you don't wait
with that sense and you go back into your head and you lose 34

--we've learned to wait for the body sense first and to really let it—knowing,
really understanding now that it will convey. It will give us what we want. 29

--... it's a it's a learned process it's really trusting um... trusting that what needs
to come will come 34

--And I said I just want to sit with it. Um... 6 sec... What came was two things.
One, a sense of this part of me that it's tired of being this way. 20

-- And somewhere in continuing—even after that, to just sit with it—came a place
of...6 sec... 21

-And then I just waited with that. Y'know just waited with that sense... Um.

--And probably um...yeah probably really it comes just by sitting. 34

sometimes if you don't wait long enough or you don't wait with that sense and
you go back into your head and you lose 34

--But that there's some aspect of ourselves, some part of our subconscious
or...what have you that's wanting—that's wanting awareness, that's wanting,
that's needing attention of some kind or wanting something and so the whole
waiting process in some ways is being- is being with that. 36

Presence and spontaneous shifting whole body (mood?) shift

is if I allow myself to simply be with it, I actually—my whole body shifts 19

Experiences bordering on [transpersonal]

self/not self ambiguity

--Like not from me, y'know, it's like me supporting me. It's all of me, but it's
something bigger than me 21

experience beyond language, maybe “spiritual”

--And I don't know how, it almost y'know goes onto a spiritual realm or a—I
don't even know. I don't know the word for it.21

Variation in focusing practice

--And then today, not always—sometimes that will be where it ends, but this
particular day there was that added place of actually there's something more here.
There's something more. My body's feeling this net of support. It's feeling
really grounded. It's feeling held, and something in the part of me that was
feeling my body sensation of that it helped me to relax even more. 39

-It's not always in words, y'know this example had some words with it, not
always with words but with something and um... some of the work that we've
done has taken us back to like younger parts of us. Y'know like a younger part
will appear, um... 30

[offering didactic, reflective explanation of focusing practices]

--Y'know tightness is kind of a vague word. 5

-- Y'know from that tense point of view, that part of me, that aspect of my being? What was it like y'know acknowledging it: ok I get it. I get uh what this is now—the tightness feels more like tension. And now how—how do I be with you? How would you like me to be with you? (mmm) What is what is what is it like to be you? Where is this part of me-- understanding that the part is me.

-- Y'know it's not a separate piece. Just separated enough that I can witness it, so creating a bit of distance is how um... I learned focusing. So there's a way to be apart from...um it doesn't stop the emotional involvement and things if that comes, y'know if tears or whatever come, but it allows um just a little bit of a different stance. 10

- What that did is that it allowed me to just stay with the feeling and not go to my head, not start figuring it out, analyzing it: What's the story behind all of this? What's causing all of this? But to just sit with it.12

Y'know it's not a separate piece. Just separated enough that I can witness it, so creating a bit of distance is how um... I learned focusing.

[Multiple languagings to explain part—careful to include awareness of whole]

-What was it like from that point of view? Y'know from that tense point of view, that part of me, that aspect of my being? What was it like y'know acknowledging it: ok I get it...And now how—how do I be with you? How would you like me to be with you? (mmm) What is what is what is it like to be you? Where is this part of me-- understanding that the part is me.

[moving further from recalled experience by shifting to explanatory mode]

--Y'know it's not a separate piece. Just separated enough that I can witness it, so creating a bit of distance is how um... I learned focusing. 10

--So um being with the tension... I just want to see if my body will take me back there a little bit. ...(10 seconds) 11

focusing community different take on parts

and the parts or-- ___ works a lot with relationship and parts. ___, who I've also studied with, doesn't really like to work with parts, um, he has some reservations about it and people getting lost in the parts. 35

parts as aspects of whole

I can see both sides; I think in my own work with my partner focusing um... we've done ok with it because both of us realize it's part of the whole? (mmmm) But that there's some aspect of ourselves, some part of our subconscious or...what have you that's wanting—that's wanting awareness, 36

difficulty finding words

... there's... I don't really know the word for it, what the more is. But there's something that...45.5

Shift does not include forgetting

I can go back to the tension, because of course this is a long standing pattern, yeah, so (you've had a lot of practice)... 46

[Realist view]

-it isn't like it's magic 46

-When people say you can heal yourself, I don't know if I can go that far- y'know like everything? You could heal everything? 51

Tension is still present, with the sense of support added on

--it's not like it's not gonna come up again for me. And I know that. But I *also* know *now* that I have a different sense that I can go back to. 46

Increasing choice in responding to experience of stress.

- I have a different sense that I can go back to. 46

[conscious of treatment of mind/body relationship]

-it seems to be something my body is probably exhausted by, y'know, um, my mind and body...47

didactic

in focusing there's a handle, you can go back to and you can bring it back 47

theorizing re returning to felt sense

- Even talking to you now allows it to come back—and to keep doing that over time I've never done a study of it, but it probably would be helpful. (mm) Um... and probably would be good for me to invite into the practice 47

[assurance that she has given me as much as she can]

-Well, I did the best I can! 49

sense of mystery in focusing

- But I think that there are things that are maybe... don't fully understand about what that body-mind connection really can do. (yeah). It's like opening a door. 51

didactic—grounding assumptions

- something I do firmly believe is that life wants to move forward and gene gendlin works from that same point—life carrying forward. And our bodies are always wanting that life to move forward as well. 52

Reflecting on the didactic impact of having a companion

importance of companioning in setting pace/waiting/holding words

- and I think companioning helped. It helped me to stay in my body. It helped having somebody there to remind me or just to repeat something back 54

reflection on companion modeling waiting

- and it also helped me to um understand what the waiting meant and that it wasn't a quick thing, and it wasn't something you could kind of gloss over: "Yeah ok I get you and now we're moving on to... what's next?" Y'know my mind so easily could move onto the next thing and away from that so it had to learn to—to wait. To sit with it, that it really mattered. 54

Exploring the difference between focusing over the phone and in person

shared awareness of impact of being in person—letting me know it wasn't just her

-- And so sitting today—both of us said in different ways—it was interesting cause we—it's been a while since we, um, focused in person. 64

experiencing increased vulnerability in person

--There was something about the ...presence of the body actually for a moment was like in the way—it was like, I know this person on a whole different level or maybe there was even a vulnerability, um...64

- and yet there was a knowing that I actually had the person sitting there, seeing like my whole physical being. My whole—reactions, my emotions. Even though sometimes I'll talk about them on the phone, something different with that. 64.5

trying to down play importance of in person to self

-... but just for a moment I had to like—when I started—I had to kind of just like, "Ok ___, um... it doesn't really matter whether it's on the phone or not. Your eyes are closed. You recreate the same—" 64

increased feeling of presence in person

-And yet, there was also a sense of...of a fuller presence. Like that person was fully present for you—not just accessible by voice, so that person *could* see all those things. 64.5

Importance of eyes closed, in person and on phone-

- I felt like I was seeing her the same either way because I like to companion largely with my eyes closed. But there is um... I think I say that because there's a certain way that I can be present with somebody when my eyes aren't leading. I'm not looking for visual cues; I'm not letting my mind really. I'm—I'm present more as a whole body level. With my eyes closed. 65

Fatigue, then support

The support would come—would have come most like after [] my body's memory, and then the net and things really—definitely after the feeling of fatigue 33

[very attuned to my needs, what I am looking for]

--is it more important to you that it's really something huge impact wise or that um it has more of the details and the progression of the actual session?1

[uses dialogical language with herself (evocatively, I think)]

--So um how did it begin? 3

-- but today we were working together so I was working with her in person so... what was different -63

[Reserved about sharing emotional vulnerability]

- There was a place where I just get teary for a tiny bit... I could feel it in my jaw that's when the sense of that in my body of the emotion came up with it I think, for a few seconds there of just... (mmm) yeah of this is just really intense and real... a little touch into the emotional piece as well... 62

Expressing approval of my question

-: Yeah, let me just check, Sarah, that's good...39 sec...61

Reflection on unique vulnerability in focusing partnership

- . And in focusing you're already connecting on a level of the person that is different than sitting with somebody having a conversation any way. There's a certain way that they know you, a certain openness or developing... there's access—they have access to parts of you that nobody else would see and you probably never sit and talk about in a conversation.

[role of scientific explanation/legitimacy?]

there's a lot—I don't know the physiology—they say there's a lot, when people are anxious, their breath and everything moves up from here [moves hand from low belly up to chest]. 25

[explaining/referencing own expertise]

They're no longer breathing from up—and I teach yoga so I see some of this and I'm aware of y'know my breath, somewhat. 25

[Acknowledges lack of expertise wrt science, but asserts her own experience as a legitimate knowledge base]

And I'm not a scientist or anything but I think—it feels like it really is a whole body experience and it really does shift things in a whole way and I don't have the science for it, I have the sense in my body of what it's experiencing. 45

[aware of repeating herself for me]

I think those were some of the words I tried to use at some point. 38

Difficulty picking w/r/t significance

Um, let me just...sit with it. Um...(29 seconds) There's so many... 1

Difficulty recalling process

I'm not sure I could give you the specifics...1

Appendix 6: Feedback from Participants

6.1 Letter Offering Results

I am writing to follow up with you regarding your participation in my dissertation study on focusing.

Before I get into the nitty-gritty, I want to begin by thanking you again for participating in this study. It has been a long and at times difficult process, but I am deeply grateful that I had the privilege to spend so much time dwelling with and pondering such meaningful and inspiring accounts as the one you shared with me. Even though this is typically a very solitary process, the nature of what I studied allowed me to feel accompanied in my work—by the memory of our conversation, by the stirring resonance I experienced as I returned time and time again to the most mysterious and hard-to-articulate moments of your story. I realize that our time together was brief, but your story has stayed with me, and I daresay will for all my days. There is a precious gift in that for which my gratitude exceeds my words.

Thank you.

Now, for the nitty-gritty! Attached you will find three documents, which I will briefly describe just to orient you a bit to their contents.

The first is a transcript of the interview you were kind enough to grant me all the way back in 2010! You will find that it is broken up into numbered chunks—more on this below.

The second is a document containing the results of my analyses of your interview; there are two sections to this document. The first, marked “descriptive phenomenological structure” is limited to the portion of the interview in which you described a particular focusing experience. The second, marked “interpretive phenomenological structure” is based on the entire interview that followed my prompt question. This is the more comprehensive piece, and includes my speculations regarding aspects of your account that seemed hinted at but perhaps not explicitly stated. The “MU” numbers cited throughout this portion of the document correspond to the numbers in your transcript.

The third document contains two additional analyses; these are overarching analyses of all 6 of the interviews that I did. The first structure refers to all six “descriptive” accounts; the second refers to all six of the interpretive accounts. When I have completed and revised the entire dissertation, I will be happy to share this with you—it will contain comprehensive explanations of how I arrived at what I am sending you now.

As part of your participation, you have the option to submit written feedback to me regarding my analyses of your account, which would be included in the appendix. As I noted above, parts of my analyses are speculative, and I am especially interested in any thoughts or responses you may have to my interpretations. At the same I time understand that you are very busy, and so have no expectations in this regard.

Please note that what I am sending you has not yet received its final polish, so I ask that you be kind enough to overlook grammatical and formatting errors/irregularities, as well as stylistic awkwardness that has not yet been ironed out. It was important that I give you an opportunity to respond prior to the (fast approaching) completion of the process, rather than wait until the final editing stages to share it with you.

If you have questions, please address them to me at this email address.
I hope this letter finds you well. I thank you for taking the time to read it, and I wish you the best in all things.

Sincerely,

Sarah Nokes-Malach
Duquesne University
Clinical Psychology Doctoral Candidate

A7.2 Feedback Offered by Two Participants

Participant One: Pleck

Pleck replied to my invitation by selecting two passages in the thematic cluster I sent him and replying to it. Below, the text he highlighted is included, followed by his verbatim response.

Text highlighted by Pleck:

Each focuser positions her conscious sense of self as a curious observer of her own experiences, rather than being prereflectively identified with them. This is accomplished through the attitude, described above, of nonjudgmental curiosity toward everything that arises in experience.

Pleck's Response:

For me, there seems to be a doubling of BOTH in them AND with them. Sometimes it starts by my being IN it, and then, over time and attention, shifts into a being WITH it... The extra RAM, spacious attention, of the focusing process and listener helps that disidentification and spaciousness to develop... So, I would say that I move into the observer, but often do start out identified with them. Perhaps you said that and I merely misinterpret it. If so, sorry....

Text highlighted by Pleck:

For two, however, the head is associated with a feeling space; this space is characterized by feelings of constriction; being "in" the head is an experience of being cut-off from the open, receptive, relaxed feelings associated with being in the body. There is perhaps even some distrust of the head space insofar as it is experienced as drawing awareness away from the body.

Pleck's response:

Well said. Much of focusing does not see the head as an ally. I hope this stage is only a transitional one.

I am a bit intense around this- thinking has become the bastard child of the mind in some circles. My presentation at the 2011 Focusing International was about a spectrum of life-

forward processes, including disembodied intuition (traditional spiritual insights that are not associated with felt sense), felt sensing, felt recognition, and use of mental models, conceptual thinking. I see each of them as important and valuable.

In creating an i3 processing chip that is fully functional (felt sensing, connecting with disembodied intuition, and the conceptual), I see the coordinated inclusion of thinking into the process of focusing as the next forward step of the process.

New forms of focusing will incorporate good thinking in a more conscious intentional way, with even better results.

I have experienced a few of these forms (like Inner Empathy), and am quite pleased with them – as are my focusing partners who I have shared it with!

Participant Four, Sophie

Sophie replied to my email with the following comments:

I did get to read all your documents on the plane, and feel the portrayal is accurate. I am glad you resonated with my story. Of course it was very meaningful for me to re-enter that dream on the eve of my trip to Central America, when I was to have dinner with K-- on the 13th. It felt like a lucky coincidence that you had written me just then, reminding me to take on the positive persona of the doctor that people gravitate to and enjoy listening to. And of course our search for funding continues, so the most valuable part of the reminder is to have confidence in the importance of what we are teaching for the empowerment for women. And to be able to articulate it more and more. That is still challenging, but I can feel the progress between now and the interview in 2010. As you can tell from my poem, the baby IS beautiful.

Appendix 7: Participant Transcripts

Note: numbers in text are the numbers of meaning units.

A7.1 Participant One: Pleck

Sarah (S) 1: I was wondering if you could tell me a little bit about how you learned focusing, how long you've been focusing?

Pleck: Sure, ahm, I...1980...5? 86? Either in the self-help or psychology section of the bookstore I saw this little book with pebbles on the cover called "focusing". And it looked interesting and I started reading it and it made a lot of sense, and so I actually tried to do it from the book! (laugh). It was-- I had a couple of... It made sense up *here* [points to head]. I learned a lot and then I tried to do the practice to some extent. I had a couple of pretty profound experiences um doing that and then um, and then for a while I just kind of didn't do it so much, and then years later-- ten years later-- I started taking some workshops. I took a workshop with AWC and BM—"treasure maps of the soul", and a couple of other workshops. Um, it's been-- I had a couple of other focusing partners who, every week, every other week probably by phone...

S: Wonderful. You're in a great area, it seems, for

Pleck: There's people, yeah there's some people around. You know J-- and you know H-- are up in ---- and I know some of the folks in ---...

S: So you started out self directed...

Pleck: It was self directed, and I... am a kind of backwards focuser, um, kinda, there are a couple of us who are anomalies in the focusing community. Most people primarily focus on doing focusing which I do, sometimes, and I probably venture to say I've learned as much by applying principles of focusing as I have by actually doing focusing. (S: huh! So, sort of the conceptual tenets?) Like Iiiii worked at a boarding school for three years during one of my retirements and uh, like, the idea that if you give people space—this is probably standard rogerian stuff—but I didn't have that background, that's not my training—you know if you give people space then something may happen that, um, if a person can be with what's happening and its helpful... sometimes someone would y'know be feeling something and I would--there's no shortage of people who want listening at a boarding school (chuckle)-- uh...and a student would say or something would happen and I'd say, "Well there's something there"—that much I got from the book—"There's something there why don't you just take a minute and see what happens." And, so I wasn't focusing, as such. A quick story but probably the most profound example of this is a staff member who came up to me and uh said um, "Look, just tell me I'm crazy and I should marry the guy." OK? And I said, "What's going on?" and she went on with the story and she talked about five minutes about how wonderful sh-he was but I kinda heard this "but". But instead of saying that or anything else I—this is not really in the book but it's from focusing—I kinda said "where- in everything you

told me--where in your body did that voice come from?" And she said, "Oh, right here." [points to head] And I said "can you do me a favor [places palm of hand on chest] and listen here?" Just kinda the idea there's different parts—"can you just listen here and see what happens?" Quiet. About ten seconds, " 'I don't love him.' " Right!? It was like, "okay!" [laughs] but I'm thinking, this is conceptual too, because, well, if this parts' [points to head] saying this and this [points to chest] this, there should, there's gotta be another part or else there'd be no conflict. So I say, "Can you do me a favor and listen *here*?" [places hand over stomach] and it got really quiet and it got *really* sad and sudden—she said "there's just a little voice that says 'I wish... I wish...'" She wanted this guy to be the right guy; she was trying to make him be the right guy. And so then I just kinda like looked at her and gave her a hug and she thanked me and didn't marry him! [laugh] (S: mmmmm). SO there—I wasn't focusing, I wasn't really guiding in any—nobody would teach that, as guiding—but there's something about focusing-- knowing those places [gestures to stomach area] where... One more: I was at a work shop—some other thing—and people asked this question and everybody's sittin there and this person says, "Ahh, no, I dunno know. I...I don't know..." and you could tell that she was grasping—she was felt sensing, right-- she didn't know she was felt sensing—"I... don't really know, it's..." "Well, just take a minute. Maybe there's something important there." Two minutes later—WHAAA [draws both hands from abdominal region up toward chest and outward] you know, some big opening! You know, so that's knowing *about* focusing, that's not... so I think I've done more of that, in terms of my... I do the practice too, but I think that's an unexplored area of the practice because everybody's so into experiential [gestures broadly to abdominal region] stuff. They don't like bein' engineers. [laughter] (S: laughter). Anyway.

PROMPT

S: Oh, well, that's- that's a really helpful set-up. Um, so, now I'm gonna ask the big long one (ok, go for it!). So I'll ask for you to please describe your experience of a *specific* focusing session with you—you would be the focuser (W: correct- sure, sure) uh, that stands out for you as particularly memorable. Ah, I'll ask you to describe how the session began, what happened for you while it was going on, and what happened afterward. You can include as much detail as possible about the situation (W: [deep in and out breath]), your feelings and thoughts throughout, body sensations, movements or shifts or anything else that comes to mind about what happened in that session, and you can take as much time as you need.

Pleck: Holy crud! [laughter]

S: So, you know, feel free to take you know whatever time you need (Pleck: [laughter continues]) to sort of settle into any...

1

Pleck: [deep in and out breath, 6 sec silence] So, I need to ask you a question because there were things that happened that were formal focusing sessions that I formally was

focusing-- one time for two hours—somebody was nice enough to listen for two hours— had a pretty fascinating experience—

2

um one other where I used focusing because it came in the middle of a meditation thing and I shifted into focusing and... all hell broke loose! [laughs] Ah! And, then there's other ones I mea- so... is it—or does it matter if focusing ga—or would it be better— whatever works better on your end...

S: I guess- I want you to check in and see... what, whatever one one comes to mind as um, your living of focusing, whatever that is for you, so it doesn't...

3

Pleck: Oooooooooo...kay... [23 sec silence]. Wow. [chuckles] I'll take another minute.

4

I have three—I'm not gonna tell you three stories. Um, no, course *I* think they're fascinating but hey! um... [14 sec silence]

5

Ok. I think I'll use this as a... [3 sec] ok, I got—I got one. (S: Ok, you can just begin with the set up) Ok. (S: where you were...) Sure. Ahm... I was... in my house. This was over the phone. I was focusing by phone with one of my focusing partners. One's in Israel, one's in the Netherlands, one's in California, [laughs] and one's in NY, so it's kind of —I—not sure, ahm... and...

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for a long time I ended up actually when I'm focusing, as I said, I often, compared to a lot of peoples' descriptions I do it kind of backwards.

7

Um, and so trying [moves hand palm down to level of head] to get into [brings palm downward toward abdomen] this part of my body which is often how focusing's described [places outstretched palm on mid abdomen] ahm, doesn't work too well for a whole bunch a reasons which is a different wild adventure story that I... won't tell-- [laughs] least not right now!

8

And so often what happens is that I feel this [closes eyes and places hand, fingers pointing toward him, in front of face] as I get quiet I can kind of feel my attention kind of [brings both hands up toward head, one on each side, palms facing one another and fingers inclined toward each other and draws them together in front of his face as if closing an aperture] tight and *here* [gesture]. It's almost like instead—it's almost the opposite of this [brings hands together over lower abdomen and opens them outward] and open spaciousness that often happens. This [brings hands back up in front of upper

face/forehead, like before, shaped as if holding a ball right in front of his face] kind of like a—aeeeeeee... um... that's I guess about the best way I can describe it

9

and it's really interesting because if I try to bring this attention [still as if holding the ball] to these places [brings hands to abdomen] there's this really tight attention that ends up doing this [fingers touching around invisible ball, touching aperture to several points over his mid and lower abdomen]] and it's like—the field's too small. I don't know how to describe it—um...

10

{there should} be focusing for head-types or something like that, you know that is—

11

So, a lot of times I'll actually start [returns hands, not touching but palms facing and hands rounded toward each other on each side of head] by just kinda being with what's the quality of my attention [hands still there] or what's the felt sense of my attending or what's the ... best way to describe it. Um, rather than just assuming that my attending is this [moves hands loosely out and inward over abdominal region] unencumbered, clear, unbiased, open spaciousness which it almost never is.

12

And so there'd be this tightness here [holding invisible ball w/ both hands] and after a while sometimes something would loosen up and it will relax [draws hands away from each other, opening space before his face]. I'll feel like this [touches hand to forehead], and I'll feel something here [places both hands high on chest] which is often something and I'll feel something here [hands over lower abdomen]. Um, this is kind of the intro to what happened here.

13

Um, also, and I'll just reference this, I had an experience... 22 years ago! I can tell you the day laughs] um, where I did some focusing, where some focusing happened and um, I had a pretty overwhelmingly intense experience shall we say and since that time, um, a lot of being able to relaxxxx... I lost the capacity to do a whole bunch of really--*cute* things I used to be able to do—I kind of reclaimed a dissociated part is probly what would best say happened, um,

14

and so since that time I've often felt tightness in certain parts of my body, often [indicates with palms of both hands low abdomen/ pelvic area]; I had neck and back pains for about ten years that were probably energy phenomena and there's this thing [hand in front of face, fingers pointed at forehead area], this tight attention, so --that's introduction, now hopefully this'll make sense... I'll try to remember this the best I can. [3 sec.]

15

So I started to quiet down and as this kind of relaxed [hands up and moving toward and away from each other in front of his face] I kinda sensed into —cuz I didn't want to be sensing with this [invisible ball gesture in front of his face] tight attention, if that makes sense. So I was aware that I was doing that; I noticed that—"ok, breathe"--and then I could feel this was tight [fingers of both hands to upper face/forehead], and I could feel that thhhere were these other places that were tight, um and as I um, kind of breathed with em I just—

16

...usually I just kinda hitchhike when I focus... over the last year and half I think I've actually just focused on specific issues but for the first [2 sec] 20 plus years, um, I think it was like, "here I am! [arms open from waist and eyes look up] What d'you wanna do?" That was kind of a... um.

17

And, I felt thissss, [hand in front of face] and I felt this [gestures to back of neck] tightness here as I kinda sensed in and I felt this [indicates lower abdomen/ pelvis] and I just kinda sat with it and

18

it went differently, I guess, always is a surprise. Um and it almost felt like there was an energy loop... I don't know enough traditional Chinese medicine to be able to say much about macrocosmic and microcosmic orbits and I don't know where they are but this [slowly moves hand w/ index loosely extended up toward head, in toward body, downward, out, in a loop] was some internal thing where it felt like there was this—this was kinda strange, but's ok, ahm, it felt like *there* [brings hands low to pelvis, palms up] was actually a [holds hand palm facing him over low ab/pelvis, draws other hand horizontally back and forth over flat palm]...blockage—"reflector" would be a nice word-- but there was something that basically said, "*Don't go there!*" [pokes finger of moving hand through fingers in flat "reflector"]

19

which would be, I don't know, sexual energies, [gestures downward w/ moving hand] underworld shamanic under—whatever, I mean, I don't—I don't take that kind of journey, but I've read about it—it's almost like, "You're not going there." [points again to flat blocking palm] It was like this [reflector] kicks the energy this way. [gestures other hand scooping back toward body up from block]

20

Then it would kind of come up here [indicates about 8 inches behind and above head] and it was like, "No, don't go there!" [laughs] kind of keeps the energy this way [holds one hand at head level, one at lower abdomen] and then there was something back here [gestures to back of neck]—I'm not exactly sure what that one was but there was like the energy was being almost like—if you were doing some kind of light show this [holds one hand, palm down, around forehead] was kind of keeping it here, this was kind of keeping

it here [the other palm up by pelvis], and this was keeping it here [shows flat hand around neck] so that my [moves lower hand in a circle/loop between three points sense of self] —some energy

21

or something was flipping... all through here [looping gesture ends],

22

um, and that was like myyyy.... ah... I don't know quite how to-- my life energy that's... not quite the best fit, um, s—it—those things maintained my sense of me within this thing, within this thing that you know for various, I mean I could give all sorts of psychodynamic reasons why I've got *this* [gestures flat hand as if slicing to pelvis], I've got--I can tell you why this [back of neck], *this* [hand in front of face] is not wanting to see things, *this* is not—Like, the whole, analyze the heck out of it! But anyway, they were there as actual, almost-like energetic—slike a laser with mirrors and you do something...

23

so I kinda felt that and it felt like they were there and I—noticed the usual—see if I can find a *kind* word to it—um, tinkering tendency to want to mess with all these things—“Well, if just got rid of this block, I would open up to the deep unconscious! [gestures downward and outward]If I opened up this block I would open up into...” [gestures above head] this kind of wonderful—wow! It felt—this was really strange —

24

but it felt like (this is probably one step away from schizophrenia but I'm very functional) um I felt like if any of these things got moved a little bit [places hands to indicate reflectors at abdomen and neck] they would actually change the energetic personality [circles finger in loop a few times]. It was almost like whoa! if you realize—if you get in there and just tilt this one a [commences tilting hand reflectors] little bit then I'd be *this* kind of person but if I tilt it this way then I'd be *this* kind of person if I tilted this mirror, I would be this kind of person—it was really interesting!

25

Ahm, um, so I sat with that for a little bit and I started thinking about doin that and it was just kinda—it's just kinda fascinating to get these insights about the nature of—I don't know what you'd call that—some kind of energy level of Being. And um, there was this really strong sense of “Don't mess with this! This is like doing plastic surgery.” It's like, “Yes, in my position I could do plastic surgery I could make somebody's nose better. I could just tweak the personality and you'll be a little nicer, you could be a little more this, or you could do a little more--” It felt like it was doing plastic surgery. It felt like it was messing in a way—plastic surgery has a negative connotation here—um, I respect plastic surgeons; I call them in all the time to sew up things. Um, but it felt like it was a messing with—it was..this... ih- it was this sense [hand on mid abdomen] that often comes here sort of like, “Uh, uh. You're not supposed to mess with this.” This, you know, it's almost

like, this, this is, I don't know. It's like—tinkering with god stuff or something; it's like “That's not what you're sposed to use this for.”

26

So I got really—it was fascinating for a while and I kind of asked into that space, “Why are you showing me this then?” like, “Why are you showing me this if I'm not supposed to do anything about it?” Right?

27

So I got quiet and I had a very, very sweet kind of felt response um, and it was um, it was, “You always wanted to know this. Now you know. Be happy. “ [laughs] (S:laughs). It was like, “no, you're not sposed to mess with it—you wanna know how life works, this is a piece of it. Enjoy.” It was like, “Don't mess with it!” It was like, “Ok!” and that was—that wa—it was that kind of a—sjust, that was it!

28

And I could feel this kind of flush like when you see something that—how life works. For me, that stuff I really like, some people could care less, I really like kind of getting “Oh, that's how this works, that's how this works...” and it was just thrilling for a while.

29

And that was, you know, and so I did not, I have not explored how to tinker with the human energy field [laughs] and whatever... “look, you have a change in personality!” so... obviously I haven't gone there. But but, uh, so that that was kind of as best I can recall [again creates frame of loop w/ hands] the experience.

S: Ah, uh-huh! So, So, sounds like there were a couple different stages to what happened there and the first part was the tightness...

30

Pleck: The first part, the first part was kind of-- I usually am pretty disconnected or depends on what language you want to use—am often so much in my head [gestures to head] or in something or into doing or something that I guess--in IFS, internal family systems, you call it one of the manager parts—so engaged with the manager part that I often don't feel this [gestures to body]. Part of this manager's job is to not feel, so what the first thing that happens when I slow down often is I feel, Oh-- I feel how bad this [laughs] feels to be me! Right, that's the first part of it. I'm actually slowing down

31

I used ta... slow down [gestures brief to chest] but a lot of times what would happen is when you read focusing instructions you put your attention on something. My really very highly efficient manager would- my caretaking part—would then go out and try to take care of all these other parts [indicates several small areas on mid abdomen] but it really wasn't you know what, you know, what's supposed to happen. And this is not-- I'm sure this is taught in focusing and good focusing teachers help people do it—but it's not really described clear like, you know, when you say put your attention here [gestures abdomen]

you might want to check and see what that attention feels like before you bring it down here! Right? Because it may be, y'know, (?)

32

yeah, so the first thing I do is: how am I attending, what's happening, oh, I don't... where am I? I often feel me here, which is often (instructive/destructive) so where am I? [invisible ball in front of forehead, tighter] Well, I'm right here. Well, how big am I? Like this. Well, how do I feel? So I'm kind of asking focusing questions of what feels alive or what feels like to be me. Well I actually feel about this big [brings pointer to thumb to show small space]—not too great! [chuckle] And I'm right about—here! [brings pointer-thumb-loop to forehead] So that's kind of how it started, if that's... (S: mmhmm)

S: Interesting and then, and then the next part is bringing—how did you get from this sense of, ah, very tight attention sharp focus here down to noticing the different blockages and...

33

Pleck: Uh, I mean what used to happen was there was this... what used to happen was that there were a whole lotta words that would happen and sometimes, it depends—

34

In this particular case just noticing that it was like that gave it some space, right? Classic focusing. You know so it's like, "Wow, I'm feeling about this tight-[pointer-thumb loop to forehead]. Oh, I wanna try to fix it. Oh, you know, then there's another part: "I don't like this." "Let's make myself be more open," like, just this like, ok, just you kinda smile—after a year, a few years, you kinda get used to this: "OK, I know this movie!"

35

So and now—sometimes, not this time but sometimes what would happen would be that I would feel... whatever it was that was *trying* to do this, [gestures hands shakily closing around invisible ball in front of chest, shaking is resistance to closing] that was *trying* to constrict—sometimes I would just be with that. This [pointer-thumb loop to forehead] is small for a reason—it's got a reason. And if I try too hard then the trying of course contaminates the field so... I've been through that movie [laughs] (S: laughs) for years, right, so it's like "OK." [sighs] So sometimes I'd feel this ---[hands fighting to close around invisible ball] and sometimes there'd be a lot of--- [balls hands into fists and they tremble in front of upper chest] ...tightness, or if I'd hit mute on the phone I'd scream a little bit.

36

And then because I usually feel a kind of discharge—some of the energy or some of the fear or whatever it was, you know, that caused me—"me", my sense of me [closes hands together tightly in front of chest]—to be this big. And as I did that in this particular case I think I just noticed that: "Oh, tight. Ok, that's where I am. I've done this 40 times before; let's just be with that." [fingers up to touch forehead]

37

Wow! That's kind of [other hand up and out about 12-15 inches from head, palm toward body] interesting because now I've got this little space from it then! Ohh-kay, I got some space from it. What else is goin on? I know I have a place here [gestures to low abdomen] I just can't feel it yet.

38

"Oh, I wanna make make myself do that!"

39

Noooo!" [does 'time out' gesture].

40

Ya know so there's-- often times for me, a lot of focusing is a lot of remembering-- actually being sensitive to *messing*, right, with; being sensitive to qualities of attention, because I'm realizing now that this is a kind of really small attention [pointer to thumb loop] that I'm bringing into my being [bringing to mid abdomen] and um, just in this case I think I noticed it and I think I remember and I also know—I've done it enough—over a couple of minutes if I just breathe *I* can't go down here, but *it* will open up.

41

Pardon the choice of I and it words; even within 5 minutes it feels like "I-it," then it feels like I, then it feels like it, then it feels like I. At this point I don't care. [chuckles] ???

S: So it sounds like when you got that-those—images of the lasers...

42

Pleck: Or mirrors. Right, um, if I was an artist, which I'm not, what it would be, would be like three things [places hands as reflectors] with actually a light going through them [rapidly circles hand in front of him] and what I felt, what I actually *felt* was *this* [circling motion] and I kind of *saw* though the edges of *this* [indicates reflectors, I think in that they were the limits of the energy motion] (S: mmm, I see, they were sort of implied).

43

Yeah I guess I'd call it a felt image. It's not—there's kind of disembodied images, but this was like—whoa! This is almost like a handle for the experience in a way? I—this—that it was this thing [hands as reflectors, then as energy loop] that that I say cuz there's times when I'll imagine stuff or I'll visualize stuff or remember a theory and it often directs my felt sensing but in this case it wasn't, it wasn't the case I just... It just—I'm sittin there and well, there's this, and there's this and all of a sudden it lights up [flashes fingers open in front of him].

44

I don't know how to describe it any other way and I can feeeell [finger making energy loop] and seeeee it in some level that, yknow, if I was an artist I'd draw it. It was, uh,

something else—I, if I cut those little cords and pulled the wires out [gestures as if touching two live wires together] ERNGH! You could actually feel it—[hands gesturing energy loop]. It was a felt experience of the way that this [hands as limiting reflectors], uh, ...

45

dynamic stabilization almost? Like, yknow, if you look at a wave, [traces deep, even parabolic waves in the air before him] like a standing wave—not in the ocean wave but a standing wave in whitewater— it looks like it's just a wave but obviously that's water moving, right. If you were a boat you would move right through it. The water's moving. It, the experience of this is moving but it has a stable pattern. I don't know if that...

S: mm-hm. and then the voice or the sense of “don't mess with it” (right) that part that— can you tell me, I mean, cuz you were saying before about the I and the it (right, where's this coming from) I'm curious if—you don' have to clarify it-- (laughs. no, that's fine it's a good question) cuz I'm wondering about where that came in and what your feeling was with that... [Pleck gets up to get his tea on a tray out of reach] Yeah, your tea's all the way over there!

46

Pleck: you know, the um... this one wasn't as.... the the “don't mess with it” wasn't as strongly different as um, “You always wanted to know this. Now you know. Be happy.” That one has thisssss familiar sense of what I would just call--what I use, my handle for that's just the “voice of guidance”. It's something that speaks to me in a certain tone of voice that I've had in dreams over years. I've had dreams and at the end of the dream it would tell me what it was about. Like this voice would come from behind and, “Don't break the bottle.” “Take your time, take a breath, do this, this...” this kind of voice. Um and so that voice I would kind of... this other one was kind of part... this other one wasn't that.

47

Um... this other one was kinda like a place in me that kinda said “I think I'd like to mess with this. Let me turn the mirror up and see what happens.”

48

And then the place that says. “Whoa, let's just wait and check.” This is all me. Caution, or something. And then this kind of checking and I'm not even sure what kind of checking it wasss, um, ...it was like a “*maybe* I should *check* [laughs]...” That's all *me*. That part was *me*.

49

Um, and then as I started to do that. There's some—I don't know, the language is so terrible here, right? Some sense of rightness or something it was ...[3 sec]...I...[4 sec]...

50

it didn't have that, the whatever the voice is-- guidance voice-- has this was kind of almost like a [slow, building laugh!] almost like a ten commandments voice. I don't mean a deep— I don't mean whatchamacallit Charlton Heston—I mean it's like, it's pretty clear in all the religious scriptures right, first Corinthians 13, yknow, basically don't, yaknow love [laughs]-- kind of love, don't be screwing around with all these “if I had this power and if I had this power and this power” or in the Buddhist stuff about the way of power or the Jewish about messing with the nature of reality for one's own purpose. Um, and so it felt like it was like a scriptural violation, actually it's like “I think I'm messing with something.” That was the initial hesitation was like, yknow it was almost like a – I guess I'll use that word-- it's almost like a scriptural injunction (mmmmm) it was like “Whoa!” your, y'know, it wasn't quite like “Don't eat the apple,” but there was [laughs] (S:laughs)-- It wasn't quite that strong but it was just like, “Oh, don't mess with this. This is a waste of your life; that's not why you're here.”

51

”You're not here to be—yeah, you can do plastic surgery, yeah you can get rich, you can open up your shingle. I'm sure you'd be really popular. You'd be really wealthy. People would be treating you.. yeah, great. Go do it. [slightly sarcastic tone].” It was morrrre... that's not very helpful; I'm sorry, that's. .. (oh, I don't know... scriptural injunction--) I mean it's a weird way to say it but it felt like it was crossing some code, rather than some—and there's a felt sense of the “No” but that's a different felt sense...

S: And that, the, when you asked of that—

52

Pleck: Then it was like, yeah. Then then it was like, cause it kept feeling like I was sposed to mess with it and I'd be—“Oh, my god!” I mean, y'know, what neat thing to— what a neat field to play in!

53

I mean, y'know--you're a psychologist! [laughs] (S: Laughs). I

54

It'd be neat if some way you could energetically sense “I can feel that you're, y'know, there's this block in this—“ Kind of like this Caroline Lace stuff is in *anatomy of the spirit* stuff which, I don't know, I don't... Barbara Brandon's work with energy fields, “Let's just adjust your energy field a little bit and let's just adjust your energy field a little bit.” Ahm, but I'm not sure what people are using as their... reference point to know when you're messing and when you're not messing, right? It's a big question. Um, and soooo, anyway I'm sorry you asked me a question and I got lost in it...

S: Oh, no, I mean I was just trying to sort of track through what you've told me and just sort of make sure that I heard everything and so I was asking about the part after you were getting that scriptural injunction you were—kinda had a sense of, well, why? y'know?

55

Pleck: Well, I wanted—that's right, I wanted to mess with it. I mean it was just like "Wow!" It was really far-- I mean somebody just gave you a new toy, let me play with it! (S: laughs)

56

And ok, it was like, it was like, it was like, it wasn't like "No!", it was like... "That's not really what you're here for."

57

And so I just kinda stopped for a little bit and then after a while I'm lookin at this, I'm seeing this, it's kinda like you're watching this thing and it's kind of like, "Well, why'd you show me? [laughs] Seriously, why did you show me this?" [looks upward]

58

Um, y'know, and um, and then there was that, then there was that kind of thing where it was like, "Y'know, because you always wanted to know, you know? Now you know. Be happy!" It was just like this.... Very... you kind of have a deeper appreciation for something about how life works, and that was it. So that had this other place [moves stretched palm down toward abdomen and out] and there's a...[4 sec]

59

there's a felt quality to that which I'm realizing I haven't really sensed into so I'm trying to do that a little bit while I'm talking to you. I always just kind of say, "Oh, that's my voice of guidance." It's really sweet, y'know, just always really sweet, but it's soft. It has a certain quality that like the best I can describe it is "All's well in the universe?" [laughs] That's maybe the best way to describe it. It has that quality to it. It's not just some neat voice; that's why I said-- the ten commandments voice is kinda like, "Don't do it. It's bad. You'll cause trouble." This is, this is a different ... quality. Aehh, anyway. That'ssssss...

S: But and so that kinda feeds into the last piece which is that after this experience um... you said earlier that you were excited about it; you didn't use that word-- (Um-) "thrilled" about it.

60

Pleck: It was really thrilled. It was fascinating. It was like, Oh my god, wow, that's really neat. *And*, Um, there's some—and there's something more. In other words knowing that opened something. I'm not sure what it is; it's maybe an appreciation that we're like this and my reflector might be this way [holds hand in reflector position] and your reflector might be this way [tilts hand] and talk about there but for the grace of God go I, right? Y'know? If the reflector just tilted two degrees then you woulda been... y'know, but instead it's like this and Ieeee—that's maybe a little too engineering minded. (S: laughs)

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Sorry, I don't mean it that way, but there's a certain ...empathy or s- I don't know, that's too strong a word... There's something that happens in that and it's really exciting and it's, y'know, one of these interesting things that, y'know, I can write about and be labeled all sorts of things, or I can leave it on my computer! [slow, building laugh!] along with a bunch of other unusual experiences!

62

Um, and, um, it's something, somehow I still carry with me as some *knowing*; I don't really know what its purpose is. It's the piece of a puzzle; the puzzle is not yet together and yet I know I have a bunch of pieces, maybe they'll... (yawns)... maybe they'll come together someday.

S: Is there, is there anything, um, else about this, this focusing instance that, um y'know, you feel you haven't touched on that might still be there wanting to be part of this telling?

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Pleck: Ahm, [5 sec] I think I will, at some point in time, spend some more time with the actual felt quality of the, of the ... voice, I guess is the right word.

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Cuz I'm realizing a lot of times that that it that as I said that things'll open up in funny ways. I'm not sure how how to—I guess that's maybe, that's maybe it. Sometimes I'll go back over an experience I had years before and I'll try to sense back into it and there's certain experiences—maybe it's the handles, maybe it's because the experiences were deeper or something where it feels like they're, even years later, they're an entry point where you can actually go back in there and reaccess something. (S: mmmm).

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Um, and the other thing which is kind of interesting is in my earlier days of focusing I had really...unusual or nonordinary or whatever experiences. Over the last year and a half in my focusing I've had incredibly ordinary experiences as if, um, "It's ok, now you see how the universe works, now get off your ass and do your own personal growth work!" [laughter in voice] It's like, "Now you know the transpersonal piece, now you gotta do the personal piece!" Abandonment issues, fear, terrified... So most of my focusing for the last year, people who've been focusing with me for years say. "You, know, you used to never go into personal stuff; it used to be all this kind of stuff." I—and now it's usually: this area's really shame, this other place here, y'know, I'm terrified of this, I'm finding some other—So it, become very... personal over time,

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it's actually kind of opposite. A lot of people come the other way—they start with the personal and it opens up, but ah, in my particular case, it – in terms of a spectrum—I hardly ever have anything like that anymore. Whereas I'd have, oh, gosh, 20, 30 pieces of "this is how the universe works; this is what it feels like- you can get an energy hit off it" [laughs] kind of like you feel the connection to-y'know, "Whaaaow!" (S: laughs).

And then now it's mostly like, "Nope, ya gotta grow up!" [laughs] So it's kinda in a continuum.. That's not about this experience, but I just wanted to- to put this into context because um as I said, a lot of times I do things backwards, and I guess this is my... my doing things backwards. So I don't know um, y'know, oh-ahhh—it would be interesting to see, I don't know maybe they'll open up again some day but at least for the last couple of—last year or two it has taken a very very personal, very much issues—stuff with me, with my kids, with my wife, w' my job, rather than "how's the universe work?" Though that's a really fun thing t—and I didn't try, I didn't set it up—I wasn't trying to focus into how the universe worked. It just...

S: Well I'm just, um, this has been so great to hear about and I have a lot more questions and if you feel that um...

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Pleck: I think that's about as much as I have. I'm not sure—I mean I could try to find it on my computer and try to dig out my notes from whenever that was but I think that's probably...

S: I was just saying, maybe we can stop the tape and uh, I just want to ask you a couple questions off the record.

Pleck: Oh, no, what the heck, I don't mind, as I said...

end

A7.2 Participant Two: Anna

S: I'm asking, to begin with, how you learned focusing and how long you've been doing it?

Anna: So in about 1995 I a friend gave me a copy of the book about how to learn focusing- Gene's book—and I was very intrigued by it, reading it and feeling like, “Ok, this is cool stuff,” because it's about connecting with one's own inner experiences and not about, you know, trying to fit into boxes or anything. And at the same time I felt like it would be helpful to actually experience a workshop- like I felt like it wasn't quite enough to read the book or whatever. And the person who was gave me the book actually had a—don't know if this is relevant at all, but she had a pretty moving and sad story which was that she was really interested in this stuff and had asked her therapist if she knew focusing. She just wanted to do it and her therapist nodded and led her to believe that she knew focusing and later, a while into the work, the woman was feelin like “What's happening? This doesn't fit with this...” and asked her more point blank and it turned out that this woman didn't know focusing, that she'd just been nodding, because you know therapists don't like to admit that there's something that they don't know about. She felt really disappointed and disillusioned by it. And uh, I was struck by her story and I was very intrigued by the book and it was like, “Oh yeah, yeah! This is stuff that I—“ but then, just life circumstances—it's not like I ended up going to my first focusing class with her, I think we kind of lost touch or whatever. But I was—it was clear in my mind that this focusing stuff was something that was really interesting to me-- also partly kind of my background. I had been practicing co-counseling for some time. I wasn't practicing co-counseling actively at that moment, but I had had 4 or 5 yrs experience with it before and so I was already very attuned to, I don't know, the politics of it. I mean, I use that word advisedly but for me there's something about a lay, peer-to-peer practice that, you know, and, not—I mean, I think that focusing can be used very well in psychotherapy and I would also think that sometimes it's really helpful to have psychotherapy because I think one more person holding and containing and it isn't all peer to peer. And I've come to realize that more as I've aged. I mean, at that point I was *really* into the peer to peer, non-hierarchical stuff etc. etc., so *that* was another thing that really attracted me to it, because in the focusing book he communicates that very clearly and um it was very much on my radar as something I wanted to do. But then it took me, um, three years to—even though there was-- AWC was in the area and offered workshops and whatever. I just have an active life and there were a lot of things so it kinda took a while before I actually got a chance to take my first workshop. And then I did take my first workshop and I loved it and I started going to a Changes group in _____ that met every two weeks or something like that. Anyway so I would go regularly, um, and I thought about getting more involved with focusing and I was kind of drawn to it, but I had a feeling for myself at that point and time that somehow my work world was going to have something to do with groups, and... this was...[5 sec]... this was very individual work, felt very individual, and so I was fascinated by it but I felt, y'know, if I had 9 lives one of them I'd definitely study focusing and get more into it but I wasn't... And it wasn't until um (3 sec) So I ended up back in school studying _____ and it wasn't until I took a class with A on treasure maps to the soul. I was fascinated by

her metaphors and her imagery and I really wanted to { give that a try?} and when I did that I realized for me that there was an incredibly strong parallel between how—especially in A’s inner relationship focusing—how we work with different parts inside and the work I was learning to do with groups. And so I- at that point in time I um felt like, ok, I really-- I want to go further with focusing because it’s like the inside and the outside of a glove, and, yeah, it just felt like it was... yeah, so that’s my story.

S: So it was coming into the particular kind of focusing that was going to fit or complement what you were—

Anna: Yeah, yeah. Uh.

S: Well, thank you for taking the time to be willing with talk with me and um, uh, it’s just a moving practice for a lot of people and it’s interesting to hear the different ways that people come to it (yeah, yeah). So, here’s the long question. And I want to make sure that you are comfortable and I want to make sure this is still on you since you leaned back a little bit, good...

Anna: Ih—just just to clarify what I meant before: I wanted focusing to be part of my life I wanted to do focusing; I was in the changes group etc, but I just mean the whole process of becoming certified to teach it—was building into it that far (right). It was when I realized this is something that can yeah, just it’d help with the group work and maybe at some point when I’m teaching people group work I’d love to be able to teach focusing (you were already involved for yourself) for myself (it was taking it to that professional--) yeah yeah.

S: Ok, um, so when you’re comfortable, I’m going to ask for you to describe for me your experience of a specific focusing session when you were the focuser, that stands out as particularly memorable. I’ll ask you to describe how the session began, what happened for you while it was going on, and what happened afterward. Ahm, please include as much detail as possible about the situation, your feelings and thoughts throughout, bodily sensations, any movements or shifts anything else that comes to mind about what happened in that session. You can take as much time as you need to identify a particular instance, and then to tell about it.

1

Anna: [10 sec. silence. Deep sigh.] I’m going to need some time to squawk about the question. I’m feeling really, um, I... I don’t have a very good memory, and a lot of my particularly memorable focusing sessions were a while back, and so I feel it would be easier to give you highlights of a few but I feel like, like I can choose one but I wouldn’t have that much—and I don’t know that I could—and I mean I know kind of what you’re asking about, I mean I just—at some point—fairly recently when—

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_____ and I have been married for five years. I moved out here about a year and a half before that, and we were dating for about a year and a half before I moved out. We've known each other for a while but um when I moved out here I was initially going to start re-growing my _____ practice and then I realized I'm in a new role as a step mom and I don't want to be traveling, away all the time, whatever. So I ended up going back to school for an _____. Yeah, because I'd never never um, y'know I'd done all kinds of peer co-counseling and then peer focusing but I'd never done [one on one] therapy as a clinician and in the process I was asked to write a lot of process reports. So, like, I know what you mean.

3

I mean, this is a little from the other side of it, but as a therapist to try to describe a session and how I felt [about different things] and so I have a real high, high standard for myself about doing that and so—your question, I'm sitting here going, “Oh, my god, am I gonna be able to do that? Am I gonna be able to pull...”

4

It's also a little bit complicated in that I- y'know, _____ has 4 different focusing partners that he focuses with weekly... ah... I do a lot of focusing related activities, but at this point, I-I... most of my focusing is with _____ and it's mostly informal and so it's not, you know, it's not like we're gonna do a whatever session, but... [sigh] so I'm feeling a little anxious about not being able to give you what you want.

S: Maybe, um, it might help to know that it doesn't have to be a y'know, I'm not looking for necessarily a formal—time. I mean, I refer here to such and it's because for most people that fits, but I'm really... as I understand a lot of people focusing becomes a practice that's very—you know [well--] it happens

Anna: Yeah but I mean still, when you have a formal focusing session you were talking about different parts [yeah, before, during, after...] yeah...

S: You're not sure that there's something there that--

5

Anna:--Well there's one that I want to share with you just because I h-- ... it's a... [8 sec silence] Well, there's two. I'll start with this one. Um, this was a session that was longer ago. It was when I was in the...being part of the changes group, so it was not a person who I... who I had focused with a lot before and I think it was with a person who.... [4 sec]... he had said something about how he often... got things to respond here; his body would say things and I can't remember exactly whether I was maybe focusing with him, or whether I had just heard that from this person who was a member or whatever.

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But it wasn't like I was trying to do anything in that regard but I do feel like he kinda gave me a certain kind of permission [mmm] cause I do love movement. To think, “Oh!

Movement is another venue through which focusing can come.” But I wasn’t *intending* to do anything about it. I was just going in to do my focusing turn.

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And so in my focusing turn—I don’t remember what the issue I was working on was—but I was exploring something and what came—and it apparently felt kind of...disconnected, like I didn’t know what the meaning of it was but there was something about just wanting to go like *this* [lifts shoulders, then arms up from her body so that they are about half way between her waist and shoulders. As she lowers both arms, she lifts her palms up and pushes out away from her body. All of this is done in a fluid, expressive motion, like a dance move, but without feeling choreographed]... just wanting to go like this. It’s like, ok, I’m just feeling like I need to [repeats]... [sigh] yeah... [sigh] And so I did it a couple of times and ...

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sigh... *after* doing it, I had this insight that, “Oh, this *connects* to... the... issue that... I’m working with!”

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When it first came, I--it was just, “My body’s wanting to do this... oh, that feels good. And now I’m wanting to [sigh] and I’m wanting to do this... and then it was like,... “ohhhhh! Maybe *this* is what people mean by boundaries!”

10

Because ...that was a word that had *always* mystified and puzzled me. It was like, “there is some abstract line that should be drawn and how do you know where it should be drawn and where is it supposed to be drawn?” And someplace inside panicked about, “Well I have no clue about this!”

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and all of a sudden it was like I got in this instant that it’s like, Oh! This is this is not some abstract, disconnected thing! This is something to do with how I’m feeling inside, how much space I am wanting and needing, and... and there was even this part of the gesture that had come, and sometimes it’s *here* [elbows bend to bring hands, palm out, drawn closer to her body], and sometimes it’s *here* [straightens arms and pushes palms out further] and it’s kind of connected to me!” (S laughs delightedly with Anna’s amazement).

12

And it’s just a really amazing... thing! Because the person I was with wasn’t trying to teach me about boundaries, or wasn’t saying anything about boundaries, I mean they were like, totally just listening. I wasn’t in the situation... I wish I could remember what the context of the focusing session was—but I—it wasn’t like there was one part of me that was thinking, “Well, where should my boun—“ It’s like the word was not even... the word was not in my consciousness, it was just... it, then when the movement came I

didn't even think that the movement had anything to do with the thing I was talking about, so it was. It was just just really memorable for me (yeah!)

S: So, you're, you were were talking about something, and... this movement is what came for you [does movement]

13

Anna: Yeah, this movement [repeats arm movement]. And I was, "Well I don't know what this—but let me just feel it. I just feel like, "Ah!" Y'know, I just... [sigh] like I just want to do [exhale] and then I just kind of want to explore, just like, well, maybe it's y'know... and it was *just movement*, it had no conceptual thing to it, until it was out there,

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and then it was just like, "Ok, how does that feel?" "Well, that feels good" I wonder what that was; it probably doesn't have anything to do with my thing, but—

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In fact, I think I probably even gave myself permission to not have anything to do with whatever. "Well, I don't—it doesn't have anything to do with, but it was good to do it!" And then it was like kind of in the next moment there was like "Oh! Wait a second! Maybe this does have something with the issue I was talking about!"

S: Th- and that, whole, [does movement]. What was that like, I mean, I guess it's tough to remember stuff like that...

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Anna: So, so—so... so that's where the going back and forth comes in. It's like, "Oh, I wonder if that has something to do with the issue?" And it's like you get this little idea light bulb going off in your head, and you get this thought, and you go back and you check it. It's like, "Gosh, let me take that in." Does this? Does this movement have to do with this issue that I'm working on?"

17

And then, "Yes!!" This, y'know, there's—so, yeah. It... so so so then in the focusing process itself as I started to focus more I got a chance to develop more of the connections between the movement and the idea of boundaries and how to apply it in the situation I was working in, and like that.

S: And I mean it sounds like... [wanted to ask] Why do you think that movement/session stays with you?

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Anna: Um... because... is different than like... I mean, often I do get ideas popping into my head and then I check them, y'know, um... I tend to get more images, I don't often get movements... um... I think kind of the fact that this person did a lot of movement or

did a lot of movement kind of gave the *permission* for that to come but it's not like I was *trying* to get that to come, and...

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the other reason I think it stayed with me is because...it addressed the situation that I was in in the moment, but it also like shed light on this conceptual category that I had always had a hard time understanding.

S: Do do you I mean, did that understanding shift for you as a result?

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Anna: Yeah, I mean...[8 sec] yeah, I feel like...[5 sec] it stayed with me. I mean, this is a story I've told different times. Not in that much detail, but, um...

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just kind of *realizing* that there's a whole inner dimension to the experience of boundaries, that it isn't something purely externally determined, something that one should have but that it has to do with... one's own comfort, you know. It kind of *grounded* that concept for me, and I think that the concept has stayed grounded. It doesn't mean that I am perfect in my life about setting boundaries or that I... have done all the work I need to do around that issue in my life, but maybe it just gave it a real...inner dimension.)mmmm) to it... Yeah. (hm)

S: Is there anything else about that instance that comes with the telling?

22

Anna: Um... I think the other thing that was so wonderful about it was... I mean it was such a – maybe because it *was* movement... maybe because I had *no clue* about the connection or the meaning for a while? Um, also I process very quickly, so like I'll get a sensation and then I'll see the connection right afterwards so it's very... but it just, because it's like, well that's [really odd], because there was a little bit of a time line between what came and then the meaning of it, it's an experience that kind of particularly... um...

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it's like that sense of like a larger intelligence that has nothing to do—not nothing to do, but—very little to do with our conscious mind and our control and our intention and, y'know, just kind of that. That it was very much...

S: Sounds like it was surprising to have that...

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Anna: Yeah, it was surprising when it happened and it... there was an element of s-s-surprise, puzzling, kind of a mystery of. A, "geeze, I don't know what..." y'know, so, and then having.. so, yeah... yeah...

S: And you said there was another instance that came to mind...

25

Anna: Well, before we go there, I just want to say that I...[5 sec] __ has this question that he asks people sometimes... “What is the essence of focusing for you?” and he really loves how different people respond to it in different ways and, uh, one of the... one of the things that [gets tea] one of the things that...

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this is a response I used to give and I don't know what I would give if I were to sense it freshly, but the- the historical thing is important for me—A way that I often described this that was very important to me was that focusing is a way of developing a...non-colonizing relationship with one's own inner landscape. And that was really important to me because it- it it symbolized or it held this stuff about y'know just like encountering stuff inside with a real --*not*-trying to immediately to figure it all out. Or just really— [given] mode of discovering but kind of a a wonder-filled discovery rather than a *colonizing*. Really, it's just the word colonizing and not colonizing and the distinction between those two (yeah) is really important to me about the focusing attitude and what focusing is.

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And so, I'm bringing that up in the context of this because ...[5 sec] ...like... I don't know it's really weird but I'm gonna like go for it...

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it's like: I might have the intention for my whatever conscious side to have a very noncolonizing relationship with something--so like to use A's mmmmm metaphor of all the little wild, shy, shy animals, whatever. I might be, you know, curious and welcoming and whatever, but there's ... what happens from the other side is kind of dependent ... on its all things and to have, from the other side, like I could be sitting here for hours just kind of observing and just kind of seeing little things poking out,

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but at some point I might actually-- something from here might come out and do this thing and I might go, “Oh, my gosh!” y'know? So it was like that, y'know, it was like my something was coming through in doing this thing that I didn't have a clue about-- I never--but it was like *very*... y'know...

S: In the first scenario, you're looking, however non-colonizing, you are sort of looking at those little... something and then something comes into your view that you *weren't looking for*, or...

30

Anna: Well, yeah, ere r... it's kind of, um, it's just the manifestation—like a big manifestation from the other side. The other side can be kind of y'know giving you little trickles or little things or like that but sometimes there can be something that feels really

big... I mean, *it's* big anyways, whether I have a sense of it being big because of all the little pieces add up; I know there's a lot there, but sometimes there can be a pretty sizeable display or something and *that* felt like to me like a pretty sizeable display of... I don't know that- that- that other thing that y'know, ...can't put any words to it—but deep wisdom, or larger knowing that's outside of what's—cuz y'know I didn't have a clue of what this was. It was really clear that it was coming to me from outside.

31

It wasn't even like I was saying, "well, Maybe I need to have more boundaries in here and what would that feel like?" It's just like, yeah. So that's what it was, so. Is that—is that making sense?

S: Yeah, yeah it's hard for you to put words to it, it's hard for me to sort of rephrase back to you to make sure that I'm—that I'm getting it, so... I think that I um, ok... so... anything else about that one?

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Anna: ...[12 sec silence]... Well, I think it was...it's like I think that one of the ... one of the reasons—and I don't know if this is the kind of stuff you want to get into in your interviews but I'll just go ahead and share it—you can mute whatever you don't use, whatever. But it's like, I don't think I'd grown up in a family where I think I felt I had the right to set any boundaries... but this wasn't...this wasn't so much about that. It's not like in the moment I got any insight into my family of origin or dynamics or anything like that but I...

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it was just a really deep reconnection in a physical sense y'know just that movement, um, and ... [sigh]...so gene talks about it as like a way that you know a stopped process can kind of unfreeze and ... so I think it was it was important because I think it was a way of me beginning to physically embody a sense of having the space the affirmation, the right, that seems a little less because its so abstract but still it's part of all of that but it's not of the possibility of [sigh] setting boundaries.

S: Your body in creating that space (yeah)

34

Anna: Yeah yeah. So I think it's a very it's a very vital thing for all of us and so I think that that moment—I think it's part of *how* it came, and then also *what* came that I think is part of what makes it so- so significant.

S: Yeah... thank you for sharing that. It sounds like a really... important (yeah, yeah)

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Anna: And it's not, like, everything changes over night or anything like that, but it becomes a touch stone, you know? It's... something that one can go back to...

S: Even as you tell me you are—

36

Anna: Yeah, I know! I mean, honestly, and I haven't done this [repeats movement], but I feel like I should do this ten times a day—like this should be part of my tai chi or whatever, y'know? It's- it's important. (mmm) IT is important.

37

So I don't feel like I've—and I guess I don't feel it's ever too late, but I don't feel like I've harvested fully the gift of that—that session, yeah. So thank you.

S: Thank you for sharing that. That's beautiful.

Anna: So, is this what you wanted?

S: (laughs) yeah, I mean (ok. Ok.) y'know, I appreciate that people have different kinds of memories and (right) and especially if you're not doing a lot of focusing... on a weekly basis you don't necessarily have those sessions to draw from in the same way, but yeah, I anticipate and hope for variation (laughs)... [5 sec]... So you—there was another, another instance...

38

Anna: I think...I [5 sec]... don't know, I mean... h-... 5 sec... I think that I want to stick with the question I asked you a moment ago which was—I think what I'm talking about is beyond variation. (ok) I think what I'm realizing for me, and I wasn't thinking of your interview, in this way when we were first doing it, um, ...like,

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...I know that whenever we go into something we're—there's some sense whether its explicit or implicit of what we think we might find or why we're looking in a certain area or what we're looking for, that... and so I was asking in terms of whether this was gonna be useful to you in that regard, but what I'm realizing for me is that ...and I don't know if this was part of the design—which is fine, if it wasn't or whatever but I just want to point it out that I think that this is *not* just what happened then, and how that fits with whatever your initial ideas were and whatever variability may come with regards to that, but this is all so... what the interview process now helps in the carrying forward of what happened then, (yeah) so...

S: It doesn't remain in the past. (right) yeah. It becomes something different when you're telling it, for you (yeah). I think that's, um, y'know, its part of my research plan only insofar as it's my hope that it will be beneficial for the people I'm talking too, that when they recall something, and something that stands out that they will have something, in that recollection, that they need still, or is still important.

40

Anna: Right, right. And I'm just realizing, when you are doing something like this in focusing how... kind of inevitable it will be not necessarily that it's going to have something—well, yes. It will have something positive. But my emphasis isn't on the positive my emphasis is on the ongoingness of it—that some ongoing will come from it, or it will be part of it... ok. Yeah.

S: So there's something about asking about a past experience that seems a little bi... um...like maybe we're not acknowledging that when I ... that that past is shaping itself right now... in the new telling? It's...

41

Anna: Well, I'm... this isn't a judgment at all; I mean we do have past experiences and it can be very interesting to study them, it's just when we're studying past experiences about focusing, in a focusing-sensitive context, it almost seems like invariable it, that there will be a present ongoing of that past experience. And I'm not talking about... yes, we're re-remembering it, etc., but it's not even just the fact that we are... remembering it differently or having, whatever.

42

But that it—some new steps forward will come. So... it just seems like, if one is open to it, it's that... like you're... so it's like your studying the past and stuff that's happening in the present and

S: Yeah... and it's uh, it's not, uh, it's not a neat process that can easily be (yeah, yeah) sort of put into a box (yeah) and that's not the—that's not what I anticipate doing! (laugh)

43

Anna: I just hope that you can get something—I still hope that you can get something useful from it, and I'm realizing that the big surprise for me was just how much more present unfolding this would be (yeah)

44

The second thing is a fragment, and I don't know if it'll be useful at all but it did pop up when you said “memorable focusing experiences” um, this was shortly after the ... um.. the treasure maps workshop--and I want to do another one at some point—I was focusing with a partner I met there, and we were doing some pretty deep work and...[7 sec]...just had a memory of another focusing experience that is a little bit clearer and it's a long story but whatever...I wanna stay with this one. Um, ...[13 sec silence]

45

I had some focusing experience where I had some... images of ...[16 sec silence] there were three. One of them was ...[10 sec]...it was like...there was a sssscene I don't know there was this image... there was something about the quality of the light...in the image, and...the solidity or the density of the light or the space... I think I'm mixing two

different ones up because there was one that was like, there was like, you know how light shifts when it goes from like air to water... it was like it was like that kind of ...

46

and then.. another one where I think it was..it was like a...[sigh]... it was more like a... y'know how light has certain colors at times of the day, it's like.... But where... where the really strong thing that was coming up had to do with these qualities of light in this image. It was like very subtle things in a certain way, yet I could feel it really strongly. And the content had something to do with... I don't know, maybe it's a little bit related to what ... ___ calls a background feeling—do you know the work on the background feeling?

S: Not that much. I mean I'm familiar with the idea of a background feeling—

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Anna: I don't, I don't know that much about it, either, I haven't done a workshop with her, whatever,

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I think that—that kind of things where I was kind of like... getting a felt sense of...almost like the way certain belief structures colored my experiences, or something is what it—came out afterwards. Like, at first it was like this other thing where I was just kind of getting this... this... image and it something felt important about it but I didn't know what the connection was, and then as I was with it more, it kind of unfolded along those lines that there was a powerful message in it.

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But this were just pretty...pretty vivid, um, and they were kind of ... disturbing isn't quite the right word, but...oh... (sigh)...[17 sec silence]... it kind of fits...[20 sec silence]... it was kind of like a ... a knowing from the inside about certain...psychological wounds that I'd experienced, it was... it was just, again, I was just so...[8 sec silence]... part of what was memorable about it was that... like for instance you can take some kind of whatever...concept y'know I mean, let's go back to the other example—and this is not what happened, but--- say you have the, y'know, the psychological concept of learned helplessness or something like that and say tha I were to get a physical image of: what is this, and what is this?

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And then afterwards kind of go, “Oh!!! That's what that whole construct that other people out there have created about this thing... feels like from the inside!” But, so it's like... and I don't remember what the particular construct was, but it was that experience—it it something along the lines of... sigh... it wasn't exactly this... but say something about connecting with the place in me that felt like it had to please others, rather than... or like say, construction of a false self or whatever... but...

so what was really intriguing about it was that it wasn't like I was going in and saying, "Oh, what does learned helplessness feel like on the inside?" or "What does a.. y'know, like, having a sense of having to have a false self in certain situations—how does that feel on the inside?" I wasn't—it's like I wasn't like I was asking that question, it was much more like, in

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... in response to exploring a particular situation, I was getting this image... a felt image.. and... that I had no clue what it was about, and then as I explored the felt image, I ... got some kind of a deep sense from it that had to do not just with the situation which I was in now but with a more general pain in my life and it wasn't like the exact analogue of some external construct, but it was like... it was that rich, and it was that powerful, but it was...it was coming from inside... does that make, like, some kind of a sense?

S: Yeah, but it sounds like in both situations—and it's interesting that you can't remember the contexts—it's almost like, whatever you were talking about that brought you to what came next and what it opened up... the particulars, the very particulars, the words, aren't as memorable (yeah) to you because, in the end, they weren't as important as what they opened up onto, which was the more general, understanding of something that was bigger and richer than whatever you--

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Anna: --Well, it was expressing itself in that situation. It's this situation that is an instance of this... [sigh] of this larger... way that I am experiencing things and able to experience things now, or... larger insight about how I've been holding myself back from experiencing things, or something that's going on in my life that's being expressed in this instance, but that isn't just contained to this instance...

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and what was memorable these times was how—I guess often when I'm focusing in certain kind of contexts—so this gets into an interesting thing about how much space another person is holding... Um. Often times when I'm focusing in other contexts, it's like I might have a little bit of a feeling and then I'll wonder, y'know, "Oh, what might that be about? Maybe it's about this, lemme check that feeling—go back in, check the feeling, y'know, like that. SO it's kind of oscillating pretty much back and forth between physical, bodily felt felt sense and...

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sometimes in the context where there's like a lot of spaciousness, it's like me feeling the ability to give myself more permission of... seeing what comes and having something come that... doesn't at all, doesn't have any intellectual content to it, doesn't have words, doesn't have thoughts and, just kind of going with it, being really curious...

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cuz often I will get ideas and words and then I go back and I check them and see if they're right, but this is more like what comes, in an image, or what comes as a physical sssensation, then I go back and I check it, "Body, is this a relevant thing?" "Yes, yes, this is-- this is important," but I don't have the meaning until much later.

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This thing—in the case of these images, they were, they were very... interesting images where... I mean it's not...like there were people in them or action sequences; it wasn't a movie, it wasn't about the objects in them but it was something about the quality of the space and the quality of the light and the quality of the—y'know. And then later, it turns out to be an incredibly meaningful metaphor for some really big thing in me. It's just kind of like. "oohh!" Yeah.

S: Yeah... and so it's it's about that what comes isn't – you have no idea what it's connection is (yeah) when it's there (yeah, yeah) and it's something important about being willing to be with that, run with that (yeah) and see if it's relevant and if it is, even if you have no idea ...

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Anna: Yeah. Yeah, and y'know, I... the other kind of focusing is useful, too. It's like, "Oh, I have a hunch that this is here and I can see how this might be relevant. Let me—let me check in and... you check in and fine tune it and all that. I find it very useful for whatever it does, but these are kind of like, kind of like deep sea diving focusing (laugh) or something that just seem startling, um, yeah.

S: And you used the word touchstone when you have these experiences and these connections make themselves, or whatever is happening you carry that touchstone of having touched that connection between the particular and the larger

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Anna: Especially in the first one. With these others, well... yeah, there was, there was a touchstone. I'm not... I'm not wanting to speak about that one right now (sure). There was a touchstone that came with one of them, um, and with these other ones with the liiiight the... it's like... y'know, I think...I'm getting two things. I'm getting—

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there's almost a sadness because I'm feeling like I could have gone further there; I could have...I don't know, written it down, taken a couple more steps with it, and then it would have turned into more of a touchstone, and it would have been useful.

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And also there's this thing of, um, a sense of, well y'know I can go back. I mean I can't go back in time, but whatever it was that's there I can—I can reconnect and and and um... and re and re- yeah. Retouch that. And, I'm just realizing that, y'know this whole process of creating touchstones it's like

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there's an active thing about what we do afterwards. It's like a dream, y'know. I had this wonderful dream the other day... and I did tell my therapist about it and I have written down parts of it and I did take a certain action based on that and I could even do more. Like I could paint a picture of it or something y'know. But it's like—the kinds of things that we choose to do afterward can ... strengthen the gift of it, that touchstone part of it. Like what I was saying about—I could get up and do this [does arm motion] for five minutes a day and it would be wonderful, y'know, and I haven't, but I could! Y'know? so it's-- y'know.

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So there's something about that—there are these gifts that focusing gives to us then, there's this other level y'know of what do we choose to do with them and some of them we end up ... doing things that allow us to receive the gift more fully and other ones we just kind of lose because our hands are full and they just fall through our fingers. Something like that. (yeah...) You like that? (very much.)

S: Yeah. Is there anything else that goes with.. those memories that want, wants to be said along with this?

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Anna: Yeah, yeah. Um...[11 sec silence].. I think in terms of the content, I think... one of those images had something to do with issues of visibility and invisibility...um... like, I'm Latina and I'm light skinned and several members of my family are darker than I am and regardless of how light or dark I'm familiar with a certain kind of experiences that I had as a child, family members have had, other people in the world have had... And I can pass for white, and there's the visibility and invisibility of the dimension to all of that. And I know that one of those had to do with not just that in particular but also larger issues of visibility and invisibility. Something to do with... y'know about this whole thing about the light and the way that y'know like sometimes when there's heat, and you know light curves, y'know and it's like, "Is there something there?" or y'know is it. So it was just interesting to get such ... such elaborate ...visual metaphors that were.

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Yeah... Um... and then some of the content had to do with, um, ...ways in which I felt fractured inside, um... This is all pretty sensitive for me, pretty deep stuff, um... what I was saying before about... the container of who is listening to us and the kind of space that's created. That's been wonderful, and it's very different experience to do focusing in the context of an interpersonal relationship, where...[mumble]

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you know, and this was a wonderful focusing partner that y'know was lived in another state and we weren't in one another's' live and we were in this deep process of of ... um treasure maps. And, were just doing so very deep holding space for each other and had developed a relationship where she was pretty trusting of my idiosyncratic focusing style of going wherever it was that I needed to go and like that,

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so I felt like I could just really...explore some unknown places and be open to some very-
- things coming out that I didn't understand at first. And that whole thing... I just feel
like—I guess I just feel like it's a very sensitive interpersonal space that if the person
who's listening to me and thinking, you know, "What the heck is this person doing?" It's
like, you know, if there's sometimes a place where I can feel somebody else's thoughts
or, y'know, sense their skepticism, so y'know it's just...it's ...

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I mean I think that there is useful work that you can do with anyone, pretty much, er, but
it'll be different and I think that—I think that different people shape different—different
focusing partners shape different listening fields in which different things are possible.

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I guess I'm saying that it's not an accident to me that, y'know, these really powerful
focusing experiences happened in the context of my focusing with this particular focusing
partner , just like the fact that I had this body stuff come up once when I was in the
presence of this person who was very...comfortable with body things, y'know like it
just—yeah. There's something interesting to me about that. Yeah...

S: I'd like to ask you a couple of more questions about that, but before I do that I – it
would be sort of veering off from the interview proper so I want to stop the recording.
But before I do that I just want to, again, just ask you to check if there's anything else...

[client expresses some concern about her last comments being made available; they were
transcribed in the de-identified transcript, but subsequently omitted. They did not offer
new information regarding her focusing experiences.]

S: Thank you for sharing this with me.

End

A7.3 Participant Three: Yolanda

S: So, I have a couple preliminary questions and then the main research question is kind of a long, multipart question. So I'll ask you a couple of preliminaries, and then I'll read the—actually read the long question cause it's...uh, to be sure that I'm saying exactly the same to each person. And then you'll sort of have liberty to take whatever time you need to answer that question and if there's things—parts that you didn't get to or that I have questions about I'll ask you when you are done with your initial (ok) so, um, I guess by way of preliminaries I'd like to know how long you've been focusing and how you learned?

Yolanda: Ok. Um, I don't have an exact date but I would say I probably learned—started to learn focusing 5 years ago...uh maybe six. I learned from a woman who lives in the area who is a trainer and um she—I went to a writing retreat at the place where she lives. She has a sort of little retreat center in this area. (oh, nice) And so I wrote and then we did focusing every afternoon. That was my first experience with it. (wow) yeah.

S: Were, were there people... was like a mixed group, or

Yolanda: This was an individual retreat so it was just. I was the only writer there but she and her land mate—there's another woman who has property with her—they were working on their writing projects, too, so. (wonderful) It was the three of us, yeah.

S: So, um, after that did you pursue any additional training or

Yolanda: Yes. I um I'm trying to remember what the sequence is. I think I went through level one training with her, ah, and then I did a phone training at some point, probably level 2, with ___, and then went back to my friend here locally to do three and four I think that's how it worked, so. (ok) I got through level four.

S: And did you do your own partnership thing that others do? (Yes.) That's probably standard... training...

Yolanda: I guess so, yeah. I I did that with ___ I had a partner—another participant in the training that I was in. And then when I was getting level three and four ___ helped me line up um people who would be my—who I would lead through the focusing process. (ok) Yeah. On the phone. (Ok.) I never met them. (ok.) Yeah.

S: Um, Ah, and you said—I think you said in your email that your practice has sort of moved through the years—(yes) more or less frequent—yes. Um, could you say a little bit about what that's been like?

Yolanda: Ok, yeah. I think one thing I also mentioned was that, um, before I retired, in addition to teaching I was ... I had a _____ practice, and so I used it there, too, in that—as part of that practice. (For yourself or--) For my clients.

S: Ok, so you were sort of guiding them.

Yolanda: Yes, yes. I would guide them through a focusing process. Uh, and and for myself I guess I use it uh when ...it's murky... I use it when I have a need to figure out what's going on with—emotionally. If I'm confused or unclear about something I'll use focusing. I don't do it every day. And also, I guess during those times of question, it comes into my meditation process. SO if I feel .. um, that maybe the meditation isn't getting specific enough then maybe I'll shift to the more focusing mode. I mean, I can say more about that at some point when you think it's appropriate but um then I'll use it as part of the meditation (ok) yeah.

S: So, um, I guess that answers those questions very well. (Okay.) I'll ask you the main question and then, if there's general things that come up like you just said that may or may not fit with the particular answer for the question we can talk about that afterward because I would like to hear about that, actually.

Yolanda: So will you guide me through answering this question if I'm getting off track?

S: Yeah, I'll try. (laugh) But at the same time, some people, their, y'know, they've let me know "this isn't exactly the answer to the question but this is important" to understand the answer (mmhmm). So... and again, this is something- we can change the tape if we run out of tape. You can take as long as you need to answer this. (Ok). So what I'd like is you to describe for me your experience of a specific focusing session with you as the focuser that stands out for you as memorable. (Mmmhmm) Ahm, I'll ask to the best of your ability to describe how the session began, what happened for you while it was going on and what happened afterward. Um, please include as much detail as possible about the situation, your feelings and thoughts throughout any sensations, movements or shifts or anything else that comes to mind about what happened (mmhmm) in that session or instance. (Mmmhmm. Ok.) You can feel free to take as much time as you need. (ok)

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Yolanda: Um... Well, I saw that on your—on the release form, and the one that stays in my mind is my very first session,

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which means it may be a little hard to remember all of the sensations, but—but I'd like to talk about that one because um I was just so immediately convinced that it was a powerful way to access my emotional life.

S: Well, tell me as much as you can remember about it.

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Yolanda: Yeah. Well um, it was during this writing retreat, as I said, and I was focusing with _____ and um, uh, they were they were both very experienced trainers, focusing trainers so I was in good hands.

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Um, and it was powerful, um, I think because I was in the process of writing ah, memoir, which I was just in the beginning stages—I don't even know if I knew that that's what I was working on at that point. But I was writing about childhood, from childhood memories.

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And... in the focusing session, I—a lot of what happens to me in focusing is that I that my... focusing focusing responses are—yes, they're physical but they're also image based. (mmm) So I get a lot of images. So I had in this process uh a sense that that there was a child—a small child in me, um, and it was as if I could envision this small child inhabiting my body. It was down in my stomach and that place where emotions live.

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And, um, so it was powerful for me to communicate with that small child, um, and uh let her know I was there, let her know I was hearing what her experience was, um, what her suffering was, uh, and ... and I I remember feeling... comforted, I guess is the sense that I have. Feeling that pain of a small child that suffers but also comforted by knowing that I could comfort her, um, and that was, y'know,

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so it feels now to me now that I've studied more Buddhist meditation like it was a moment of compassion that I was able to extend to a part of myself that had been pushed aside or exiled... um, hadn't been able to speak until then and

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I think it was, uh, I remember saying at the end of my session that it felt to me more powerful than any therapy I'd had until that time. (mmm) that, the more traditional therapeutic process didn't, didn't wasn't as immediate, didn't feel as direct. I felt like, in that focusing session—and I have felt it since then—that I just got to the heart of what the issue was or what it was that I was feeling, what the core emotion was there. (mmm) and it sort of cut through the verbal process that one engages in in a more typical therapeutic session. Um.

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Or at least that had been my experience at that point.

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So... and I think that it was also related to the writing that I was doing that that was astonishing in a way that I would be accessing a part of myself that was that small child and be writing about my childhood at the same time. It was very powerful. Um, yeah. I don't know. I've sort of come to a stopping point so if you have questions that you want ta—(Sure) I could say more about....

S: Yeah, well, for one, the first thing I'm wondering about is, um, do you remember afterward, y'know, you had this focusing session and did anything shift in anyway for your afterward? (mmhmm)

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Yolanda: Well I know that there was shift, y'know, at the end of the session. I felt like I felt that shift during that session of feeling ...um... feeling that sense of compassion or acknowledgement of the small child part of me.

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And, so that stayed with me certainly, that. And it has has been something that I continue to come back to in focusing that comes up again and again and it's always, ah, it's always a wonderful reminder, "Oh, yes, that part of me needs ta—for me to let her know that I know she's there.

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And so it's a way always of um accessing... ah, a different kind of knowing about part of my emotional life that I hadn't accessed before. So I think immediately after that first session, although I felt sort of tender and raw and sad, probably, it-- y'know because it brought up a lot of feeling—um, I... I also felt like I had a way of addressing it and um it was- it was relieving or it was, um, sweet, y'know? (mmm) Yeah.

S: And it sounds like that has remained... the relationship that was forged there. I don't know how you would put it but

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Yolanda: Yes, it has, and uh, y'know, I I come at it from different ways now cause I have also practiced loving kindness meditation and so I – it's kind of the same. It's kind of stepping back from the experience of pain and allowing myself to ... come at it from a point of view of compassion which is very similar to acknowledging the small child who's there, y'know, imagining holding her or reaching out my hand to her or—

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that was a gesture from that first session, actually, it was my reaching out to walk on a road with her, hold her hand, so um,

S: Something you actually did in the session?

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Yolanda: Something I saw happening—the image of that gesture came to me, yeah, so and as I said a lot of what happens to me during focusing is image based, um, I-

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and *that* seems to make a distinction for me between focusing and meditation. y'know, with with meditation I don't usually focus on images. I don't, I don't meditate on images I—more just try to observe what's happening in my body, in my thoughts, um, I let them

come and go whereas the focusing is much more for me an opportunity to dwell with a particular image or a particular sensation and be with it, um, and stay with it.

S: In that, in that particular session, do you remember at all how you got to discovering that small child? That—that was what was there, or y'know, that's a wonderful image you just shared about reaching your hand; I'm wondering if there were any other things that led to... of course, that you can remember; it was some years ago...

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Yolanda: I think that the images are always pretty fleeting. They come as if from nowhere

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but I I'm sure that in that session I started with the physical sensation of in my gut, what was, what was I feeling there, was there an emotional quality to it, um. And just that invitation perhaps to let that part of me know that—that I was aware, then, brought images. I just think that's, for me, a natural phenomenon—that my mind is drawn to work with images. But I'm sure that it started with the physical, you know, getting into my body and seeing what was happening there. Um, because I'm sure _____ led me through that process! (mild laughter)

S: I'm struck by your reference to, um, this immediacy and the directness and the getting to the heart of something. Um, I know it's hard to situate in an instance but I'm just wondering if you could say any more about what that was like—to feel like you were getting (mmhmm) to the heart of something (mmhmm) Um...

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Yolanda: Um, ... it felt like I could ... let go of analysis, Um, that I could let go of trying to figure something out, or... because that's always my tendency. And, here was something more physical and immediate and I was embodying it in some way. Um, and ...so it felt more real, it felt more authentic than an explication or, uh, y'know a more cerebral intellectual interpretation of what my experience had been or was. (mmm)

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Yeah, so, um, it felt as if I were still having that experience of the small child. I mean that *was* my experience, and um... she was me, and um, she became a vehicle to express whatever I was feeling at that time. Uh, y'know, as if I were speaking through her voice or from her, from her place as opposed to seeing it from a distance. Yeah.

S: So, you said, y'know, you were having that experience then. Almost like, um, you said about—and this is, I know it's difficult to put words to it (right) but you, you were having—there's something about that immediacy because you were actually having that experience that she had, but now it's different because... there's more going on, or...

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Yolanda: Right. Because she was only part of all that I experienced. She was only part of me, and so I was also able to see, too, to see other parts of myself that could step in and reach out to her, and, and, care for her.

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Um, yeah...(mm)... and that's really wonderful information in itself to know that you are also capable of taking care of yourself, that you're also capable of...um... empathizing with a part of yourself that's been cut off...

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or—another experience that I've had—don't think it came up in that session is of that Gollum? Y'know that hobbit figure? That—there's a part of me that's like that Gollum figure and shut off in the cave and, so, focusing—and it's similar to that small child experience—focusing is a way of being with that part of myself that doesn't get recognition very often. (mmm) Yeah.

S: That's an interesting image... are there any particular sessions that you've, um, contacted that (mmhmm) sense? (The Gollum?) yeah.

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Yolanda: Yeah, oh, yeah! Um... there was a period of time when I—I think it was during the time of my life when I was giving my life-coaching training cuz we were just—the training was really intense and really pushing us to explore, uh, our gremlins, they called them. And, and to uh, to access our really authentic power and so forth, uh, so a lot of it came from then, that Gollum, that sense of the Gollum part of myself arose then. Um, as a as an inhibiting factor or as a judging, y'know uhm, part of myself that I—in daily life would just as soon hold at arm's length! (Laughter)

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Um, so yeah, having an opportunity to go down to that pool where he lives and sit there and offer um offer a hand or extend... concern or support is very powerful. (mmm) Yeah

S: Let me just sit for a moment and maybe just invite you to do so as well and, um, just sort if see if there is anything else with that story, that first focusing instance (uh huh) that's part of what happened that might not have come forth yet. (11 seconds)

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Yolanda: A couple things come to mind. One is, as I said I think I at other times have come back to that ... relationship that was established in that focusing session with um that small child, that part of myself, um, and... there've been times when I have felt—if something has been really challenging to me personally—frustrated that I have to go back and comfort that child again! [laughs]. focusing is the way to do it for me. It always—it always becomes apparent, to me, that's what is needed, um, she wants my attention; she wants my reassurance. And it's always so powerful to do it, although there's another part

of me that resists it. And I think I've had specific focusing sessions—I can remember a specific focusing session w ___ during my training where she's like holding out the two sides: the one that's resisting offering that support or acknowledgement, and the one who wants it. So, um, yeah, that... I don't know if that was answering your question.

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Another piece of that experience that was powerful for me was the presence of whoever was—either _____ who was guiding me through the process, so... the person facilitating, guiding, leading, is really key in the process. I mean mostly what I do now is focus by myself, which is, uh... good, I think it's a little harder, uh, but, having a really skilled person to lead you through the process is...is huge. (mmm) Yeah.

S: In that first piece that came up when I—when we were quiet for a second um, that was something that came subsequent to the initial (right) experience (right) but... I don't know it's—very much connected and it sounds like a... like a richness or a complication of—it wasn't just--in that first session it was an overwhelming sense of compassion but subsequently when you went back to have that (right) it wasn't just that (right) anymore...

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Yolanda: It's almost as if I have felt, um, since the first session or the early sessions, um that progress needed to be made. I mean like I was gauging it in some way like I needed to be growing or outgrowing this need or... um and so there's been some resistance or a... wish to deny that the small child is still there needing my attention. (mmm) and so, and yet doing focusing it's clear that's often clear that that's... not what needs to happen.

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So this part of—there's this part of me that resists and, y'know, sometimes in a focusing session I will acknowledge the resistant part and find out what that part of me needs and—does that part of me need to be acknowledged and... yeah.

S: Mmmm Is there anything else about that—that powerful earlier first focusing session that's there?

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Yolanda: (7 seconds) It reminded me of... I mean I think it's the first time that I found—was able to articulate or give form to a feeling that I've had that—It gave me—and it gave me a form for a kind of strength that I knew I had um that in periods of time when I've been suffering about one thing or another I've know than I've been able to um find a way to ah get in touch with an inner strength, um... and that session really tapped into that for me. It gave me a form for that—or it gave me—and because I was able to—also be, was able to be the suffering child but I was also able to be the one reaching out to comfort then that grounded me in a strength that I knew on some level that I had, but it gave it a more specific gesture or y'know sort of physical and visual reality to attach to.

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Y'know before I started focusing I knew that I could turn to the natural world for example if I was upset about something, that I could go for a walk in the woods and feel everything was fine or would be fine because-- I don't know, I had some connection with nature, with Being that was profound and really grounding and that was, um, that gave me strength. Um and in the focusing session it was similar—that same kind of feeling that um there was a strength here that I hadn't really articulated but this was a more um concrete manifestation of that. (mmm)

S: So that helps.. .that kind of brings me to that question of what happened after that session. There's something about articulating...um (mmhmmm) something shifted in terms of what was articulable (mmhmm) and experienceable about your own strength. (mmhm) Something that you knew was there before but not in the same way (yeah...)

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Yolanda: So, it was, uh, a new awareness of of part of myself being suffering or exiled and part of myself being strong enough to be compassionate. To acknowledge that other part. So, that part of myself that was strong enough to be compassionate then... I became newly aware of that.

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And I think also, another thing that issss somewhat related is—because then I was a part of a small community of people who were focusing and y'know we were sharing the experience...um, not only did I focus but _____ focused everyday too so then I had the opportunity of um of witnessing their process, um, then I became aware that everybody has some exiled part of themselves or um everybody, uh, so I felt less alone in that.

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And these are functioning human beings and (laughs) – as I was and so it gave me a sense of it's ok to have parts—places in my emotional life that need attention or y'know. (mmmmm) It sort of relieved me of some pressure to enter the world with the sense that I had to be strong and (huh!) Yeah. (Huh!... That's that's so interesting) SO it allowed, uh, it allowed me to accommodate a part of myself that was tender or vulnerable, right? Um, yeah.

S: And you knew that other people had those tender parts (yeah) too and they're walking around with (right!) all of them...

Yolanda: Amazing, right? [laughter] (laughter) Yeah.

S: What a wonderful experience, what a wonderful first...

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Yolanda: Yeah, it was really. Very powerful first experience.

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I've sort of wondered if, um, there have been times when I have wondered "Am I doing it right?" because it's always so visual and um as opposed to—and um in the process of the training when I would guide people through it many people's experience of it is much more physical. It's here in my body, it's here in my body... and that was present for me but it also became quickly very... almost like story like, um (mmm) but, that seems to be the way it is! (Yeah)

S: Yeah, some variation (yeah). Wow. Let me just think if there are any follow up questions about that particular instance...(9 sec) I guess, um, I don't have any additional questions about that. I am wondering though because you mentioned uh focusing and meditation if there are any particular instances that you could share... about that, um... (uh-huh... um) Maybe when you first discovered how focusing interplayed or (mmhmm) some particular...

36

Yolanda: Yeah, ok. Well, memory is tricky, of course. [laughs]

S: Or recently... if you've found yourself moving into focusing, could you describe what that's like?

37

Yolanda: Um... uh... a year or so or go I um was suffering from some performance anxiety. I mean I still do. So I sat down to meditate because that's when I was really learning more about meditation and trying to be really vigilant about it, y'know, disciplined about it, um.

38

And so I got a sense of how that showed up in my body. I had an image of the shape of the anxiety, um, and what was going on with my pulse rate and everything I was sort of able to just watch that, um, physical process of it. But then I realized I was shifting into focusing and it was more—really staying with that part of my body where I was feeling that as opposed to ... I don't know there's a subtle difference there and so focusing is more guided. Y'know, is more—it felt like it was more about letting that part of me know that I knew it was there, um... did it want me to keep it company? Those kind of questions you ask that help you stay present with that.

39

Whereas with the meditation it might so move off and then it'd be gone and I'd sit again in silence, um. SO it—meditation is less directive than the focusing is and the focusing often brings me back to acknowledging what that feeling is and developing a relationship with it in a different way. So that, y'know, around the performance anxiety is when the two things started to meld together.

S: Did anything in that instance --when you were dealing with the performance anxiety—did anything shift while you were attending to it?

40

Yolanda: I think the actual—the thing that was actually... most helpful around the performance anxiety was stuff that came from a meditation teacher, come to thing of it. Um, specific strategies to use, ah, to...ah articulate when I was thinking, when I was feeling and... yeah I was doing a lot of stuff to work with that, um.

S: But nothing comes to mind about the—y'know , beyond seeing the shape of the anxiety and sort of plying it with different focusing kind of questions about what it wanted—

41

Yolanda: Well, yeah, now that you're asking again, once I—once I y'know shifted into a more focusing oriented um approach to it then...um, I I think I was then—it opened the door for me to get more understanding about it. It was more um then I could see that it was related to... uh, the small child again, the need for perfectionism, um, and gave me a way of uh going back to comfort that that part of myself that was fearful y'know?

42

Um, I don't know if it was helpful, even, cause performance anxiety y'know is—becomes a physical thing that's... ah it's hard to. It's a hard thing to work with because it becomes physical. (ohhh) And I'm not sure that the focusing cured me of it [laugh] but it I guess I would have to say that it helped me understand the nature of it and, um, why it was an issue for me, right. So it gave me, uh, it gave me an understanding of why I experience that. Where that's coming from. (mmmm) Yeah.

S: Any movement with that? Any piece of compassion there, or—I'm just curious whether it

43

Yolanda: Yeah, um, I think that was a little more stubborn when it comes to the performance anxiety but I'm sure that...I'm sure that um in those moments when I was sitting there focusing with that, around that topic, that I came to a place of compassion. It's hard to hang onto that. (Sounds slippery.) Yeah! [laughs] (laughs)

S: So I just want to give you a chance – if there's anything about what we've been talking about that you wanna... add before we sort of end the interview proper, and I have a couple unrelated questions about the meditation...

Yolanda: (12 sec) I can't think of anything.

S: Ok. That's fine!

Yolanda: I hope that's helpful for you.

end

A7.4 Participant Four: Sophie

S: I'm asking everybody how you learned focusing and how long you've been focusing for...

Sophie: Kay, well I originally took a class with _____ in 1989 and um I got a certain sense of it, and then I and then once he came back we moved to the states again and I was and then he came up to where I was living in ___ and gave a class. But I was still like—I don't know not really—I really liked the idea of it but I wasn't really... getting it, I think. And um, so it wasn't until I decided to become a trainer in 1999 that I-- when I started with ___ and __. I took a 6 month course. And I understood more from that. But, I don't know I just always—I'm just learning more and more about it. I felt like I've learned a whole lot from this phone course that ___ is doing in the last 3 weeks. Um, you could say in one way I've been doing it for 21 years, or maybe it would be better to say I've been doing it for 11 years, more intensively, (mmm) Um. Think I was before that.

S: So it's moving deeper for you. (yes.) Well, this may be a tough question, especially if you are focusing regularly it may be hard to pick just one, but, um, I'll read the long question and you can just take whatever time you need to absorb that before you start to answer. (Ok.) Um, please describe for me your experience of a specific focusing session with you as the focuser that stands out for you as particularly memorable. Describe how the session began, what happened for you while it was going on, and what happened afterward. Please include as much detail about the situation, your feelings and thoughts throughout, bodily sensations, movements, or shifts or anything else that comes to mind about that focusing session or instance. Take as much time as you need.

1

Sophie: Ok, I've got two that come to mind and one was yesterday and one was the day before. [laughs] um, and, I don't know I just... ok I'll just see if there's any others in there... 6 sec.

2

I think. These last two were pretty good, so I just have to decide. I think the one I'm more attracted to doing is...the one I did on Thursday about a dream because I think that um because I think I really learned something about how to work with focusing with dreams and that had been the subject of a phone class that I listened to on Wednesday night. Then I had a dream the next day and I was going to my therapists the next morning—and she's not a focuser but I was able to work with myself...um... y'know I'm able to work with my felt sense as a focuser with her, and she pretty much gives me the space to do that... So...3 sec um... yeah it just seems more—it seems more interesting to me.

3

So. Ok. So yeah, it was a case of me doing focusing kind of on my own, but with someone a skilled person who listened to me, um, and I could have told her to be—she was kind of—she only intervened as a therapist in one place and I kind of found it helpful

what she said, so. I guess it's a good example of how a therapy—a therapy client can use focusing with a therapist who isn't a focuser. (mmmm) If they have a good relationship. So does that sound...?

S: That sounds good! So you can begin wherever it seems...

4

Sophie: Ok. Well, um, ok. Well, so, I'd listened to ___ the night before and he said—can I do this, so you have some background?

5

He said there's two stages to um finding out what a dream was about and the first stage is “Oh!!! Now I get it! It was about--- It was about this. Yeah, ok! I get it!” But he says there's always that initial getting it is probably not really showing you something new that you didn't understand before (mmm).

6

And to do that, you need to first find something in the dream that is like a positive or something in the dream that you feel is helpful thing that can give you strength and energy for working with the rest of the dream. Annnd... he said y'know any animal or plant or any living thing or a baby--or especially a baby or a child or something—those kind of things, even if they're fleeting in the dream, you have to notice them. Um, find what it is in the dream that you can use that gives you a good felt sense that can ground you before going into the new part that the dream is trying to tell you.

7

So, I had never quite done this before, so I had this dream—and I wrote this down, I wrote this for the forum for the class—Um, so I'm let's see—I'm—oh, I'm at this... there's a lot of people in the street and it seems like it's in Central America or Latin America or somewhere. It's warm and sunny and the people are kind of walking along the street and and there's ... hills in the background and ...and and it's a.. y'know it's a... seems like it's kind of a poor middle class... poor lower middle class barrio in Latin America. Which is, um, it's not—it's not a scene like you would see here so much; it's like ... people out in the street. And there's this feeling that they're also—they're there for a reason... I don't know if they're protesting or... it's it's more like they're showing their power by being together out on the street and on the side there's—and somehow I had something to do with this, with organizing it or something... and it's like a—the feeling is it's like the fruit of our work or something.

8

And ... and over to the side there's some young people and they're selling desserts, um.. and so I bought this white, sweet, milky dessert. In Spanish it would be called tres leches, which is a – y'know three milks. I had some, actually, the other day on... that this woman from Spain made... or it could've been—I don't know if it was tres leches but it was this thick, white, thing. It could be like flan or... or something.

9

And um, y'know so I bought one and and and it was like I wanted to support these young people who were raising funds as part of this whole thing. And usually I wouldn't, y'know try not to buy desserts but I did then. And um... it was just a really—it was a good feeling! It was something about the freedom... to...enjoy being peacefully on the street on a sunny day. Everyone together.

10

(mmm) sooo.... Then I was at this old rambling, um, country house and I was having a conversation with ___ who is the director of the business that—the community business that I work with in___, And—in real life. And she was talking to me and all of a sudden she starts vomiting this white stuff and I I say, “Oh, my god. Maybe that was that desserts we ate down there!” Something. And so I was trying to be sympathetic to her. And then I started vomiting, too. So it was like... we were just racing around like trying to find the bathrooms and then we'd come back... “Ohhh! I gotta go to the bathroom again!” And we're thinking maybe we should rest in the beds, but then we get in them and “Ohhh!” We gotta go back to the bathroom [laughs]. It was like, oh, geeze! This is bad, y'know? [laugh] (laugh).

11

Y'know after a while we calm down and we weren't throwing up any more um and then the owner of the house came over – of this old rambling country house—and y'know, he looked: “ohh! What have you women been doing in here? This is disgusting! Y'know, you're—Ohhh! God!”

12

y'know it's like, “We'll clean it up. We're sorry, y'know, we didn't mean to, it just happened and we're really sorry!” And “we'll do everything we can and—“ “Oh, yes, please, well-“

13

And then [laughs]. And then there was like a skip and I don't know if it if it was aware of a time lapse but there was my old neighbor...um, who I called KN ... uh... he's a pediatrician and he's also a – he raises animals and...he was talking to the owner of the house like in another room or something and I just overheard him saying, “The baby was so beautiful! It was so perfect! It was just amazing. It was so beautiful! I mean I—it was just so amazing!” And that—that was the dream. (HAaaah...)

14

And so... and so I woke up and I thought, oh, I was throwing up all over everything, ok, ah... whatever. (laughs!).

15

And then I was walking on the way to the therapists cause I see her at nine oclock in the morning... So I was on my way there and I was thinking, “Well, what was that dream about? Why was K there? And then I remembered the last conversation that I had with

her which was two months ago where she was in a where we were—we'd gone up to... to have some wine together and and she was lamenting that she was lamenting that she hadn't been able to get pregnant and she'd been doing invitro fertilization and... she was just... y'know it didn't work, and what was she going to do?

16

And I said, "Well you know you've just been – as the director of this agency you've been putting out so much energy over the last 6 years and and y'know –" I said to her, "This is your baby. This is the baby that you've been putting all your energy into" and and maybe there's not that kind of ... that kind of inner energy that you need to have a real baby." And she said "Yes, I really really—I really really think that that's true."

17

And... so...and then so it's like she's looking for the transition, how to transition from this very involved nurturing of this agency and making it successful into a different stage of her life where she would be able to have the kind of time and space to nurture her own baby. And she did not know how to do it, and then I thought, "Oh, gosh, well y'know, I'm the other part of this equation. I- I'm I send clients to them and so I'm responsible for a lot of their income and so I..."

18

I'm also wanting to transition into teaching focusing and NVC more but I often can't do it because I'm so busy with my tourism clients and and ... and now I'm trying to make a new website and I'm trying to take the.... Y'know what we've both built- she and I have both built together over the last 6 six years—take it to a new level—will I be able to get more income and maybe hire someone to help me because all this time I've been doing it... I've been doing my part all by myself...

and then, that might give me more—I mean the hope is that it would give me more time and resources to devote myself to teaching focusing and NVC and ---- and whatever.

19

And so I thought, "Wow!" and this is just like what gene said—"Wow! I know what that dream was about! We were both pregnant! I was pregnant and we were getting morning sickness and we didn't know it! And WE were both pregnant! Here I thought just she was pregnant but no I'm pregnant! We're both throwing up all over everything! And we both just didn't get it yet that we were --were were--actually ARE pregnant and we're gonna have a baby and it's gonna be great!" and "Wow! So that's what it's about!"

20

And so that was like the initial—that's part one, like gene said. So, I said ok, I I I can see that. And then, ok. So just about then—and this song came to me... and oh! Then I thought—no, then—I'm still walking, toward the... office where my therapist is. But no, no what's the part in the dream I can use—I recognize that I'm saying, "Oh, yeah, I know what this- thought" but there must be more, so, what's the part that I can use to uh to be

my ally as I go into the into working on the part that I don't know about, that's something new?

21

And so I thought, "Oh, there's a baby at the end!"
But then I thought, "Oh when JM said, 'oh, the baby's so perfect, so beautiful! So precious, so amazing!' I felt furious—just like my felt sense was like ARRGH!! SHUT UP!" and I thought, "Why am I so angry at this... nice doctor talking about how beautiful the baby was? And ____ said, "If you can find a baby, that's great!" but I said, "No! This does—this does not feel good, this whole thing about the baby." So I can't go there...

22

and then I went back to the beginning of the dream and I said, "oh, well, that feeling of everybody being in the streets and feeling safe and calm and the young people participating and feeling that somehow this is a result of our efforts or something—that—that's a wonderful feeling! I really liked that feeling, like...[big sigh] you know like this calm peaceful...everybody together, everybody feeling safe to be in the street. The young people really participating and seeing how they can benefit from this. It's like, "Ah!" It's just like, "mmmm!" Felt all warm and fuzzy and like [honey] so... [laughs]

23

so so then I so then I keep climbing the steps to go to my therapist and...so I told her the dream and and I said, "Well when is a time when I when I was pregnant but didn't know I was pregnant?"

24

And I remembered after I had my two children... I had my children at 41 and 43 years old, and so I got pregnant again when I was 45 and my whole being said, "I'm sorry, these children are great but you— I just could not do this again. This is gonna kill me if I do this again." And so I took my little daughter who's a year and a half and she went up with me—cause we were living in__ and she went up with me to the states and I got an abortion from my old friend the abortion dr.—that that I had worked with before at the women's clinic. And, um, and...and I remember I was talking on the phone when I—and I—before I knew I was pregnant with this third pregnancy I was talking on the phone and I just had to say, "Excuse me!" and I just went to the bathroom and had to throw up like in this dream. It was like, y'know, what the hell is going on here? Because I hadn't.. I just hadn't. It just hadn't...I don't know why I didn't think I could get pregnant again. I just—I don't even remember—I--it's-- I don't know what my—what kind of birth control I was using but I was just like, "What?" y'know like, "I'm pregnant again!" and it just took me a few days for it to dawn on me but I knew that—drop everything right away run and have to throw up—and so that was kind of like the feeling in this dream of...

25

And I And I And the interesting part was that at that time of being pregnant for the third time, my felt sense was... I don't I --not only will it kill me to... it not only will deplete

me too much to have this baby again—I'd also hemorrhaged the last time, the last time I was giving birth—um, but... I I don't want any more children. I want to give everything I have to this baby, to these two babies that I have.”

26

And... so that's.. it's kind of like... it's kind of- I don't know I kind of compare it to—let's see... the felt sense of— I don't know if I ... let's see... um...(4 sec) well, the main thing is that it's—I'm trying to give attention to the tourism, the community tourism baby that I have... before I...before I get pregnant with the focusing/ NVC teaching baby—although I'm already doing that, but um. So that part is not clear on a felt sense level. But I—I remember talking about it with a therapist ... and um—

S: Yeah, what actually happened when you were talking about it and what was that process like?

27

Sophie: Uh, talking about—AH, well, I haven't got into the interesting part of the dream yet. (ok) I haven't gotten to the part where I was...I was really working on the—I mean that was...that was interesting but I didn't really go into that. Then my therapist offered—and you know I didn't—I wouldn't--we've never worked on a dream before and I didn't tell her not to intervene but she said, “Oh—the owner of the house—he was obviously your inner critic.” And... so I thought, “oh.” Because I really didn't know. I hadn't worked myself on who he was, but I thought, “Oh, of course, that makes sense! He was just disgusted with—all he saw was the messy... situation. He didn't know what was really going on and... and ah... and so she said that and that felt right. Like, “ok, yeah, ok.” So that's the inner critic. So let's get rid of him. So that's who that was.

28

And then I thought, “well, why was KN there? What was he doing there and why was I *so mad* at him for talking about how beautiful the baby was?” And in the dream I thought—I didn't know whose baby it was but he was just coming in and—he's a pediatrician, so, y'know, it wouldn't be weird for him to come over and tell his friend, the owner of the house, about some—

29

I don't know, for him to go on rapturously to his friend, that was kind of weird. So—although this, I mean he's capable of being rapturous about things—and so ... I thought, “Why was he there and what was... why was I so mad at him?” and so I got a felt sense of what he means, what he represents for me.

30

And this is what was so interesting. What was so genius—dreams are so genius! [small laugh]. “Ohhh! The way I feel”-- I remember standing there listening to him at his house while he talks for fifteen minutes about what he ate for lunch on his vacation. And everybody's like, “Oh, wow! That's—this is interesting!” And then I'm ...I'm at the house and I've maybe just come back from like a peak experience in my life of teaching

focusing and NVC in ____ and I'm like, [quietly] "uhhhhhh...uhhhhhh" I don't know how to—there's no place for me, there's no entry way!

31

And I remember at one point saying—and these are people I've known for years—I mean saying, "Um, could somebody ask me about what I've been doing? So I could talk about it?" [laughs] I don't know—I don't know how to... just go on and say, y'know, "Wow! What I've been doing in ____ is really really neat!" y'know?

32

And or just- like the way he would talk about what he had for lunch y'know like, "Oh, the *corn!* And then this *great...*" y'know like the way he could talk about this stuff,

33

y'know, what he had for lunch and make it really interesting and here I'm doing something really interesting that's like I "eeeehhhhh!" like I can't talk about it (oh!).

34

And then the other thing is, he—y'know, this felt sense of "there's no place for me, there's no way I can be like that of... what?" Just this anger: "How the hell can he think that he can hold forth for fifteen minutes about what he ate for lunch and everybody's like, 'Wow!' and I can't even talk about this stuff and" -- just *mad* about it, y'know? Like, y'know, just mad!

35

And um, and then the other thing that came up about him—he's a Taurus. I'm an Aquarius and he's a Taurus and his thing is like animal husbandry

36

like, "Let's raise turkeys and slaughter them and give a turkey to each of the old people in the community." Or, now, his new idea is no longer turkeys. Now he's raising – he had - last year they bought a cow, and four people bought it together. They raised the cow and then they slaughtered it and now everybody's got black angus steak!! And when I go back this summer, there's six cows! Twenty-four people that are all buying quarter of a cow!

37

And here he's got y'know this [style?], exponential way that he's that he's able to say, "Hey people! Let's all buy a cow!!" y'know and (laughing!) "Wow!" and the people get like really excited about this and they're all talking about their cows and...oh, it's just like—please!

38

And then that reminds me, oh, shit! In --- all the programs that are helping people are like, "Give a girl a cow or a goat! You give a woman a goat and then she's able to bring in money for her family and she's not going to go out and spend it on alcohol! That

woman is going to educate her daughters and she's gonna be improving society because – because you gave money for her to buy this cow and this goat!!”

39

And so now I go to y'know I'm looking online at all the funding... funding for teaching focusing in ---! [laughs!] (laughs!) Well, what category could that be in... well, there's for cows and goats and chickens and uh emergency relief and police and uh... y'know it's like, so his idea—he can make so interesting to people the cows and, “Yeah! Let's do the cow!” And I'm going, “Nyehhhhhh...”

40

And then I go to the funding thing and – focusing, I just see the changes that it's making in people's lives, but... when I look at the funding it's like it's all for cows! [laugh!] (laugh!) The cows are [just nothing!] I mean they make the streets all dusty and --Oh, god!

41

I mean he's coming over here and he's the cow person... and... and so I don't care what he has to say about the baby because he just... it's just another form of animal husbandry like, a big production—“Isn't it wonderful? Let's just give them the cows and chickens and then they'll have more cows and chickens and that'll solve everybody's problems!” [laughter] (laughter)

42

So...I thought, “Wow, y'know” and yet y'know I mean this, this is a very lovable man. I mean he's a totally lovable man—I mean his heart is as big as all outdoors and he's not—he doesn't deserve my wrath. But I could see how it—this cow thing cattle livestock kind of thing just ...

43

y'know there's no—and y'know also I read a thing in the New Yorker about a woman—this French woman is analyzing microloans to people and saying well some people are entrepreneurs and they'll take that 25 dollars make it into a little store that's a success and then there's other people that aren't. Some people that are good at raising cattle, it's like great. Terrific. And there's other people that their chickens die and “eeeeeh, my chickens died... this happened to me” Y'know it's like there's there's more things going on inside of people that have lived through hard, traumatic experiences and the way they think about themselves that—isn't gonna *let* them take that 25 dollars or that cow and make something out of it.

44

And there's ways that I'm not able to take my *years* of focusing training and workshops and all this stuff that I've done and make it into me being able to teach focusing. (mmm) So it's like I'm one of those people and and you-- and I don't want a cow and I don't want ... to set up a store. I've got something deeper and different that I wanna teach.

45

And KN doesn't understand me. And so—and there's no place for me at his house. And there's no—and then he's coming over to his buddy—the wealthy—they're both, they're both very well to do – a doctor and a landlord—and he's coming over to his buddy's house and... and and they're both of this—y'know they've got enough money, they could give us some money to do our thing but I can't even talk to them about it! (mmmmmm.)

46

So all of the sudden I say, "Wow! I think what he's showing me is that... he's coming over and he's—he's like visiting his buddy the landlord and he's saying, "This baby that these women are going to have—it came out so beautiful and so amazing. It's so perfect." Y'know? They'll clean up the mess, don't worry about that. This baby is sooo beautiful." And it was like he was advocating for me but I couldn't recognize it because of the of of the ...y'know because of this frustration that I have about where to find funding and about- and I had, in the past...

47

It was almost like--now, I can develop in myself—I can see, y'know, I can see—I can develop in myself that that sureness about the rightness of what I'm talking about and what I'm doing that he has-- To tell people about—that calm, groundedness: "you're all with me and wanting to hear what I had for lunch on my vacation because I'm such a great person and... I know that you're interested; there's no question in my mind that you're interested in this and..."

48

So it's like, somehow it was showing me a persona that I can develop and a and a part of me that was like y'know frustrated because it doesn't have this but something that I can develop and and own. And and it's my ally and it can come to the... come to the inner critic and say, "Wow, y'know, wealthy buddy boy, this is—this is really really beautiful, y'know. Perfect." (wow!) Yeah.

S: Sounds like a lot came from that! (laughs) (yeah.) Oh. So I feel like I have a good context now for what unfolded you know when you were working in that room with the the therapist and I'm wondering if ... I'm wondering if you could walk me through, as best you can, having all that context sort of set up and what happened, if you could sort of bring me into the room as you're working on this and understanding, y'know, the process is so complex but I'm curious about what it was like for you as you were sitting there. From when you first started thinking- I mean you started thinking on the way to the office but... in that time of focusing if you could tell me what it was like for you to be sitting there and doing that in that context, like, um, and any other... I'm not quite sure how to ask this because you've given so much full, full context... but I guess I'm I'm missing my understanding of you there experiencing it as you did in that room. It's like I have all the dream and I have what came out of the session but I'm missing the session itself, and how that unfolded for you. Does that make sense?

49

Sophie: Should I- should not talk about the part when I was focusing on my own on the way there? OR should I concentrate on the?

S: The whole—if you were starting to work on it on the way there, then that would begin—then it sounds like starting there.... Um. I feel like I have a good understanding of everything that came from it, but I'm curious about... what it was like to be you and moving through that process. What that felt like.

50

Sophie: Well, first of all, what it was like to be me generally—wake up with a dream it's like... "Nyehhhh..." there's nothing here, you know. (laughs) "Why don't I have interesting dreams? Why did I have a dream about throwing up? Why don't I have—" y'know like- Then I was walking along and I remembered.

51

And I and I got that feeling about, "Oh!!!" And I remembered Gene had just said, "OH!!! I know what this dream is about!" I started feeling so happy like "Wow!" y'know, I... I... 'm so happy that I know about this two stage thing because I got this- I don't have to stop right th—with the thing like "Oh! It had something to do with th—with K being pregnant and me being pregnant and and then I ... and then I got—ok so then I was walking along and I and I said, I don't have to stop here.

52

But this...this is so interesting because he was just talking about this last night and I can see that there's. I see that there's—y'know and I went to the part about the baby, and should I use the baby as an ally and that's definitely not! No, no, no, no—that's not where to go!

53

And then I- -and then I got the good feeling about the crowd and the being in the street and the young people participating and it was like ahhh! and so I was – I was like feeling, "wow, this is neat!"

54

And then I—and then I remembered this song... and I started crying on the way, um, and I didn't quite know... I just started thinking over and over again of this [artist--- Sosa] song... and I... um ... and I knew that –I just felt like—wow this just—this is my song. This dream is... is just telling me something about how I'm going to be given a baby.

55

And and the words of the song are... if I can just go into this... if I—do you understand Spanish? (Mmm, no. Maybe like an eighteen month old, perhaps) Well, it's this very beautiful way that I've always—this thing that you can do in Spanish it says, "[Quieso la siesta ponerle la nina es el soledad]" And it was like, ... it's like this way of removing individual agency, where you can say—soon there will be—you don't say—that's

translated in English as, “I forgot” but the way you say it in Spanish is that “it was forgotten to me” like.. it--or like ...[sound of perplexity] “El carro—“ It’s like there’s this way in Latin America you separate—there’s lots of ways of separating yourself from agency and—by the way you talk. (ahh.) And so this thing says, “The siesta wanted to give her a child for her loneliness” [laughs]

S: The siesta, like, the nap?

56

Sophie: Nap, the nap time... had wanted to give her a child for her loneliness. (ahh) Y'know something happened, we're not going to say what, during siesta at some point—well let's just say the siesta—the siesta wanted to get her pregnant! [laughs] (laughs) The siesta wanted to give her a child for her loneliness, and he he's made of wheat and the moon (Awhhh!)

57

Yeah, it's just so beautiful! It makes me cry [tears up and reaches for handkerchief] And so she's just... and so y'know this woman she's got like crooked feet and she's and she's walking beneath the hot sun and then and the burning sand and she's walking... it just [? Her] y'know she's, she's a poor person [crying], and she's crippled and then it says, “And the siesta wanted to give her a a child for her loneliness of wheat and the moon and... and be walking hand in hand together... and um [wipes tears]

58

I'll play the song for you later, it's really beautiful. This harmony on it.

59

And um, I just said, “Y'know I think this dream is about—I just kept repeating the song and I actually stopped before I went out—I had my iphone and I stopped at this place where I know there's wifi and I just looked up the words to it really, really quickly cause I wanted to see... I wanted to make sure that I understood the words... cause that is weird, you know, “[Quieso la siesta ponerle la nina es el soledad]” if that's what she was saying. And um, cause I thought maybe I would work on that with the therapist and I wanted to... make sure that I understood—yeah—that I understood the words—and so I'm kind of singing it to myself and I, I'm just crying because there's a certain loneliness that I have as...of being... cause I'm alone.

60

But, there's also this... oh, there's this incredible way that I feel accompanied by my friends in ___ that we're really working on something together. And it was... it was... and it has to do with poor people and this song is about poor people and...and so...the feeling of the song is—just to say more about where I was, like... there's y'know this child of made out of wheat and moon and and by and y'know holding hands they're walking it's like this incredible...I don't know incredible feeling of accompaniment and, um, that appeared—that song appeared in my mind almost like the way a dream—(mmmm) y'know all the different... significances of that song.

61

And so I was kind of like crying as I went up to the... y'know crying from being touched in my remembering this song. And all the times that I've heard it but I've never, I've never taken it in as relating to me and that's the way of the dreamness of it too because I thought, "Wow! Now that's a – that's a song that I can really identify with!" I never never thought of it, and then it just all came to me...[gets additional tissues]

62

So, um, then I went into the therapists' office I was really in this beautiful space about "Wow, y'know, there's something about this song and this child that [blows nose] there's something about this song and the child that has to do with this dream, too. And that's all I—that's as far as I got.

63

And so then I got up there and [blows nose] and uh... yeah,. And then she, y'know, and then she intervened and what she said, "Oh, obviously that's your inner critic" Well, I mean, the inner critic is a big deal in focusing too so I... I thought, "Wow! Ok..."

64

But I didn't—it was like...it was like I didn't have to go in—I didn't have to stop her, I didn't have to say, well, "Don't intervene in my process" because—that's another thing that gene says, too, like, "Oh, you see the inner critic and then you keep walking you walk past that and you go somewhere else" And I thought, "Oh, ok. Great! That-that makes sense. I don't have to figure out who that was—that was the inner critic. It's obvious! Ok, so fine.

65

So, I'll move on to the more interesting part which is what was my friend the doctor doing there?"

66

... And... And this therapist, I mean we love to laugh and so she was—I say things and she just bursts into laughter (bursts into laughter) [laughs]

67

but I was like saying that the the y'know that KN was like the buddy of the landlord... anyway, she's very, she's very fun—and uhm, so...well, I was able then to really get in touch—and it was just the genius of the dream! Like, how would it know that I—y'know that I did all these searches on line and seen—I'd gone to the people's houses and seen all their weird goats and chickens and... and y'know that this one person in my life, KN kind of symbolizes this

68

and also—I mean I remember being in a meeting with him once too where he’s talking about the revolution like—and that’s for him the revolution, is the giving them lamas and animals to the people and and that’s what excited people y’know and- and you know so it’s like he—just getting into what he symbolized through my felt sense and and and gene’s—and my sort of ignoring him and saying “well, what the hell’s he doing there?” y’know gene’s saying, well, ask: what , y’know, what are these people doing here?

S: Did you actually ask that of yourself, while you were--?

69

Sophie: Oh yeah. Yeah, why is he there?

70

And then I went into the felt sense of it which is [voice dragging] “ohhhh, I’m alone, there’s no place for me here and I can’t even speak and I have to kind of ask for the right to speak and then it kind of drops and then I don’t know it just...” Just visibly depressed, out of place, y’know in the midst of very nice (mmmhmm) wonderful people. It’s just kind of...alone and this kind of wall between me and expressing... what’s so exciting to me,

71

and also frustrating boredom—just BOREDOM! With what they’re talking about! (laughs!) [laughs!]

72

So it was—the felt sense took me immediately to that... Kind of shut down part of myself that I actually had—have trouble with and need to learn about and have more confidence in and here he was coming over to visit his buddy the inner critic and saying, “Hey, you know. Forget the vomit all over everything. The baby’s gonna be so beautiful, amazing, and perfect! [laughs] (awww).

73

And and and so I just started getting just ebulliently happy—it was like “Wow!” y’know? This gives me something to work on- gives me something to notice of myself—like like Gene said and I get into that space where I feel like “Ohh, I can’t talk about this” “Well, just pretend you’re KN and start talking about it (laugh) [laugh]!!”

74

I mean, I would never go—I would never go and just start talking about what I had for lunch so what about much more interesting for me to talk about something that really is interesting—of interest, y’know like? And so that’s like a growing place for me.

S: Yeah, so it brought you—I was gonna ask what happened afterward but you’re kind of answering that. I mean would you say that that’s a good answer to that question, “What happened afterward?”

75

Sophie: It gives me something to—the action step for me is to be aware of the part of me that gets shut down in expressing the things that are really of interest to me,

76

and to and to see and to just notice the persona of KN and how I could incorporate that more—like how I could just say, “Oh, yeah, I know it’s hard for you to talk, ok, whatever—“ and then, “just pretend you’re KN and—cause he thinks the baby’s gonna be beautiful (awhhh) and he’s telling your inner critic the baby’s gonna be beautiful so why not give it a try?” (Oh...that’s lovely!) [laughs] Yeah!

S: Hmmm. I’m struck how you said before too, a bunch of times now: he’s really quite a nice guy—(Oh, he’s very nice) but there’s not y’know

77

Sophie: But there’s also no reason for me to be mad at him

S: And it’s it’s—he’s a great example of how it’s ok to talk about what’s interesting and and and he’s still a great guy, y’know, like he’s he’s not having any ill effect on people and people aren’t reacting poorly to him (yeah, yeah.). Like, he turned from an antagonist in your dream to having some kind of other role for you in your work (mmhmmm)

78

Sophie: Yeah, like an ally. Very much an ally—getting right in there man to man with my inner critic and saying, “Hey, y’know, this is gonna be great!!” (laughs) [huh!]

S: Hmm. I am not thinking of any questions yet for this situation because you’ve described it with such care. But I also want to let you have a chance to um see if there is anything else about that instance of focusing that that was important to what happened then...

79

Sophie: Well, it helped me write something the next day. It gave me like energy. There’s just this block I have about... ohh... It helped me write two things already. It helped me write two things yesterday. Like I had to write something for a little--like writing is really hard for me and I’ve written like 19 editions of this book about --- but it was always like...

S: Oh, I saw all of those! Those were--?

80

Sophie: Yeah, that was my book! (laughs!) but its like—

S: You’re the person I need to talk to when I want to go to--, right?

81

Sophie: Yeah! That's what I do. I help people plan their trips to ___ and I love to plan trips for student groups also university groups, and but mostly my clients are couples, families, people traveling together. And I work with a network of community of rural—poor. Isolated, rural communities in pristine areas that have been funded by the UN development program to have their own eco lodges.

S: Wow! Well we'll have to talk more about this later!

82

Sophie: So y'know that's another fascinating thing that I do and somehow in the old place where I lived in ___ I was just like “ehhhhhh” I was never able to hold forth about it the way somebody like KN could about his lunch. And so I was able to say when I was writing

83

—I started writing for this new church and I'm... I was translating for—they have a relationship with a church in _____ and I was translating for the minister from ___ when he came and I and I said, well I'll just try teaching a focusing class so you can see what it's like and...and these little old ladies in the adult study group that y'know thinking is this really where I even think I could really teach something? And I thought, well y'know, I'd like—this is the opening that I have and so I'd like to see.

And so I had to write up this little blurb about it and I know that they're studying the gnost—the Gnostic gospels (hmmm) and so I looked that up online and I see all these quotes—This is focusing! This is focusing! That's what gno—that's what they're talking about! The greek word for knowledge—they distinguish y'know like they have four words for love; they've got two words for knowledge! One is like ... knowledge like intellectual knowledge like you know mathematics and then the other one—and it has to do with knowing—and the other is intuitive, knowing from experience! OH! That's like focusing!

84

And then they're saying y'know—the Gnostics say, “Better to search for god, and ask more who y'know look at your own sorrow and anger and... and frustration and there you will find him! That's what the Gnostics are saying! And these quotes! And then the other thing in the Gnostic gospels they say Jesus said...bring forth that is within in, because if you do not bring forth that which is within you.... Because what you bring forth from within you will heal you, and what you do not bring forth from within you will destroy you. (ahh!) There's that “Wow! Y'know this—talking about focusing.” And so I wrote—I was able to have the confidence to take these quotes, point out how it has to do with focusing, and write this little blurb and send it to the church. And then I had—I've been trying to do my new website so I was like [voice dragging] “eaaarghhhh... writing on my website... eh” and then I—I just said, “Hey, I have pdfs from my book on my computer. I'll just go and see what I already wrote about one of these things and I read it and I went, “This is good! I can use this! I don't even have to write that more stuff

because this is fine and I've written it already!" So I put it all together and I sent it out and I got into saying, "I can do this!" So it helped me with my—have more confidence in my written expression and I think it'll help me more...

S: When you say "it helps you" could you... locate in that moment of like—what "it" is? What is it that—

85

Sophie: Well, just the thing of seeing KN's ability to hold forth to people about what he's interested in and to have confidence about what he's interested in whether he's talking about lunch or his new deck or whatever thing that I think is boring and he's talking about, and to do it.

86

Because he does it from this kind of richness of his own being. It's like, "Oh, let me share this with you because this is from the richness of my being" rather than...[sigh] "What do I have to do to get you to be interested in these things that only I am interested in and that you're probably not really interested in because you don't know anything about it and how do I start to explain it to you... [trails of dejectedly]" [laughs] (laughs!)

S: So the it is sort of—I don't want to put words in your mouth but it sounds like you you have some kind of experience where you can somehow kind of connect with that experience?

87

Sophie: KN becomes like a living energy. He becomes a living felt sense that I can remember (ahhhh) and take into me... as a as a—I can try on that persona or something and—yeah, there's like-- to me, after that experience, there is kind of a leap and I can understand how you couldn't... follow it maybe but for me there's a a leap in... the fact that he—to recognize him as my ally... it's like...it's like making him part of me. (mmm)

88

It's like he—oh! Because in the dream everything is a part of you! So here he was... he was standing, he was showing me all about- he was showing me this whole conflict and

89

it's quite—quite a... it's like a—I feel aware that I'm on the level of--- once I was a president of a coop in this small town where I lived and I went along and I was kind of a new person in town. And they were looking for a president and so it's like "Let's get the new person because they don't- they don't they're not burned out like the rightest of us!" So I was really happy to do it because I'd been in a coop before many years ago... in another place and I really wanted to do that and I was like, "Ah! This is great!"

[camera needs to be attended to]

S: Sorry for the interruption; I interrupted your train of thought!

Sophie: Oh, that's fine. Where was I? I was talking about how he became an ally

S: and he became a part of you?

90

Sophie: Oh, yeah, right! I had—yes that I've had a—oh! That I was the coop president and and all the sudden like after three years of being the coop president the manager of the coop... quit—no the vice manager—the assistant manager quit and then the manager quit and then and then the shit hit the fan and everybody was blaming me for them quitting or something and I was like—and I was—and I—I just got totally scared and I got in touch with... the feeling that I must have lived a life as a—I must have had a past life as being like burned at the stake or something for being a witch because I just felt totally powerless against what they were accusing me of.

91

And instead of saying, “well, y'know, I didn't have anything to do with it, it was like I I had this feeling like: there is nothing I can say or do that will have any effect on these people! And that's well that's what I feel is happening in politics now too... y'know in didn't know how to say... it's like somehow I took it on like this... guilt like or like this—being in that situation I immediately kind of retreated into this powerless, there's no one that will understand me kind of place...

92

so for me to um—I've been doing a lot of EMDR with this therapist and um I think its its helped me... be a little more out there, be not afraid of—I mean that's was a very traumatic experience to be... to feel myself accused of something that I didn't do—I mean I should have been more aware of—I should been certainly more aware of what was going on inside these people but I I didn't have experience of being a—I didn't have experience of being in that role of the president of the board.. I didn't—so I was just—there were a lot of things I was unaware of but I wasn't... y'know, I didn't really have anything to do with it at all [laughs] but I didn't – it seemed like if I said that then no one would believe me and so what's the use? And so I've had this—it's like a miasm or something that prevents me from... getting out there and

93

I think that this was another... this thing about seeing KN as a persona that I can take on or—or just kind of loosening up everything around all that... is...good. (mmm) Y'know, I mean loosening up maybe just loosening up everything around that whole thing of “I can't talk, I can't say what—I can't—nobody's gonna be interested. I can't I can't do this, whatever. (mmmm)

S: That's a big one. That's a really amazing dream to have gone into

94

Sophie: Right and it just sounded so kind of stupid at the beginning! [S says something unintelligible as they both laugh)

S: What a surprise.

Sophie: Yeah.

S: Well, like I said before you have done such a good job and I'm trying to think of other questions but, um... yeah, I... nothing's coming up, so...

Sophie: Well maybe, I mean... do you have to do it all in this time? I mean cause maybe something comes up later when you're...

S: I'll probably try—as I said before interviewing could go on indefinitely, y'know, hearing about experiences cause they'll sort of change and your understanding of it may change and um, so there's there's a little bit of necessary arbitrariness of saying “Ok, we're going to consider this a response, and turn the stuff off and we'll talk about other things!” But if I have really questions or confusions um what I imagine is that I'll wrestle with that as best I can and then when I comes time for you y'know—it's your option for you to read the transcript and then I welcome your comments. So it's kind of nice in that you can—if you choose; you're not obligated to—for some people that doesn't sound very appealing—but if you read the transcript and then you read the phenomenological analysis that I've done and you want to comment on that, then that goes in there too. So you're voice gets to be part of the final product as well, so there's a little bit more, um... I don't want to say back and forth because that could go on interminably, but I do my best to make sense of it with this research method and then it doesn't stop there; you have a chance to comment or respond to that. “I don't understand this” or “This fits really well” and that all goes in there so our voices are there together.

Sophie: Ok. Well I'm willing to give you a few minutes of going inside if you want to get in touch with—take time to get in touch with anything that might be there that you might wanna...

S: (57 seconds) I think I'm just um feeling the complexity and the... um, richness of everything that you've just said and sort of feeling like... wow, I don't know how I'm gonna wrap my arms around that! And then also seeing if there's some piece of clarification that would help and I just think that that's gonna be a process for all of them! This is the research process so I'm just kind of gonna let that be—kind of jump into it!!

Sophie: Ok!

S: Thank you!

end

A7.5 Participant Five: Eliza

S: Um, so I guess just one thing that I'm asking from everybody is kind of a brief summary of how long you've been focusing. You have a lot of experience, so...

Eliza: Well...let's see, um, I started focusing in I think it was 1997. And, uh, it's been a regular practice for me for most of the intervening years, so... Anything else you'd like to know?

S: Yeah, well, um, I guess I'm curious about what—how you learned it, from whom, or whether there was a particular teacher? Y'know there's a lot of focusing teachers, various approaches (right).

Eliza: Um, I learned focusing in therapy with ____ (oh, wonderful). And ____ is a certifying coordinator. So I did focusing oriented therapy with her for a couple years and then I trained as a trainer. And then more recently became a certifying coordinator myself. (Wonderful!) So, yeah, it's been a long haul. Now, when I took my training with ____, ____ was coleading. He's no longer with us. (I'm sorry to hear that.) He died a number of years ago, yeah. Um... and I've also I took all of ____ level's as well, through level 4, but I certified with __ and __ so uh. So I use inner relationship style of focusing, and uh also more recently been studying internal family systems courses. And that's a focusing—like approach that works with the parts. So... I've done a lot of training with other—I've done a little with __, with um, who else, __. So y'know whenever I can get someone else's kind of style I enjoy doing that.

S: How would you characterize your practice recently, or like in the last few years? Do you mainly teach it? Do you focus—do you have a focusing partner? Do you do it with yourself?

Eliza: All of the above! (laughs) [laughs] I teach it regularly. I've been – recently I just started a proficiency in focusing partnership series and I'm on my second round of those and I intend to keep doing that training three times a year, cause they span four months (mmm). Ah, I have my second class of certification candidates I'm working with and I give focusing workshops. I have one coming up in __ focusing with procrastination—action blocks. (Wow.) So I've been teaching a lot, and then I do have one focusing partner who I've been working with every week for five years. I met him at a treasure maps retreat—__. And then I have a lot of other people who I'll focus with. So, this week I'm going to work with __ I probably shouldn't even bother with mentioning names. I often—usually two or three times a week I'll be focusing on my own stuff with somebody, and then I also give guided focusing sessions, so I might have a client or—I integrate it with my coaching practice, so I might be focusing- guiding someone in focusing – who doesn't know the process himself or herself so I'll lead them in and help them navigate the inner space. And, uh, I also have a regular journal practice. So often I'll journal—I'll be writing, and I'll pause and I'll go in and check something out in a more focusing kind of way and then come out. But sometimes I'll go in with a deliberate intention to work on an issue (mmm). Like for example I've been working with an

action block around getting my website up—for a long time. So y'know, I'll go in and have a session where I just work on that and I'm doing it by myself and I'll use a journal to hold my space.... So... that pretty much covers it (ok) so I do a lot of focusing! (laugh) {laugh} (in a lot of different dimensions!) Yeah.

S: Well, so, um, y'know, this kind of summarizes what I'm going to ask you; it's fairly straightforward question per se. I'm asking everybody to describe your experience of a specific focusing session--where you are the focuser—that stands out for you. Um, and so I would like you to, to the best of your ability, how the session began, what happened for you while it was going on, and anything that happened afterward, including as much detail as possible about the situation, your feelings and thoughts throughout, any body sensations, movements or shifts or anything else that comes to mind about what happened in that specific session, taking as much time as you need. And that's pretty much it. So...

1

Eliza:(4 sec) I-I-I'm pausing because I feel like nothing rises to the surface right now? Um, I have many sessions recorded in my journal, where I could pretty much get the whole flow of it for you if you wanted me to use that as a resource...

S: Well, I mean...

2

Eliza: I mean if you give me time I might have something that comes to mind. I remember images (hmmm) from focusing sessions 12 years ago (mmm). Not the whole session, but the piece of it? (mmm) And uh, y'know, so there—I have like bits and pieces but whether I can get the whole flow of a session...

S: Well, I guess I would just say to the best of your ability. Y'know, just, um... I'm curious about a specific instance—what's it like for you to be a person focusing? And for me it's helpful if that can be a specific instance. Lots of people have had difficulty recalling the *whole* thing, start to finish, every detail, but... that's what I'm asking for, as best as you can do with that. And if you need to pull a journal—I don't have any reason why that wouldn't be fine...

Eliza: I could give you a lot more in the moment kind of---

S: But I guess I would still want you—I would want the telling from you now about that session, but if it jogged your memory and would be helpful...

Eliza: Ok. Um, let's stop and think.

S: And really take as much time as you need.

3

Eliza: I don't know if you want to pause the—it might take me a while! Um... 25 sec. I think I should get my journal. Nothing is floating right up, so...

S: I want to say, too, that while you're talking I may take a few notes if you are doing any gestures. I don't have a video camera so I just wanted to let you know that I'll be jotting down...

4

Eliza: Ok! (goes to get journal, returns) New Years weekend I pulled out all of my journals—I've been journaling since 1994- and I wanted to see if my new year's resolutions were different. They weren't! (laughter) [laughter]

5

But I found some of my very first focusing sessions and it was really fun to see how I was not yet really quite getting it, y'know, so, I very much like it when I teach somebody... (flips through journal, about 1 minute).

6

Well, this session—this was a long focusing session... but I was using an ifs approach where I was identifying different parts of me that were coming up, so it's um, it's it's not—it's focusing, but focusing with a map. Y'know, the internal family systems map. (mm) So I don't know if that would be... useful for you or not, but it was a long session.

S: Well, I guess I'd like to just give you the leeway to chose one that for you, um, kind of just fits what focusing is for you, so... y'know...

7

Eliza: (50 sec) This might be a good one. It's about the website, so it's not about my deepest darkest secrets. I'd prefer to work with something a little more-- closer to the surface here. (Sure.)

8

So, um, I could just read this out loud and then as things arise I can stop and comment.

9

I don't remember it per se, so... this is a session from... the middle of December, and I was focusing with this long-term partner of mine. What I was working on was what I am calling my "website phobia"!

10

Um, I said, *"At first I couldn't find the part that doesn't want to do it. I kept finding the manager parts that were puzzled about why I couldn't get going...all of the—"* and there's some head talk here—*"all of the answers and theories that've surfaced earlier seem so easily rebutted. I can do the technology because I've done it for so many other*

people, I would only be advertising what I already do, I don't have to take on more work than I want to..."

11

I've been working on this issue uh, in a number of sessions, so there is a lot of history to this focusing session. It's what I would call "project focusing"

12

rather than sort a dip-in, "how am I right now?" (mmm) And often, I will do that in the mornings, just like, "Well, what's up?" (Hmm!) And just see what the inner weather is. I often get surprises—"Oh, I didn't know that was-on my mind or in my body right now!" (mmm)

13

Now this was a more deliberate campaign (ah) to see if I could make some shifts in the place where I'm stuck in my life.

S: Interesting! So it was what you would consider sort of a project focusing? You went in with an intention?

14

Eliza: Right. To work on this particular issue—it probably would have been the sixth, seventh session I've had over time, ahm...[returns to journal]

15

"and so I couldn't find the part that didn't want to do the website. All of the parts are trying to get me to go forward—" oh- "All of the parts that are trying to get me to go forward were like little bull dogs—" that's right—bull dogs or pugs "Straining at a leash. I can really feel the tugging in my body" [pulls forward in chair as if straining forward]

16

"I can see the old brown leather leash and the hard—and the hand holding it" [holds hand up with invisible leash closed in grasp] this was the image that was coming up, was this hand. A firm hand, and this leather leash and these bull dogs that were trying to move forward, but they were restrained... [does the pulling forward with her body.] You can see the body movement! [laughs]

17

"and then as I ah—" Oh, this was actually a focusing partner with a friend. ___ was actually partnering with me. Rarely does he make an intervention; usually he'll just mirror what I'm saying but here he had this—made a little suggestion, which I found brilliant. He said, "focus on the leash." (Hmm)

18

So, I did that. And what I could get the sense of was there was this large male figure that was holding the leash, and he was very solidly planted. He wasn't straining with the leash at all. But he wasn't budging either. He was just holding the leash while the dogs were pulling against it.

19

"So I asked him" and this is an IFS [internal family systems] move—" I asked him to step outside where I could see him more," and um, "then he was sitting, facing me, in a modern, clean line brown leather chair, and the dogs were relaxed next to him, no longer pulling on the leash. But the man continued to hold the leash. I asked him to show me what he was not wanting,"

20

this is, uh, treasure maps kind of work—if you can find a part, often you can find out what it's not wanting to experience? (mmm) It's a way of finding out how it's protecting you in some way.

21

"So he was not wanting me to puff up artificially, making big claims regarding my services, and then have to struggle to meet. He also did not want me to have to do things that aren't fun, that feel like pressure and anxiety.

22

He's restraining opposing parts that are grandiose in their pretensions. He can sense those parts cover up and protect other parts that always feel that they're not enough.

23

Then toward the end of the session I got an image of an old store front like my husband's grandparents" had a "little cigar store in east Boston. And it was as if I'd been doing business in this little shop for years but I haven't yet hung out a sign telling the world what I do." That image is kind of like this old fashioned store.

24

"And all I want to do is name out loud what I already do, not make it some big blown up heavy thing that will make me feel small, inadequate, or anxious, or work too hard, or be a phony." (mmm)

25

And then I wrote, *"I got an aha as I wrote that."* So as I was writing about the session that had taken place the day before, it was taking me back into my focusing space and I was getting shifts as I was writing. (ahhhh.) It was like there was a—one of those kind of openings that come from focusing. [5 sec] "What else does he want to tell me?"

26

So I'm back, dialoguing with this male figure with the dogs. *"I could feel the caution in my chest,"* [puts hand on chest] *"and then I got a flash on me as a high school and college student, always striving to be tops. Not just good—the best. Yesterday I remembered me sitting for hours... Yesterday, I remembered me sitting for hours with boring studying to make sure I got an a."*

27

I also remembered all the effort that I put into running for class office, and how I really didn't enjoy the activity that much after I won the election. This part doesn't want me to do that again...that being" ok, so doesn't want me to do that, and then what the "that" is "going after some goal that fills some need for recognition but really doesn't give me activity that is truly authentic, fun or fulfilling."

28

And then a question for myself, *"What's my 25 years as a lawyer? Another gross case of the same thing!!"* [laughs] I haven't been a lawyer now for eleven years, but, uh...

29

"At the end of the focusing, I asked the part with the leash what it was wanting for me. It wanted me to be to feel free spontaneous, light—"

30

and then now," in the moment when I was journaling, *"Comes 'comfortable in my own skin'" that phrase 'comfortable in my own skin'—"satisfied. And,"* comments in the margin, *"I never really got that—what that meant until now."* That whole sense—comfortable in my own skin. I'd heard that phrase, but I had a body feel here for it—that was a shift for me. (mmmm) *"Oh, is that what that means!"*

31

"So I just imagined myself going to my computer and working on the website. I felt something pushing back like on my chest," so here I was, in the moment, trying see where this was going to lead.

32

"It feels like a part that wants me to do other things, like my art projects, and it doesn't want me blurting off in another direction, abandoning those projects midstream. It sees the website development task as some huge, all enveloping task that will put all else aside. It worries my child artist would be shut to the side once more."

33

I've been doing art for the last year. It's become a really big part of my life, after never having picked up a paintbrush in my life....

34

Ok, I'm feeling into the bulldogs again. *"The bulldogs have a should quality to them. I notice that my real life of coaching and focusing, which is so soft, loving, humble, relational, is not in those bulldogs at all.*

35

There's another presence I'm feeling now. A white glowing woman. The light of true self, of love there. She's showing me how wonderful I feel when I teach focusing, when I work one on one with someone in focusing oriented coaching.

36

Just let that expand." So I sat with it and let that feeling try to come, more and more. Um, and this is what was coming as I wrote,

37

"I can feel some sort of constraining walls around her, like she's in prison. There's a biblical image of an angel visiting one of those saints in prison" That was the association—"It feels like a wall of a cave, but it is cracked open so that the light shines through..."

38

[shows me the journal] There's a little picture of—kind of capturing the image of this lit woman—Ah!

39

"She's in a cave! Like the exiles in Ted Holmes' book" that's an IFS book—"Me, finally what I was born to do, joyfully creating, empowering others with love, receiving love and knowing I am worthy enough for me. Follow my bliss."

40

And then I—started thinking at this point, what brings bliss. I started a list of things that bring me very good feelings inside. So, um, is that helpful? That was all I wrote.

S: Yeah, do you mind if I ask a couple of follow-up questions? (Sure.) So it sounds like, in that session, or in what you just shared there was a sort of interweaving between what happened in that focusing session you are writing about, and then there's more things happening in the writing (right.) and um, I'm not sure how much this is possible because they are all... like-- that session seems like it was then changed by the writing about the session—but just in terms of your initial living through the session, could you help clarify for me what parts of that were in that initial session, understanding that some of what you described was new for the writing?

41

Eliza: So, ahm, which parts of that story were from the session that I did with my partner? (mm hm.) The bull dog, and the man sitting in the chair, and feeling into what it was he didn't want me to experience. I think that was all a part of that original session.

I'm pretty sure that's accurate. I can't recall...4 sec...I can still see him; I can still see the chair and everything now...3 sec... I think that's probably where the session ended.

S: So how long would you say that that session was? I mean, that's of course a very succinct summary of the session and I'm imagining that there was much more in getting to that. (mmhmm) And I'm wondering if you could say any more about that process? For you as you lived it, not how you know focusing goes, but whatever you might recall from when you started focusing and any pieces or shreds of that memory—of that what it was like to have that image come, however it came, or whatever you did to come to that image?

42

Eliza: Uh, well I can say it probably was a 20 minute session because that's what ___ and I generally do is 20-25. Uh... and I think in that session I was I was deliberate, I had a project; it wasn't just open form focusing.

S; So from the moment you began you had this thing in your mind—this is something that I need to—

43

Eliza: Yep. I wanted to go in and sense what it was—and actually what I was looking for when I started the session was the parts that didn't want to do the website. I wanted to be with them. (Hm) and see what they would like to tell me.

S: So there was even a more focused- it was focused on the level of this is a particular issue and AND I'm looking for these specific parts.

44

Eliza: Exactly. And to my surprise I couldn't find them! I was finding- because I'd done so much work on this already I wasn't finding the parts that didn't want to. Um so then I forget how I moved from that place of realizing I was kind of fishing around inside... inviting the parts that didn't want to come on up! "Is anybody home?" (laughs) [laughs]. And they weren't there.

45

And then these voices that had all these rebuttals, all the different arguments that I've heard from them about what they are trying to protect me from, all those arguments sort of floated up. Ah, so I heard those answers, sort of disembodied.

S: It was different from actually making contact with the the part that didn't want to, you were hearing the rebuttals.

46

Eliza: Exactly. And it's almost as if—and this is me thinking now, just kind of explaining or theorizing a little bit—it's almost like the parts that didn't want to have

heard all of that before and are beginning to buy it. (mmm) So they just weren't as strong?

47

Ahm, but then—but then I did discover—I could feel the impetus [puts hand on chest and moves torso forward in chair] to do the website, and that was those dogs straining at the leash. I could sense that there was a lot of power a lot of pushing to do it, but they weren't going anywhere because they had this leash on them.

48

And then – you know, but for ___'s intervention, “Why don't you focus on the leash?” I'm not sure I would have gotten to the man.

49

Because I could see—I could feel the dogs, I could see the leash, y'know very graphically, and there was this hand. It was almost like a –like a picture where it was just the hand holding the leash and the dogs were in the picture. (Ah.) Clearly somebody was connected to the hand, um, and it's when ___ said, “Why don't you give some attention to the leash?” that the whole thing—person came up...

50

[phone rings, Eliza checks caller id and leaves it.) So... so then the part kind of personified and responded to my request that it move out so I could see it, really dialogue with it.

51

Uhh, and that's when I began to get a lot more content about what it was concerned about and uh. (You said it sat in a chair?) Mmhmm. Just like you're sitting there, but it was like a brown Scandinavian, very modern brown leather chair. Sitting like that with his legs crossed, holding the dogs. He's relaxed—holding the leash but the dogs kind of y'know sat down next to him and they were relaxed but he still had the leash. And, uh, and then we talked about it! So...

S: And when you talked about it, what was that like? I mean, were you imagining yourself there, sitting across or— how did that?

52

Eliza: No, I was in me, not not the picture of me. It wasn't like a movie (mmhmm). Actually, I don't know if you've done any work in internal family systems but, um, one of the things that's suggested is that if you see you out there, it's just a part. (mmm). It's not really the core observer self.

53

So I was really kind of in me, looking out at him, rather than seeing you and I sitting here. (I see) So. (And then the dialogue unfolded?) And then the dialogue unfolded, yeah, and so I got quite a bit about what it wants.

54

Actually when I get back to it, a lot of that—what it wasn't wanting me to have to experience—was brand new! (Really.) Yeah, it was brand new. A lot of it was. I had gotten pieces before about um not wanting to be pressured, not wanting to like work to hard anymore—I'm semi-retired—um, not wanting to be kind of vulnerable or seen in the world. Privacy, confidentiality, feeling naked somehow. (mmm). The world's gonna find out what I'm up to on the website!

55

So I'd had all those pieces, but this part about it really wanting me not to kind of puff up and.. .be pretentious or build a website that I'd then have to live up to the—purple prose in the website—that was new. And that was important. (huh.) And that was a very important gift from that session. (wow.)

56

Yeah... now I still haven't done the website! [laughs] (laughs)

S: After having had even those new pieces—and then it sounds like after that session part of what happened afterwards is this writing, and the things that came from the writing that kind of carried that session further for you...

57

Eliza: That's right, that's right. And this now, and I think what came after-- was this concern about—that if I really starting building the website that all of the time that I really want to devote to art will be gone, will be sucked up! (mmm) And, um, that that sort stopped me at that point.

58

(Stopped you from--) Well, it it it just felt more important to me to do the artwork than to build the website. Then it still feels like an either/or kind of choice that I don't have enough time in my day to to do both. And I choose to do art, in my few hours a day, than spending a few hours a day building a website.

59

Now maybe they'll be a time when I have less other stuff going on in my life where I will make that time. But—there's still—I can feel now—there's still something there holding back. (uh huh.) So, more focusing work is needed.

S: When you—when you started to go in with the intention to think about this website and not wanting to build it, um, can you say anything about any... and of course it's retrospective, but did you have anticipation about what that would yield? I mean-- when you decided to focus on it, did you have an idea on any level for what? I'm gonna focus

on this, and then this is what I want to have happen after that focusing? Or what I want to be able to do?

60

Eliza: Well, I mean my objective was to find what was blocking and have that block dissolve.

61

But I also know that if you go in with an agenda, your part isn't gonna talk back to you. So, you have sort of—it's a funny sort of—you have to go in with a purpose, but then you have to let it go and let whatever's gonna happen, happen.

62

My goal was I guess to hear from the parts that didn't want to. And just understand better what was in me that was oh... concerned about that particular activity. So, I definitely got there! (laughs) I haven't gotten to the goal of doing the web site, but maybe that's not what's right for me.

S: I was just going to ask: do you have a sense—a different sense about... doing the website after that, I mean after having heard from those parts, do you have a different feeling about that block or—has your relationship with that project shifted?

63

Eliza: I actually have more respect for the parts of me that don't want to. I think they have a really important, um, reason for holding me back. I mean, they're really guardians of my authenticity. (mmm)_ and I think that until I learned that in the session, um, other parts of me that were kind of disparaging, inner critic types—like, “Why can't you get this done? This is ridiculous. Just push through this! Just go out and do it!” That y'know those parts um were kind of I would say—just critical. Critical of the fact that I haven't been able to do this after many many false starts (mmm) ah,

64

so I feel—I feel, just sensing it now it's kind of a softer, more accepting [moves hand, palm facing her chest, in a circular motion in the air a few inches from her body] feel to the whole dynamic. There are parts that would like to and there are parts that really have reasons why they don't want me to. And that's where it is right now.

65

It will continue to shift, I'm sure, but right now there's in a way more comfort with that inner tension, so.... (mmm) so it's interesting. It's a little bit feeling like there's something in process, and just waiting to see what comes next—trusting that something, in its right time it will happen.

66

S: That's very—just—that's very helpful, um. Asking these clarification questions actually seems to really have brought out for me what happened in that session. Um, and

so all I can ask is if there's anything else about it—if you want to sit with it for a second and see if anything else from that session that happened that maybe hasn't been spoken or recalled yet. Just give that a chance...

67

Eliza: (30 sec.) there's just more stuff coming now. I'm finding myself as I sit and ask if there is anything else that wants to come up, but what's coming up is fresh—now in this moment, and it's a curiosity about those dogs and wanting to go back in and finding out more about them—how they're feeling.

68

Cause they're the ones that have the impetus to go forward, um, but I didn't work with them. In 20 minutes, it would've been nice if this would have been an hour long session, I could have worked with both ends of the tension, the polarity. Worked with the dogs that were straining to go forward—what was that all about? There was a real power in it—these little beasts, cute little beasts! [laugh] (laugh)

S: So they're still very lively for you and waiting for your return at some point!

69

Eliza: Still there, still there!

70

Then there's that leash—the leash itself is... quite interesting cause—I ended up working with one part of the constellation there—the male—the holder of the leash, but the leash itself has some—I could feel—there's more. There's more in the leash. It's so vivid—like old leather, a little bit cracked... I am feeling with my fingers what it would be like. So I think there is more there—the connection between the part that doesn't want to and the parts that do. What is this relationship between them, like that. So—yeah!

71

This would be a good place to pick up and do another session! [laugh] (laugh)

S: Very rich, every ah piece of it just has soooo much depth and meaning and in the beginning when you said images, um, I think I maybe have a better understanding of what you were talking about. Sounds like if this is the kind of constellation of images that come and they each have this kind of depth... I can imagine how this image will be with you, and especially as you inquire into each piece...

72

Eliza: There's an energy behind each one that's unique, and yet they're connected. So...to inquire separately, and the whole—step back and get the whole of it. What's it like to have—to be me, carrying this triptych. It's really a triptych...

73

You know there is--- there is one other focusing session that um I'm going to mention just because it's very powerful and it goes way back to when I was in therapy (huh.) and I don't remember the whole thing, but it felt very um-- spiritual.

74

And, um, uh—back then I did get very—I'd get a visceral [moves hand up and down in front of chest, palm toward chest and fingers as if grasping something as she moved hand up and down] feeling and then it would um there would be like an image that would kind of hold the body feeling. So for example I might feel an amaryllis—a big amaryllis bulb growing in me [brings hand from low ribs, up, as if emerging at the top of her chest] or something like that.

75

This one was ah... (exhale) the image was so strong—it was like a disc [holds hands, facing one another as if holding a round object, about a foot from chest], um, and it felt out here [moves the disc to nearly arm's length in front of her], like I was looking at it. And behind the disc was a light [keeps one hand as if holding disc, brings other hand to space behind it to indicate light] And I had the sense that if I could put my hands on it and shift the disc a little [mimes this]—the light behind it would be—I'd be able to see the light.

76

This was a time in my life when I was trying to discern my path. I was leaving the law—I think I had already left—I was actually starting my doctoral program. I had gone in and out of seminary. I was really kind of searching and not clear at all about where I was going. And often would focus—it felt like I was sitting in a cloud. Knowing that there was something there—I could *feel* the presence of something there, but I couldn't see it, touch it, or feel it cause I was sitting in this deep fog.

77

(chuckle) so, ah, this disc, it was also—at some point it became like an African mask, just very simple primitive features on it—and when I was able to put my hands on it, in imagery, and move it, ahm, I had this—this feeling like I was connecting to my true self, or to god, or something- it was very...

78

And my body went through real strong visceral, almost like convulsions. It wasn't like I was laying on the floor having a fit, but like these strong visceral vibrations—almost like something was trying—y'know the alien—when that thing pops out of his chest it felt like something was really trying to come out. (yeah.)

79

And um I remember my therapist was with me and when I opened my eyes it was pretty palpable what was going on. She was sitting like [pulls up in chair with look of surprise,

concern and maybe fascination] [laugh] (laugh) I don't know if she thought she was going to have to pick me up off the floor or whatever!...

80

But it was such a strong body shift, um, that I can—it's with me now, twelve, twelve-thirteen years later. And um... y'know there's not a whole lot of head understanding of that so much as that was a really powerful inner experience that came out of focusing, and it it was at a time at my life when I was really making some radical changes in how I was and how I was living my life. It felt emblematic of that in some ways.

S: Has that stuck with you in the way that the bull dog triptych is with you, in the sense of something that could be gone back to, or is it a different relationship?

81

Eliza: It feels a little more archival at this point, but the bull dogs are pretty fresh. Um, but y'know if I went back to that, it's almost like in would be—it's like a situation that I would be going freshly to that situation and whatever carries forward would be now using that as the seed, so to speak. But I don't know if it would open in the same way. I'll have to try it! [laugh] (laugh) I'm curious! That was—that was powerful.

S: And that sounds like it was so visceral. You did a lot more gesturing with that one, ahm, in terms of – there was something really different in the quality of the experience as you were describing it. Um... something at once visually more, um... vague isn't the right word...

82

Eliza: Symbolic, or archetypal. Stripped down. (yeah, stripped down) without so much story and understanding, but just yeah much more powerfully experiential.

S: And it sounds like with a much stronger body sense, although you weren't convulsing on the floor it seems like it was a possibility. (laugh) [laugh]

83

Eliza: I probably was doing something like this [pulses torso as though trying to bring something up—reminds me of the upward movements of a cat about to throw up a hair ball] cause I I can still the remember the feeling of like like ah birth pains, or something really wanting really wanting to come.

84

I remember one other focusing session. It was in my office in my old house. And it was a weekly session with somebody I was partnering with, and uh, I was working on some issue—I don't remember what the issue was, but it had strands, like a braid, so there were these sort of a tangle of issues. [Moves hands, fingers moving too, in a tight little circle around each other]

85

And as I worked with it, there came a moment when the braid untangled and it was like the strands were all laid out in front [indicates laying out three long strands in front of her], instead of like a bowl of spaghetti.

86

And when that happened, my whole body just softened and relaxed. It was like my bones had dissolved. I really felt like I was going to melt out of the chair. It was so... opening. (sigh) Whatever had been tightly bound up in there, it had been opened. It was a really very physical sensation, sort of melting (oh...) It was lovely. It was lovely.

87

So when you talk about focusing bringing a sense of spaciousness inside, for me that can be very real. I mean it's a spatial thing, like there's less crud clogged up and more... [inhale] your lungs can expand more. So I know something's really happening, because you can experience it. I know it's not just figments of your imagination. (yeah) Fascinating process.

End

A7.6 Participant Six: Ila

S: Would you mind kind of summarizing when you started focusing, how did you learn, what kind of training have you done?

Ila: Sure. Let's see, Sarah, I started focusing ah probably in 2003. I took a um I took a weekend training. I had read about it in a brochure; I was interested in the sound of it, and nothing specific I can remember except it was supposed to help you understand more about life and yourself and deal with life. It might have said any of those kinds of things. Um... and so I went to the workshop and it was a weekend long, so it was a pretty good introduction. I then, that summer, um the center where I went had a week long retreat where you could go and you weren't necessarily going for more coursework or more workshops, but you did have a chance to meet with a trained focuser every day, um, one on one and have a session. And there were—it was mainly a quiet retreat so you could be with yourself in whatever came up the rest of the day and journal—whatever it was. Um, and I remember leaving that—probably 2000, that was the summer of 2004 and thinking, “Ok now what do I do? How do I find—it wasn't close to home. How do I find y'know somebody to work with?” And around 2006 I met ___—someone recommended her to me. And ___—I said her last name wrong, but—and um I worked with ___ a little bit at that time, 2006ish maybe and then I got busy with other things, so again I kind of got called away again and it was in 2007 maybe that I then met ___-- I think I talked maybe to ___ and she said “talk to ____ . I'm actually working with therapists now primarily; ___ is working with people who aren't doing therapy work per se, um, and she's teaching at different levels so she'd be a great person to connect with. “ so I connected with ___; think I took maybe an advanced level with her, or intermediate—something in through there. And then when I finished that, um 2008, she asked me if I would be interested—or I asked her, I'm not sure--maybe both--um, whether I could go on. And if you've worked with ___-- have you worked with ___? (I've met her a couple of times.) Her enthusiasm is contagious. So, yes. I was moving on and there were a group of four of us that were moving on and we spent a year together, um, really mastering focusing through all the levels, working with people. And I completed that training in December of 2009, so just about a year ago. Um, in the last year I have I attended a focusing—a couple of focusing Institute y'know programs—not their summer long, but a few other things. And then I worked with ___ over the phone.. She had a program on how to set up a business and how to work one on one with people over the phone, so I did that because I wanted to gain experience working with people long distance. What would I do over the phone, and also what would I do if I wanted to take this into some kind of practice? How would I do it, y'know? What would be involved? And um... that has led me to a lot of different things over time and I think—it's led me to a lot of things in terms of meeting different people and using focusing with them, even informally. (mmhmmm). I like working with people over the phone; I find it just as easy, although different, than in person. Um, I--since 2008—2007, 2008—I'm not sure exactly. Probably 2008. I've been working one on one with a partner over the phone. This is my partner in ____ . And um we focus twice a week; we have focused twice a week for two and a half years or so. (How wonderful!) It *is* wonderful! (It must be very... disciplined isn't quite right--) It's a practice. It's really a practice, just like to me a meditative practice or yoga or any of those things—walking

exercise, y'know whatever. It really is a practice I think and in some ways it's been really more profound in helping me understand what focusing is than... than any teaching I could do. In other words, in order to teach it, I have had to live it. (mm) And I think it's been an amazing journey. Especially over the past year in terms of the deepening and the actual, "Oh my gosh! What's happening!?" How focusing informs my day to day existence I think is also really... impor— It's just, if somebody had told me this back in 2003, I maybe'd've hoped for it but would never have been able to wrap my fingers around what it actually was. (oh.) And I'm- it's been pretty amazing, and now to be able to take that out to different groups and seminars—I feel like I have something to offer because I understand in my own life what it—I mean like it's something that's alive in me, and so I can carry that to others I think. Yeah. (So-) That's the synopsis! (laugh) I hope (it's wonderful) it's not too long!

S: No, I was thinking it's a good segue because the question I want to ask is about a specific instance and often people want to situate that in a... broader context, and I value that. So. (Yeah.) Um, so I'll ask my specific question, and um it's got a couple different parts so I'll read through it, and don't worry about remembering them. Just do your best to respond and if you haven't addressed each then I'll just prompt you. (oh, good. Thank you. That's a relief!) So what I'm asking is for people to describe your experience of a specific focusing session with you as the focuser that stands out for you as memorable in some way. I'll ask you to describe to the best of your ability how the session began, including where were you, what was the situation, what happened for you while it was going on, and what happened for you afterwards. You can include as much detail as possible about the situation—our feelings and thoughts throughout, body sensations, movements or shifts or anything else that comes to mind about what happened in that situation, taking as much time as you need.

1

Ila: Ok, so let me just think for a minute. I mean I focused today—that may be the most current! Um, let me just...sit with it. Um...(29 seconds) There's so many... and I y'know it has informed some decisions I've made, informed all kind of things but I'm not sure I could give you the specifics...now. I do journal so I could go back and flip through a journal, but I also um...could just go with y'know today, to just bring it y'know to something... is it more important to you that it's really something huge impact wise or that um it has more of the details and the progression of the actual session?

S: Um, I guess I'm looking for a rich narrative description of... y'know.

2

Ila: I think I'd better go with today's session then, because it's more—just because it's more current, if that's ok with you. (that's fine.)

3

So um how did it begin? I didn't journal because I wasn't home, so I didn't put it down. Let me just see if I can go back to that.

4

So I came into the focusing session... realizing that there was a tightness—yeah—in my lower abdomen [places hand on lower abdomen] so that's how it began. And then I realized there was some tightness in the right side of my jaw... so it began with a sensation, y'know kind of vague sense of tightness, mum

5

... and from there I stayed with the sensation of tightness because I wanted – I wanted to be curious about, or I was curious, feeling curious about what that tightness was. Y'know tightness is kind of a vague word. So as I sat with that...trying to kind of get a handle on it, um...

6

I actually remember um (phone rings shrilly in room.) oh, the phone. (It's alright). We'll have to pause. There is an answering machine in here. (Sure. We can wait.)

7

Um... so in this tightness--I do authentic movement as well and that can create body senses in my body so sometimes my body actually moves so... I put my hands on my lower abdomen to really just acknowledge the tightness. (I'm gonna take a couple of notes of your gestures.) Mmm. Just to get a sense of that tightness

8

and then what happened was that my body did really convey it clearly. I got a sense of um pulling-- my hand started moving out. [pulls hand out from abdomen slowly, then puts the fingers of both hands together and pulls them apart, as if stretching an elastic.] A tightness, an elastic band-- and my jaw actually tightened so it was really... It was really interesting because it was so physically in my body at that point. And at that point I realized that the word I wanted was "tense". I wanted "tension." Tension came first when my hands were pulling apart, and even my jaw. Tightening. And that led me then to the word tension. SO as much as the other came, that then followed.

9

And then I just waited with that. Y'know just waited with that sense... Um. What was it like from that point of view? Y'know from that tense point of view, that part of me, that aspect of my being? What was it like y'know acknowledging it: ok I get it. I get uh what this is now—the tightness feels more like tension. And now how—how do I be with you? How would you like me to be with you? (mmm) What is what is what is it like to be you? Where is this part of me-- understanding that the part is me.

10

Y'know it's not a separate piece. Just separated enough that I can witness it, so creating a bit of distance is how um... I learned focusing. So there's a way to be apart from...um it doesn't stop the emotional involvement and things if that comes, y'know if tears or whatever come, but it allows um just a little bit of a different stance.

11

So um being with the tension... I just want to see if my body will take me back there a little bit. ... (10 seconds) What I had a sense of... I'm trying to think of the flow of this for you... there was a sense then of um... mmm... a place of anxiety. So, a sense that my body actually splits [moves left hand from the center of chest up to her chin, while moving right hand from center of chest down toward pelvis] when I'm anxious. So this tightness forms in my lower abdomen [gestures to abdomen], and then I come up here [gestures to area above L hand], um, and there's a separation. And that's where I had a lot of a sense of how that felt, uh... (5 sec)

12

My companion at that point may have asked if I wanted to just be with that separation? Did I want to just be with that place in me that was anxious? Did I want to stay with that? Was it ok to just be with that? I think I remember her words. And I remember sitting for a few moments and just saying, "ok. I can do that. I can just... acknowledge within me that this part of me is anxious. There's tension in my body.... I don't have to understand exactly why in this moment; I can just be with it..." What that did is that it allowed me to just stay with the feeling and not go to my head, not start figuring it out, analyzing it: What's the story behind all of this? What's causing all of this? But to just sit with it.

13

And as I did that, I was aware... I was aware within me that there was this place of the anxiety, of the tightness, of the tension... it just appreciated me being with it. So there was a sense of... relaxation maybe even? A kind of spaciousness? A tension gave way a bit. It let loose a bit.

14

And there also at that point I believe may have appeared another place in me that didn't like the whole staying with the tension—that wasn't comfortable with that: "It's time to kind of move out of here! Let's move!" Um... "Get back to work, get back to life, get back to my head, y'know, figure it all out! Let's move on!"

15

So I paused to acknowledge that part and how much it wants me not to be in this tension—not wanting it—not wanting to just sit with it. Wanting to resolve, move on. But letting it know at this point—I was asking it to sit aside, so I could just stay with the tension a bit more. And it was ok with that. It was like, "Ok I can hold you *here*." [curves right arm around open space at side hip, where some small being might sit beside next to her or possibly on her hip] Like there's almost that bodily sense of ok I'm holding you here—I'm not sending you away. But I want to just be with this. (mmm) Cause it feels important for me to just sit with this."

16

Um, as I sat with it... even longer... what I realized was not really words... y'know sometimes you get a sense from that part of you that is speaking what it needs or wants—

it wasn't so much coming *from* it but it was coming *underneath*. [gestures to space in front of, and extending past low pelvis] It was like I—what I'm needing is support, so I can relax. I need—and what I was feeling was a place in me of support, underneath. Um. I think I remember saying to my companion, "It feels like a net." And then this tense part of me relaxed even more, um.

17

And within that place—from that point...um... from that point there may have been... two things that came. One, I may have gone up into my head for a bit? Umm, to bring it into a story, um, cause there's a situation with my husband where we'd had a disagreement and there was tension around it, so... that's part of the story that was coming through and where my anxiety comes um is up I kind of lose my ground, I come up [gestures upward to head]. So it told me a lot about where my body was feeling, where I was holding the tension from that, and what I was wanting was support to really hold, y'know all of it—hold where I was, y'know? Stay centered I think enough to resolve or work through it. So part of me went back to my mind to kind of uh.. allow some of that to come and to sense into that, yeah. How—what's that like and, "Oh, is that so? IS that part of this? IS that what's part of this going on?"

18

AND then to say, "oh, ok, but now... now I've heard that; I understand my mind is trying to figure this out, trying to help me out and here's this other part that wants to help out too, and move on, but now I want to come back to that sense and I want to just be with it because that's what it's wanting. It's wanting me to simply sit with it, be with it, um... is what it really felt like.

19

The beauty that then came, Sarah, and often comes in focusing, is if I allow myself to simply be with it, I actually—my whole body shifts, and the shift for me today is more of a um...5 sec... It's a place of grounding. It's a place of feeling supported myself, and... y'know whatever the situations of life might be. It's a place of acknowledging that when I am not feeling that, this is where the tension builds, where I hold it. (mmmm) And... um, I know that, but there's also what came was sitting with it.

20

As I sat with it for... oh, a while y'know-- a couple minutes at least. And my companion was very quiet in that time. And I said I just want to sit with it. Um... 6 sec... What came was two things. One, a sense of this part of me that it's tired of being this way. Like this is a pattern; it's tired of this pattern. It does want something different. Um... it wants to *be* in a different way. And that was, um, just good to acknowledge, y'know that this is a pattern; this is an old pattern—this whole issue of support, all of this, and... there's something wanting to change.

21

And somewhere in continuing—even after that, to just sit with it—came a place of...6 sec... a sense within me of feeling such a deep level of support. Like not from me,

y'know, it's like me supporting me. It's all of me, but it's something bigger than me. (mmm)_And I don't know how, it almost y'know goes onto a spiritual realm or a—I don't even know. I don't know the word for it.

22

It happens sometimes for me when some part of me – um I think it came up today because of the pattern. Y'know the realization that this is a pattern, this is something long standing. And it's something in me that *is* wanting to change or shift, somehow just to sit with that-- this sense came... and I'm trying to give words to it, um...13 sec... it's like my whole breath changes. There's space, there's...there's a y'know there's a relaxation, there's a... "all is well", tranquil, any—y'know it's like I have my ground back again... I have my focus, my center. I have *life* supporting me, y'know. It's like... so what whatever was clogging that in the altercation with my husband or the unresolved situation—not really a fight, but a prolonged discussion that didn't really work out easily... so that was like two or three days ago, but my body's still carrying it.

23

So coming to that place not only helped me in that moment, to again have more understanding of my body and what it's carrying and what it's wanting to move forward, but I also have felt it the rest of the day. It's like it shapes the rest of the day. I'm *not* where I *was*. I'm not—I have a different way of --that I'm even looking at—I have a different way that my whole body feels like it's moving through the day, because I do feel like my whole body has shifted its focus and its way of being. I also have... more clarity I think about that specific situation so my mind has then taken that further and worked that, so... I don't know if that's helpful, but that's kind of... it's kind of an example.

S: It's a well-articulated example. I have a couple kind of follow up questions, because it seemed very important when you were talking about um... the part that's a pattern that wants to change, and you were saying "it" and I'm not sure what part—the tension, the feeling of support, that's underneath that tension...I was curious first of all when you were saying "it" is tired of being that way—what that it was.

24

Ila: I'm probably referring to my body- my body's way of holding something in. My body is saying: I don't like the holding of the tension, I don't like how it separates [again, brings one hand from mid chest up to chin, and the other hand from mid chest downward] when I'm really holding it in, and I'm working then from way up here. It's almost like a...um, it's almost like it's suppression? Like you would suppress the feelings... (mmhmm) It's suppressed, and then I'm living from up here. Y'know I'm not--- I'm actually almost living from here, up. I'm moving from my head...I'm um...

25

there's a lot—I don't know the physiology they say there's a lot, when people are anxious, their breath and everything moves from here [moves hand from low belly up to

chest]. They're no longer breathing in through their belly, they're breathing from up—and I teach yoga so I see some of this and I'm aware of y'know my breath, somewhat.

25.5

My whole breath moves up. It's like I'm not- not living from the bottom heart any more, it's—where the feelings and things are, my instinct, y'know all those things—but y'know I've put them away, so I think that part of me that was expressing that... it was almost like a *tired*. I'm tired of this pattern, I'm tired of living this way. I don't want this constriction, this tension, this closing down, this living from up here.

26

(mmm) Um, cause that's where the anxiety really comes forth then. And it can come forth in my voice and I'm not... y'know I might speak louder, I'm not feeling heard, I'm not clear, what I'm saying isn't coming out--y'know those kinds of things. So you move my energy back down, move my whole body...it just feels like my whole body was so strongly telling me that today. It wasn't coming from my head; it was my body. It was um... it was sensing my body even: I'm tired. I'm really tired of this pattern. Somebody help me out; I want this to shift so it it was um....

27

I think in focusing ... my companion and I have y'know talked about this. There's a... there's a people talk about it being a body modality and it think it definitely is. There's a body wisdom that comes through and at times the body actually can speak and convey that...

28

and yet there almost inevitably at some point will be some involvement of the mind, um, to even appreciate or register or even remember it. (Right) SO it's not a matter of sending the mind away, but over the years that we've focused together I think both of us um there's times that we remind each other to stay in the body if we feel the person's really gone into their head,

29

but I think over time that's been less and less of an issue for us cause.... Um.... Maybe because we've learned to wait for the body sense first and to really let it—knowing, really understanding now that it will convey. It will give us what we want.

30

It's not always in words, y'know this example had some words with it, not always with words but with something and um... some of the work that we've done has taken us back to like younger parts of us. Y'know like a younger part will appear, um... and so y'know it's just—it's very interesting what comes and how it evolves but it all has its... it's really kind of a inner beauty. I don't know how to expl—it's such a unique way of ...a unique way of being with yourself that most of us don't even think about...y'know, even being possible.

31

And yet having done it now, um, as a practice for the past two and a half years, it's uh... it is transformative and it is um healing, um... it's centering. Mostly it's a way of connecting...it is a connecting with my own wisdom, my own healer, my own counsel, my own own inner being. I don't know. It's so deep.

S: What you were talking about, today felt like specific instantiation of that and so I guess I just wanted to clarify the sequence of recognizing that fatigue and then, was it after that that you got underneath that?

32

Ila: Yeah, I think I started speaking about that but I think it actually came after that, yeah. Yeah. Um, I've tried to give you the ordering as best I can remember it.

33

The support would come—would have come most like after [] my body's memory, and then the net and things really—definitely after the feeling of fatigue.

34

And probably um...yeah probably really it comes just by sitting. Waiting with it until um... and I had to learn that too, Sarah, because sometimes if you don't wait long enough or you don't wait with that sense and you go back into your head and you lose ... it's a it's a learned process it's really trusting um... trusting that what needs to come will come

35

and the parts or-- ___ works a lot with relationship and parts. ___, who I've also studied with, doesn't really like to work with parts, um, he has some reservations about it and people getting lost in the parts.

36

I can see both sides; I think in my own work with my partner focusing um... we've done ok with it because both of us realize it's part of the whole? (mmmm) But that there's some aspect of ourselves, some part of our subconscious or...what have you that's wanting—that's wanting awareness, that's wanting, that's needing attention of some kind or wanting something and so the whole waiting process in some ways is being- is being with that.

S: So you , you recognized that there was a sense of wanting that pattern to be different and then you waited, and then it sounds like there was an experience of it... being different? or... (yes. Yes.) could you say what changed as you realized there was something already there?

37

Ila: Yeah. I think it um...comes in different ways. It comes in my body first. If there's a shift of some kind my body will find that first--so the tension or anxiety that I might have

been feeling? I'm going to feel the physiology of that. I'm gonna feel my breath will shift, I'll feel some actual relaxation, space...

38

I think those were some of the words I tried to use at some point.

39

Those would have come as I sat with it and as it felt attended. Ok, I'm listening.

40

And then today, not always—sometimes that will be where it ends, but this particular day there was that added place of actually there's something more here. There's something more. My body's feeling this net of support. It's feeling really grounded. It's feeling held, and something in the part of me that was feeling my body sensation of that it helped me to relax even more. So it helped me to open and let go even more. (mm) And all of that comes in a bodily sense.

41

I can give words to it; I can give words of a net or things like that... in some ways that helps my mind. And my mind is carrying it, but my body's already feeling it. So it's just giving some added ways for my whole body to connect with it. So then I have a mind-body connection, is how I see it. Yeah.

42

Sometimes it's-- sometimes it's just the sense of it, yeah something has shifted and there's an easing, a change of breath, a space.... Those are, those are kind of common...

43

[her lovely cat appears over my shoulder] He likes to say hi to people sitting in that chair. Are you saying hi to Sarah? [laughs] Oh, you're funny! (He knows I like him.) He does! The tail goes right up in the air! (Hi!) So if that helps...

44

There's definitely in the felt shift--I think it may come different ways for different people but for me it's often in that body posture. If I'm sitting, I'll shift.

S: I'm so interested in the after effects that you described? That it not only impacted the specifics of how you were thinking about that situation but... it also sounds like it was with you in a much more global sense.

45

Ila: It frames—it redirects my whole attention, my whole... ah...I think it must inform my whole way, my whole being. I think it must work at the nerve endings, it must work at the—all these different levels of um conveying information—sensory and otherwise, perception—all of it. And I'm not a scientist or anything but I think—it feels like it

really is a whole body experience and it really does shift things in a whole way and I don't have the science for it, I have the sense in my body of what it's experiencing.

45.5

(Yeah.) Yeah. And my mind doesn't ... my mind holds things—the whole experience differently, I think, in terms of where I then move through the day. Somehow my whole mood, my whole mind frame is different. I'm in a different place. I'm walking with a different... way of being... There's more space in me. There's more possibility. There's more energy... there's... I don't really know the word for it, what the more is. But there's something that...

46

[7 sec inhale, exhale]...I'm trying to just get a sense of where I am now, just to let you know because it's been hours after. Where am I now? ...21 sec... I don't know how to put it, the words, Sarah, but it's still there. This space, this sense of...and my breath, all of that's still there. And even if I think of something that's... I'm not thinking about it in the same way. My body's not holding it in the same way. I can go back to the tension, because of course this is a long standing pattern, yeah, so (you've had a lot of practice)... it isn't like it's magic, it's not like it's not gonna come up again for me. And I know that. But I *also* know *now* that I have a different sense that I can go back to.

47

And my guess is if I—especially because this is something that's long standing and it seems to be something my body is probably exhausted by, y'know, um, my mind and body... so...yeah, I probably would be good—in focusing there's a handle, you can go back to and you can bring it back. Even talking to you now allows it to come back—and to keep doing that over time I've never done a study of it, but it probably would be helpful. (mm) Um... and probably would be good for me to invite into the practice so I could try that and let you know what I experience in the next like week or two if I can just keep bringing it back.

48

(I'd be fascinated to know.) Yeah... how long it stays or what it morphs into or if I go back and focus with it what happens—will it take me somewhere else, so. I'd be happy to share that with you!

S: Well, if it occurs to you, you've got my contact information and email so, um... I really appreciate you sharing that experience and it's really nice that it was a recent one because you really were able to track through it nicely. I like to ask everyone for permission, when I'm transcribing, if I get confused or I'm not sure if I could call or email.

49

Ila: Sure! Well, I did the best I can!

S: Sure, well part of the challenge is the verbalization in that moment and then remembering for another person is, I realize, a real challenging question. So. Um, I appreciate the sense of adventure and willingness to go with it!

50

Ila: It's interesting...I'm a mind person so for me to have learned focusing, it isn't something that came easily to me to understand my body and what it conveys. I mean it's very easy for me to live apart from that whole sense of things.

51

And yet... I think I managed over time, y'know, more and more to understand the power that our bodies have. When people say you can heal yourself, I don't know if I can go that far- y'know like everything? You could heal everything? But I think that there are things that are maybe... don't fully understand about what that body-mind connection really can do. (yeah). It's like opening a door.

S: I think we're on a frontier...

52

Ila: Right! But it's fascinating to look at modalities like focusing and just see and... something I do firmly believe is that life wants to move forward and gene gendlin works from that same point—life carrying forward. And our bodies are always wanting that life to move forward as well. Y'know and so the beauty to me in focusing is no matter how hard a topic can come up, and um tears and y'know everything else, can bring a distance from it so you can really be with it and comfortably... something scary, like I've had spiders that were really yucky looking up here, and I was like where are you coming from?! My body? Um, the beauty of all of those kind of things is that life is trying to express itself in some way and it's trying to move forward.

53

And to ... to trust that... um, just with my head... I could say sure, but y'know it didn't do a whole lot for me. It wasn't until I really did learn that if I kept working this I could work with my body and that's when I started...

54

and I think companioning helped. It helped me to stay in my body. It helped having somebody there to remind me or just to repeat something back and it also helped me to um understand what the waiting meant and that it wasn't a quick thing, and it wasn't something you could kind of gloss over: "Yeah ok I get you and now we're moving on to... what's next?" Y'know my mind so easily could move onto the next thing and away from that so it had to learn to—to wait. To sit with it, that it really mattered.

55

Sometimes things would go away. (When you sat and waited?) Yeah. Y'know they'd disappear. It wasn't the right time. I wasn't sitting with it quite the right way. I didn't get it. Uh, there was a time when I had a little part of me uh was just really angry—

y'know just like, “You’re never there! You never pay attention to me! So why why why am I goin’ sit here with you right now? You want me to come sit with you? You want to come sit with me? Hello!! Where have you been the last 50 years!?” y'know, that kind of thing. (Aw.) Um, so, y'know when you get something like that, it’s like “oohkay. I get you. I get that.”

56

And then there’s the resistance pieces that come up. Um, I don’t have them a lot but um... what’s an example of that?...Hm...I don't know something.. my mind comes in and I don’t want to look at something. I don’t want to really do that. And then it’s, “Oh, okay. My mind is telling me it doesn’t really want to deal with this, doesn’t really want to feel this, doesn’t want to take time for this.” Whatever it is, and um “okay. What is it like to just sit with that? To just sit with the part of me that does...” cause you know there’s a part of me then that says “I don’t want to do that,” What does it have to tell me? What does it have to say? (mmm). And sometimes, by looking at that then I can come back to the other part (mmhmm) y'know, eventually. (That needs some attention before... there’s a reason that it doesn’t want you to...) Yeah, Mmm-hmm.

57

And that little part that wanted to run in me—the part I was kind of holding under my right arm--at one point I told my companion cause she said, “Is it still there?” “Yeah, it’s right here,” I said, “I’m just kind of holding it.”

57.5

Well I don’t want it to go away, I’m just not ready to deal with it right now, but at some point it would be good for me to go back in the next few days and really sit with that part. Y'know? What were you afraid of? What was—y'know—what were you concerned about? Or what were you wanting? What was so important? Y'know maybe it wasn’t any of that, maybe it was something else. Yeah.

58

And sometimes I think I can go back and sometimes I can’t. In all honesty, sometimes I can’t. It would be nice to say yeah I can easily go back all those times—go back to anything—sometimes yes, sometimes no.

S: Yeah. Well- in what sense would it be nice ? I mean, it seems like maybe there’s some meaning in that you can go back to some and not to others, and—

59

Ila: Well, life keeps moving forward so sometimes you just say OK, y'know, when it’s important again it will come back up. It’ll surface. Maybe in a similar way, maybe in something new. Yeah, but it’ll come back.

S: It’s such exciting work and it’s really wonderful to hear.

60

Ila: Well I hope that's helpful. I didn't mean to kind of go off...

S: It is, and... I'm just thinking about whether there are other follow up questions I'd like to ask about this particular experience before I turn off the microphone. I guess all I can think for now is to ask if you want to just check and see if there's anything else from that experience today that didn't come up or...

61

Ila: Yeah, let me just check, Sarah, that's good...39 sec...

62

There was a place where I just get teary for a tiny bit and that's what I'm just trying to take a minute to... go back to it and see where that was, if I can...13 sec... I think it may have been—just around the time of the feeling, so when I was talking about y'know I couldn't actually—my hands started pulling apart and... I could feel it in my jaw that's when the sense of that in my body of the emotion came up with it I think, for a few seconds there of just... (mmm) yeah of this is just really intense and real. And if it didn't come up there, then the other thing that occurs to me is somewhere in the place in me where I'm tired, I'm tired—that also happened so there may have been one or both of those areas a little touch into the emotional piece as well, yeah. So that's if that's helpful...

S: Yeah (yeah). There was something about both of those places that seemed to dip down a little bit into some intensity...

63

Ila: Mmhmm. Mmhmm. Yes. Exactly. Yeah... And everyday's different. I've focused with my partner usually over the phone but today we were working together so I was working with her in person so... what was different – when I was talking earlier about people on the phone versus in person is I realized I had an actual person sitting with me. It wasn't that I don't ever have that. I attend changes groups and um... I teach at them and work with different people doing focusing um... but there's something about—both of us said—there's something about um...when you work with somebody focusing on the phone, there's a certain level of...um... like you learn a way of connecting. And in focusing you're already connecting on a level of the person that is different than sitting with somebody having a conversation any way. There's a certain way that they know you, a certain openness or developing... there's access—they have access to parts of you that nobody else would see and you probably never sit and talk about in a conversation.

64

And so sitting today—both of us said in different ways—it was interesting cause we—it's been a while since we, um, focused in person. Probably a good 6 months or something? So maybe 8 months? I mean it's been a while, and yet, we do so much over the phone. There was something about the ...presence of the body actually for a moment was like in the way—it was like, I know this person on a whole different level or maybe there was

even a vulnerability, um... but just for a moment I had to like—when I started—I had to kind of just like, “Ok ____, um... it doesn’t really matter whether it’s on the phone or not. Your eyes are closed. You recreate the same—“

64.5

and yet there was a knowing that I actually had the person sitting there, seeing like my whole physical being. My whole—reactions, my emotions. Even though sometimes I’ll talk about them on the phone, something different with that. And yet, there was also a sense of...of a fuller presence. Like that person was fully present for you—not just accessible by voice, so that person *could* see all those things. So both sides, but an interesting difference. So I think it made it maybe took me a bit to get into this session today, too, because of that, which was interesting. I don’t know if that’s in your research or not

S: Well, yeah, in terms of the the set up of that instance and um... I think...most of the people I’ve talked to have been over the phone—have really relied—descriptions of focusing over the phone.

65

Ila: Yeah, and it’s just—it’s different. I noticed when I companioned with her, I still closed my eyes like I often do over the phone, so it wasn’t really different in a way but there were a few times when I opened my eyes and thought, “Oh! I can see the whole person here!” I didn’t need to; I felt like I was seeing her the same either way because I like to companion largely with my eyes closed. But there is um... I think I say that because there’s a certain way that I can be present with somebody when my eyes aren’t leading. I’m not looking for visual cues; I’m not letting my mind really. I’m—I’m present more as a whole body level. With my eyes closed.

66

And, and yet it was nice a few times to actually y’know open my eyes and see I have this whole being I’m keeping present for. And I can see her expressions and just sit with her on a different level. So there were times I could do both. And it was like, “Ah! That’s kind of nice!” So those are, I think, the interesting things of today’s focusing. So I hope that helps you.

S: Thank you so much for sharing.

end