

HELP FOR HELPERS

Monday, May 13th 2024

8:15 — 9:45



An Introduction to “ Real Time ” Focusing and the Playful Practice of Presence-Audio

with Michaël Hébert

and everyone who would kindly like to participate

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The Murmuring Flight of Starlings



Watch : https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=V4f_1_r80RY

***“There are no teachers ...
there are only people learning
and people learning how
to facilitate learning.”***

Moshe Feldenkrais

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The Captain ! Rowing within a raging storm.... with a smile !

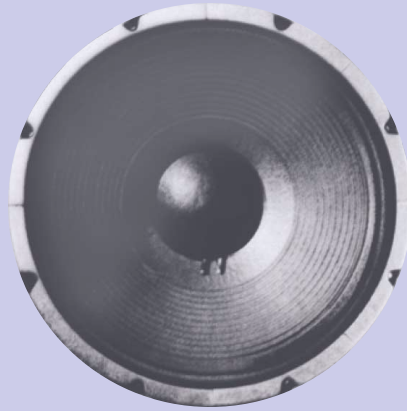
*The essence of working with another person
is to be present as a living being...*

*The first thing you have to know is that
there is somebody in there, and that you have to wait
for that " person," that being in there,
to be in contact with you.*



Eugene Tovio Gendlin
from “ The Primacy of Human Presence ”

SUGGESTED MEETING SCHEDULE



- 8:00 - 8:15 : Informal arrival
- 8:15 : Roundtable : What are we arriving with
- 8:25 : Presentation — Q & A
- 8:40 : Attunement
- 8:50 : Connection Room — Presence Practice
- 9:00 : Meeting with the Stimulus in presence
- 9:05 : Sharing 1
- 9:25 : Presence-Audio
- 9:30 : Sharing 2
- 9:40 : Closing Poem
- 9:45 : Voilà !

“ The greatest traveler is not the one who has circled the world ten times, but the one who has circled himself once. ”



“ Be the change you want to see in the world. ”

Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi,

HELP FOR HELPERS

*An Introduction to “ Real Time ” Focusing
and the Playful Practice of Presence-Audio*

1

PAUSE, PRESENCE AND LISTENING

Listening to oneself

At the start of this learning, nothing more will be asked of you than to be silent and to listen. It's about taking a break from the usual hustle and bustle of life.

First listen to **what is going on inside you**, as you would listen to a friend.

For this act of inner listening :

- Pay attention to **what is happening inside you**
- Bring your attention to the center of **your** body
- **Observe** (sense, feel) and recognize what is there
- Allow yourself to **stay present** to what is manifesting within you

Listening to “ others : being aware of our felt sense while interacting with a stimulus)

When you know how to go into your own inner space, you can listen to someone else.

We then say that you offer your « presence » to this person.

I want to start with the most important thing I have to say : The essence of working with another person is to **be present as a living being**. And that is lucky, because if we had to be smart, or good, or mature, or wise, then we would probably be in trouble. But, what matters is not that. What matters is to be a human being with another human being, to recognize the other person as another being in there. Even if it is a cat or a bird, if you are trying to help a wounded bird, the first thing you have to know is that **there is somebody in there**, and that you have to wait for that “ person, ” that being in there, to be in contact with you. That seems to me to be the most important thing (Gendlin).

In order to create a space for listening to others :

- Clear your inner space by putting down your thoughts and concerns next to you in order to be open, without ulterior motives and without expectations towards the other.
- Put aside all your preconceived ideas in order to really pay attention, with a new look at what comes from the other.
- Take the time to see if there is anything in the path that is stopping you to have good contact with the world in general or with this particular person you want to listen to.

When you take your first steps in the type of listening that we practice in Focusing, two instructions are particularly important. They will allow you to remain present to what is happening, **presence** being an essential quality for the deployment of listening and Focusing processes:

- **Pay attention to your body and your breathing by being aware of the signals that your body sends you at each moment.**
- Stay with the words of the person you are listening to, a bit as if you were their custodian, as if the words were entrusted to you. (When there are no words, pay attention to gestures, attitudes, silences, which are another form of language emanating from the person.)

At first you will just listen... **simply listen and stay present**. You thus learn to listen from a deeper and calmer place that reflects your real felt experience while interacting with the person's experience, your attention and your caring curiosity.

¹ The content of this page was taken from *Diffusion Focusing Québec* « Basic Training Program Manual » (2016-2024) in « *Relational Focusing* », page 8 and 9. The content has been translated from French and slightly modified for the purpose of this meeting. <https://www.diffusion-focusing.org/doc/collectif-pei/focusing-relationnel-cours-de-base-2016.pdf>



Life goes on
regardless
of the
weather
and daily
events

PRESENCE ! — (The client's client) — Akira Ikemi (4:04 • Abstract)

(Video recorded in Germany in 2000 and published in 2009 on Youtube).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XBC8Zl0oCMA>

In his article “ The Client’s Client ”, Eugene T. Gendlin says that **the true client in a learning process is the client’s bodily felt sense**. The listener can respond to the focuser without access to either person’s bodily felt senses. Often, the focuser does not want to look at what he/she is carrying. The focuser will say, for example, that this discomfort is only fatigue and that by resting it will go away [*thus putting the “ response-ability ” on something other than ourselves*]. For the listener, it is possible to have an interaction that addresses both the focuser and their bodily felt sense. The listener will then say : “ I hear that you are tired and that you don’t want to go see that. ” At a certain point, the person who is listened to in this way begins to be more present to *what is inside them* and to be able to *interact with* what they are carrying (here is me, and there is that). The process then begins to happen on its own with the support of the listener.

Akira Ikemi (2:25) says that “ **HOW we relate** to another person **is a key element** of Focusing. ” A person who is listened to with **a quality of presence from the bodily felt sense** may forget the words that were said but will remember having been listened to. The focuser will sometimes be surprised to have opened up about such sensitive issues and will be led to believe that this type of support is a bit “ magical ”. But, according to Akira Ikemi, it is **presence** that allows this opening. The movement that occurs reconstitutes the experience of the person. According to Akira Ikemi, the two important elements of presence are : (1) **Listening from an open space**, (2) **Feeling within yourself** to that which is experienced by the other [from our own felt sense of self].

About Being Present

It is possible to BE present to yourself and to someone else at the same time. It is a conscious inner disposition. When one person speaks in a group, everyone offers their presence (*listening from their own felt sense*). In this type of listening, there are no comments on what is shared. *When a reaction arises within you, simply pay attention to your body’s internal signals. This reaction speaks about you and not of the other person.*

Guidelines for the practice of Presence-Audio

Real-Time Focusing — Silent listening, in partnership with our human nature

THE PRACTICE OF PRESENCE-AUDIO

The “ applications ” presented hereafter, proposed for “ inner ” listening and harnessed from a musical source, are part of a Somatic Practice of Presence complementary to the practice of Focusing. We will initiate this practice with specifically selected musical recordings. We will be doing this together to facilitate “ choice ” in directing our attention towards our bodily felt sense as a tool for “ listening ” to the vibrational frequency generated within ourselves, by ourselves (from memory). This frequency doesn’t really come from the “ outside musical stimulus ”. It arises from letting ourselves become embodied by the audible sounds and by witnessing the emergence of our direct, instantly felt, visceral reaction to the stimulus (***I hear with my ears, but I listen with my whole body, with my bodily felt sense***). I am not saying that this is the truth. I am just exploring and sharing an hypothesis I have been joyfully playing with.

QUESTION 1: The music track isn’t preceded by a title or information about it. Why is that ?

Any form of “ conceptual ” information, preceding the listening of the sound source, would only activate our rational attention (wanting to know) and therefore could very well trigger a reaction response before even having listened to the musical source (stimulus). To validate our focusing practice I felt useful to include, to have imbedded in it, some of Eugene Gendlin’s important considerations. One component of his is that **we move our attention towards a place of not knowing**, and let the “ knowledge ” arise from the lived experiential, directly from our own felt sense. Instead of securing ourselves beforehand, **we learn to trust, in real time**.

Let’s think about it : What could happen if, before we position ourselves for inner listening, we already knew in advance what the musical sound source was going to be ? Feel it now, it’s going to be from, let’s say : Guns & Roses... or Taylor Swift... or Rammstein... (are you already reacting) ?

Or, what if I told you that the style the musical sound source is : Jazz, Western or Speed-Metal ? This information, beforehand, would most probably (instantly) trigger an internal “ love-hate-neutral ” reaction on our part, linked to past experiences, influencing the not yet musical exploration to come. We would no longer be “ neutral ” (the innocence of a child), before listening. The idea thus conceptualized, this “ knowledge ” preceding listening, already induces a subjective coloring (which, for the purpose of this exploration today, we can consider as not being useful here). This is why there is no prior information. After all, isn’t Focusing a new way of listening to ourselves in a place where we do know... and by letting the “ words ” come from experience ? Let us therefore relinquish the prior temptation to want to know. Instead, let us playfully trust that our felt sense will deliver personal information, in contact with the stimulus, and make it our source of playful knowing !

A complement to Focusing

We can therefore imagine, having read to this point, that in this practice of “ Presence-Audio ”, there are at least two dimensions that can be explored, one being more subtle than the other, one that can facilitate a possible deepening of presence in our Focusing practice.

What arises and comes into focus from the musical stimulus

What we experience in our own intimacy, even when it is shared with another person, there is first of all the music itself, of course (in the “ way ” that we usually listen to music in our daily lives), often in the background, when we are busy doing something else (intelligent noise).

“ Life is what happens to you, while you’re busy making other plans ”¹

But, at the same time, as a Focuser, we recognize that there is “ In Vivo ” this place inside oneself that perceives this music and has it’s own felt appreciation of it (reacts to it). The “ reaction ”, which is specific and personal to us (and which has nothing to do with the stimulus itself, but has everything to do with our “ acquired relationship ” to stimuli), takes shape from our interpretative filters (our different parts), the very ones which have been educated and accumulated since our birth to this day.

This practice of “ presence ” is therefore a furthering opportunity allowing us to observe, with the subtle guidance our bodily felt sense, the reactive activity with which we color a stimulus, musical or otherwise (with our own viscerality²). At first, when we start listening, we are likely to think that we are hearing an audible musical piece “ outside ” ourselves (aka Gendlin’s “ Old Mind ” unit model posture separate from our “ Interaction First ”). This is partly true. The “ outside ” is *what we think* we hear, possibly with some certainty. But in fact, and at the same time, there is something subtler happening, a something we can choose to direct our attention upon, which could open us up to the unraveling a more important undercurrent.

In fact, the hypothesis suggested here for us to explore is that it’s our own “ reaction ” to the music that we are truly perceiving, not the music itself (here is a case of “ *Don’t shoot the Messenger* ”). The music that we think we hear, outside of us, is in fact mainly our inner, totally subjective, intimate, personal and educated reactive interpretation of it. This is what is original about this practice and which links it to that of Focusing (among others themes like our “ internal authorities ”).

We hear the music, yes, but the practice here is one of listening to the source of our self created feelings about “ it ”, in relation to “ the ” stimulus, so that it can teach us something new, even unsuspected, about ourselves.

QUESTION 2: What are the options and contexts for practicing Presence-Audio ?

- a) It can be practiced in solo, in a partnership (dyad) and in groups formats
- b) Without prior preparation, by just starting the music player & listening to a recording (as usual).
- c) After an attunement (body scan, meditation,...) for 5 to 10 minutes, before listening starts.
- d) Do (c) + “ Clearing a Space ” (15 minutes total) or a self-focusing (15-20 minutes)
- e) In partnership : After Focusing 20-30 min. Simultaneous music listening and then sharing.
- f) In partnership : Presence-Audio — 10 minutes gazing in silence without adding anything else.
 - f1-Then listen to music with eyes closed (see procedure below) ; With afterwards sharing.
 - f2-Simultaneous gazing and listening (for the duration of the recording)

NOTE : Make a first choice then try it out. At another time, explore several other options with multiple diverse stimuli (styles), in order to compare the resulting felt reactions.

¹ **Quote from :** John Lennon

² **Viscerality:** Which touches the being in its most intimate fundamental experience.

SUMMARY

The Presence-Audio exploration itself is therefore not that of a so-called “ musical ” or “ artistic ” appreciation. It is intended to be a tool, a means, to facilitate access to what on the surface is imperceptible to us, that is to say our reaction to a stimulus. Use this tool to go below the threshold of the rational surface (appreciate, understand, analyze, judge, categorize, etc.) so as to be able to access, initially, a more subtle and profound “ dimension ”, an alive dimension without words (from the felt sense “ murky ” zone).

Let this depth “ emerge ” by itself (as in Focusing), that is to say without any voluntary effort on your part. Just remain attentive to your physical sensations, immutably centered, with the “ camera ” directed towards yourself (not towards the music). Let it take the wheel and lead you towards an unpredictable destination, one that your mental activity alone would be hard-pressed to make you discover, or even incapable of conceiving.

Let yourself become inhabited by your feelings, images, thoughts, sensations... , in the physical body (take the position of the observer-witness of your own sensations, stimulated by the audible frequencies). It is suggested here to not do anything else. Become aware, if you are doing something else, which could be a possible interference to direct listening of your self.

If there are thoughts (and there will be), redirect your gaze and attention to your bodily sensations (directional breathing). Keep your ultimate and gentle attention on physical sensations only, without effort of will (this is the practice). Let the images come, possibly offering you clues as to the real source with which you are stimulating yourself. To explore further, then come and share your impressions in writing, drawing...

PRESENCE-AUDIO PROCEDURE (personal practice at home)

1. a) Before you begin, prepare your audio player and make sure you have downloaded and shared with your partner the mp3 intended for listening.

b) Choose an option for listening :

If solo, with or without preparation, start the audio as soon as you are available. Have a pen and paper close to you so that you can write or draw your impressions following the listening.

c) If in partnership (with gazing... the ultimate PA practice) :

2. Open your usual meeting platform (Zoom, Skype, FaceTime, Messenger) and select the large visual screen (pin your partner's image) so that you only see the face and eyes of your partner (your own image is either small or no longer visible).

3. Sit comfortably, with your partner, possibly in a seated position, erect, but relaxed and laid back.

4. Use a “ timer ” that says 10 minutes. Then, begin the gazing practice in silence.

5. After 10 minutes of mutual gazing in silence, partners turn off their own microphone and activate the play function on their personal audio device. Then, close your eyes and listen to what is moving within you while hearing the chosen musical recording.

6. Come together : Share, from your felt sense, describing the movement inside yourselves
Write or draw whatever comes to you after the sharing.

Movement is
Life ; Without
movement life is
unthinkable
Moshe Feldenkrais

Useful Quotes that can support our practices & explorations



Empty Yourself of Everything (clearing a space).
Let Your Mind become Still.
The ten thousand things rise and fall
while the self watches their return
(witnessing from the felt sense)

They grow and flourish, and then return to the source.
Returning to the source, is stillness, which is the way of nature.

Lao Tsu, Tao Te Ching



Philosophy begins with the understanding that you cannot simply observe or experience
and then report what you see, because how you conceptualize and symbolize
distorts your experience.

Eugene Gendlin



You need to stand again in your own experiencing... in your own felt ongoingness, which
is that intricate complexity inside of life... to put onto the world what hasn't been said
yet, that you are carrying from your particular experience.

Eugene Gendlin (from Thinking at the Edge)



Nothing is permanent about our behavior patterns , except our belief that they are so.
By reducing the impulse to succeed and focusing on the means
to achieve it, we learn more easily.

Moshe Feldenkrais



The intuitive mind is a sacred gift and the rational mind is a faithful servant. We have
created a society that honors the servant and has forgotten the gift.

Albert Einstein



If you will go [to the edge] with your awareness and stay there, or return there,
that is all it needs ; it will do all the rest for you.

Eugene Gendlin



If you want something you have never had,
you must be willing to do something you have never done.

Thomas Jefferson

