

Experiment 2 - Exploring spaciousness and grounding in Focusing practice: sitting with what's iterating, rather than with felt senses

1. Beginning Focusing

Enter into Focusing ...

... if you like, clearing a space ...

... if you like, exploring some issue or edge in a focusing way ...

As you are practicing, if something comes up that pulls you away from your experimenting, make room for it,

be gentle with it, ... let it be here, be kind to it, and, following your intuitions about what is helpful for you, help it to rest for the time being, invite it to be present with you as you go on with the experiment, or shift in whatever way feels helpful for you ...

Checking: How does moving forward, being led by the practice instructions, feel right now?

2. A figure / ground gestalt shift

Whenever you feel ready ...

... explore making a figure / ground shift within focusing, a gestalt flip, ...

... finding something which is background, because it is ongoing ... and ongoing, and ongoing, ...

take plenty of time here: treat this as an opportunity to get to know the underground or underpinnings or background of Focusing deeply, ... in ways that in Focusing practice we normally would not ...

Its also an opportunity to explore what we can see 'through' paying gentle, open attention to what is going on all the time in the background ...

In the spirit of "doubling": let yourself notice what you can freshly see 'through' or 'in' the ongoing pulsing, the ongoing flow ...

Some places where you might let your attention rest:

background feeling tones ...

... loving-feeling-insight-coming ... that is, the underlying sensuous joy in feeling felt knowing coming and felt shifting happening

....

... an underlying sense of spaciousness ... where before you might have felt a sense of strain or pressure, you may find you are feeling an undercurrent of (quiet, happy, ...) spaciousness, instead ...

... a sense of comingness, ... how all experience is coming, coming, coming, ... sometimes we feel able to relax, receiving insight after insight in our body's sensuous rhythm ...

... a background feeling of delight, or peacefulness, or stillness, ... sometimes our 'background' in focusing, the taste of space, is itself an ongoing joy ...

If you like, you can gently remind yourself there is no "ought" here: you can take up or set down experimenting in a relaxed fashion anywhen you like, following your sense of what feels helpful or forward for you ...

In Focusing, our practicing usually centres on being with our felt senses, and finding our ways forward ...

In this experiment we are letting that go, and shifting our awareness, paying attention to what is normally in the background: ongoing qualities of process, the feeling of being in a distinctive kind of space, the feeling of being a Focuser, ...

If you are listening to someone who is focusing in this way, be prepared for long silences, and remain gently present, gently with, allowing their silence, supporting them with your kindly undemanding presence ...

If you are being listened to, there is no need to say anything at all, ...

If you are familiar with meditation, you'll be familiar with the *kind* of focus we are pointing to here: its like an instruction to 'focus on your breathing' or 'rest in Presence of Awareness' ...: in meditation practices one is often asked to sit quietly with something ongoing. We are doing something similar here, but *our* focus is on sitting with what is quietly ongoing in *focusing* practice.

And, we are explicitly inviting being curiously aware of what comes through, or in, sitting quietly with ongoing pulsing or tones: being open to what might emerge, or open up, or come, in and through what seems regular and ongoing ...



ongoing presences ...

... resting in experiencing the 'space' we find ourselves in as we are focusing ... feeling its distinctive, alive presence as a medium in which we encounter ...

... resting in experiencing the distinctive kind of 'presence' we have, we are, as focusers, in focusing space, ... aware, oriented, centred, open, willing, ...

Staying with what is ongoing is "holding", being open and curious quietly is "letting" ...: they happen together, they are the one way of being with ...

3. Holding what's ongoing, and letting

With any ongoing feeling, make it the centre of your awareness allowing usual changes (like the comings of insights) to happen in the background in a new way ...

hold the feeling of spaciousness, comingness, loving-feeling-insight-coming, stillness, delight, Presence, ... and allow whatever wants to come through it, in it, with it ... to come

holding the ongoing, with a relaxed stillness ..., and *letting*

We are "holding" this (possible) registry constant - feeling the iterating, heeding the iterating - *allowing* a new experience of 'meaning', a new kind of 'space', or new kinds of insight, to fall out.

At first this gestalt shift may not be easy to sustain, because we are accustomed to continually moving forward in Focusing - allowing felt senses, Direct Referents, to shift, carry forward, bring fresh insight in *familiar* ways.

4. Gently receiving

Relaxing into what comes, gently receiving ...

Let the grounding, the underpinning, of your focusing process come clear to you

Enjoy, receive, learn ...

We may find that a new experience of how it feels to be a felt sensing being falls out,

... we may find we are experiencing ourselves as felt sensing beings as *such*, ... as beings whose process goes on and on, bringing fresh insights in fresh situations ...

If experiencing Delight-Wisdom-Stillness-Compassion-Ease-... comes, gently allow its presence, relaxing into its presence, savouring it ...

Comments

This experiment has its roots in a concept - "doubling" - to which Gendlin gives a central place in his account of the emergence of new forms of life in *A Process Model*. For Focusing practitioners, "doubling" is familiar in the transition from an unease or excitement, felt somatically, to a distinct "felt sense" with a handle (image, phrase, etc.). The unease or excitement is felt kinaesthetically (a tingling, a tightness, for example), it carries also what we might loosely call 'an emotional charge' - the *being* unease or excitement, and, in focusing process something new emerges: a felt understanding - a presence ("the felt sense") within in its own kind of space in which 'we' are present with it. The felt sense is not reducible to the excitement, any more than the excitement is reducible to the tingling. Companioning a felt sense *is* a kind of sociality, being social *is* a kind of behaving, behaving *is* a kind of tissue process, in this model of what our being-alive is. Each "is" here points to a 'doubling' that opens profound new possibilities, because with each layering a new kind of space becomes part of our experiencing.

Speaking of focusing, Gendlin writes:

"one both keeps the situation the same, and one also lets it change [...] Holding and letting sound contradictory, but are one and the same act, like a holding and waiting. [...] something [...] comes [...] of its own accord, but in a somewhat different space [...]" aPM p.233

Here, in this experiment, *part* of what we are doing is creating an opportunity for exploring a kind of "doubling" that Gendlin has *not* described: exploring ways in which focusing process can itself be experienced as iterating - as 'stopped' process - as a medium in which a new kind of 'signal' - a new kind of 'space' - might emerge. Nothing can be forced here of course: we practice by letting, but what makes it *practicing* is that we are also 'holding': keeping steadily aware of the ongoing-ongoing-ongoing-... and allowing whatever comes to come ...

