

## **“FOCUSING” - ENHANCING THE BODY MIND CONNECTION IN THERAPY**

### **Presentation by Jane Quayle on 1 December 2015 – reviewed by Juliana Triml**

On this evening Jane Quayle refreshed our memory of E. Gendlin's Focusing method for some of participants and/or she offered a new therapeutic tool to others. Each attendee received a 4 pages print-out describing Focusing and a list of references where more information can be obtained.

Although Gendlin's Focusing was formulated some decades ago, there is some overlap in the process with other body works/therapeutic paradigms. Jane commenced with brief overview of focusing modality and then most of time was devoted to experiential work, which was more explanatory than many words.

Focusing has elements of mindfulness, embraced by other therapeutic styles, in that the focus is on the body feelings and felt sense rather than cognition. Gendlin was member of Roger's Research and formulated Focusing through his studies of theories and therapies. He elaborated on Roger's "client is his/her best expert" while he formulated Focusing process/felt sense as body's language that is beyond words. Some may call this "a gut feeling" that is not unlike intuition but to a degree more accurate and less describable in words.

Jane tends to invite clients to do some experiential exercises rather than simply give instructions. During the process client may come into contact with uncomfortable material but there is no "right" or "wrong".

During the first exercise participants of the evening were invited to imagine some less pleasant or boring activity, and to notice their felt sense. Then we were invited to imagine or remember some pleasant activity and, again to notice our felt sense.

In the last part of the presentation Jane (as a client) and one of her students (to simplify ethical and confidentiality matters) gave us a demonstration about the way a session may be conducted. The topic of exploration was "What is satisfying about my work?" Jane's answer was "Empowering people to find a 'more satisfying' relationship with themselves and their world. She was then invited by her therapist to check her felt sense for the words 'more satisfying', and after some explorations Jane came up with 'a deeper and more whole' relationship with themselves and their world. When Jane was invited to check on her felt sense, she agreed that the words have a comfortable fit.

It has been noted that many clients, particularly those who were traumatized, abused etc. do not have a sensitive relationship with themselves, particularly their body. Focusing process enables the client to learn to trust their body and mind in a more harmonious manner.

In conclusion, there is often a good reason to disconnect the mind from messages that the body sends. We are all aware that 'fight or flight' is initiated by the sympathetic nervous system and, therefore, dealing with symptoms of anxiety purely on cognitive level is seldom very effective. Focusing facilitates the process in a gentle manner.