

## **So what is Focusing? (For people who don't know it yet.)**

**by Fiona Parr, FOT, BACP**

The practice of Focusing is very specific and precise, and yet the word 'focusing' has many meanings.

Here I am talking about Focusing as developed by Gene Gendlin, different from other uses of the word 'focusing.

It's easier for me to say what it's not.

It's not focusing your life.

Many times I have heard people say they need to get focussed. They may feel their life is all over the place, a bit chaotic, and they feel they need to learn how to bring some order, by focusing on one thing at a time.

It's not focusing as concentrating on something.

Such as when you might say, 'At the moment I'm focusing on writing my dissertation.

It's not focusing a camera lens, or a microscope, or binoculars.

It's not focusing your eyes, to see distance or near objects.

In Gendlin-type Focusing, it's very different.

It's about looking for and staying with the unclear edge of awareness.

For example, if you ever get a sense when you walk into a room full of people, that something doesn't feel right.

It all seems fine on the surface, and yet somehow the atmosphere is different.

You may find out later that there has been an upset or conflict that you were not aware of at the time.

All you knew was that you had a kind of uncomfortable feeling, or perhaps a hunch that things were not what you were expecting.

If you were to stay with the vague sense of unease, more information would come to you.

You would be able to identify some of the subtle signals you were unconsciously picking up on.

You might be able to say to yourself, 'Of course, that's what it was. No wonder I had those uncomfortable feelings.'

You are becoming aware of how your body is responding and interacting with your environment.

Even if you don't find out that there was a conflict before you arrived, it helps you to settle into the meeting if you give your uncomfortable feeling a few moments of attention.

If you acknowledge to yourself exactly how it is feeling.

You can take care of yourself by putting a gentle hand on your stomach, or wherever it is that you have that feeling.

In our culture, we are expected to know what it is we are feeling, or what we think about something, and be able to say it.

So it's unfamiliar to give attention to what in us is unclear.

However, there is great value in doing that.

If you are patient, and listen closely to what in your lived experience is unclear, partly known and partly hidden from you, more reveals itself to you in surprising ways.

Something emerges from what is unclear, that brings fresh insight, a new way forwards, or deeper self-understanding.