

A Remarkable Focusing Session with Pain from Severe Physical Damage

by Bev Stevenson

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I was contacted recently by a lady who had heard that Focusing can be effective with pain. She said that she had no idea what Focusing was and that she was contacting me because she had seen something I had written, claiming stress and pain relief as one of the benefits of Focusing.

When I told her I considered these to be side benefits, she sounded rather disappointed. What she was looking for was a method or treatment to help her deal with the pain that resulted from a severe injury to her foot. She told me she has been living in constant pain for eight years and had undergone surgery to remove some foot bones and staple others together. She had been told the only option to deal with the pain was a series of nerve blocks. As the first nerve block was only effective for four weeks and required a general anesthetic, she was not prepared to go ahead with that. Her medications were costing \$800 per month.

As she spoke, I got the feeling that some Focusing sessions would at least enable her to be in a calmer place with all of this. So I said I would see her as long as she was clear about one thing-that I had no idea how effective it would be with pain from physical damage, and I would prefer if she could be open to just letting her process guide us even if it didn't seem to be totally about the pain.

We arranged a time to meet the next day. As I sat across from her, she told me a little more about how this injury had changed her life, from being a very active person who loved to go on

long walks with her husband to someone who feels exhausted after vacuuming one room and who is forty pounds overweight. She told me that at one point, a clot from her foot traveled into her lung and caused life threatening complications. There were tears with that.

Because I sensed her need to tell her story right off in one piece, I didn't get to tell her anything about Focusing...and at the end of the tears, it seemed just right to start there. I explained I was going to invite her to notice how she felt in her body right now and that maybe we would use this first session to begin to get acquainted with her inner world and the process of Focusing. I recall saying something like, "Rather than making dealing with the pain our goal, let's see if we can be open to anything that wants our attention including the pain."

So, the session began. First, an awareness of the pain-two kinds-the bone pain, like a white hot poker stuck into the bone and twisted. The burn pain, like the worst sort of burn but under the skin. As that was acknowledged, she felt a clamping in the throat, a feeling like being choked. When she sat with that, it shifted to a prick in the forehead, then a pushing up from where the prick was felt. A feeling like mercury going into the head through the forehead and pressing down from the top of the head-inside the head. This was an OK feeling. At the same time, there was an awareness of a pin-pricking energy jumping and zigzagging back and forth in the left lung and around the heart. This was a 'mischievous' energy—a 'gremlin'.

Then there was a greater awareness of the pushing pressure of the mercury. Suddenly, she described it as going down a tube—whoosh!—to the base of the trunk. Then it followed the exact path of a clot which had traveled from her leg to her lung years ago. It followed the same path backwards.

When the ‘mercury’ reached her damaged foot, it stretched out and wrapped around the foot. As this was taking place, she suddenly started shaking her head and saying “I don’t believe this, the burn pain-I always knew the burn pain was the worst.” Then her eyes popped open and they were as round as marbles. I was having a quiet heart attack, but I said as calmly as possible, “You’re noticing something about the pain.” “Yes” she said “The burn pain is disappearing!”

I invited her to stay with that and let it know how much she appreciated the change and just be there with all that. The bone pain became less severe. By this time, she was sooo excited she couldn’t settle any longer, so we ended the session there. The Focusing part of this interaction consisted of about thirty minutes.

As we sat, both of us filled with awe, taking in all that this meant to her and having a cuppa, she noticed the rest of the burn pain had gone and there was a feeling like it had been replaced by an ice pack.

Well, that was five weeks ago. After that session, I suggested it might be good to follow up with at least three more sessions so she could learn how to attend to herself in a Focusing way. She has only felt the need for one more session so far and is managing beautifully. Most of the time she is free of both types of pain.

Today, she told me more fully just how this has impacted her life. Most of the time now, she is sleeping right through the night. Before, she could only manage two hours at a time. There has been a gradual decrease in weight, about a pound a week. The foot does not swell now—before the sessions she could not get her shoes on most afternoons. She has reduced her medication intake to about one-fourth.

And maybe the biggest bonus of all, in her own words: “Before this, I was always wanting things to be different—I was very dissatisfied with my life and myself. Thinking about it, Focusing has made my life joyful. I just say, so what if I can’t do some things I used to do. I have a whole different perspective now.”

Having witnessed this, I feel I can still say—pain relief is a side benefit that can happen with Focusing...well maybe I can say a big side benefit.

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