

Wholebody Focusing

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Kevin McEvenue, from Canada, has brought together his skills both as a Focusing teacher and an Alexander teacher, and developed Wholebody Focusing. He discovered that within the body is contained the possibilities of its own healing. In this article I describe Wholebody Focusing, and how it applies to working with the experience of trauma, and to spirituality.

What is Different about Wholebody Focusing?

Wholebody Focusing is a development from normal Focusing, in that the Focuser consciously invites a sense of the whole body, grounded and present, and supported by the environment. (McEvenue 2002 p.12) This places the Focuser in a larger context than is usually experienced. A relaxation often happens here; not a slumping, but a coming into alignment and balance. Feeling supported, the Focuser's body may subtly grow taller. This is the starting point of Wholebody Focusing. There's a sense of wholeness, of the whole body, balanced and supported by the ground and the environment, which is very resourcing.

In Wholebody Focusing, the symbolisation of the bodily felt experience is often through movement. The Focuser asks if there is a posture, a gesture, a subtle movement, that somehow captures the quality of the bodily felt sense. Wholebody Focusing is a way of Focusing that awakens spontaneous inner-directed movement. (McEvenue 2002)

A Sense of Acceptance

An important aspect of Wholebody Focusing is to have an accepting, welcoming and non-judgemental attitude, especially to parts of myself that may be hurting, out of balance, or wounded. So there are three aspects for the Focuser to be aware of: the whole body, the parts that need attention, and the Focuser's sense of 'presence', that resourced place in me that can be with anything. (McEvenue 2002 p.10)

Consent

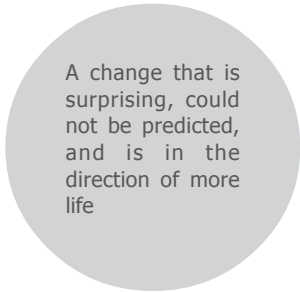
There is a crucial balance between **actively giving consent** for a movement to unfold, and **not making something happen**. The movement is coming from a place all of its own. The body contains its own wisdom, its own knowing of how it should have been, its blueprint of how it could be, if this were all resolved. (Gendlin 1981 p76). The Focuser is not trying to fix it and make it all better. He or she stays back from becoming too closely involved or immersed in the process, and maintains an attitude of 'interested curiosity' and a compassionate openness, making space for whatever wants to happen. (McEvenue 2002 p11, p15)

Body Parts Connect Up

The Focuser gives space for hurting places to be 'more', giving them all the room they need to experience just how it is for them right now. This might lead to them to connect up with other parts of the body, and the movement process develops. The Focuser finds that rarely does a body part operate in isolation. A whole complex dynamic begins to reveal itself. The Focuser gives active consent to the movement that is unfolding. It is being in a process of unknowing, and allowing the change process to follow its own dynamic. The Focuser is asking, what does my body know about this, that I don't?

The Role of the Companion

Although the central relationship in Wholebody Focusing is between a sense of the whole, and a sense of the parts that need attention, the role of the Companion is crucial to the whole process. As Companion, I support the Focuser by being present in my own body, aware of my ground and connection. The Companion's body becomes fine-tuned as a listener; able to respond to the subtleties of what the Focuser is experiencing. The Companion holds a large, compassionate, expansive space, supporting the Focuser in welcoming whatever comes.



A change that is surprising, could not be predicted, and is in the direction of more life

Wholebody Focusing and Trauma

Wholebody Focusing is particularly effective in releasing trauma because of its twin processes of starting from a resourced sense of the whole body, and because the body is already in movement. This creates a sense of safety. I can move away from what is too scary or difficult to be with. I experience myself as standing on my own two feet, and I have a choice. The movement helps me through a stuck place.

Contra-indications, and what to watch out for

It's important to make sure the Focuser is in presence, and can choose to stop if it is getting too uncomfortable. There

is also a need to discern if the movement is simply avoidance. Continuing to be grounded is helpful with this. It is important to watch out for dissociation, becoming bored, not feeling the aliveness or connection. Here the Focuser can ask how this whole thing is connected to my life story, or what else is alive here.

Both the Focuser and Companion need to feel they are safe. If the Focuser cannot take care of him or herself, Kevin McEvenue suggests coming out of the process. The Focuser is self-responsible, and the best way to take care is to 'find the feet,' as a simple reminder of the resourcing possibilities.

Wholebody Focusing and Spirituality

Wholebody Focusing has implications for deepening my experience of spirituality. It is through my body that I have access to a deeper reality, a broader context. Through my body, I experience my connection with all life.

Kevin McEvenue suggests that we can draw on this bodily felt connection with

our spirituality. Especially at times when I feel stuck and cannot resolve the situation, it may be helpful to ask, is there something in me that knows more about this than I do. I have seen people do this, and it brings about a change that is surprising, could not be predicted, and is in the direction of more life. McEvenue says, 'Wholebody Focusing is a way of accessing the body's awareness of its own wholeness. This sense of wholeness has an inner direction and a purpose all its own.' (McEvenue 2002). In this article I have shown how it is possible to allow healing and integration in directly felt positive ways through using Wholebody Focusing.

Further Reading

McEvenue, Kevin 'Wholebody Focusing' in *Dancing the Path of the Mystic* (Self-published monograph, 2002 Toronto)

van der Kooy, Addie 'My Experience with Wholebody Focusing' in *The Focusing Connection* (Focusing Resources September 2002)

Fiona Parr is an experienced Focusing Practitioner and Teacher who works in Devon with people who are committed to their own personal development and growth. She teaches Focusing both as a five-weekend independently run course and with adult and community learning organisations. She has a private practice with individual clients, a Practitioner Programme and she also offers practitioner mentoring and supervision. Fiona leads Focusing retreats in Devon and Cornwall, and special days and weekends on Focusing with movement and dance, Focusing and creativity, and Wholebody Focusing.

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