

Clearing a space : Gendlin's first step



Gendlin says, Clearing a Space:

“It is the time when you establish an environment of friendly feeling within yourself. You prepare to give yourself a fair hearing”. (Gendlin Focusing P79)

It has two purposes:

- To take an inventory of issues and feelings which are present in your life,
- To give you some space to breathe and simply be.

From there you are more able to give your attention to the most important thing for you right now. Or maybe you can just dwell in the cleared space for a while.

What are we doing when we are clearing a space?

We are acknowledging our issues and feelings and placing them aside for a moment.

We are not ignoring problems or trying to make anything go away.

- 1. Start by acknowledging whatever is present with you.**
- 2. Find a description for it then check the description... does it fit just right?**

[A description can be: a word, a phrase, an image, a colour, a body sensation, a metaphor, a sound... or something else.]

- 3. Then imagine finding the right distance between you and it.**

Some questions that help you to find the right distance.

Can you place it a little away from you?

For example:

On the floor beside you. On a shelf. In a filing cabinet. On the seat next to you.

If you are with something with a lot of energy in it, you might need something a little stronger.

Can you take a step back from it?

Can you put it on an island in the middle of an ocean?

Maybe ask in your body what feels like the right distance?

Don't force it; sometimes it might need to sit on your lap. Other times it might need to be

at the other side of the planet. It will tell you. (Adapted from Jane Quayle).

Clearing a space – Guided exercise and suggestions to do with your partner

These are guiding suggestions. If at any time they don't work for you allow your body to be your guide and stay with whatever is present for you. Simply acknowledge whatever is present for you and allow it to be just as it is.

Maybe you can allow your eyes to close so that you can pay better attention to your body. If you are not comfortable with closed eyes you might like to lower them.

Notice how your feet are making contact with the floor... Notice how your body is making contact with the chair... notice if its even on both sides .. what sort of pattern would it leave on the chair?

Now notice your breathing, observe your breath going in and out of your body.

Become aware of your body from the inside. Allow your attention to rest inside your body... In that area which includes your throat, chest and lower abdomen.

In a friendly, gentle way you can ask yourself, "*Is there anything in the way of me feeling really good*" or maybe "*What wants my attention now*" and if you become aware of something .. notice how the whole thing feels in your body, say hello to it. See if there is a body sensation, word, a phrase , an image, gesture, a sound, or something else, that seems to describe the whole of it. Or you might like to just say it back silently to yourself.

Then *check and see what would be just the right distance between you and it* you might imagine setting the whole issue with the feeling aside... perhaps on the floor in front of you, or on the chair beside you. Using whatever image or metaphor feels right to you. Checking where it might like to go. And if you find you can't set it aside, that's ok too. Just be with it in any way that feels right for you.

Allow your awareness to come back into your body and sense *and just see how it feels inside without that issue, maybe there's just a little more space.* Or perhaps you could ask your body "How would I feel inside if I didn't have that whole issue?"

Stay for a moment with the feeling that results from having found some distance from that issue... And now in friendly, gentle way, once more ask yourself [repeat]....

If you sense that nothing is standing in the way of your feeling all ok right now, then sense into whatever is there for you and spend some time becoming familiar with that.

Now bring your attention back into your body and sense *how it feels inside without those issues, maybe it's just a little clearer in there, maybe a little more space... perhaps lighter, warmer.... Maybe there's just a little more comfort or ease. Just notice how it is for you – whatever is there for you perhaps you could just notice it ... and welcome it if that feels right.*

Maybe invite a word, an image, a movement, a body posture, a metaphor ... or something else, which seems to capture the whole of how it is for you right now. You might like to check if you want to set that aside ... or perhaps you'd like to invite this to stay with you ...

We have taken some time here today to identify and place aside some of the issues of our everyday life, a little like unpacking a suitcase when you come back from a holiday. Some of things that you set aside may need some attention a little later. If there is something like that for you maybe let it know that you'll come back to it Gently bring your attention back into this room. Adpated from Jane Quayle