

Who came up with Focusing?



Philosopher and psychotherapist Eugene Gendlin noticed that people who do well in counselling could tell you how they feel. Not just “I feel sad”, but “I feel sad and it is like a lump in my throat” or “it weighs me down” or “it feels like a black cloud above me”. Gendlin developed a process that helps any one get in touch with their inner wisdom. This enables people to find a way forward for themselves. This is extremely powerful and helpful.

By learning to listen to the way your body feels, you can start to put yourself into a relationship with those issues separate from you rather than seeing them as defining you. It's as if the Focusing process puts the concerns outside of you so you can then work on your relationship to and with them. Although problems aren't necessarily solved, focusing can allow the focuser to feel and think that change is possible which is often such a critical breakthrough in its own right.

What is Gendlin's thesis and what does 'Implicit knowing', unfolding a 'felt sense' and finding a 'life forward direction' mean?

Understanding Gendlin's philosophical thesis around our 'implicit knowing' helps to clarify his ideas. Gendlin believes: “our body knows the way forward”, indeed it has an “implicit knowing” and an ability to move in a “life forward direction”, “to fill in the gaps, the needed and implied events that never happened, to heal ourselves, to know what is right for us”. When we feel something missing, there is a knowing of what is missing and what would bring forward movement often before we can explain or further understand it. Focusing can help make the implicit explicit. The fuzzy, preverbal intricate “something” comes into definition and expression (Gendlin 1996 pp 259 and 280, Weiser Cornell 2013, p 16).

Giving our awareness to something 'carries it forward'. Gendlin says, “what I call focusing is paying attention inwardly to that unclear sense of something there.

Focusing is a very deliberate way to touch something inside. I have seen that help the bigger process.....focusing is tiny and important where an 'I' is attending to an 'it'"(Gendlin, 1990, pp 205-224). As we keep the 'something' in us, (the 'it'), company, we can get a forward step and then a 'felt shift' and a physical sense of relief.