

The Focusing attitude

“The real shift in consciousness for me is to accept myself just the way I am in this moment. The doorway into change is the ability to be able to sit compassionately and empathetically with what is happening” (Kevin McEvenue Dancing the path of the mystic (2002) p 23)

“The focusing Attitude is that approach of gentle curiosity toward whatever you find inside: non-judgmental acceptance “(Gray 2009, p. 36)

“The process of focusing requires that we give up self blame and drop the judgment of our feelings, our injuries and human failings.....When we can adopt the Focusing attitude we can begin to see our problems, inadequacies, our failings and our pain without blame as a natural part of our human condition. This is the beginning of healing through self empathy and self forgiveness” (Gray 2009, p. 89)

The most essential aspect for successful Focusing is creating a positive attitude, inside of yourself, for whatever might arise during a Focusing turn. This is the focusing attitude (Macquire, pg 44 from Gray and Marder editors).

“With more experience of (focusing) process steps this friendly inward attitude becomes easier. With repeated experience one comes to know that what appeared negative contains positive life energy that is only twisted or blocked. One comes to expect it to change its form as it is carried forward in further steps. So one can prepare to feel friendly toward the feeling before it opens.” (Gendlin Focusing Oriented Psychotherapy p 56)

Focusing both requires from us and develops in us an attitude of friendliness and care towards ourselves.

In all my experience as a psychiatrist and as a human being the deepest and most pervasive pathology I have seen is the incredible harshness we have towards ourselves (Gerald May, Simply Sane).

Embedded within our culture is an attitude of judgment and mistrust of our feelings and emotions. We judge and categorize feelings as good / bad, positive / negative.

If we take a Focusing attitude to our feelings we can view them as spontaneously arising in response to our situation. They are there to tell us something about our life.

It is important to differentiate feelings from actions and behaviors. We have choice over our actions and behaviours.

Key components of the Focusing Attitude: (Rappaport, 2009, pp. 27-278)

- **Welcoming** – letting all parts of us know they can come as they are and we will say “Hello”
- **Being Friendly to-** if the felt sense is eg scary, Can you just be friendly to it
- **Keeping company with-** to have a relationship with your inner self – there is an “1” (you) and an “it” part. Just be with “it” as witness and also be in touch with “it” eg like you would with a child
- **Friendly curiosity-** be interested in “it” and curious about what it is all about