**ZIGZAGGING INTO EXPANDED POSSIBILITIES FOR FOCUSING**

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Note: The [original version of this article](http://www.serviceoflife.info/focusing/zigzaggingfolioarticle.htm) contains references to radiophysics and epigenetics, then suggests ways that these can be used an analogies to expand the practice of Focusing. This version omits most of the science references, and has been further streamlined and edited for greater clarity. Footnotes are indicated by the small numbers within the text. They refer to [further commentaries available online](http://serviceoflife.info/focusing/foliofootnotes.html) .

0. Summary of ideas offered here

- felt-sensing is a directional process, which can be intentionally attuned into various areas

- mental models and belief systems can guide the sensing-into, and the transmitting of, energies and ideas

--this combination of mental models and belief systems, could be termed a "reflecting system" that we "focus into".

- the choice of reflecting system shapes process and outcomes

- through the combination of intention and bodily-felt connection, we can influence much smaller (cellular) and larger (social) systems than we may have imagined.

I.Starting with a particular definition of Focusing

A definition of Focusing that makes helpful distinctions, and will set the stage for this paper, was articulated by Bruce Gibbs. Quite a few processes contact and work with felt-senses – but not usually in the same way as in Focusing. In order to understand this better, he distinguishes three levels of relating to felt-sensing:

a) Contacting a felt-sense: Something in the body that has meaning, which is not yet clear in

the mind. This level brings felt-sensing into awareness, but does not prescribe what kind

of relationship one has **with** the felt sense – one may push, ignore, or manipulate felt

experiencing.

b) Mindful Awareness: Bringing mindful, loving attention (compassion and/or

interested curiosity) **to** felt experiencing. Just being with felt experiencing in an open,

accepting, connecting manner.[1](http://serviceoflife.info/focusing/foliofootnotes.html)

c) Focusing: Focusing can be described as **a zigzagging and a checking** – offering

mindful loving attention (“mindful awareness”), **between** felt experiencing **and** the

symbolic, the conceptual, continually **checking** with the body for rightness or fit.

II. Pointing our sensing into new areas

“*To do the impossible, one must be able to perceive the invisible*.”

Directing an antenna to find a signal often involves pointing it in a certain way. *Sensing-into* is sensing *in, to* something– some particular direction, *in to* some particular something.[5](http://serviceoflife.info/focusing/foliofootnotes.html)

In Focusing, felt-sensing is often considered to be a neutral process. In part, this is because one of the ways of “going in” is very open-ended. For example, as Focusers we are taught that we can ‘go in’ with a very general question, such as “what is wanting my attention today?”

Of course, we also know that we *can* choose to ‘go in’ with a specific question, and invite a felt sense about *that*. Yet it’s not often recognized that even when we are going inside with an open-ended invitation, that invitation is often still patterned by our existing beliefs and assumptions.

Those existing beliefs and assumptions not only color and shape our “open-ended” Focusing invitations, they also tend to constrain our sense of possibility, of what we can choose to intentionally “sense into”, when we are doing the second, more directed form of “going inside”..

I first became aware of the enormous possibilities for using directed Focusing to *attune and develop our felt sensitivity in new ways*, during a workshop on “Focusing and Architecture” offered by Ellen Kirschner.

After an introduction, participants were encouraged to 'sense in a Focusing way' into various architectural qualities, such as space and design, and then to share with the group what they were sensing.

Each person both did **his or her own** **sensing** – and, he or she **also had the opportunity to hear and resonate with what others were finding** through their own felt-sensing inquiries.

We appreciated the rapid learning as we **developed a new sensitivity to (and capacity to articulate)** what had been a completely new area for some of us. We had just acquired a new ‘felt-sensitivity’!

We also realized that the process we had used led to a more **rapid understanding** and a **greater depth of connection** with the subject than any one person could have developed alone. This format could serve as a model for teaching **how to expand what one can sense-into.**

As we examine this process more carefully, we may notice some of these elements present:

- Being clear about what it is, that one is wanting to learn to consciously sense into (**directing** the antenna)

- A setting where one can get **direct experience and feedback from others who have content mastery** (having something to align to) . In this case, Ellen was part of the group, offering her own feedback to the participants.

- A co-sensing system, synergistic group process is used. Each observation or suggestion or concept is allowed to resonate within and between members. Each offering is taken in to see what is evoked in response, just as we would "take in" a reflection that someone offers us in Focusing.

These insights suggest a valuable use of the Focusing process. Focusing can be used to help people learn more fully and deeply from others who have acquired particular skills and sensitivities in almost **any** field.

For example, one painting instructor may be finely attuned to subtleties of contrast, another to shading, and still another to perspective.

One therapist may be highly attuned to the sense of internal connection a person has to him/her self, another to the attachment dance between a couple, and another to the object relations.

This Focusing-compatible process can accelerate our own learning of and sensitivity to these qualities, especially when we are able to explore this in a supportive cooperative setting, such as the architecture workshop described earlier.

Yet sometimes the individual themselves might not be able to fully articulate their own attuning and felt-sensing process. How then, might we learn from these individuals' highly developed gifts?

We might begin by intentionally inquiring about, and/or sensing-into, a particular person’s perceptual gifts, to develop a sense of what they are tracking and connecting with in their work. We can resonate what comes with that person’s own experience of what they are doing, and with our experience of what we are noticing from our perspective – zigzagging between outer observations and inner felt-sensings, checking for better and better fit….

From the perspective of **teaching** Focusing, it could be helpful to expand the content of our current Focusing trainings to include learning how to discover what it is, to which a master practitioner in a particular field or practice is attuning. In other words, we want to be able to discover HOW a particular person is using their natural felt-sensing process, regardless of whether they have formal training in Focusing or not.

III. Attention, permission, and mental models

As conscious beings, we have the potential to influence some old and habitual processes.

New or unexpected information may be considered as ‘background noise’ and not be registered consciously. Our filtering mechanisms run akin to software programs~~,~~ on autopilot. If we are not aware of something existing, or if we believe that something is not possible, then energy and information actually coming to us from those areas may not make it to our cortex – or be registered in awareness – unless the signal is strong enough to be registered *above the filters* we have.

If felt sensing can be pointed like a directional antenna, what shapes the direction of our transmitting-into, and receiving-from? (see illustration on next page)

We can stop, notice, and become aware that there are other possibilities, and then attempt to connect with them.

We can then select, or search for, something else.

Analogous to a radio, we can **choose to change channels to another frequency that we are already familiar with**...

or… we can hit the ‘search’ button, **and sense into a more open field** of what is out there, scanning until something registers on our sensors, and we begin to tune-into it.

It is important to also be aware of **the key role of the pause** in this process. Pausing allows a stepping back from a presently operating pattern and making space for allowing a different one to occur.

FACTORS THAT ENCOURAGE SHIFTING OF HABITUAL PATTERNS

Stop the habitual -

pause,

offer a different perspective,

shift brainwave frequency

offer novelty or surprise

Increase strength of intention

RELEVATION

Attunement. Point out a direction to sense -into

Increase mindful awareness

Increase identification of the signal by feeback: reflecting and co-sensing

Increase the strength of the signal

Increase sensitivity

Free up limiting beliefs – give permission and information

I appreciate Tom Atlee <http://co-intelligence.org/> introducing me to the term ‘relevation’ – how making something more relevant helps call it forth into occurring. I have heard it described as an **elevation of something that is implicit, to more explicit manifestation depending on relevance to the depth of need that is present.**

Another way to help us search or direct our attention into ways beyond the habitual is through the use of ideas – such as a model or theory. These can also offer encouragement and permission.

Giving permission or welcome may bypass limiting beliefs that might hold one back from sensing into particular directions, or from registering ‘what came’ when doing so. Permission and acceptance also may encourage sensing into areas that were habitually unrecognized.

An example of this comes from Treasure Maps to the Soul Focusing. If we are aware of really wanting to do something (write an article, for example) but feel that we cannot, feel blocked in some way, **this model presupposes the existence of a part of us, presently out of our awareness,**  **that does *not* want to do that very thing** (write the paper).

Asking~~,~~ and then sensing inside, if such a part exists, often connects us with a very powerful dynamic , something new that we were not aware of previously while operating in our habitual Focusing manner.

(In this case, the habitual pattern is being overly identified with one part of an opposed pair of wantings, and not sensing the other.)

As another example,,.. I have always been interested in how people have learned to become “intuitive”. When I ask the intuitives I have met over the past 25 years, many of them have given me the same response:

“A workshop, (or a teacher) gave me permission to be intuitive. Then we were encouraged to practice, and got better at it.”

In those cases, the mental model that offered permission was: “Becoming intuitive is possible. And, you have the capacity to do so.” The participants’ ensuing experiences in the workshop support the results of their operating from that belief.

While other factors are also at play (a supportive group, sharing percepts in a co-sensing environment, self-selection bias of attendees) possibility and permission are crucial elements.

IV. Roles of beliefs and attitudes in shaping flow of energy and information

While we often hold the realms of thinking and feeling as quite separate from each other, “mental models” – beliefs, concepts, and ideas - do influence our sensing.

Focusing is often so useful in getting past certain types of stuckness, that it is easy to lose sight of the fact that **sometimes the life-forward step in certain situations is a change in the conceptual –** into anew perspective or understanding. Sometimes a ‘knowing’ is what can carry us forward.

Just as we have habitual ways of thinking, we also have habitual ways of feeling, and habitual ways of felt-sensing. Sometimes, when we pause to notice, we can identify the situation or remember a concept (“That sounds like a critical voice”, or “I feel way shut down – I wonder if some shame is here”, etc.) that gives us another way to frame things, another way to relate to our experiencing, so that we can *be with it* and *interact with it* more spaciously and constructively.

This conceptual change can help us find ways to shift out of being too caught in something, too close to it; on the other end of things, it can also help us connect with felt-sensings that might otherwise be too distant for our previous sensing modes to detect and connect with.

Aligning with an idea can help us connect with the life-forward-movement that **we may not be able to feel, but that we can know** must be there. If we become aware of the possibility of something existing, and are offered cues or guidelines, then we may be able to *make sense of our sensing,* so to speak.

As an example of the roles that beliefs and attitudes play in shaping flows of energy and information, I would like to point to a few of the worldviews/mental models regarding illness and suffering.

a) Illness is caused by a biological or chemical imbalance or aberration (machine model, common in Western medicine).

b) Being sick means that something is defective inside of you (very old, shame-based worldview. Sadly, this has mutated into a new variation, the “New Age Guilt Trip”… “If you can’t heal yourself from your dis-ease, you must be really messed up!”)

c) What happens to us is the result of Fate. It is destiny, and we can learn to deal with it (a fatalistic worldview).

d) Illness as understood through the lens of the Buddhist Four Noble Truths, which describe the truth of suffering, its causes, and cessation.

e) Dis-ease comes from being out of balance; there are ways of regaining balance… (many holistic modalities). Some are more prescriptive, and others more allowing and listening-receptively based~~)~~

f) Who you really are is fundamentally good. Your distress is just your stuff, and you are not your stuff. After emotional discharge, you can think more clearly. (Re-evaluation counseling and others).

g) Your distress is some aspect of Life singing a song of something it wishes to become, some way it wishes to help. Something that seems to be a problem may be life’s new growth edge, encouraging the system to evolve further. (This idea is incorporated into the practice of Jin Shin Jyutsu, for example.)

**Each of these different understandings** – about the nature of who we are, our distress, and our relationship to the larger world – **leads to an entirely different orientation to our situation.**

Sam Keen speaks to the implications of this quite succinctly:

“**Be careful whom you let diagnose your disease - for you then give them power over its cure**.” (Keen, 1985)

V. How beliefs and worldviews affect the sensing-into process

“A belief is a thought that channels energies all of the time” (Patent, 2011).

Depending on which belief systems around the nature of illness and disease we are operating within, we might make different choices, interpret what happened differently, monitor different parameters, relate to ourselves and the distress differently, etc.

We might welcome our symptoms, treat them with medication to suppress them, allow them to deepen our mindfulness, encourage emotional catharsis, or just hide them!

If we were to engage in Focusing with our symptoms, results would vary according to which worldview we are holding as we sense into them.

For example, our felt-sensing would be directed very differently if we were working within an allopathic medicine worldview. We could be sensing into medical diagnostic clues, and encouraging patients to sense into their felt rightness about various medical treatment options.

This would be very different to an “illness as a turning point” model (LeShan 1990), where someone might be sensing into what wants to emerge, what “song wants to be sung”.

We have seen that felt-sensing can be directed in certain ways by intention and mental models.

And that mental models include beliefs about what matters and how things work and interact.

Therefore, our **felt-sensing can be significantly influenced by our beliefs.** This includes beliefs held by the client, beliefs held by the healers (when applicable), and beliefs implicit within the process used for healing.

Besides the placebo effect, that the patient’s and provider’s belief in the efficacy of a medicine will strongly affect their own outcomes, there are also various forms of transmission from the listener or healer that can subtly (or not-so-subtly!) shape the outcome..

For example, Jane Bell, practitioner of both Focusing and shamanism, has noted that a number of her clients - who have had traditional Focusing experiences with other Focusing listeners - often spontaneously experience shamanic content (animal spirits, etc) during their Focusing sessions with her. These clients were unaware of her shamanic background.

VI. The transmission of **patterns**

In homeopathic medicine, the practitioner seeks a remedy that matches the disorder, and in some ways resonates with it. “Like cures like.”

A solution is then made from this remedy which is so dilute that no molecules of the remedy remain in the solution – **only the informational pattern** or energy **remains**. This pattern can act as a “seed crystal”, to allow a reparative internal re-organization and re-alignment to occur. (Lansky, 2011).

[The original paper has a reference about research on this J. Aissa et al., “Transatlantic Transfer of Digitized Antigen Signal by Telephone Link,’ Journal of Allergy and Clinical Immunology 99 (1997): S175.]

Brainwave patterns between people can coordinate and align. A Brain-Mind Bulletin issue from 1989 describes a study on brain wave synchrony between two people (Grinberg-Zylberbaum & Ramos, 1987). Each person in their pairs was instructed to close their eyes and “**try** to become aware of the other’s presence”.

During the periods when both people reported that they had developed this awareness, the inter-hemispheric correlation brain wave patterns of each brain were very similar to the other.

If partners reported that “it feels like we have blended”, the EEG patterns were nearly identical.

Conversely, there was no such synchrony when they just sat in silence alone not trying to attune to each other**.**

In addition, the researchers found that **the person with** the highest concordance **(the** one with **higher amount of right brain-left brain synchrony) was the one who most influenced the sessions.**

The implication is that, by centering and grounding more deeply, any of us can contribute to a partner, client or group’s increased well-being and level of connection. You may have experienced how someone in a group speaking from a deeply connected place can bring other participants to a more connected level. (Many participants in Community Wellness Focusing groups experience this dynamic on a regular basis.)

Energetic transmission is affected by intention and belief systems. Since Focusing allows such a sensitivity to felt qualities, more attention to the role of worldviews and intentions within the practice, experience, and teaching of Focusing would add power to the practice.[6](http://serviceoflife.info/focusing/foliofootnotes.html)

VII. Examples of intentionally transmitting a state of consciousness or energetic pattern

Along the lines of the brain wave experiment described two sections above, perhaps what one person brings **in terms of an embodied understanding**  can resonate with others, allowing a synchrony to occur, an alignment, a healing or growing.

A number of spiritual traditions utilize the capacity of a master teacher to transmit a blessing or a state of consciousness to students and devotees – such as in offering darshan (a Sanskrit term meaning "sight" or “seeing”). The student attempts to open to, and attune to, the teacher’s energy. At times, a transmission is received that affects the consciousness of the student.

This process parallels the study findings on EEG synchrony between people. One can notice the same elements here - intention, opening, attuning to….

The study’s findings that the one with the most synchrony (teacher) is the one more likely toinfluence the other, through the process of attunement and resonance, suggests that the teacher can bring the student up towards the teacher’s level of synchrony/integration, at least temporarily.

Reiki, Therapeutic Touch, and other forms of energy healing are intended to transmit certain qualities through the healer-as-channel (first connecting and receiving, and then transmitting) to the client.

Lawrence LeShan has done research **into the particular worldviews of psychic healers when in the healing state.** He has found that shifting one’s own worldview (understanding and relationship with the universe) can allow certain kinds of healing to occur[7](http://serviceoflife.info/focusing/foliofootnotes.html).

Based on this finding, he was able to learn and teach healing based on principles most healers had in common:

- centering, grounding oneself

- making an intention to be of service to a particular person or group

- **holding** an image (a worldview**, an experiential belief) of connectedness and**

**wholeness in one’s awareness**.

As another variation on this theme, Greg Braden describes a form of healing where either the client, the “healer”, or both, **hold a multi-sensory image** (felt, visual, etc.) **of a desired or ideal state in which they experience the client as if already healed,** as if the healing has already occurred in the present.(Braden, 2011 – video reference)

Gandhi’s “Be the change that you want to see happen” may be seen as an application of these the same principles to spiritual activism. If one lives as if something were already true, that pattern helps organize life energies along those lines.

Within Focusing, two examples of intentionally calling forth a positive outcome from the body include:

- the question: “What would come in my body if this were all ok?”

- the Widening step in Recovery Focusing (**experiencing "what could be" and expanding that felt sense.**)

In Focusing, as we see in these two examples, the ‘vision’ comes primarily from the body, rather than being directed primarily by one’s conscious mind. These allow the possibility of another source of information and integration than one could achieve by mental intention alone.

VIII. Amplification of signals and patterns through Reflecting Systems

Up to this point, we have been exploring rather subtle forms of transmitting energy and influencing others, and the role that our belief systems play in this process. . But these basic principles also apply to the very common **intentional transmissions** that occur while Focusing – what we usually call **reflections**.

But, wait – aren’t reflections just a neutral way to hold space and help someone hear back their words, and connect more deeply with their own experiential process? Like holding up a mirror – nothing is added, right?....

That is sometimes how the process of reflecting is thought about. But in these days of relativity theory and post-modernism, is it any surprise to consider that all reflections may have some inherent reference point, some intention and belief system implicit within them?

Even with mirrors, there are many kinds - parabolic, convex, flat, etc. Likewise, there are many kinds of reflections, each which shapes the incoming energies and directs them in different ways.

As we follow the experiential flow of another’s process, we may reflect something back to them to help support their process. What we choose to reflect depends on what one believes is important or significant to facilitating the process.

We may have been taught that “holding space” is helpful, or that “slowing down” is helpful, that “helping someone hear their own words back” is helpful. Here we can see that **reflections** (implicitly) **contain a worldview - about what is believed to be important or significant to the process!**

In Focusing, we are often taught to reflect back either what the speaker says, or feelings, or felt meaning, to support the client’s process in being with and holding their felt experiencing.

But there are other possibilities, as well. Just as in sensing-into, reflecting is somewhat directional. We chose, consciously or unconsciously, to reflect back **particular aspects of someone’s experiencing. In turn, this is subtly shaping the experiencing of the person receiving these reflections..**

David Young, LICSW, learned something about this in 1985 during a Changes Group experience with Marshall Rosenberg, who was present in his triad while Dave was listening to a person who had been coming for years and had never made any progress during his turns (Young, 2008).

[ Marshall Rosenberg founded Non Violent Communication. He often listens for, and reflects, feelings and “needs” – what he senses is alive in the other person as they talk. As an example, when listening to someone who is expressing a judgment, he will not usually reflect those words of judgment back. Instead, making the intention to connect, he may offer a guess at what needs may be underneath their judgment, and have the speaker check that for fit.]

“. . . Marshall listens to Z, but in a much different way, and Z gets to some honesty -- not to change, but to a touch of reality, connecting with what's alive in him.

“All my classic, careful empathic Listening, and all Jane's and many others' beautiful Listening -- hours & hours for years -- **didn't do what Marshall did in a few minutes**.

“During an earlier Changes, Jane had spent the entire two hours Listening to Z, determined to get through. Nothing. With Marshall, Z arrives at what Gene might call "the edge".

“ Afterwards, I ask Marshall how he knew to do that.”

“Have you noticed," Marshall asks, "**when you reflect content, you get more content**?"

“Sure, Marshall,” I reply, puzzled.

“And have you noticed, **when you reflect feelings, you get more feelings**?"

I frown. "Of course.”  
  
Marshall fixes me with his dark intense eyes. “**When you reflect an alienated view of the world, you just get more alienation.**”

Marshall is aware that simply listening and reflecting back words spoken – if those words came out of a disconnected place in the speaker - may not create any sense of connection or forward movement. Since whenever we reflect, we are implicitly conveying a particular worldview, the choice of what and how we reflect is a crucial one.

To illustrate this further, here are a few aspects of the flow of experiencing that we may be able to sense into and reflect back – besides words, feelings, and felt meaning[8](http://serviceoflife.info/focusing/foliofootnotes.html):

* reflecting back **the partial nature of an experience** to decrease overidentification with a part “something in you is feeling….” done in Inner Relationship Focusing (Cornell)

- reflecting back **feelings in the context of needs** (NonViolent Communication)

- reflecting back the **aliveness** of a person’s process (Gendlin[9](http://serviceoflife.info/focusing/foliofootnotes.html) )

- reflecting back the therapist’s sense of **the attachment dance** between a couple (Sue Johnson, Emotionally Focused Therapy)

- reflecting back the parent or teacher’s awareness of **qualities of** **greatness** in the child in that moment (Howard Glasser’s Nurtured Heart Approach) (Glasser, 2011) (Glasser, 2010)

- reflecting back qualities of **spaciousness or holding** that seem to be present in the situation (some meditations reflect back the space around the objects of awareness)

- reflecting back the **divinity** **within** someone (numerous spiritual teachers)

A “**worldview or mental model, along with the reflections we offer based on that model**”, is what I term a “**reflecting** **system**”. I like this term because it contains an understanding that the directionality of someone’s felt-sensing, the directionality of the reflections that are being offered back, and the implicit beliefs held by each person, are all part of a system, and that these various elements all inter-affect one another.

VI. Mental models and felt sensing direction as differentiating features among Focusing styles

One meaningful way to distinguish differences in the various schools of Focusing is by studying their models and how these models direct the felt-sensing in distinct ways.

As mentioned in , one of the several powerful aspects of the framework, or mental model, of Treasure Maps of the Soul (Cornell and McGavin) is the acknowledgment of *felt dissociation*. It recognizes a number of patterns of stuckness, and suggests ways to become aware of parts that were dissociated out of our experience, and invite them in to the conscious experiential flow.

Recovery Focusing, another Focusing model, is grounded in the 12-Step tradition. Each step incorporates a felt-sensing dimension. Felt-sensing in the context of each step is done in three phases, or three ‘directions’.

Each of these ‘directions’ guides the sensing differently and encourages support and forward movement in dealing with addictions: first resourcing, then connecting with the difficult places, then allowing the body’s knowing of what it wants to become, to carry a person forward:

The "Honoring" phase is about experiencing a positive "helper" felt sense to begin the process. We could see this step as “resourcing”.

The "Opening" phase is about exploring the "stuck process/pattern" (in this case certain aspects of addiction);

and the Widening phase is about experiencing "what could be" and expanding that felt sense. S.Noel (personal communication, Nov. 20th, 2011).

This lens of seeing how felt sensing is being guided along certain mental models, could be used to understand the workings of other schools of Focusing as well (Domain Focusing, Wholebody Focusing, Biospiritual Focusing…).

Each master teacher has their own particular concepts, their own worldview about felt sensing, their own helpful maps for navigating one’s inner environment.

In addition, each master teacher brings **their own personal refined attunements**, their cultivated felt-sensitivity in certain areas.

Once we are aware of this, we could begin to consciously articulate these aspects for each style of Focusing. This clarification could help students increase their “fluency” in several different styles of Focusing without the expense and time involved in having to begin at the very beginning.

**Once a practitioner of Focusing knows the basic “operating system”** (zigzagging between felt-sensing and the conceptual), **they can use this approach to learn and practice the new conceptual models and particular felt attunements associated with any particular style they wish to learn. This framework could allow them to do so with greater ease than they might otherwise**.

X. Sensing into different models of who we are, and what the universe is like

“But that is not all!  
 Oh, no!  
 That is not all...”

said the Cat in the Hat

(Geisel, 1957).

So far, we might consider learning to attune our sensors into activities within cells with using felt-sensing as a microscope.

We can also shift the lenses of felt-sensing outward as a sort of telescope - towards the sensing of “larger bodies”.

Resonance and harmonics occur at a cellular level, with organs, at the level of individuals, and in larger groups. Perhaps these larger patterns can be sensed into, and transmitted into, as well.

As we explore this, we can remember that our worldviews affect our sensing-into, so some of what we find in our Focusing will depend upon our worldview that we are holding while Focusing.

The most common worldview used in Focusing is seeing ourselves as separate beings, each with our own distinct processes. We each take our own personal turn. We respect each other’s process, and avoid interfering with each other’s content, which is considered to be disruptive or intrusive.

This description may seem **so** obvious, that it may be considered by many as “how Focusing is done correctly.” Some are concerned that deviating from these traditional guidelines will threaten the sanctity and protection which makes the Focusing process so gentle and safe.

Yet, if sensing can be directional, then **new mental models can offer new directions to sense into.**

So, what might occur if we did Focusing while holding other ways of understanding reality:

1) While Focusing, people sometimes experience a sense of a “third thing”, a presence or sense of grace that is palpable, that occurs without intentionally attempting to seek it. What might come if we intentionally directed our sensing into the “between space” of interpersonal resonance? With each person sensing into a shared field and shared space of interactive content, *it* might begin to unfold with qualities of its own as *it* was offered attention.

2) Given that we ourselves are a part of larger bodies, such as a community (perhaps even an Earthbody), which might happen if we allowed ourselves to sense into that larger body? Where in Earth’s body might *IT* be feeling *ITS* feelings? ( one way to explore this is at <http://www.serviceoflife.info/focusing/healingplaneten1.html> )

3) Rather than working with ourselves as discrete entities, what kind of sensing and receiving might occur if we also did Focusing from the perspective of ourselves as interpenetrating waves of energy and information that inter-affect each other? How would our habitual sense of who we feel ourselves to be, and how we relate to each other and the world around us be affected?

(Neil Dunaetz has done some very interesting initial explorations in this area, as an outgrowth of his work with Gendlin’s Process model; Glenn Fleisch and Karen Whalen have written about this in the 2011 Folio.)

4) We assume that it is “we” who are doing the Focusing, offering our attention to various aspects of our experiencing. What might arise if we considered that there might be a Larger Body that is Focusing, a larger ‘Something’ that is offering caring attention to us as if we were felt senses, so that **we** can shift and unfold into our right next steps? Such a process might involve a sort of letting go into a larger loving attention, allowing ourselves to be shaped and moved by it…

These are all fascinating territories, left largely unexplored to date….

If we wish, we can choose to explore any of these other ways of understanding reality. To do so, we might consider some of the basic principles we have already explored here:

- choosing **a direction** to explore,

- offering ourselves **permission** to try something “completely different”,

- making an **intention**,

- working with **someone** who is **already attuned in that area**,

- and **being part of a co-sensing, co-reflecting group** in these realms.

XI. Toward Closure

Due to space constraints, we have not delved into to the physics of **bias and distortion**. Analogous to how iron can cause a compass to deflect, can felt-sensing be distorted or deflected? And how might it be protected from such influences? (more thoughts on this, [on my website.)](http://www.serviceoflife.info/focusing/biases1.html#http://www.serviceoflife.info/focusing/biases1.html)

Quite a bit of material has been offered here. Will it hold up in your practice? I encourage you experiment and see what practical value you may find in applying these concepts:

- we have the capacity to intentionally attune our felt sensing in particular directions

- mental models and belief systems can guide and support (as well as constrain) our sensing and our transmitting/emanating

- the choice of reflecting systems has an effect on the process and outcome

- when we are listening to someone, both transmitting and receiving are occurring on various levels

- through the combination of intention and bodily-felt connection, we can influence much smaller (cellular) and much larger (social) systems than we may have imagined

Please feel free to send me examples from your own experiences along these lines – ones you have already had, as well as any new discoveries.

XII. A caveat, as well as some possibilities of blessing…

As excited as I am about these many concepts, I also acknowledge the good reasons that many Focusing practitioners historically are cautious about applying mental models and conscious intention to shape sensing and transmitting.

Focusing includes a type of kinesthetic biofeedback, in which we can feel how various aspects of our being are relating to each other. We can ask ourselves, or others, to pause and to check:

“Is something being too pushy?”

“Is something feeling steamrollered?”

“How is everything inside with what is being suggested? “

The sensitivity to, and honoring of, bodily-felt process in Focusing makes us loath to use the mind to influence our bodily-held process. We have experienced too often how willpower and beliefs can be “abused” by one aspect of our being against less verbal aspects.

The power of intention is sometimes used to force or manipulate the body in ways that do not respect its wisdom, that do not interact with it as partner. Fr. Ed McMahon speaks to some of this, and how Focusing can offer one antidote to this, in “Beyond the Myth of Dominance” (McMahon, 1993).

Focusing has been described as practicing and offering a “non-colonizing relationship with one’s inner landscape” (Zubizarreta, 2003). One of its key gifts is encouraging us to establish a respectful partnership between mind and body, listening, checking with, and following the lead of the body’s life-forward knowing and moving.

At the same time, a key point in this paper is that our minds, our intentions, and our mental models, are ALREADY influencing our Focusing process, whether we are aware of it or not. And so, rather than deny the role of our mind, in a pendulum swing toward “the body”, we can work to consciously establish a respectful partnership.

This partnership is not only an internal one, but could lead to much fruitful collaboration with other forms of practice. For example, the worldviews implicit in the practice of Focusing could positively inform the worldviews of those who seek to improve the world through intention and through working with concepts. In combining deep and respectful listening with the cognitive and the intentional, a dual channel zigzag can help us integrate the conceptual and bodily-felt realms.

Focusing can help us hold **conscious intention**, **and also** the **bodily-felt** sense of **intention,** to help facilitate a synergy between what may be two hands of one Larger Intention.

Perhaps the zigzag and loving attention within Focusing can allow a crossing of what the heart longs to express, with what the mind longs to know and achieve – thereby carrying forward this vision of Teilhard de Chardin:

*“Someday, after mastering the winds, the waves, the tides and gravity, we shall harness for God the energies of love, and then, for a second time in the history of the world, man will have discovered fire.”*

Thank you for your participation in this larger process.

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More science and the bibliography are available in the original article at

<http://www.serviceoflife.info/focusing/zigzaggingfolioarticle.htm>

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