

RESONANT SENSING FOR PEACE – LISTENING TO OUR PLANETARY BEING

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“.... A felt sense of anything can be invited to come in the body...” Eugene Gendlin

What can happen when we gather together to create a field of attentive listening for the Earth? A small group of us have been exploring this idea since 2013.

In this article, we describe:

History: Personal experiences and conversations that inspired and shaped this process.

Adaptations and Innovations: Ways of directing attention and felt-sensing that we have borrowed or discovered over time.

Challenges: Some of the design challenges that we faced, and some we still are facing.

Actual experiences: A few snippets from sessions that give a small taste of the kinds of experiences that have occurred.

Resources: Online links to some of the material in more depth, to explain and help orient anyone interested in participating in this kind of process.

PRELIMINARY EXPERIENCES

Eric:

I am in an apartment in New York City, around Christmas. A sudden snowstorm has made exiting the city impossible - all the trains, subways, bridges and buses are shut down. I decide at one point to make a connection with the city – a Therapeutic Touch kind of energy connection, just to see what happens.

The connection felt solid, and a definite feeling came with it. The feeling was unmistakable – “Spanish Pride”. Was I ever surprised! I was not aware that a sense of an entire community could come from a Therapeutic Touch-like energy connection. [As it turns out, I was in a large Spanish neighborhood, but I didn't discover this until the following day when I left and I was walking to the train station.]

The next day I get to the train station. I am waiting for the train, when a Hispanic woman comes down the steps on another platform. In her arms is a baby crying very loudly and continuously. I still remembered the feeling of Spanish Pride very clearly, so I get the feeling back, make an energy connection with the baby, and send that feeling to her. She stops crying instantly and was quiet the whole time until my train left.

[This occurred about a year before I read the book Focusing by Dr. Gendlin. I knew Focusing would be important to me because, when I first saw the book out of the corner of my eye, it appeared two feet tall and a foot wide, just long enough to get me to find the book and buy it.]

*Focusing made sense to me as soon as I read about it. I recognized how my earlier “Spanish Pride” feeling would be considered to be a felt sense. And, even before learning about Focusing, I had experienced how **a felt sense could be communal** as well as individual, and how **a felt sense could be shared by Therapeutic Touch-type energy connections**...*

Bruce:

*During the 2002 Children Focusing Conference, Marta Stapert invited me to “listen to the voice of her process”, as she sought to articulate her work with babies. As Marta began, she noticed how she was “sensing for the baby.” It was as if a **joint felt-sensing system was being created** by her attuned listening. In her being with the babies and their felt experience, something would often shift and unfold in a healing way. (notes at <https://www.serviceoflife.info/planetaryhealing/stapertprocess.html>)*

After sharing this experience on the Focusing Discussion list, list members considered how Focusing attention might be offered in a similar fashion towards other nonverbal beings, such as animals. From this discussion came: “What if we listened to the Earth in a Focusing way, where her own right next steps can emerge out of a space of caring listening presence? Wouldn’t that be different from the usual approach of “trying to save/fix the planet!”

I loved the idea, wrote a post about it, <https://www.serviceoflife.info/planetaryhealing/healingplaneten1.html> and even tried listening to the planet a few times. But my solo attempts felt rather abstract and distant, so I stopped.

In 2011, I was excited to read Eric’s posts on the Focusing discussion list, where he described offering attention to others’ felt senses for their healing. He also suggested that offering this kind of attention to world leaders in critical situations might decrease their reactivity, and improve more creative and peaceful outcomes. “If he could connect to others’ fields, and if I could connect to him,” I thought, “then this might work!”

STARTING UP

Through several phone and email exchanges, we explored how to actualize this concept. We began slowly, inviting a few people on the Focusing list who had expressed interest in joining us. Eric suggested that we begin with some preliminary work, so that group members could create some sense of connection with one another. The intention was to create some kind of support and linkage that we could draw upon when sensing into potentially vast and powerful planetary energies.

We continued our preliminary work by gathering together via phone, and attempting to “make an energy connection with each other”. We did so both visually and kinesthetically, sensing each other, “sending a connection” to each other through head or hands, and then checking to see what the others were feeling. Once we had completed this stage successfully, we began sessions in July 2013 with participants from the US, Canada, and Australia. We have now participated in over 40 virtual sessions, in addition to a few live sessions since then. We use this

general format:

- An initial check-in. At times, the check-in may include a personal intention for ourselves.
- A lead-in for grounding and making an energy connection with others in the group, followed by an invitation to begin to sense into “What in the world is wanting my/our attention now?” Here is how we usually begin:

“Let’s start with becoming aware of our own presence ... Noticing our breathing ...

*Being aware of our feet on the floor, our bodies on whatever surfaces that are supporting them...
Feeling that support ...*

*Noticing how those surfaces are being supported by the planet, this depth of support and
grounding under us, holding every one of us*

*Being aware of our bodies ... the space within our bodies ... the outline of where our bodies meet
the world ... the energetic experience of our bodies ...*

*Aware of ourselves, also becoming aware of the others in the circle, together ...
Allowing ourselves to make an intention to connect energetically with each other, to feel or
visualize the others in this virtual circle here, together, in this process...*

*Feeling how this circle ... is one in an ongoing series of circles ... of those who came long before
us, and of those who will go on long after us ... offering care and attention to the earth, to its
well-being ...*

*Being aware of our intention to be of service to the planet, and to be listeners, as well, to what
wants to emerge ...*

*Connecting with each other, and with our bodies, in a felt way, we offer the invitation:
‘What... in the world ... is wanting our attention now?’ ...*

...And we share what comes, into the center of the circle, as we feel moved ... ”

- As in some forms of Quaker process, we then sit quietly, sense individually, remain open to what comes, and share as we feel moved to do so. Often, there are significant periods of silence.
- Participants are welcome to engage in any of the three phases of Focusing with non-verbal life forms (drawn from the work of Marta Stapert):

- Creating a shared field of connection through attuned listening. Just being with what is there, holding whatever is there, with the non-verbal being.

- Listening for what comes, a felt sense of what the non-verbal being may need, and allowing that to be articulated through us.

- Moving with felt aliveness as we feel called to, in response to what we have heard and how we have been touched.

- As in Focusing, some of what comes may be reflected by another person – as a way of acknowledging *what's there*, and also to allow others to resonate with the Focuser's felt-sense, if they wish to do so.
- In response to a reflection, there may be silence, the same person may say more, or another may share (on the same theme, or on something quite different.) There is no attempt to have us all stay on the same topic.
- At times, a Focusing suggestion may be offered to someone, such as, "You might want to check and see if it feels ok to say 'hello' to that..."
- Occasionally, a very different kind of suggestion, something quite novel, may arise and be offered to the group for consideration and for us to try out.
- Nearing the end, we close the circle. Sometimes there is an informal debriefing afterwards.

ADAPTATIONS AND INNOVATIONS

Resonant Sensing for Peace expands the traditional Focusing process in several ways:

- We sense into something outside of our physical bodies that is larger than any of us.
- The process involves group felt-sensing. We are co-sensing and co-resonating. Each of us is listening (to one another and to the planet), and we are also Focusing. Each person's sensing and resonating touches something different-yet-related in each one of us...
- We strengthen the group container by intentionally making an energy connection with one another at the start, and occasionally checking that connection during a session.

PROCESS AND DESIGN CHALLENGES – PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

As one might imagine, designing and coordinating a process that involves people in multiple locations sensing, offering attention, and communicating together has its challenges.

Logistics. We enjoy having participants from various geographic locations around the earth, in Pacific, Eastern, and Australian time zones. This diversity of time zones makes scheduling quite complicated; we use Doodle or When2meet.com. We try to set session dates to balance participation, as rarely does the entire group have the same time slot free.

Tech platform. We have used Maestro Conferencing, and more recently, Zoom, which adds an

additional dimension of allowing some of us to see each other.

Size limitations. We often have 4-5 participants. The process has also worked well with only 2 people present. The largest group we have had has been 10. With an even larger group, it would help to have a way for people to signal when they wanted to share.

Guiding. We are still considering the optimum amount of guiding to offer during sessions. Some of us have found that our current lead-in format, followed by long periods of silence, is not always enough for all of the participants to develop a felt-sense of the Earth. If someone doesn't experience much, the process will not feel very meaningful to him or her, and so there has been a natural self-selection among those who continue in the group. This topic needs further attention.

Reflections. Designating who will offer reflections is not clearly defined, and can be a source of confusion. Up to now, one of the hosts usually does most of the reflecting, but others are welcome to reflect if they feel moved to. In general, we seem to have managed in this manner, but here is another area where more explicit guidelines might be useful to all.

Intensity. So far, we have not found the intensity of the material that arises to be a problem. This may be related to the good group connection, which provides support and occasional guidance when someone feels stuck with something. What comes for any individual during this process is seen as their experience, and also as information for the group as a whole. This combination – feeling connected with the group, and not treating whatever comes as 'purely personal content' may make it easier for members to be present with what comes.

EXCERPTS FROM TWO DIFFERENT SESSIONS

These notes may offer a taste of the movement and flow of this process. Within each session, we have used p1, p2, etc. to denote a shift in the person who is speaking. Due to length constraints, we have not included here the text of the reflections.

1. Excerpt from of a session with five participants in January 2014:

p1, After some silence: *Peace talks in Syria – something wanting to have people stop the violence... feeling discomfort in stomach... Trying to match that reality of great suffering with the great beauty in the world... (longer pause)... When in the suffering, watching the world, it is easy to forget the beauty, get overwhelmed... Wanting to say hello to that place... (p2 reflects)*

p1 continues: *... Can see the people who have had the courage to even think that these factions could come together... Like a candle in a tsunami... And yet, there is a candle... But it is very small... (longer pause)*

p1 continues: *... There is the possibility of putting one's hands over our ears, close eyes, and pray... And, a part that has done that, at times, can escape from that, wants to pay no attention to it... (another long pause)... And, there is another part, the heart, very vulnerable, that says, "I must witness... I must watch." ... in a camaraderie for those who suffer – not closing my eyes to*

what I see, to these people...

(p3 reflects)

p1 ... *It is a beautiful pain... It is utterly alive... And, I treasure it... There is a fierceness to that aliveness... There is a LOT of life there... Noticing two places... An aching in gut, tender, not as twisted now... And something now around the heart, into the throat area... Words coming "An embracing of the whole"... Feeling like our feet are on the ground, when I am really in contact with that...* (p4 reflects)

p1 *"Count me in!" it says....*

p2 (guiding suggestion) *Maybe just breathing with all of this for a few moments...*

p4 (after a brief pause) ... *All of a sudden, actually smelling baby powder, very strongly, right here – like a mother's womb, and babies, coming very powerfully, feels quite amazing...*

(p3 reflects this, then after a pause, offers their own felt sensing:)

p3 ... *An image of fresh leaves pushed up from a bulb, from beneath the soil and up above into the air... Leaves and growth, surging, growing, wilting and fading, and growing again... leaf and bounty and fruit, then fading... something being born, and being allowed to die...*

If we only look at a little piece of that process, it appears like a tragedy... (p1 reflects)

p3 continues....*If we have the bigger view, we have an expression of something huge.....*

.... *A pulsing, breathing, surging, a pulling back and a pushing up...* (p5 reflects)

p2 (after some moments of shared silence) ... *A deep resonance with "count me in" going from living ON the planet to living IN the planet... Like the difference between renting, and owning, a house - "this is MY world, a very different feeling....*

p1... *getting a sense of "Count me in!" - as in "IN-timacy" ...*

p2 (after more silence) *In preparation in closing the circle, checking if there are any requests for us, from the planet....*

p1 *"Have courage," it says...*

2. Excerpt from a session with a different set of 7 participants, in Sept 2014:

p1 ... *feeling a strong energy here in this group... calm, peaceful...*

Suggesting we treat that energy as if it were a felt sense, and connect with each other, as if we were making a large antenna, one that covers a lot of space... (p3 reflects)

p1 ...*Making a specific intention for us to connect with everyone in the world, from this energy connection that we have as a group... and for that to connect with the place in each individual in the world, that wants peace...* (p2 reflects)

p1 ...*Gently holding this intention, in whatever form it takes, to let them feel that something is with them, to reinforce that in them, that they are not all alone in that desire for peace.*

p1 (after some silence) *Some tension present, as well... Acknowledging that the tension exists, it is not ignored...* (p2 reflects)

p1 continues: *... the tension exists, and, can co-exist with the part that wants peace* (p5 reflects)

p2 (after a pause) *A felt image of a circle of people, standing up. Something lifting up... A metaphor of taking a stand, standing up, for peace, in some strong way... Something inspiring... yes... standing up... as people see others standing up for peace, they don't feel so alone.*

p3 *...Feeling a humming in my body, a movement, connecting, very soft...*

p4 *Resonating with the 'lifting up' – an image like The Magic Schoolbus – the bus lifting with us up into space... connecting together... something magical about the adventure...* (p7 reflects)

p1 (after a pause) *... hearing a dog barking... something about not just connecting with people, but also with everything in the world that wants peace...*

p5 *... resonating with "co-existence" ... a desire to co-exist within self, peace in self, then translates into others desiring co-existing, nations co-existing, and also now Creation co-existing...* (p2 reflects)

p6 (after a longer pause) *feeling a quiet peacefulness when we included animals... appreciating the connecting with the rest of life beyond humans. This feels like an important piece, to peace.* (p3 reflects)

p4 *... Really resonating with the connecting inward, connecting outward, and the link that connects between...*

p2 (after a longer pause) *Something ripping in chest... stepping into standing up and being counted... Tears are here, almost jubilant tears... not sure who is crying – me, or the planet... a big yes, joining something... "I stand for this..."*

p3 *... acknowledging it, a deeper sense of being part of it, being with it gently...*

p1 (after a pause) *appreciating what this is like, doing this with the group...*

p2 *being with the essence of this "standing up", almost as if something inside is saying "I won't turn away from you" to the planet, to peace. Not loyalty, but taking responsibility, making a commitment... There is a bonding that is happening...*

p7 *almost like a holding, saying "Yes, I won't turn away..."*

p2 *"I am here with you... for you." A sense of saying to the planet "Sorry I was such a stranger... I'm back now." (p4 reflects)*

p3 *... like a deeper homecoming... Here we are, together...*

EFFECTS OF THE PROCESS

Participants often report one or more of the following:

- A sense of bodily-held peacefulness.
- A sense of gratitude for participating in something deep, meaningful, and larger than ourselves.
- Feeling more centered in one's caring towards our Earth and its inhabitants.
- Shifts in how we are holding certain global situations, towards more care and understanding.
- Feeling able to be with difficult global situations in a calmer, stronger, and more centered way.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR RESONANT SENSING FOR PEACE:

An index page at <http://serviceoflife.info/planetaryhealing/phindex.html> includes:

- Description of one way to explain the process to a new group
- Orientation letter for group participants
- Excerpts from sessions of Resonant Sensing for Peace 2013-2015
- Experiences of Eric's that have influenced this process
- Notes on Marta Stapert's process of Focusing with babies
- Focusing and Healing the Planet – (sections 5 and 6 inspired this process)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES OUTSIDE THE FOCUSING COMMUNITY:

The Gaiafield Project <http://gaiafield.net/> : *"The Gaiafield Project promotes the study and practice of subtle activism, which affirms the power of consciousness-based approaches like global meditation and prayer events to support social and planetary transformation."*

HeartMath Institute www.heartmath.org, researches the connections between heart & brain, human beings, & the Earth. Their work points to ways that the Earth's fields and human fields interaffect each other.

Their insightful "Interconnectivity of all Living Systems Through Earth's Magnetic Field," is available at: <https://www.heartmath.org/research/global-coherence/>

We invite you to use some of the above resources to develop processes and practices that work for you. Please feel free to contact us with questions or any innovations that are generated from your own experiences.

Best wishes in your explorations!

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