

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH FOCUSING THROUGH THE PAUSE: The Merging of Two Worlds

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*“To see you emerge,
To be with you,
To listen to you,
To tell you that I’m here.
Curious about your blooming, and mine”
(Hernández, 2010, p. 33)*

INTRODUCTION

This paper is about a “journey” of discovery and transformation. Our aim is to share with you the significant “stations”, the obstacles on the way, the “twists and turns” on the path, the unexpected encounters and circumstances that have brought different people to “travel” together, following the same vision: The vision of a human development process that enables people to look for answers and action steps for improving their life, *not only* in the external, material world, but also in their deeper, internal world.

In this paper, we will share a new social development model that has integrated the Natural Pause and Felt Sense Literacy (FSL), as cornerstones of sustainable development efforts. William Hernández, as the Executive Director of FECD (Fideicomiso Ecuatoriano de Cooperación para el Desarrollo), a non-government organization, dedicated to strengthening local capacity and promote sustainable economic, environmental and social development within a framework of equity, has initiated this “journey” of bringing together social development and Focusing. He has created this new model for implementing social development efforts with vulnerable communities in the poorest cantons of Ecuador. Since 2009, FECD has implemented the model presented here in its development projects. Soti Grafanaki, in a serendipitous way, has joined as a “fellow traveler” in this journey after she visited Ecuador last year. She has become a partner in spreading this effort in other parts of the world and studying the impacts of the Pause and FSL on social development projects.

We will summarize the experience of integrating the Natural Pause and FSL in the social development efforts, working principally with groups of rural farmers from the lowest income communities of Ecuador. We will also share the new “places” and possibilities that have appeared on the horizon as the “journey continues”...

William will provide a deeper narrative about what propelled him to integrate FSL in the social development efforts of FECD and share his experience of initiating and implementing the “Literacy of the Pause” in Ecuador. Soti will share her viewpoint as a “participant-observer”, who has witnessed the impact of this crossing during her recent visit in

Ecuador. She will also share the learning that has emerged from co-facilitating with William a number of Pause workshops in Europe.

Our paper will address the role of the Natural Pause in transcending boundaries, removing distinctions created by language, life conditions, education, culture, gender, and in bringing together two worlds: the world of Focusing and the world of social development.

SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH FOCUSING IN THE MIDDLE OF THE WORLD

The Start of the Journey: William’s first encounter with Focusing

In 2009, José, my son, was studying in Brockwood in England. A Skype call we had that year became the “starting point” for my journey with Focusing. During that call, José started saying things that seemed strange to me. He talked to me about “getting closer to the truth” and “being the truth”. While he spoke, I could see the tears running down his face and I could hear his voice cracking. “I began to imagine” that something was wrong with him! I told him to “calm down,” and to take things “maturely”. We continued the “conversation”, but certainly, I was not listening. I only wanted to give him advice and guide him so he would not suffer and cry. This used to be the way, I listened to everybody, especially the people that “I loved the most.”

During that call José tried to make me understand that he only wanted to speak the truth and not to say “things” that are not true inside. He was crying and could not speak. At the same time, he was typing to me that he was fine, and there was nothing wrong. He was asking me not to worry. He said that what I was witnessing was part of a body process that he had been working on. I noticed that someone was by his side during our conversation. He or she accompanied him lovingly, in a respectful and attentive silence.

José concluded our call by telling me something that I wrote down, and that I have kept posted up on the bulletin board of my office ever since “...let yourself be taken by the wind...let yourself be taken, by yourself and by the Universe,...let yourself,...please,...just let yourself...”

That night I slept like any other night, without anything special occurring. The next morning, when I woke up, I noticed that a special sensitivity had emerged in my entire body, “Far too much” sensitivity to the slightest touch. It felt as if my whole body did not have any skin; therefore it was exposed to the slightest contact that provoked a special sensation, similar to pain. The symptoms were like having a severe congestion or being sick...but *I was not sick*. With some difficulty, I showered, got dressed, and drove to my office. I turned on the car radio, even though I was not accustomed to doing so. I felt something internally, as if asking me to immediately turn off the radio. I did it. I noticed that somebody “little”, like a boy showed up. It was as though he had appeared from behind a wall or a screen. That little one seemed profoundly scared and worried. This special sensation of someone, who was very little and wanted to say something, wanted to announce himself, really caught me by surprise. I remember distinctly having a sense in my body of this little one wanting to be noticed. Instinctively, it provoked me to direct my attention to “that” and talk to *it*...At the

same time, “something in me” was going in circles reminding me to act “normal,” and be careful so the other drivers on the road would not see me “talking to myself.”

Then began a cautious side-by-side dialogue that emerged instinctively, with much care and gentleness, with a selfless and undoubtedly loving curiosity, the kind of loving curiosity you have for someone who had disappeared, had been abandoned, or assumed dead for a long time. A “special” someone who had stayed “frozen” at a specific point in my life, in order to protect itself from those strange challenges and human circumstances that back then, it could not comprehend. I felt a special need to talk to that inner voice that had emerged in the form of a child. I started to take notes of our dialogues, daily records that I have kept until today.

Here it is where the “journey” began of reconnection with my life, with myself, and the world. Here it began my encounter with those “somethings” of my body that were forgotten. This is how it began, my first encounter with Focusing, and its application in my personal life and the business practices and human growth efforts of the organization (FECD), where I was working.

The Beginnings of the Crossing: Learning Focusing & Connecting with my Inner Voice

I continued my discussions with my son, and I shared my experience with him. José explained to me that in Germany he had started working with his body. He suggested to me that I read a book to help me with what I was discovering. The title of the book was *Cure Your Loneliness* in Spanish—and *Healing Your Aloneness* in English (Erika J. Chopich, and Margaret Paul, 1995). I was mainly interested in one page from that book (p. 152), in which a couple of lines referred to the work of Gene Gendlin’s Focusing. I looked on the internet, and I discovered the Focusing Institute. I wrote an email in English to Mary Hendricks. After having sent the email, I noticed that I had written, with certain amount of ease, in a language that, at the time, I did not have much knowledge about. I was a bit puzzled by the way the events were unfolding. Mary Hendricks replied almost immediately and advised me to contact the Focusing Coordinators Edgardo Riveros from Chile or Elena Frezza from Argentina. I could only make contact with Edgardo. He agreed to come to Ecuador to offer us Focusing training.

Edgardo visited Ecuador a number of times over a period of approximately nine months. Together with four colleagues from the management of FECD, and my son, Antonio and his wife, I started my journey of formal Focusing training. Although the training processes were exciting and very beneficial for everyone who participated, there was a sense in me that “something more...” was still missing. The training was intensive and required time to master the theory and practice of Focusing. In this type of training, it was obvious that it would be hard to share in a wider dimension, for example, with the administrative staff, field technicians, and the rural communities we supported in Ecuador. Although the training process was powerful, it was also time-consuming, expensive, and complex. I had a deep inner sense that we needed to find ways to simplify the process, if we wanted to make it more accessible to a larger number of people.

In the same period, I continued the dialogues with my inner voice, discovering with amazement what emerged every time I paused, felt, and listened to *it*. This process was not entirely new to me. It had emerged naturally much earlier, only this time it had academic validation through the formal Focusing training I was receiving from Edgardo Riveros and other teachers of the Focusing community in the United States.

In those first steps, I made attempts to introduce the conventional Focusing workshop to communities that FECD supported. We traveled with Edgardo and other Focusing trainers-in-training to carry out the first workshop with leaders from the rural communities in Esmeraldas. The workshop was beautiful and supported people in getting in touch with their felt sense. People were moved and eager to learn more about how to return to their bodies again and again.

This first workshop lasted for two full days. The training confirmed my previous intuition—that a process of this nature could not be easily applied with a large number of people and communities. I knew after having participated in this process that it was not possible to reach out and support 10,000 new families each year (one of FECD’s goals during the past years of its work in social development). The traditional process of learning and teaching Focusing could not be replicated with groups and families with limited opportunities and resources. Something needed to shift if we wanted more people to benefit from the Felt Sense Literacy.

Nevertheless, I continued making a huge effort to offer the traditional Focusing workshop to the leaders of rural communities. I even added individual Focusing sessions one day before the workshop. Sometimes in a day, along with two or three other Focusing trainers, we would listen to thirty or forty people. This practice further confirmed the need to create a simpler process, suitable for sharing with different social groups, in different geographic locations, and with communities who lived in extreme conditions of poverty. There was a need to find a new “pathway” to introduce people to the “Felt Sense”.

The Pause in individual Focusing sessions: The Emergence of the Pathway “to something more...”

In an effort to support people to be with their bodies, we started offering individual Focusing sessions prior to the Focusing workshops. During those sessions, I began by offering my own natural Pause before starting to respond in the traditional Focusing way. I noticed that by starting from my own pause, the Focuser was able to go more swiftly to his or her own body and felt sense. It was obvious to me that pausing at the beginning of the session allowed me to listen with much more agility and flow. From then on, the “something more...” moved and flowed with its own pace, time and intensity. The exchange of words and questions were significantly reduced. It felt like the Natural Pause was doing the work for both of us—the listener and the Focuser. It was naturally supporting deep listening, presence and wider life-altering felt shifts, beyond a specific situation or issue.

It was my observation that by pausing naturally, people hardly needed any guiding. Both the Focuser and listener were a *single complete interaction*. Connecting from the Pause

was creating a different kind of interaction that was less intellectual. There was no room for imagination, intellectual games, analysis or search for a precise “handle” to return to. Past logic and knowledge were reduced to a minimum. The Natural Pause was not dividing people into “different parts”, but was rather enabling a unified, natural, non-directed interior relationship. I was noticing a “carrying forward” movement (Gendlin, 1997; 2004) that was more gentle and less probing.

In one of our later discussions with Mary Hendricks and Gene Gendlin, I mentioned that starting from the Pause was like looking into life as a whole, rather than being bound by one particular event or incident. In this way, the process was more like attending to the whole “sea” of life, rather than only looking into a “specimen” of salty water in a glass. The Pause was offering a “pathway” to connect to the totality of our life situation as experienced in the moment.

The simplicity of the Pause was creating a vision of a new way to interact with each other that was deeper, calmer, more attentive, and natural. This new way of interaction could reduce tensions, overcome barriers created by race, language, education or living conditions, and enable people to connect from their deeper place of humanity. This for me was serving the central objective of any action for social development: human sustainability as the basis for any other type of sustainability.

Focusing through the Pause in the Social Development Projects

It was through these observations and my life experience that “Learning to Focus through the Pause” naturally emerged in the social development and human sustainability efforts. My interaction with people reflected a Natural Pause that allowed me to go to my body directly, waiting and trusting that my responses and actions would naturally arise from *there*. Even in those early years of my Focusing practice, pausing naturally had a very “familiar” sense to it. It did *not* feel like the complicated process that I had first encountered with Focusing. It was a kind of natural, intuitive process that has always been part of my life. I came to realize that pausing, for me, has been present ever since my early childhood as I stuttered, and so in speaking with people I connected to my own pause and responded from there.

In my adulthood, I was re-discovering the deeper, inner-directed meaning of Pausing. I was coming to a new awareness about Pausing and felt sensing. I was gently learning to bring the Focusing process into my life, through steps and instructions. I was also re-discovering, through my Natural Pause, a new way of accessing the felt sense, simply and swiftly.

When I started to integrate the Natural Pause in the way I engaged with a group, something shifted in the structure of the workshop. Something more fluid and easier to follow emerged naturally. Pausing in the presence of a group allowed me to come up with simple exercises that enabled the group to connect with the felt sense, through the experience of naturally Pausing or not-pausing, in the moment. The Pause became the fastest “pathway” to the felt sense without having to ever mention this term.

When we conducted the workshop exercises, people went to their bodies directly. A natural silence and calm generated a larger inner space. This was the moment, when many

realized for the first time, that when we naturally pause, an inner voice can emerge. Some of the leaders, who attended the first Pause workshop, returned back to their communities and actively applied the Natural Pause. People in their families and communities noticed the difference and were inquisitive about knowing what had occurred. “Why do you keep silent?”, “Why you do not fight?” they would ask. The leader would respond, “I have learned to Pause.” In this way the Pause expanded and reached many people beyond the workshop. This is how more people and communities became interested in knowing about “how to pause” and respond from a different inner place.

The structure of the “Pause” workshops emerged naturally in our effort to bring a much richer inner process in the human development efforts. The basic workshop and exercises have retained their essence and structure that organically emerged during my first workshop in the area of Guamote in 2009 with an indigenous group. This initial event has been a significant “station” in my journey to bring Focusing and social development together. Photographs and videos from this first group have been posted in the Focusing Ecuador web site.

Since 2009, “Learning to Listen with Focusing through the Pause” has entered the social development process in a gentle and unexpected way. The Felt Sense Literacy through the Pause became part of the social development efforts and an important point for discussion with Gene and Mary, who became really interested and supportive in knowing more about the work we had been developing in Ecuador.

The power of going into the body naturally and easily through the Pause, interacting with and from the body, motivated me and many community leaders to extend these workshops in many other communities around Ecuador. Most community leaders and organizations with whom we have shared the Pause were interested in bringing the “Literacy of the Pause” to their communities.

In addition to workshops, I took advantage of my daily interaction with people to share the power of the Pause, as a pathway to a deeper and more profound bodily *feel* of an issue or situation. For example during brief, causal encounters I will ask people, after having a little pause, to share the name of their partner or child. This small action of taking a Pause naturally connected people to their felt sense without instructing them to look into their bodies, and the result was that communication and interaction was positively enhanced. The interest of people in discovering what has happened to them in those brief moments of deeper connection was clearly reflected on their faces. Some would be surprised, others naturally calm and pausing, over and over again, and most of them curiously interested in learning more. Most exciting to me was how quickly people noticed that Pausing was a possibility that could benefit their families, communities and organizations. In this way people became interested in learning more about Focusing through the Pause. Since 2009, close to 6,700 leaders from more than 230 organizations have participated in the Pause workshops also known as “Learning to Listen with Focusing through the Pause”.

I was excited to discover that almost every person who had an experience with the Natural Pause talked about the Pause to his/her own family, neighborhood or community. Some of these people, more than a hundred so far, have been trained as “Literacy of the

Pause Educators". Under their initiative, many communities have formed "Schools of the Pause", where communities and organizations have developed creative ways to apply the Pause to real life situations, decisions and challenges of everyday living.

From my experience, I have observed that learning to naturally Pause is easier for people *before* they have had any instructions about Focusing or Pausing. People who first learned the Focusing steps or Pausing by instructions eventually could notice and become aware of the Pause, but in a less natural way. For example, they might close their eyes and say, "Ahh...now I'm going to..." or "I will bring my attention to the middle of my body", and although they would be able to connect with the Pause, the process never seemed to be entirely natural.

Attending to the felt sense through the Pause has been a natural and simple way to introduce people to Felt Sense Literacy. Enabling people to experience the Pause has naturally supported people in speaking from and with their bodies. The Pause has offered new possibilities in our social development efforts by supporting people to widen their perception of the situation and overcome "fixed action patterns" (Hendricks-Gendlin, 2003).

Research data, collected over the last year, indicates that the implementation of the "Literacy of the Pause" in various communities in Ecuador has significantly contributed in reducing community tensions and family and gender violence. Focusing through the Pause combined with environmental, agricultural and economic dimensions appears to positively impact sustainable development efforts that address *both* internal and external changes. Initial findings support the idea that personal and social change emerge through *doable* skills and practices that are taught together with contacting one's bodily living process from inside. Social and individual development imply and require each other to achieve sustainable changes (Gendlin, 2011). Changes in attitude and behavior through the "Literacy of the Pause" are affecting the levels of productivity, commitment and leadership, as well as transforming social and family relationships in many communities in Ecuador.

Many beautiful testimonies from participants of this process have provided me with the strength to exceed the boundaries of a city or community, or even a country, despite the barriers of language, and to offer the world a simple way of accessing deeper feelings, where peace and always "more..." possible.

EXPANDING HORIZONS: THE LITERACY OF THE PAUSE AS A WORLDWIDE POSSIBILITY

The Role of Pause in Felt Sense Literacy (FSL) Projects

Through the implementation of Focusing in the social development projects, I discovered that the "Literacy of the Pause" can imply and support Felt Sense Literacy in a way that is more readily accessible and understood by all people. In late 2010, when I started my regular meetings with Gene and Mary, I had not yet realized the importance of what we were achieving in Ecuador. For me it was simply a beautiful new possibility for people with fewer opportunities and a way of humanizing the social development process.

Gene and Mary were supportive of my idea to introduce Focusing through the Pause. In their opinion, Literacy of the Pause could be a simple and effective way to expand Felt Sense Literacy and Community Wellness initiatives beyond Ecuador (Gendlin, 2011; Hendricks-Gendlin, 2011). Along with Mary and Gene, we tried to build the Felt Sense Literacy Project for supporting communities around the world to have a fast, direct and profound access to the felt sense. FECD supported this initiative.

Our regular discussions were deepening my conviction that sharing the Pause was not possible through theorizing or talking alone. It was apparent that, as in all experiential processes, people had to notice the distinction between *pausing naturally* and *not-pausing*, or pausing with instructions. Gene's and Mary's presence in this "journey" of trying to implement social development with Focusing crystallized some of the intuitive learnings and supported the possibility for a wider dissemination. Our discussions for the last three years have helped me articulate, concretize, and share my ideas, while creating a sense of security that my work in Ecuador was deeply respecting the most essential element of Focusing, the felt sense.

My discussions with Mary and Gene were invaluable in helping gently expand the horizons of two worlds: The world of social development and the world of Focusing, opening up new possibilities beyond Ecuador. The FSL project initiative was bringing new opportunities and collaborations beyond the communities of my country. It was as part of this FSL initiative that in 2012, Soti Grafanaki visited Ecuador and became a committed partner in bringing the Literacy of the Pause into other parts of the world. In Summer 2013, Soti and I had the opportunity to co-facilitate nine Pause workshops in three different countries in Europe.

In the following sections, Soti will share her experience of joining the "journey" of "Social Development with Focusing through the Pause". She will tell her story as a participant-observer of our work with the rural communities in Ecuador, and share her viewpoint as a "co-traveller" to new "destinations" beyond Ecuador.

Discovering a New World: Soti's experience of starting the "journey"

In summer 2012, Mary Hendricks sent an email invitation to the Focusing community, to participate in a worldwide FSL initiative. I remember feeling excited about the possibility of being involved in such project. Reading Mary's email created this inner sense of "fresh air" entering into my life and "breathing in" new possibilities. I was too excited to wait, and remember writing immediately to Mary and William, indicating my interest in participating in the FSL initiative. In my email, I mentioned a project for homeless youth, which I wanted to support here in my town.

At the time, I was not familiar with William's work in Ecuador. I did not know about the Pause workshops and the massive project he was undertaking to implement Focusing in the social development efforts of his organization. The only thing I knew was that he was familiar with supporting lay people, not just psychologists or other helping professionals, to get in touch with their "felt sense". Our first telephone conversation included a translator

because William was not very fluent with the English language. During our call, I was interested in learning a bit more about his work, and how his experience could support me in teaching Focusing to a group of homeless youth. I remember asking him, "How many workshops do you run with each group?" I was surprised to hear his reply: "Just one 3-hour workshop." I was just shocked by how this long process of Focusing, with the different levels of training, could be condensed in one, three-hour workshop. This possibility was fascinating, especially because I knew that with homeless youth, it was never certain that they would come back for a second or third workshop.

William's response had excited me. The possibility of learning how to "teach the essence of Focusing" in only one session was something I could have never thought was possible. I remember asking him, "How much is your fee? How much will you charge to teach me this?" and his reply was, "It is free. But please give it for free too. Just get your ticket, if you can afford it, and come. It will take 5 days. We will organize three workshops for you to see our work, and then you will know."

I put the phone down fascinated by the possibility of "teaching the essence of Focusing" to a group of homeless youth in only one session. And this is how the preparations began. William was always welcoming and supportive in his emails, making it easier for me to trust the process and arrange for my trip. In October 2012, I visited Ecuador. William and his team, true to his word, had prepared an unforgettable learning experience. We traveled to different parts of the country, from rural communities on the mountains to those by the ocean. We traveled to some of the poorest cantons of Ecuador. I had the opportunity to be with William and his team and to participate and witness first hand, their work in these communities.

The workshops took place in very basic community establishments—places with no heating or special equipment...just simply a room, some chairs and lots of eager people, inquisitive to know who I was and what I was doing there. In those places, far from my comfort zone, in a new environment, surrounded by people who didn't speak my language and who lived in conditions that I have never lived in, I first encountered William's work. That was my first contact with the model of "Social development with Focusing through the Pause." I witnessed how through sharing the Pause, William and his team were supporting individuals and communities in attending to their life challenges in a very different way.

It was fascinating to be part of an experience that I could first feel it in my body, then later, understand in my head, through the words of my translator. Sensing first, experiencing, then understanding helped me be open to what I was witnessing and participating in.

I learned how Focusing was taught through the Pause. Not with special steps, jargon or long sessions. Just with one, 3-hour workshop, offered to a group of 10-50 community leaders, who have come together to "learn how to listen". During the workshop, William or the facilitator of the group, would offer some simple, experiential exercises that engaged the group in naturally getting in touch with their Pause. Through the exercises people had the chance to experience what comes in the body when they Pause.

People would play together, interact, and engage in simple tasks such as rapidly passing a balloon around the circle, or passing the balloon while looking first into the other

person's eyes. I remember looking into my partner's eyes and experiencing the power of eye contact in helping me naturally slow down, become more caring, less competitive, and more attentive to the other person. It was like I was participating in a human experiment that was allowing me to re-discover how to connect with others without even having to talk or communicate with words. Throughout this workshop, the simple exercises were enabling us to feel our bodies, to respond with and from our bodies, and to notice the distinction between pausing and not pausing. I was deeply moved to see how naturally and simply people were learning about "felt sensing" without this term being mentioned during the workshop. Holding an object and attending to "how does that feel there?" while the facilitator reflected closely, or answering a question, after pausing for a moment, naturally supported people in connecting with their bodies to experience a felt sense. People naturally noticed that the body was providing rich information when they gave it time to respond.

It was obvious that each workshop was a new interaction. The order of the exercises, even the variation sometimes, would slightly shift to attend to the needs of the group. The facilitator was always exhibiting good listening and reflecting skills, and, above all, ability to Pause and sense what was emerging in the moment. It was, and still is, really fascinating to experience the power of presence that naturally emerges when the person pauses. On many occasions, I saw William kneel in front of the person and become 100% attentive to what the person was sharing in that moment. William did not always notice what he was doing with his body, but it was very obvious to me that he was not "giving a workshop"; he was fully immersed in the experience of connecting and accompanying what was emerging in the moment. When making a point, he would naturally get off his chair, kneel down, and come to a position in which he could keep at an eye level with those in the room. He was not only pausing, he was supporting the Pause of others through the quality his own presence. It is by observing, witnessing and experiencing this quality of presence that I came to the realization that you cannot simply run the Pause workshops by only reading the exercises and applying them to people. The true essence of the workshop cannot be communicated in what is done, but *how* it is done. This is what I feel makes the process so unique and distinctive. I can recall comparing, how in many Focusing exchanges, I had experienced myself or my companion to be very mechanical in reflecting the inner experience, and not really participating or engaging deeply with what was emerging. I could see how the Focusing process could become mechanical and passive with the listener reflecting, but not really being *in presence*. Being with the Pause was teaching me how to naturally listen and be in presence with another person.

Every group I attended was a mixture of older and younger people, male and female leaders, who had an important role to play in their communities. Participating in the workshop was supporting them to become better "listeners" through re-connecting with and practicing their Pause and learning to naturally attend to what emerges in their bodies. After the workshop these community leaders would take the initiative of sharing what they learned in the workshop with their families, their neighbors and other groups in their community. In those workshops, I learned the simplicity of creating a structure that allows for wider dissemination, and supports communities to continue the process without relying on 'Focusing experts'. I remember sitting in one of the workshops experiencing a sense of awe about how these people can carry out such a task with so little exposure. And yet this is

what they do. Many of these participants have been successful in bringing and talking about the Pause to their communities. Many communities have created the 'Schools of the Pause' where you can witness the transformation that has been achieved through the Pause in the way people interact with their loved ones and others in their community.

I had the chance to witness the "work" of such a school in one rural community of Chimborazo. All the women of the community had come together, tired after a long day at the market, but very excited to share with us the new exercises they had developed for the Pause. They role-played real life situations showing how they would respond from a place of Pause and a place of not-Pause. There was a sense of pride and excitement in the room about trying out new ways of responding to common life situations. I sat there amazed by the resilience and creativity of these women, who were demonstrating so much willingness to change their life situations. These women were proving to me that the Pause was making a fundamental difference between violence and non-violence, tension and peace.

During my visit in Ecuador, I had the chance to talk with some facilitators who have emerged from these communities and listen to their testimonials about how Focusing has changed their lives. One of the female facilitators shared, "Focusing has been my medicine that has cured my heart, helped me find my self-respect, and look back into the mirror without feeling ashamed." She told me, "Learning to Pause made me stronger, helped me stop the vicious circle of aggression and abuse in my family and gain respect among my relatives". I remember feeling so humbled listening to her testimony. These encounters were changing me inside. I was gently realizing that learning to Pause was offering this new possibility of freeing people from unproductive ways of relating and helping them find new alternatives that can transform the way they feel about themselves and their situation.

When I left Ecuador, I had a sense of having touched something really beautiful and precious. I could not entirely comprehend all that had happened, but I had somehow complete faith that it worked in supporting human development. What I witnessed in Ecuador was not exactly the Focusing process, as we know it. There were no special instructions for attunement, "clearing a space", finding a "handle" or "asking" questions. There was a deep and focused attention to the foundation of Focusing, the felt sense. From that place all the other steps could naturally flow from an inner-directed movement, rather than an external invitation by the facilitator. The process I had witnessed was much simpler, more playful, and deeply connected to the most essential condition for felt sensing: the ability to Pause, which in its essence is about, "Waiting, and being with what emerges." In its simplicity, the process felt true to the essence of what Focusing has been for me: a pathway for reconnecting with my humanity and a way for meeting the humanity of another person... "Putting nothing in between" (Gendlin, 1996).

Pause in Europe: The Journey Continues to New Lands

After coming back from Ecuador, we continued our discussions with William, and I joined the bi-weekly conversations with William and Mary Hendricks. As a participant-observer of the Pause workshops, I shared what I had witnessed in Ecuador and reflected on the new understandings that were emerging about FSL. The Focusing community was

getting quite interested in William's exercises and how to apply them in their own unique context. At the same time there was a sense that the Pause was a very familiar concept that all Focusers knew about.

Actually, I noticed that William was proposing a much more fundamental, much more natural kind of a Pause than the Pause we encountered during Focusing training—one that somebody can experience in their daily life without elaborate instructions, attunements or special places, but in the midst of his/her life. Mary's seminal paper on "The Revolutionary Pause" (2003) gave people a theoretical framework for understanding the Pause as a fundamental condition for felt sensing. But what seemed to becoming more intriguing for the Focusing community was not the definition and meaning of the Pause, but how William and his team in Ecuador had creatively implemented the Pause through a series of very simple, experiential exercises. Focusing trainers and coordinators from different parts of the world started contacting William to request the exercises he used during the workshops. This interest fuelled more invitations to share the exercises, to write a manual of the process, and to start spreading the work beyond the borders of Ecuador.

Our presentation at the Focusing International in Switzerland was the first European event that I co-facilitated with William. I remember being a little afraid of running a workshop with William, not only worried that we did not speak the same language, but concerned that I did not know well the whole process and order of the exercises. William was supportive, but very apprehensive about my wanting to set a fixed schedule of events during the workshop.

"This is not the way I do things," he told me the night before our presentation. "I never prepare my workshops in advance. I just follow what needs to be done in the moment." Hearing those words I panicked, realizing that I would be offering a workshop to an audience of experienced Focusers without having a concrete plan. Our first workshop together, despite my fears and worries, was beautiful. William was right. We did not need to prepare things; we just needed to trust our Pause and sense how the group was moving along with us. Slowly and gently I learned to overcome my fear by attending to my own quality of presence. Pausing and being connected were important ingredients in helping things unfold naturally.

After Switzerland, we offered eight more workshops in Italy and Malta. Two hundred people attended our presentations. Every workshop was a new experience, a new interaction, a gift of real presence and human connection. Diverse audiences, made up of people from different cultures, languages, vocations, gender and ages, came together to learn 'how to listen through the Pause'. During our European trip we worked with different NGOs, organizational leaders, and communities, including people who knew Focusing and those that had never heard anything about Focusing.

Despite the obvious external differences, many of the participants of our workshops responded in a universal way to the Power of the Pause to bring us right into our bodily felt experience and deeper place of connection with ourselves and others. We witnessed in different countries, contexts and settings, how the simple exercises we use during our Pause workshop were able to perform a little 'miracle', so after two and half or three hours people could look into each others eyes and become deeply moved by the profound simplicity of

learning to accompany another human being with and through the Pause. After the workshop, they were asking for ways to expand and bring the Pause to their 'world', creating more opportunities for spreading the Pause and FSL, beyond the boundaries of the workshop.

Bringing the "Literacy of the Pause" to places outside of Ecuador has provided a rich learning experience. It offered the opportunity to see how the Pause actually creates a space for understanding and connection that overcomes language or cultural barriers. Differences can be reduced, and affection and respect for one another can grow naturally.

THE PAUSE AS OUR TEACHER: LESSONS LEARNED

By implementing the Natural Pause in social development efforts in Ecuador and Europe, we have realized—starting with ourselves—that a deeper felt sense cannot form if the person fails to Pause. The Natural Pause provides the swiftest access to the felt sense.

We noticed that by pausing naturally, the fast thought-memory-knowledge process can calm down, become less strident and more accurate, including feeling and thinking in action, at the same time. Pausing can help an individual or a group to conserve and direct their energy in a more precise manner.

The Natural Pause is a space of silence. This special kind of silence is one of the best ways to listen to another human being naturally and not as an applied technique or intervention. Through the Pause, we learn to create space to "accompany the feeling of another", while being present to our own feelings. We have noticed that mutual eye contact implies a Natural Pause that holds the attention of the other person and help us go directly to our bodies and listen naturally.

We have learned that sharing the Natural Pause with people and communities doesn't need to be carried out in a special place, away from a person's everyday reality. The Natural Pause can be performed within the daily interactions. If a person pauses naturally, their context can pause too, as people and their contexts are not separate, but interrelated. In this way, pausing offers a real pathway to reducing violence in the interaction of individuals and generating peace and affection.

When a person pauses, he or she may interact less egocentrically. The Natural Pause allows a new human relationship to flourish, in which "something more..." than the usual and the mechanical may arise. This "something more..." may be more loving and more kind, allowing another type of interaction that is less conflicting, fragmented, greedy and selfish to emerge.

We have witnessed that "life is never locked into a fixated pattern, but people in some situations feel utterly fixated, when they are not in touch with their bodily ongoing life process" (Gendlin, 2011). Pausing allows individuals to be mindfully present when interacting with what is happening around them. Pausing naturally brings people to a place of more awareness of *their now, their moment, their present*, helping them widen their perception of the situation and overcome "fixed action patterns" (Hendricks-Gendlin, 2003).

Like yawning or breathing, the Natural Pause is a deeply personal process, inherent in all human beings. In a sense the Natural Pause is not a process to be taught. It is *already there* as a natural process. However, the workshop brings heightened awareness to this inner resource and allows people to experience the benefits of the Pause.

The Literacy of the Pause has come to humanize the development process and make it more complete. Acting from and with the body makes a fundamental difference in people's development and wellbeing, offering a great possibility for solving disputes and reducing violence in family and social relations in the communities. The Literacy of the Pause can be a driving force for Human development that puts human sustainability, before material sustainability. It can enable people to acknowledge that material wealth is not the most important element for daily cohabitation and wellbeing. Pausing allows us to expand our horizons of perception and action and supports us in increasing the effectiveness of our efforts to improve our life situation. In the end, pausing naturally is "waiting and trusting". In many cultures this is called FAITH.

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