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Audio-Visual Focusing

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AUDIO-VISUAL FOCUSING

Lucille Herman

INTRODUCTION

During the past two years as an art therapy student in the L4 program, my major concern and goal has been to research and decide upon a psychological framework which complements my philosophy. A secondary goal has been to design an individual treatment method which follows this framework and philosophy, fosters a sense of independence, self awareness and raises self esteem. While these goals are common to many therapists, each has to discover an appropriate modality and manner in which to implement them. I have used, and am familiar with an extensive array of media as both artist and therapist. The medium which suits my purposes most effectively is video. The utilization of video for its inherent properties, i.e. feedback loop, reflection, documentation, simultaneity, "live" or "real" time, and two-way communication constitute a substratum for fertile therapeutic application: therein lies its potential for facilitating a profound insightful experience for both client and therapist.



The thoughts expressed throughout this paper are the culmination of two years experience and experimenting with video equipment. They trace a personal learning experience manifested through a commitment to the Audio Visual Focusing technique I created. While working with alcoholic patients, I first used video to document and record activities for objective audio visual feedback. Whereas it can be said that formerly it was an introductory use of the technical applicability of video, in this project video was used specifically as an integral element with the subject and her process. Several years were necessary for my commitment to grow in order for this project to occur.

In treatment programs, video has been used in a variety of ways such as documentation of therapy sessions, supervisory and consultation work, feedback to group etc., however, to my knowledge it has not been used with "Focusing" as will be demonstrated in this pilot study. If the reader is not familiar with the Focusing technique, it will be helpful to turn to Appendix 1.

I have called this technique Audio Visual Focusing (AVF). The purpose of this specific treatment design is to encourage confidence of one's intuitive and perceptive abilities with the goal to learn to function as one's own teacher. Employing AVF provides the focuser with the rare opportunity to see and hear herself. Focusing without video implies reflections are made by the listener. Without access to physical images, the client relies on the listener's perceptions of herself; when the method includes video however, the client can see how she appears and sounds. She learns at her own speed. Knowing that everything is recorded on the tape offers the client the opportunity to choose what

to see and hear; she can concentrate on certain issues and ignore others. The significance lies in the choice to examine the whole picture and to create meaning from it. The motivating factor and ultimate goal of this design is for the client to work independently without a guide. The philosophical and social implications are far reaching and will be discussed in Study Results.

This project will demonstrate an adaptation of Eugene Gendlin's technique: Focusing and Active Listening, combined with a feedback loop using video. This is a qualitative pilot study limited to 4 subjects including myself. There are 3 variables addressed in this study: person, process and equipment. Joined they form a loop. Here the loop functions symbolically as reflection, continuity and completion. A feedback loop using video means that the output of video has an effect and impact on the input. Both input and output interact to form a loop which is a completed system. "The feedback is the control of a machine on the basis of its actual performance rather than its expected performance." (Schwartz, Human Connection and the New Media, 1973, p. 55). The loop implies continuity of an action, repeated continuously at will as a single entity.

The purposes of this project were to identify and describe the Audio Visual Focusing technique, document my learning process, define by position as artist and art therapist, and work on research with unforeseen conclusions. A commitment was made to employ Focusing as a treatment method. Learning and teaching Focusing as a technique took 7 months of research and overcoming personal resistance towards a final acceptance. The learning process involved 4 months of attending Changes, a

weekly reflective listening group based on Gendlin's method, extensive reading, a 12 hour workshop led by two teachers from the Focusing Institute, and one on one training sessions in Focusing. Personal conflict and resistance were overcome by allowing myself to accept the value of someone's technique as opposed to the lure of personal interpretation. The dedication to Focusing is based on a personal experience of its value as well as a belief in its far reaching potential as a meaningful therapeutic tool.

The choice of video as the preferred medium is based on its manifold possibilities. Video offers the opportunity to maintain records which function either as educational, supervisory, or documentary tools. For teaching and supervision, tapes can be shown to staff, clients, and trainees. The "audience" can interact directly with the information on the tape (Schwartz, 1973; Battcock, 1978). Since the recording reflects the moment, the tape can be used to observe behavior which occurs in "real time" during a therapeutic encounter. Role modeling as well as initiation and practice of new behavior can be effectively demonstrated on tape. While a trust level between client and therapist is in its early stage of development, sessions can be recorded and played back without the therapist's intervention. It is sufficient to let the client remain with her own perception of the experience. On the other hand, while the therapist watches herself, she can comment on her style and reactions and thus serve as a role model for the client until the latter is ready to verbalize her experience.

The decision to use a fixed camera when a person is working alone (with the option of a moving camera if a camera person is available and

requested by the focuser) seemed logical. With a fixed camera, the focuser needs only be concerned with manipulation of deck and monitor which simplifies the process. With a moving camera, a camera person can choose to modify the focus for specific emphasis; however, while this creates a certain aesthetic quality, it also introduces a subjective element since what is recorded depends on the camera person's judgment and aesthetic choice rather than the focuser's objective confrontation.

The monitor can be thought of metaphorically as a reflective screen or mirror image as demonstrated by video artists such as Campus, Jonas, Gillette, Graham, to name a few. Both reflection and screen imply the occurrence of an interactive process between viewer and machine. The process is two fold and begins with a passive receptive experience: that is, the participant listens to and watches the tape and can choose the quantity and quality of material to receive. This in itself is an experience and contains potential for analysis. The second aspect is active introspection. As the information is being received, it is assimilated into the person's sense of experiencing. While introspection might at first appear passive, it is a dynamically actual process. With the use of a monitor the viewer has the rare opportunity to interact with her image, to experience, observe, listen, confront and receive.

There are two parts to this study: a written component and a video demonstration tape. The written part consists of 5 chapters: an integration of resources based on a theoretical description of art and metaphor approached from a psychological, philosophical and practical point of view; a study methodology which contains a narrative description of the process including materials, population and setting; a critique

consisting of a discussion of future implications and limitations; study results and appendix. The appendix includes a step by step outline of Focusing and other information (touched upon in the paper itself) necessary for a comprehensive understanding of the topic. The tape is a demonstration of the technique integrated with a statement based on the relevance of feedback and its application when used with video.

"It is (my) thesis (...) that society can only be understood through a study of messages and communication facilities which belong to it; and that in the future development of these messages and communication facilities, messages between man and machine, between machine and machine, are destined to play an ever increasing part."

(Schwartz, 1973, p. 53).

INTEGRATION OF SOURCES

The framework for this chapter consists of a description of the Focusing steps supported by theoretical data, paralleled by related personal experiences and the meaning of art and art therapy. For internal consistency, I found it necessary to combine my experience with the bibliographic material, this motivation being implied by the title. The empiric component is intended to concretize the referential theories, and facilitate the reader's identification. For the sake of structural clarity, subdivisions are made in the paragraphs; they are not indented and occur throughout the paper.

Focusing is a specific step by step self-help method created by Dr. Eugene Gendlin, author and professor in the Behavioral Sciences Department at the University of Chicago. While the method is described extensively in Focusing, its theoretical and philosophical foundation

is exposed in Experience and the Creation of Meaning, both written by Gendlin. Briefly, Focusing is a guide to the internal process, the unconscious. If the technique is practiced correctly, the focuser achieves deeper sense of self, physical release of tension, heightened awareness of inner experience which contributes to the creation of personal meaning. Focusing is based on Eastern and existential philosophical concepts (spiritual outcome of the experience and the individual's choice to create own meaning).

Combining Focusing with video to create Audio Visual Focusing was a natural step in my evolution as an art therapist and evolved from having devoted much time and energy to the search for a psychological framework and treatment design. This search involved a creative learning experience, the evolutionary process of the pilot study, and the subsequent creation of the technique. The process drew substance from personal experience and was strongly supported by readings from Clive Bell, early 20th century art critic, in Art, Rollo May, existential humanist psychologist, in The Courage to Create, and Wassily Kandinsky, early 20th century Russian painter, philosopher, teacher and member of Der Blaue Reiter (a group of artists residing in Germany whose paintings expressed inner vision) in Point and Line to Plane and Concerning the Spiritual in Art. Among the many authors read for this project, the three mentioned were significant in that they helped clarify and gave new form to my ideas as artist and therapist.

One of the most important commitments I made was the acceptance of the responsibilities to being a practicing artist--that is to say, a profound identification with that function rather than solely its

activity. The impetus for this commitment came from the practicing of Focusing, for I began discovering, exploring and creating meaningful reality. Simultaneously Kandinsky's theories gave my thoughts a metaphorical direction. The very title of the book Point and Line to Plane, expresses the form of a process: the original point giving direction to the line which is then shaped into the plane. This chapter will identify the total experience, and specifically, deal with the combination of Focusing and video as a "privileged" therapeutic tool; it will also attempt to show the responsibilities of the artist and art therapist, and the spiritual and healing quality of art. The cited authors were chosen because of the commonality of some aspects of their aesthetic and spiritual ideas, and their implied philosophical relationship with Focusing. However, as in the nature of creativity, each theoretical position is explored through a unique means of expression. Connections between this study and art therapy will be explored. Specific headings have not been devised to separate topics, e.g., art therapy, philosophy, etc. The reader is advised to consider the overlap which exists as a general framework for an art therapy experience.

Understanding the connection between creating Audio Visual Focusing and a commitment to personal growth, I was eager to test the effectiveness of the technique "on" others. As with anything new and not yet assimilated, the presentation of information to participants and colleagues was difficult. There were moments of shyness and uncertainty.

"I consider the greatest difficulty to be overcome (...) by untrained (writers) is lack of confidence. They are too-self-conscious. When once the pen is in the hand, it's important to forget about the opinion of others and to write away after your fashion with careless indifference."

(Ghiselin, The Creative Process, 1952, p. 179).

Until I could take myself seriously and recognize the worth of my achievement I felt self-conscious, thereby lessening my effectiveness.

Using the Focusing steps as a framework, a discussion of the similarities between the Focusing experience and the referential theories will follow, including the psychological overlap which leads from one step to the next.

The first step in Focusing is "clearing the space" or taking inventory of concerns at hand. As each concern is identified, it is figuratively set aside or placed "outside the mind."

While work progressed on this project, there were obstacles to overcome, such as resistance to forming new solutions, especially concerning the presentation tape. Acknowledging my status as a novice in all aspects of tape production, I had no idea how complex and time consuming video production actually was. For example, the script was thwarted several times - as a consequence of inexperience and unreasonable expectations. Each time plans fouled and I became reluctant to let go of an idea, creativity was stalemated and awareness close circuited (Lerner, 1977). Upon encounter of each block, it was necessary to stop and identify what was really happening inside the body before resuming work. This phase resembles the period when an artist prepares materials and sorts out subject matter before commencing work. One of the psychological effects regarding the tape production was anxiety. Anxiety assumes the form of rootlessness or shapelessness, yet it is crucial in the struggle for order. The creative person seeks order from chaos. Without chaos the resulting anxiety, new forms could not be created, symbols and patterns could not evolve. There was no question in my mind relating to the

commitment to create a new tape; yet the struggle to write the most appropriate script became so intense that the project was almost abandoned. To lose oneself in negative thoughts may be seductive and tempting, as it is at times easier than creating new meaning, but this is a trick of the mind. Falling into negativism reinforces it and can lead one astray. However, courage to go beyond those mind games is a test to our creativity (Learner, 1977; Weiner, 1969).

The second step "the Felt Sense", was beginning to come into play at this point. As the resistance reached its apex, the solution to the problem appeared. From the struggle to create, came the breakthrough - and the struggle occurred over and over. In the process of Focusing, it is advisable to let go of an issue for a new understanding to arise. For a new idea to form, a past idea is destroyed (May, The Courage to Create, 1975, p. 9).

Picasso said: "Every act of creation is an act of destruction." Courage is implicit in destruction as well as creation. According to May, creative courage is the ability to reinforce sensitivity, responsibility, and awareness in order to create new forms. However, the risk in struggling for order is that it may lead to despair. "Courage is not the absence of despair, it is the ability to move ahead in spite of despair." (May, 1975, p. 3).

In the preceding example, the identified issues were resistance combined with unreasonable self-expectations. Once the problems were identified, the second step could begin to unfold.

The second step of Focusing is vital to one's understanding of it: it is getting the "Felt Sense", the body's sense of its problems and

solutions. In The Courage to Create, May describes 4 kinds of courage man is expressing in contemporary society; one type is physical courage. "Physical courage", rather than an expenditure of force, means being in tune with the body, listening to it, thereby reaffirming its existence.

"Your body knows the direction of healing and life. If you take the time to listen to it through focusing, it will give you the steps in the right direction."

(Gendlin, Focusing, 1978, p. 77).

The "Felt Sense" appears as an ambiguous form in the body, and relays a message to the focuser. The viewer peering into a microscope might see amoeba-like images, jumbles of words and associations. For clarity to occur, the focuser finds a handle work, or images, to articulate the "Felt Sense". The focuser delves into the experience as an explorer, and finds what it is all about, as an artist actually beginning to work on a painting.

The aforementioned process might entail anxiety or struggle before the issue assumes coherent form. Thus begins the existential challenge to create meaning, a struggle existing within the focuser (as with anybody) searching for a sense in life. As an art therapist, I can facilitate and guide a client to discovery of new forms and symbols through AVF. "Without struggle, I am like a ship without a rudder" said Edward Munch, the 20th century Norwegian artist. Effort, concrete and abstract, is a prerequisite for discovery and illumination. Concretely AVF, used with a facilitator or alone, is an aid to discovering and supporting self knowledge through insight; abstractly, motivation is required for

the client and/or facilitator to attain deeper understanding. Describing this concept, Kandinsky selected an appropriate quote:

"for the man who does not strive tirelessly, who does not fight continually against sinking, will mentally and morally go under."

(Kandinsky, Concerning the Spiritual in Art, 1914, p. 7).

Striving pertains particularly to those on a spiritual journey.

Writing in the early part of the 20th century, Bell described the artistic process as similar to a Focusing experience. His hypotheses state that the necessary qualities found in a masterful piece of art include significant form and aesthetic emotion. Significant form is the harmonious combination of line and form (including color) which contributes to the spiritual dimension of art. The aesthetic emotion, different from other emotions, corresponds to the Felt Sense.

"But a felt sense is not an emotion like anger, fear, hate, joy or anxiety, it is a sense of your total emotional situation, a feel of many things together, in which an emotion can be embodied or from which an emotion is produced."

(Gendlin, 1978, p. 97).

Cezanne was a model of a master painter; he took irrelevant detail and transformed it into significance, consequently painting the essence of his subject and evoking aesthetic emotion. Cezanne's paintings exemplify his Felt Sense of a subject.

While Bell named significant form and aesthetic emotion the essential qualities in art, Kandinsky spoke of harmony of inner need, that is, being aware of one's inner spirit or vision. Kandinsky's guiding principles of art demand the artist's heeding his inner need and arriving

at a coherent point of contact between inner and outer expression which is then transmitted through the use of line, form and color. Color touches the human soul and plays a distinctive role in achieving harmony in art, and in those who view it. Kandinsky formulated detailed theories concerning color, its placement and corresponding effect. He identified each color with specific qualities, correlated to psychological feelings.

Both Kandinsky and Bell believed that through the use of color the artist has the power to awake subtle emotions in others, and work towards "a refinement of the human soul" (Kandinsky, 1914, p. 24). Talented artists have the potential to create forms of a transcendent quality; however, if they lack passion, the painting is ineffective. Talent is a passive quality for either it exists or not, but for talent to surface and serve as active function, it needs an emotional counterpart to allow significance to emerge. Such an emotion is passion.

Following the Felt Sense and exploration comes the "Shift", accompanied by illumination. Shifts run the gamut from minor to major. A major bodily shift can be perceived as a religious experience, can be sensed as a warm feeling streaming throughout the body, and functions as a reinforcement of a higher sense of awareness and self.

Focusing is an insight oriented creative encounter. In The Courage to Create, May describes specific steps occurring during a creative act which are enumerated below. Necessary to any project are hard work and commitment. Authentic commitment emerges from the centeredness of one's being and relates to the intensity of the inner vision. Hard work alternated with relaxation contributes to sudden illumination or insight. Even though certainty of insight exists, it may be in conflict

with present held views which in turn to create anxiety. There is a lag between the past and the present in the creation of new forms. The old perception of the self is in conflict with the present relationship to the world and a struggle surfaces. From the struggle for congruence, a breakthrough will occur.

Insight in Focusing is accelerated by the use of video. Using video intensifies the therapeutic experience through confrontation, feedback and reflection. Since the impact of video is powerful, the facilitator needs to be cautious and sensitive to the client's experience - as in any therapeutic encounter.

Video is an important means of contemporary communication. It is fast, confrontive, real, and allows for spontaneity. "The images we make (film, video) are part of our minds; they are living organisms that carry on our mental lives for us, darkly, whether we pay them any mind or not." (Davis/Simmons, The New Television: A Public/Private Art, 1977, p. 30). I will add to that remark that not only for being made, but for being seen, do images become part of our mind. In my personal growth, the need to confront myself directly is crucial. Video offers direct objective feedback, which is self-confrontation. Margaret Keyes, an art therapist, videotapes her clients in preliminary sessions so they can observe themselves (Observing through feedback) "itself causes changes" (Keyes, The Inward Journey, 1974, p. 4). The emergence of a shift is provoked by the fact that what is experienced and seen with video is usually unexpected. In AVF, I found the shift accelerated due to the technologic component. I find this method justified as an art therapy modality for it is a means to create new forms, symbols and

patterns and meaningful to the client through visualization. The creation of the technique evolved through motivation, commitment, and search for meaning.

As an art therapist, my responsibilities lie in acting consciously with each client on as many levels of awareness as possible. Art content comes from within the body and is transferred concretely in the form of an image as product. Verbal comments by the client give relevance to the image and meaning to the experience (Betensky).

Artists have social responsibilities; they are the "spiritual teachers of the world. For their teaching to have weight, it must be comprehensible." (Kandinsky, 1914, p. 7). Art therapy actualizes this philosophical theory; it is a concrete application of the quoted statement. My responsibility is to offer others the opportunity of a creative outlet for both inner feelings and vision.

Bell's ideas on significant form emphasized the spiritual, healing quality of art. To be religious is to have "an uncompromising belief that some things matter more than others." (Bell, Art, 1958, p. 68). Concomitant with its spiritual element, is the healing quality of art, which I have personally experienced through my work. When I look back at my drawings from May to September, it is evident that so much of what I was unable to express verbally appeared in my work.

Kandinsky firmly believed in the metaphysical potential of art, and that artists will proclaim the spiritual revolution and play a role in its manifestation. Both Bell and Kandinsky's aesthetic philosophies are based to a large degree on the transcendental dimension of art rather than only on aesthetic qualities. For being in touch with the deepest

part of the self, artists convey spiritually through their work, perceived by the sensitive viewer.

The following chapter will consist of a description in narrative form of the AVF technique as a creative learning experience.

STUDY METHODOLOGY

- MATERIALS. Equipment vital to Audio Visual Focusing is a camera, monitor, microphone and tape. Minimal technical knowledge is sufficient.

- PROCEDURE. In the initial phase, it is advisable to work with a partner. One person can handle the technical aspect, while the other focuses. As soon as one is reasonably comfortable with the equipment, the system can be managed independently.

- AUDIO VISUAL FOCUSING. This technique can be done independently or with a guide. It is preferable to use a guide in the beginning.

1. Subject sits in front of recording camera, wears a mike. Monitor and deck are nearby.
2. Subject clears space and comes to a Felt Sense as with focusing procedure. Speaks aloud if desired and commences the monologue.
3. When finished speaking, turns off camera, writes counter number of tape on paper, and rewinds tape to the beginning of monologue. Turns on monitor and watches playback, listens passive receptively. When finished watching tape, turns monitor off, pushes record and play buttons on deck to resume recording, turns camera on and returns to chair in front of camera.
4. Subject resumes speaking, responds to tape and continues monologue with rest of focusing steps. Repeats step 3 until finished.

- POPULATION. The subjects were four women including myself. Three of the women are practicing artists, two of whom are video artists. One woman worked as an art therapist, and has a background in social work and counseling. Each woman has been married and divorced. One has remarried and has a child, the others remain single and are pursuing their respective careers. All the women have graduate level education and are between 29 and 34 years old. They had previous therapeutic involvement, and are knowledgeable of the therapeutic process. The rationale for selecting a high functioning population when experimenting with a new technique is that it serves to create a standard, and a frame of reference, from which other populations can then be compared.

The subjects selected were personal friends, thereby eliminating a screening procedure and saving time. There was a sense of eagerness and excitement shared by all, participants as well as myself.

- SITE. Working with the women took in their respective homes. They had video equipment and assisted me technically. Basically the home atmosphere was relaxed. In two out of three we were alone. In the third instance, another household member was present. The effect was that we were slightly inhibited and allowed ourselves to be dependent on that person for technical expertise. When alone, we were more experimental, more confident and serious in our work.

Whether or not there was another person, anxiety existed on some level. The subjects were unsure how they would respond and I was anxious for the same reason. For the most part, anxiety dissipated as time passed.

- VIDEO TAPE PROCESS. Herein follows a description of the tape production from a historical and personal perspective. To date, the project has been in existence for a period of 7 months. This time span will be divided into three phases. Phase I: May through July, a time of initial planning, recording and basic research; Phase II: August, weekly taping sessions with subjects, a time of repose; Phase III: September through November, confrontation of aspirations versus reality, then transformation and evolution.

PHASE I

Each of the subjects, Betty, Connie, Ellen and myself were taped. Betty was enthusiastic and caught on to the technique quickly with minimal resistance. Connie voiced resistance; she wanted to limit the sessions to four, and was hesitant to delve into personal issues. Ellen was eager to learn the technique and subsequently realized she needed to exercise an active type of behavioral therapy, rather than pursue an introspective modality. As fourth subject, I was enthusiastic, nervous and excited. The subjects will be discussed further in this chapter.

May was a significant month in my personal development, as described in Integration of Sources relating to the commitment made as a practicing artist with the impetus derived from Focusing and the inspiration from Kandinsky's Point and Line to Plane.

PHASE II

During June and July, the concept of "connections" symbolized my focus. It was vital for me to discover the relation between life and death, an issue originating from my father's illness and subsequent death. Similarly, I had to integrate learning and teaching processes, i.e. learning to deliver information about the technique and teaching it, and integrating the conception, realizing and actuating my thinking in writing for the sake of clarification and communication.

PHASE III

Plans and expectations backfired and smoldered. Relinquishing idea after idea in quick succession, led to a shift in the direction of the project. The change was from thoughts of a spectacular production to those of a realistic thesis presentation. "The only time we can have what we long for are those moments when we stop grasping for it." (Kopp, If You Meet the Buddha on the Road, Kill Him, 1976, p. 65).

The effect of reading Rank was gaining awareness that a personal stance as artist and as art therapist was necessary. The need and the definition of a position were equally important. My theoretical structure can be called humanist-existential, the theoretical application of my philosophy can be realized through facilitating others in the creation of meaningful reality with Audio Visual Focusing as an art therapist.

SUBJECTS

"... that the patient tends more and more to become his own therapist (through meaningful contact with materials) is highly important, for thus he is able to cooperate with the therapist."

(Lyddiatt, Spontaneous Painting and Modeling, 1971, p. XIV)

Just as each experience with a subject was unique, only the beginning of their process was similar. The subjects began with initial curiosity, skepticism, a degree of resistance coupled with enthusiasm, and later followed by acknowledgement of the technique's effectiveness. The technique's transparency was unexpected. Each person adapted the design to accommodate her personal style. For the first subject, Betty, the technique unfolded smoothly. She exhibited no overt difficulty. We had several preliminary sessions before we taped. When we taped, she demonstrated an understanding and awareness of both the Felt Sense and Shift. Once she experienced the Shift, her resistance, which was minimal, subsided and she worked with enthusiasm. Her emphasis was on integrating body and self images. Betty was image oriented rather than verbal. Images therefore appeared easily, related to the transitional feelings she had in her professional context and her self image as a woman. Her vision had a symbolic and mythological quality. Using Audio Visual Focusing, she was able to make meaningful statements to herself about her present reality, and was interested to pursue the identified issues further.

Her confirmation that the technique was effective was important to me in the beginning phase of the project; however, this experience prompted me to believe that the process would be equally comprehensible with the

following subjects.

When Connie, the second participant, was resistant to the active listening, I was taken aback. Of all the subjects, she had the most practical therapeutic experience; I expected minimal difficulty. In fact, she was the one person I should have been prepared for in that respect, simply because of her past experience. My expectations rested on the assumption that since Connie had been a therapist, she would carry that knowledge with her as subject. Throughout she felt awkward with active listening - many people react similarly in the initial stage (Hart, Tomlison, 1970). The teaching process was primarily role modeling. Connie's first monologue was lengthy; she discussed her images and their relevance to her, as she, also, was image oriented. Her images were of soldiers in battle, and her associations related to the necessity she felt in maintaining a strong front at that time, and minimalizing her emotional concerns. In spite of her elaborate monologue, she did not lose sight of what she said after watching the playback, and experienced a shift. Nevertheless, in the final analysis her preference in therapy was to establish a therapeutic relationship as opposed to working independently. Her needs at that moment reflected her preference for therapeutic dialogue.

The priority before commencing with the third subject, was to locate equipment and find a dependable site. At that time, there was no specific person in mind. While discussing my plight with Ellen, a close friend of mine, we decided to work together at her friend's home where equipment was available.

When Ellen and I finally began to work together, I made fewer

explanations and had more expectations because of our intense mutual comprehension. My error was to lose sight of a beginner's frame of reference. Ellen was frustrated since her experience with Focusing did not result in the ultimate "cure", but more so because she was not interested in this type of therapy, as mentioned earlier. She thought she was already too self involved, judgmental and overly introspective. Since I role modelled with an image orientation, Ellen felt, obligated to assume the same approach and was hampered by her difficulty in doing so. My frustration was the consequence of impatience in starting to teach another subject the process from the beginning and preoccupation with personal matters.

There were times when Ellen veered from her analytical, logical style. For instance, when speaking about how she felt one day when looking in the mirror, she said: "I feel beautiful and maybe the only thing needed to begin feeling that way is to smile. What a difference a smile can make." Her face was radiant while she spoke which was precisely the expression of a shift, although it was difficult for her to acknowledge the experience. During another session, she mentioned how the smile had made such a difference then, while this time it did not matter at all.

Even though Ellen was eager to learn, she was indeed resistant, and labeled this obstacle: boredom. Her constraint propelled me to reevaluate our process. Conferring with my advisor, we discussed resistance as a protective device, a built-in self preservation mechanism, and concluded that each person discovers intuitively the quantity, quality, and time to reveal information to others or to themselves. Time

is an element which cannot be forced. Instead of "breaking resistance", it is more important to respect the person's own rhythm, and support her when she prepares to show signs of readiness to change.

Ellen worked a total of 12 hours. By the final session there was still some reticence, however the change throughout the project was noticeable. In the first session, Ellen would scarcely talk about her Focusing experience, and did not do active listening. Five sessions later, she was responding to the playback, doing active listening and able to acknowledge the Shift.

If served as a role model, and showed each subject the entire procedure at least twice. The first session was memorable because I witnessed the potential success of the AVF technique and was convinced of its therapeutic value. Two incidents were instrumental in my learning process. The first one occurred while concluding a Focusing session when Ellen remarked in passing: "don't limit yourself." This comment in itself provoked a shift since it was exactly pointing to my present behavior. The realization that I did not allow myself time to experience was important information, personally and professionally. The shift made me actualize this concept, 'com-prehend' it.

The second incident was of a different nature. Finishing the monologue, I was ready to watch the playback, when I found out that, by mistake, the audio had recorded: there were only images and no sound. As I watched, I recalled how weighty and cumbersome the words were, and how refreshing it was to only watch. The words contributed to chaos while silence created a shift.

Both incidents demonstrated the significance of reflection, and the

varied ways one can experience a shift. In one case, the reflection related to a restricted thought process, in the other case, to nonverbal awareness.

The use of metaphor enlarges the scope of understanding and encourages universal communication.

"A metaphor achieves a new meaning. It does this by drawing on old experience and by using symbols that already have some other old familiar meaning. Metaphors differ from ordinary meaningful symbols in that they do not simply refer - as ordinary symbols do - to their habitual felt meaning. Rather, the metaphor applies the symbols and their ordinary felt meaning to a new area of experience, and thereby creates a new meaning."

(Gendlin, Experience and the Creation of Meaning, 1962, p. 113).

This project reads as a metaphor for creative learning experience: the foci being to investigate the effectiveness of a particular technique, to experiment and explore my learning process. I regard May through January as the overall framework for the Focusing experience, during which time, numerous events which represented Shifts in my understanding and reality structure, merged. I anticipate a major bodily shift to occur upon completion of this project.

Audio Visual Focusing pushes this technique to another dimension; it is an application of modern technology to further self-awareness and communication. Confrontation of the image by the observer is another way of describing an encounter between reflection and reality.

An important task in this study was to explore the interface between reflection and reality in an objective manner. With the utilization of technology, the requirements of objectivity were met. The objectivity

of camera and tape is so indisputable that image and sound trigger a response from the observer. When subjective and objective poles meet in an encounter, a creative act results, says May (May, 1975). The discovery that results from the interface between the reflection and reality is a creative act. How the act is perceived and subsequently handled, depends on the idiosyncratic style of each subject.

Participation in the process is intense and introspective; as is the case for any other form of therapy, it is not recommended for every population. For whom it is best suited demands further investigation. The experience is as intense as one wills it. It is the will and willingness that makes the ultimate difference in an experience, remarks Rank in Art and Artist. The most rewarding goal of therapy is to make a subject aware of her own willingness to experience as fully as possible.

The population working on this study was high functioning. With each new population modifications need to be considered. The strength of a technique lies in its ability to adapt to the widest range possible of settings and clients. However, since Focusing has been successfully tested on a broad range of populations from high functioning to schizophrenic, it seems reasonable to hypothesize a similar degree of effectiveness holds true for this technique.

The technique explored in this paper derives from Focusing and is an adaptation of it. What is significant is that the ideas are based on Gendlin's and existential philosophy, with credit attributed accordingly. The technique originated from wanting to further personal growth, and Audio Visual Focusing offered the opportunity to explore self

confrontation and reflection. It was important to see and confront my image presented in an objective manner.

The experience of inventing a technique, forming a pilot study and testing its value warrants attention. As in the last step in Focusing, "Receiving the information," it is important to let myself be receptive to the product of creativity. Receiving the information is the final step. Assimilation of insight is an inner organism experience which necessitates "being with it" to absorb the full impact. To have faith and confidence in my ability to create meaningful work is as important as my commitment to being a practicing artist. This constant reevaluation and modification through practice constitutes a loop of which the parameters are creativity, commitment and passion.

The culmination of this experience was manifested in writing this critique. The personal importance of this work lies in a behavioral pattern which demanded confrontation and exploration. The struggle was to slow down, assess and work with existing data rather than to rush ahead in new directions. Passive receptivity. May describes passive receptivity as the time when the artist "appears" unproductive, when he mulls over material, and clarifies his information from an introspective view (May, 1973, p. 27). William James appropriately stated: "we learn to swim in the winter and to skate in the summer." It is a time of internal activity. Not until the artist assimilates the material can she step forward. The critique served that very function. As presented here, it consists of a discussion of the subjects, the tape and teaching process.

Gendlin notes (through 25 years of research working with audio tape

recordings of clients in therapeutic sessions) that it was possible to detect from the start the potentially successful client. He could identify it through a change in the client's manner of speaking, and in his silence. The client speaks, modifies what has been said and then says "no, that's not right", pauses again, modifies his words, etc. The silence intrigued Gendlin. Clients exhibiting this behavior were statistically the most predictable candidates for successful therapy. From that discovery, Gendlin coined the bodily or "Felt Sense" and consequently the Focusing steps.

To what extent does this pilot study substantiate the aforementioned data? This was a limited pilot study; therefore, the accumulated data are not sufficient to formulate statistical conclusions. Subjects 1 and 4 appeared most receptive to change and introspection, whereas subjects 2 and 3 had other needs at the time and consequently were resistant to the process. While speaking, all subjects demonstrated selective reconsideration of thoughts articulated. In conclusion, I speculate that the 4 subjects, if motivated to change, would be successful subjects. Naturally the choice of treatment design depends on personal taste and makes one form of therapy more appropriate for certain individuals than others.

The subjects in this study were my friends. There were advantages and disadvantages with such a choice. Since we were familiar with each other's history and personalities, we were able to integrate unspoken information into our dialogue, thereby enriching the experience. We followed client-centered concepts in that we were genuine, empathic, supportive, and for the most part congruent. A trust level had long

been established. As a consequence of our friendship, it was difficult at times to discriminate between roles as friend, facilitator, subject and student. The main disadvantage was the subjects' diminished investment as difficulty arose in the learning process and their lack of interest in introspective therapy. Whether advisable or not, I did not prepare them beforehand for the intensity and involvement required in learning this process. Occasionally, my assumptions were inaccurate; since the technique was easy for me I took things for granted and lost sight of their frames of reference. In future investigations, candidates would be selected more methodologically; they would be screened, contracts would be designed and agreed upon.

Intuitive thinking was the mainstay of this project, supported by readings from Bell, May, Lerner, etc. From subject selection to readings to tape production, the process depended on each preceding step. While subject selection was primarily based on availability and interest, friends' interest in the project prompted asking for their participation. The most stable component was the bibliography. Beginning with a proposed reading list, there were few deviations. Tape production and teaching were another matter. Each time something appeared within grasp, a stumbling block diverted its course. Each change was significant in that fixed ideas were pushed to their limit, and alternatives became new solutions facilitating progress. Ultimately it meant being receptive.

The difficulties encountered while working on the tape were dependency on others for equipment and technical expertise, a lack of funds to rent equipment and to pay participants. However, the most difficult

aspect of all to bear was my overly critical self! With this experience, a groundwork has been established for future projects of this or similar nature. With a more comprehensive perspective of the financial and technical components, the aforementioned difficulties will be lessened in the next project.

The importance of not making assumptions or checking them out when not functioning, and not taking anything for granted is of uppermost significance while teaching. In further studies, I could hand out xeroxed instructions describing the method, and instead of working with 3 subjects on a short term basis I could work for 3 or 4 months teaching small groups creating a staggered group situation. In that way I imagine there would always be at least one group member sufficiently familiar with the technique willing to assist others when necessary, thereby creating group cohesiveness. Not being explicit enough and not having created a measuring device to evaluate subjects' progress and understanding were the two negative criticisms seen in this approach. The project would be organized differently in the future; it would begin with an introduction to Focusing, an explanation of the steps, subjects' demonstration of a practical comprehension accompanied by an evaluative device to note their readiness to using video. While more time might be necessary to spend acquainting another group with video, this pilot study group had no difficulty whatsoever. Many people experiencing video for the first time feel threatened and intruded upon, therefore the initial stage of preparation and introduction would of necessity be slow.

A most interesting insight occurred upon realizing that this entire project represented a large scale focusing experience. "Clearing the

Space" and taking inventory was represented by the concern in choosing a thesis, selecting subjects and deciding to make a tape; delving deeply enough to allow the unknown to surface related to the sense of the enormity of the task at hand and its implications; exploring and getting the "Felt Sense" was confronting my fears of capability and success, taking myself seriously; finding out what it was all about, or asking questions, was confronted in the writing and struggling with personal and other conflicts.

STUDY RESULTS

According to this study, the Audio Visual Focusing technique is effective. It is most valuable with people receptive to insightful therapy. If a person learns the technique and is interested to do introspective work, this serves as a multi-dimensional tool for body/mind awareness. Body/mind awareness differs from a bioenergetic, or body language, position; it means getting the bodily felt sense. This difference is significant. When working with resistant clients, the approach needs to be slowed down considerably; meanwhile, if necessary, it can be adapted to concentrate on one aspect of the technique, i.e. clearing the space, depending on the therapist's discretion. I believe this technique is most worthwhile for long term use. Research has shown that video therapy for behavioral means loses its effectiveness when not used consistently (Berger, 1970).

Depending on one's critical judgment, it is important for a therapist to guide the novice in the beginning. Without doubt, a person's experience is enriched with a therapists' guidance. When working alone, it is easy to overlook parts of the experience; although it also allows one to proceed at a natural speed. This independence was the prime motivating factor in my choosing Focusing and ultimately creating this technique. Until the experience of having worked through stuck points, it is suggested the client remains with a guide. Recognizing how to deal with and focus on issues comes with practice and time.

Results of the Audio Visual Focusing technique can be measured by asking the following questions: - does the subject use data from the playback

and to what extent? - does she observe her behavior as seen on the playback and does she make references to it in the recording? - is she aware of body image, posture, Felt Sense? - does she understand the Felt Sense? - is she able to focus and work through an issue? - does the Shift occur? Answers to these questions are an indication of the extent to which the client has assimilated the technique. Since this has been a pilot study, it is difficult to state conclusive results. Nonetheless each subject had a strongly moving experience which gives credence to the transparency and adaptability of the technique.

The unexpected component was the extent to which this was an effective and powerful experience.

The foreseen difficulty is the inaccessability of video equipment outside of an institutional setting due to its expense and the technical expertise required for overall operation.

If the equipment is available, however, the social and philosophical implications of utilization of an independent self help method such as Audio Visual Focusing are far reaching. Developing and following a sense of heightened awareness of inner experience as a guide, enriches meaning in one's personal reality, and aids in surpassing experiences known in the past. The more self trust in the inner experience a person has, the less susceptible he/she is to external influences, consequently affirming and encouraging self direction and development of personal style. The more people realize they can create their own personal meaning, the more valuably manifested will be their contribution to self and others.

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APPENDIX

FOCUSING METHOD - CREATED BY EUGENE GENDLIN, Ph.D.

Find a comfortable place to sit - although not so comfortable that you might fall asleep. Work alone or with an Active Listener*.

1. Clearing the Space

Ask yourself how you are, don't answer, let whatever comes come, don't fall into feelings, and greet each thing as it comes.

Pick a problem, whatever concerns you most.

2. Getting the Felt Sense

Feel the whole problem, what it feels like, remain with that feeling (what makes it feel so bad, sad, etc.) don't answer just be with it.

Let words and/or images surface from groin to neck area.

3. Finding a Handle Word

Go back and forth between words or images and the feeling, try to get them to match.

If feeling or words change, follow them.

* Active Listener: someone who listens and responds by restating what has been said, never interprets, guides focuser to a deeper meaning, ideally does more than paraphrase though concentrates on the speaker's frame of reference and not his own.

4. Resonating with the Word

When you get a perfect match, words or images fitting perfectly, let yourself feel that for a minute.

5. Ask about it

Perhaps the most important part of Focusing. Ask question to find what is the worst of the feeling, what it provokes, needs (comfort, etc.). Let words come from the feeling, and let it explain itself to you. What would it feel like if it were ok, let the body answer. What is in the way of that? Could I come back to it later?

6. When you feel a release of tension, a Shift, feel its impact in your body and stay with it.

SPECIFICS ABOUT FOCUSING

In Focusing one attends to the BODILY SENSED "Edge" of how a problem exists concretely in the body.

This is not just getting in touch with feelings. It is the body sensed inwardly, how the body carries what isn't yet clear about a problem or situation.

Just having feelings may not make change. Many people know how to get in touch with their feelings but then these feelings keep being the same, over and over again. Focusing is the next step past getting in touch with feelings.

In Focusing there is a bodily sensed felt shift which means that how the body carries the problem changes. At that moment the physical tension drains away.

Focusing comes from research at the University of Chicago which showed that just talking and just emoting does not bring change. What differentiated successful psychotherapy patients was their working with the bodily sensed edge.

Many people go to psychotherapy for years without change. They wonder whether anything is happening. But when change is actually happening one can sense it unmistakably in the body.

FOCUSING IS BEING USED IN:

Healing: Focusing releases how the body is distorted by psychological difficulties. The body straightens itself out, and incidentally one also discovers some of what has been wrong. Focusing is being used by Simonton's clinic in Texas, by Continuum in Los Angeles, and other healing centers.

Bio-feedback: Don found EEG Correlates for the bodily sensed "felt shift" during focusing. (See Brain/Mind Bulletin, Vol.2, #13, 77) Bio-feedback equipment is being worked on.

Creative Writing: Bonime and Perl in New York are using focusing. The writer spends some time attending directly, and wordlessly, to the sense of what is to be expressed in writing, and is not yet clear. Bonime also changes the usual format of creative writing classes, which used to consist solely of criticisms. Instead, she asks the writers to focus on the best spot in what they have written, and to sense just why it is going well in that spot. The rest can then be better worked on in the light of what is discovered about the best spot.

Meditation: A recent research study found that meditation-training helps one to learn focusing. Focusing is also a good procedure to use before meditating. As ancient masters have indicated, it is helpful to release the body from whatever concerns it is carrying, before entering meditation. Focusing is not meditation, it is being fully alert as usual, but below the usual verbal and emotional level.

Preventive medicine, stress reduction, practical problem-solving, education, business, and especially spirituality, are other areas in which focusing is being used.

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