

# Senses of Focusing Volume 2

## Foreword

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### ‘Carrying forward is living’<sup>1</sup>

The invitation to write this foreword comes three years after I wrote the chapter *Living forward: the challenge of carrying forward Gendlin’s legacy*. It makes me aware of the never-ending process of grasping concepts beyond the intellectual level and of living the depth of Gendlin’s Philosophy. It’s a joy to always discover new facets emerging from the living process and to experience this multiplicity in *Senses of Focusing*. The different stories in this book—and in both these volumes—reflect how everyone is constantly creating meaning from experience.

Implementing the richness of Gendlin’s theory and practice makes me aware of the process of ‘*Creating At The Edge*’. People aren’t facts nor rational beings, they are living organisms. Living always includes a fresh ‘forming’ process. Everyone can learn how to address the power of the implicit and create life-forward steps. Every interaction brings something new.

The process of forming and creating is a natural movement we can embrace and facilitate in a more conscious way. That’s why good therapists take care of their nonjudgmental welcoming presence so that everyone in the interaction feels encouraged to pay attention to the bodily felt wisdom. Gendlin’s words: ‘*In Focusing we don’t have a solution, we have a carrying forward*’ express confidence in the living process. Furthermore, people can cross their felt sense of something with any theory or experience in order to invite new movements and carrying forward. That’s how, for example, Focusing on dreams and crossing with Jungian insights can lead to surprising new energy; Focusing in nature can become a nurturing experience; Focusing and expressing through art evokes powerful alternatives; Focusing in science discovers new territories; Focusing on ethical behavior leads to a compassionate heart.

Gendlin’s question: ‘*What’s most alive in you now?*’ leads to creative sources. This raises another theme that was alive in Gendlin, although he always struggled to acknowledge and articulate his experience as ‘spiritual’: ‘*It’s not enough to be human. ... The way it is is that The Larger System is here. ... If “the ordinary” had God or whatever-the-fuck-it’s-called or The Larger System already, then there was already help or something. ... I was always already helped ... has to mean something ... not just human.*’ (Gendlin, 30 Oct 2015). It makes sense to acknowledge that an experience of being unexpectedly ‘helped’ can be understood as a bodily felt experience of the Spirit or being part of The Larger System. Moments of carrying forward sometimes bring that wondrous experience of a Transpersonal Life Force working throughout living organisms. Something like a personal experience of the spiritual edge of existence in a human body. Gendlin was genuinely concerned to make every communicating process more

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<sup>1</sup> This quote (Gendlin, 2 Oct 2014) comes from the unedited conversations: ‘*So What’s Alive In You, Gene?*’ - *Thinking At The Edge Of Life*. During the last 4 years of Gendlin’s life, Dave Young had weekly conversations with Gendlin that started with this question: ‘So what’s alive in you?’. The talks took place at the initiative of The International Focusing Institute who asked David Young to conduct and transcribe conversations with Gendlin with the intent that they would be published. In an Online, Interactive 4-Session Series facilitated by Dana Ganihar, Baruch Brenner, and Dan Schachter (November 2020) participants had access to parts of the intimate conversations of 2 Oct 2014, 30 Oct 2015, 12 Jan 2016. All the Gendlin quotes in this *Foreword* come from those conversations with Dave Young.

open and to say something fresh. *'We can have the kind of saying that also does what it says. ... To communicate, you must use that kind of saying where it achieves what it wants to achieve.'* (Gendlin, 12 Jan 2016). On many occasions Gendlin embodied a way of living wherein a great Spirit comes forward and he demonstrated that Focusing is an innate process that unites human beings with The Larger System.

Meeting Gendlin was one of the great gifts of my life and I share that good fortune with many close friends who are kindred spirits from the Focusing world. I appreciate how the Focusing Community allows a multiplicity of truths, offers a place for inspiration and healing, brings a sense of belonging. It is my sincere wish that everyone who hadn't the opportunity to imbibe the spirit of Gendlin in person, may experience the warmth and lightness of his being and way of working through encountering good mentors.

May this book, wherein different colleagues offer the best of their understanding and ways of implementing Focusing, serve as a bridge to a body of knowledge from which everyone can receive their next steps in carrying forward.