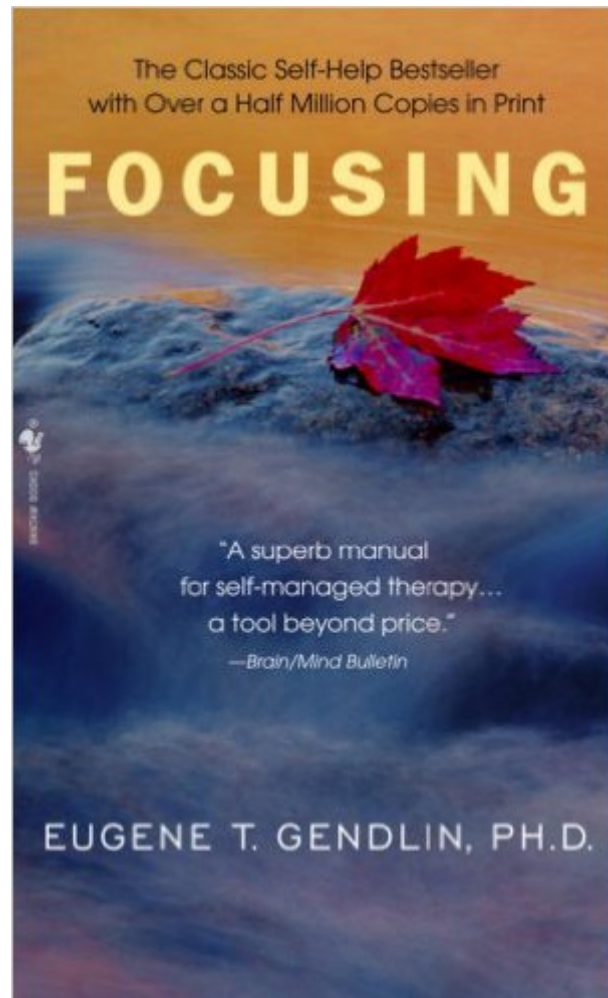


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Focusing



Synopsis

The classic guide to a powerful technique for personal transformation Based on groundbreaking research conducted at the University of Chicago, the focusing technique has gained widespread popularity and scholarly acclaim. It consists of six easy-to-master steps that identify and change the way thoughts and emotions are held within the body. Focusing can be done virtually anywhere, at any time, and an entire session can take no longer than ten minutes, but its effects can be felt immediately "in the relief of bodily tension and psychological stress, as well as in dramatic shifts in understanding and insight. In this highly accessible guide, Dr. Eugene Gendlin, the award-winning psychologist who developed the focusing technique, explains the basic principles behind focusing and offers simple step-by-step instructions on how to utilize this powerful tool for tapping into greater self-awareness and inner wisdom. As you learn to develop your natural ability to focus, you will find yourself more in sync with both mind and body, filled with greater self-assurance, and better equipped to make the positive changes necessary to improve and enhance every aspect of your life.

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Customer Reviews

This book was first published in 1978, and I wish I had discovered it back then, as it would have spared me years of spinning my wheels. The author is a psychologist, as well as a philosopher specializing in phenomenology. His thinking definitely serves as a solid underpinning to this book. However, the book is completely practical. It teaches you how to get in touch with your

body/mind--the part of you that feels and knows without using logic, morality, guilt, or blame. Once you get in touch with whatever your body/mind is experiencing in the present, you focus on that "felt sense." Keeping your conscious awareness tuned to that feeling causes a movement in the energy, and ultimately a shift occurs, which you can physically feel as a release of a blockage or a point of tension. This technique works very well for those problems and issues that you thought you had worked through, but keep returning over and over again. The best part is, you can do this work without a therapist. After a while, you will find that your body (or rather, body/mind) becomes your best teacher on all matters of the heart and soul.

Want a small taste of what this book teaches? Try this: Think about a place you love to be. There's something about that place... something that makes you feel good in just that exact way you do feel when you are there. Feel how it is for you with this place you love. We are all used to putting things into words right away. But this time, don't try to say what it is you're experiencing right now. Just be with the feeling of how it is to be there in that place, and what makes it feel like that to you, without making any words for it for a while. As you slow down to be with this felt sense, you may be noticing that you feel it in a specific part of your body--often your heart, or your throat, or your stomach. Right now I'm sitting in a place that's like that for me: one of my favorite chairs with my cat curled up next to me. To show you what I mean, I'll go into the felt sense of sitting here with my cat. Right away I notice that I'm feeling it in my heart and throat, a kind of thick warm golden feeling a little like honey. It's got a poignant quality. Now that it's become more vivid and tangible to me, I'm going to pause for a minute (an actual real honest-to-god minute of clock time!) and just be with the feeling. In a minute I will go further into it, but for right now it's good to just give it my friendly attention. After the pause, I notice that I'd like to ask this felt sense, 'what makes this poignant quality?' So I ask that, and then I pause, so that the answer comes. I don't go looking for it, I let it come. It may take a minute, before it does. So I'm doing that now..... It's something about her trust in me. Her whole body is open. She needs me, and she's at ease needing me. There's something about her open trusting needing, that I need. Her trusting presence keeps me connected to her and to where I am, while I am writing this. I pause again and just feel what's happening in the felt sense (which will constantly make little shifts and openings)..... Oh, and there's a bigger thing I just saw! This open trusting needing that she is displaying, is exactly a way I could be, myself, in a certain situation I'm in! I'm pausing again, to take that in. That feels much more sound than the other more constricted way I was being in relation to that whole thing. I can feel how what I do in this situation is going to be a little different now. Going into something small and positive like this is a good place to start in

learning the process, and it can continue to be a powerful way to Focus no matter how accomplished you get, as it was for me here. But this is kind of like the tip of the iceberg. I've made it look very easy (and it can be really easy like this). But like any profound process it takes a while to learn it deeply, to get an intuitive feel for things like: what to ask the felt sense next; what to do if a felt sense doesn't come; how to handle it when you're in the middle of an overwhelming situation so you can get some breathing space to even be with the felt sense; and much more. Gendlin's book can begin to answer many of these questions for you. Here's something a little more formal about the process, taken from the current home page of the Focusing Institute website: "You have a bodily orienting sense. You know who you are and how you come to be reading this page. To know this you don't need to think. The knowing is physically sensed in your body and can easily be found. But this bodily knowing can extend much more deeply. You can learn how to let a deeper bodily felt sense come in relation to any problem or situation. Your body "knows" the whole of each of your situations, vastly more aspects of it than you can enumerate separately." In the decades since Focusing was first identified by Gendlin, the teaching of Focusing has developed considerably as a subtle art, and Focusing itself has become understood (by Gendlin himself as well as by many others) as much more than the therapeutic/self-help process which he initially described. It is used by stock market traders as a decision making process, by hospice workers as a way of listening deeply to the dying, by nurses and doctors and other healing professionals who use it to help their patients access their own body's knowing of what it needs to heal, by artists as a way of unlocking their creative process, by educators with their students, and in many other fields as well. It has also become clear that it deepens spiritual practice across traditions. (You can maybe see a little about why this is so, if you look at the whole-body contemplative process that was happening in the example I began with.) A "felt community" of small groups and people doing Focusing in partnerships with one another (often by phone) has developed, all over the world. It is possible for people to find a teacher of the process in most major cities in the US, and in an incredible variety of foreign countries. As well as entry level workshops, videotapes, and other resources for people who are just beginning to learn Focusing, there are also many training programs for those who want to learn more about the skills of listening to a Focusing partner, and later on, how to guide another in Focusing. There are also a number of training programs which teach therapists to integrate the process into therapy; as well as one training program (my own) which teaches pastors & rabbis, spiritual directors and transpersonal counsellors, meditation teachers, taiqi & yoga instructors, etc. how to integrate the process into their work. In keeping with Gendlin's background as a philosopher, Focusing has also been applied to the process of formal thinking. It is possible to begin with a felt

sense of something one knows which would be important to communicate in one's field, and from that often-unsayable beginning, to develop a formal theory which integrates one's knowing into the conceptual structure of the field. The process of doing this has been laid out by Gendlin in formal steps over the last several years (he taught the process of theory construction for decades at the University of Chicago). This second practice which comes out of his philosophy is called Thinking At the Edge, or TAE (Focusing was the first). But back to the book: even with all that has unfolded in this area in the decades since it was first published, this book is still highly regarded by Focusing practitioners. In its deeply human way of empowering readers and its deceptively simple style (deceptive because this material can keep opening up for many years), the book remains unmatched.

As a layperson, I was skeptical as to whether I would be able to understand this book. I was expecting lots of clinical explanations. To my surprise, it was just the opposite. Written so that anyone can understand it, "Focusing" gives the guidance to holistically find the source of fears, anxiety, and negativity. It guides the reader to a place where he/she can sit and listen to the body speak of the source of a problem's manifestation. I recommend this to anyone seeking a deeper understanding of why we sometimes feel the way we do.

I'm giving it five stars for the system; it really works for things I have applied it to. As a book, it is also well written and has a certain fun sense of discovery, especially when reading about how Dr. Gendlin was trying to discover what 'it' was that people who were successful in therapy 'got.' I am not part of 'the-religion-which-must-not-be-named' but I must agree that too often psychology (granted a broad blast here) simply makes people more self-centered, self-deluded, and generally worse. If you have some things that feel perhaps too painful frightening to even think about approaching, Focusing gives you a way to defuse the bombs from a distance, so to speak. My humble summary of what Focusing is: It is a system to repair specific communication errors between the limbic system and the rational part of the brain. AFTER finding how you have been mislabeling a certain pain, you may THEN find that the origin is very clear. Dredging up potential origins first (as most systems do) to find why you have a current discomfort, is like doing an appendectomy through your ear - once and a while it will work and once and a while the patient will even survive. Forget that and try Focusing.

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