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### **Inner Relationship Focusing and Embodied Awakening**

In my professional life, I help people who long to awaken to their full potential. My work includes helping clients release action blocks, replace confusion with clarity, empower them to dare to manifest their dreams, heal old fears and hurt, and increase intuition.

Perhaps most importantly, I help them live a fully-actualized life of embodied spiritual awakening.

I have always known that our human potential is vaster than our typical, day-to-day experience. Human potential expands further than the reaches of the mind. And it can be actualized. There is an omnipresent, universal field; perhaps we could call it a vibrant essence, a field of pure consciousness, a universal mind that underlies and connects everything in creation. It connects to us and lives through us. We can awaken to it. It moves all of life forward ...with it...to it...as it.

But how can we consciously tap into this field? Our bodies “know” and sense this underlying field, but we forget to turn within to remember it. Our bodies spontaneously “know” how to live without any training. And our bodies know more than just how to breathe, digest food, rest, heal, and love. Our bodies have an inner brilliance that senses and knows deeply the next step needed to move life forward. This inner, embodied knowing shows up in what Eugene Gendlin calls a “felt sense.”

In the early 70’s Gendlin developed a method that he called “Focusing.” It’s a process that directly helps us open our embodied knowing and sensing to our conscious experience. Through sensations, words, symbols, gestures, and memories, our deepest truths reveal themselves to us. When we begin to receive their truth, we call these experiences “felt senses.” Gendlin created this term, and it is so apt that it is also used now by other teachings.

Sometimes we forget to listen to our bodies; we disconnect from that inner brilliance. Using Inner Relationship Focusing, I help clients remember how to access, open to, and be with felt senses. Initially, the felt sense may be a discomfort in the physical or emotional body of the client. As the work continues, the client begins to effortlessly connect to a universal, life-forward energy that lives in and as all of us.

Just as water “knows” how to flow downhill, our bodies know how to move us forward and out of helplessness, stagnation, pain, and suffering. But just as water sometimes encounters obstacles in its path, we too sometimes encounter obstacles. Fortunately, deep within we also know how to resolve, integrate, release, or flow around those obstacles.

As I work with people to foster growth towards embodied awakening, I interweave several modalities and perspectives including a spiritual path called Trillium Awakening, Shamanism, and the perspective of psychotherapist John Welwood. I find that Inner Relationship Focusing enhances each modality I offer.

### **Trillium Awakening**

I am a member of a teachers’ association for Trillium Awakening, a set of spiritual teachings and a community that describes itself as living and supporting spiritual awakenings that are integrated into ordinary human life.

As a Trillium teacher, I coach people in spiritual awakening using a process that explores three key components: consciousness, embodiment, and mutuality.

Consciousness: The awakening promised through the Trillium path is achieved when the student has direct experience of pure consciousness. This is the field of pure awareness or pure intelligence, that underlies all of creation. The field of pure consciousness is the unmanifest source of all manifestation. It is eternal and not bound by time or space. Consciousness is the infinite, transcendent ground which is always registering everything while remaining untouched. Pure consciousness can be understood conceptually. It can also be directly experienced. For many, this direct experience comes initially as "witnessing" consciousness. For all, when experienced directly, accompanied by the understanding of what is being experienced, a shift in identity occurs. Over time this shift stabilizes into a new sense of self. One is no longer exclusively identified with the mind, body, and emotions and comes to know oneself as the larger spaciousness that underlies all of creation.

In Trillium Awakening, a further stage of awakening unfolds into non-separate Conscious Embodiment where consciousness fuses into feeling-union with the body-mind. Consciousness (so to speak) awakens ("up"), embodies ("down"), and recognizes its oneness with all things through sensing that is more feeling than conceptual.

Many people intuitively sense they are more than a body and mind. We might have a sense of our connection to spirit, a sense that each of us is a spark of a divine flame. Our inner knowing may have grown due to timeless experiences through which we felt connected to something much greater than our everyday life. Perhaps we have experienced a moment of unity where we felt a connection to everything in the universe. Maybe meditation has opened experiences to us of a field of pure consciousness that underlies and supports specific states of consciousness, including waking, dreaming, and deep sleep.

Living in the awakened state is an experiential change where the sense of identity shifts from exclusive identification with the separate, finite, human condition to an expanded identity as indefinable consciousness with a distinct sense of being non-separate from all that is perceived.

Embodiment: Some teachings emphasize awakening as an experience that is localized, either in part of the body or even outside the body. However, Trillium Awakening emphasizes that awakening occurs in the whole body/mind. Trillium Awakening asserts that true awakening does not require denying our humanness for the sake of knowing ourselves as spirit. We emphasize that awakening as divine consciousness occurs in the body, whether it begins in the head, heart, or any other bodily location. We are integrating our awareness of our infinite nature into our human experience. And this infinite nature is intimately alive in the body instead of transcending or going beyond it; thus, we call this state an "embodied awakening." Through the path of embodied awakening, we hold with loving kindness the very limits of being human. We hold with gratitude and reverence the mystery of having a body and a human life and the gifts they can reveal.

In Trillium Awakening, we encourage people to follow the wisdom of the body, to learn to allow and be with all that arises physically and emotionally. We guide people to investigate areas of life that feel stuck and unresolved. Through this investigation, people discover that relaxing into the places that feel stuck allows these places to be acknowledged and embraced. In this way, the places that feel stuck become doorways to further liberation.

Mutuality: In mutuality, we honor our own truth in all communication and action, while simultaneously honoring and respecting the truth of others. We continuously cultivate a respect for the validity of each person's unique perspective, as well as a willingness to be with the inevitable discomfort of the differences between one's truth and that of others. We experience how much of the healing and integration of our human and divine natures can only occur in relationship with others. In Trillium Awakening we are deeply seen and unconditionally accepted as infinite consciousness by others. The wounded places we have rejected or wanted to fix can relax. We can

embrace parts that we have previously avoided or rejected. In this compassionate embrace, we integrate these parts into our wholeness.

### **Inner Relationship Focusing (IRF)**

As well as being a teacher of Trillium Awakening, I am also a teacher of Inner Relationship Focusing (IRF). The practice of Focusing has guided me to the inner, felt-sense knowing of my body. Focusing has brought me not only to profound healing and integration but has also opened doorways to help me explore my divine, awakened life. For this, I am eternally grateful.

Inner Relationship Focusing helps with the exploration of all three key components of Trillium Awakening (consciousness, embodiment, and mutuality). Much of the work of a Trillium teacher is to facilitate inner healing. Not limited to but especially in our formative years, our needs were not always met. We developed strategies to deal with the resulting lack, confusion, and pain. These strategies usually include methods for stopping or numbing the feelings of pain and confusion as opposed to allowing them to be "processed." It is as if something froze when a need was not met. Unfortunately, the body's knowledge of how to move forward to the next best step also stopped.

The founder of Focusing, Eugene Gendlin, describes focusing as showing "how to pause the on-going situation and create a space for new possibilities for carrying forward." (The Focusing Institute, 2014.) Gendlin uses the term "stoppage" to indicate a process that has become frozen in time. Stopped processes are "held apart" from the flow of life energy and cause us to feel numb, stuck, or even more pain and confusion.

The stoppage of life energy generally happens early in life. When we were children, we needed respect, safety, nurturance, mirroring, and loving touch. But some of these needs were not met, or at least not consistently. Then, as we grew and sensed that life was not moving forward from this frozen need, that brought more pain. Sometimes we even doubted if we could find our way out of the stuck feelings of unfulfillment and the patterns we'd adopted to numb the pain.

Similarly to Gendlin, author, and therapist, John Welwood points to defensive strategies we developed in childhood to supply what we felt was missing and to protect ourselves from feeling the pain of our losses. He uses the word "ego" to describe the conditioned personality that we created in childhood. "Our ego or conditioned personality is composed of various identifications, or self-images, and develops in childhood as a form of self-protection. It begins as an attempt to cover over and compensate for our loss of being by fabricating certain qualities that we need but that seem to be missing." (Love and Awakening, 33)

Welwood points out that the delicate nervous system of a child cannot handle intensely painful feelings, which are then magnified in the absence of support and guidance from the adult world. So, we conceal pain, fear, or emptiness behind the façade of the conditioned self. As children, we try to seal off painful feelings, which sometimes even feel like enemies that are attacking and undermining us. We are not able to see feelings such as helplessness or sensitivity as simply a part of being human. We continue into adulthood, spending our whole life avoiding these feelings. We do not understand that these feelings do not reflect our true identity.

We grow up feeling more and more empty inside, not because we are deficient, but because the protective façade cut us off not only from feelings of helplessness and inadequacies but also cut us off from the fullness of our own being. In Trillium Awakening, we "descend" into the shadows of the unconscious to find the areas where life energy became frozen. The simple act of contacting and acknowledging these frozen, hurting places with non-judgment, empathy, and compassion starts a process of thawing. This is the inner healing that a Trillium Awakening teacher facilitates.

Trillium Awakening teaches a radical acceptance of one's entire self, called in Trillium, "greenlighting." However, greenlighting does not have a defined process, and is, therefore, less consistently effective than guiding a student with Inner Relationship Focusing. When using Inner Relationship Focusing (IRF), the frozen places can easily be sensed directly, acknowledged, described, and accompanied. Gradually these frozen places melt and rejoin the river of life energy always available.

One of the beauties of IRF is that a guide does not have to ask her client to look for places that feel stuck or stopped. That might lead to the client's trying to find them with intellectual analysis or based on a concept. Instead, the client simply needs to turn within and invite whatever wants to be known (especially but not necessarily in connection with an unresolved issue) to arise. When gently guided with the facilitative language that a Focusing guide is taught, major insights and shifts unfold naturally.

Using the presence language developed by Ann Weiser Cornell allows students to stay directly connected to their process while having some space and distance so that their sense of Self is bigger than the issue or situation. They can then stay bigger than the "stoppage" that froze around the pain. Gradually, the process that was stopped unfreezes naturally and effortlessly. We don't need to do anything to make this thawing happen other than gently hold what is arising with genuine curiosity and compassion, and welcome anything more that wants to unfold.

I have found IRF to be the perfect tool to explore the threefold path of Trillium Awakening: Consciousness, Embodiment, and Mutuality. IRF greatly assists in exploring the feeling sense of pure consciousness. Frequently, when working with a student to discover the direct experience of consciousness, I start with an invitation to directly experience the inner landscape that arises upon closing our eyes momentarily. While voicing this invitation, I hold an unspoken focusing orientation. This orientation includes a radical embrace of the present moment without judgment or preference. I hold the space of consciousness and in some mysterious way, my students are also held in that space. I guide my students to close their eyes for no more than 15 seconds and then instruct them to open their eyes.

Once again, I ask them to close their eyes, this time for a little longer. After inviting them to open their eyes for the second time, I ask, them to notice if there was some silence, some quietness. I have never found a student who did not experience some silence. I then ask them if they noticed some thoughts in that silence. Inevitably they have. I ask the students to again close their eyes allowing them yet another dip into that silence. They come to experience that silence is there even with the inevitable thoughts which arise. Once again I ask them to open their eyes. I point out that the field of silence underlies all thoughts. It is the ground of pure awareness or pure consciousness that registers all thoughts. I then suggest we might spend a little more time exploring this field of consciousness.

Once again, I ask them to close their eyes and this time sense any words that may arise to describe the silence. During the rest of this exploration, I act in much the same way as a focusing guide. I stay in a state of presence and reflect back the words students use to describe their direct experience of this silence, which underlies thoughts and emotions. In this way, my students experience pure consciousness directly in a feeling way that is deeper than concept. If needed, I might give suggestions such as, "You might check how that is showing up in your body." I find that nearly every reflection and invitation I have learned as a focusing guide can be used to help students explore the feeling sense of consciousness. Although it is not the goal of Focusing sessions, in this exploration, they tend to be infused with the felt sense of expansion, unboundedness, connection, peace, and fulfillment. Inner Relationship Focusing has given me the tools to guide students in this exploration of pure consciousness, a requisite of awakened life.

For the awakening to be stable and sustainable, further integration is needed. In Trillium Awakening, we use the word embodiment to represent all manifest creation. We encourage students to embrace full direct contact with all manifest expression of their being, including their personal and cultural history, body, emotions, mind, intuitions, and spirit. By living deeply in our personal lives, we allow ourselves to be impacted by life's ups and downs, not attempting to protect ourselves unduly from these experiences. The focusing orientation helps with this embrace. Much of the work I do with people might look to be little more than a conversation. But during these conversations, I hold an attitude of curiosity, non-judgment, and compassion. I acknowledge with interest and empathy what my students are sharing with me.

If they seem to be talking without really connecting to or embodying what they are saying, I might gently interrupt to suggest that they pause for a moment to sense what they have just been sharing. Or I might say, "Oh, what you just said sounds really important. Let me say that back to you so that you can take it in." Frequently, inviting a student to pause and acknowledge what they have said can lead to either a short or extended Focusing exploration of the issue they were sharing. Often unexpected connections are made as things begin to loosen and unravel in ways that are not possible if we don't allow time for this. With a focusing orientation, students are guided to pause and look beneath the surface, past the edge of what is already known. I have learned the efficacy of inviting this Focusing orientation. One of my Focusing mentors, Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapist, Cathy Pascal, has emphasized the importance of "sensing for the unknown edge."

Trillium Awakening teachers hold the same conceptual framework for inner healing as do Gendlin and Cornell. The biggest difference is one of semantics. Whereas Gendlin, holding a "process model," states that a process was stopped (although what was lacking at the point where a process stopped continues to be needed), in Trillium Awakening, we use an expression that life "energy" got bound or stopped. In both models, in some way, life is halted; and in both models, it is relaxing into, inviting contact, directly experiencing, and acknowledging that opens the person to a renewal of life. The Focusing approach, having been refined to a fine art over more than 40 years of working with clients, is the most effective tool for this that I have encountered.

Over time my clients discover a permanent shift into embodied awakening. This includes a continuous identification with the spaciousness of consciousness while also staying connected from a place of interested curiosity and non-judgment to whatever is arising in the ever-changing field of life. When, through Focusing, my students become established as Self-in-Presence, I find no difference between what that and what we call in Trillium Awakening "consciousness." This is not a dissociative state but rather a deep connection to both Self in its pure essential nature and all the manifest streams of life including thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and intuition.

Another tenet of Trillium Awakening is that students can come in a rapid shift to embodied awakened life by simply "templating" off the teacher. This does not arise from a conscious effort but happens naturally. Similarly, when guiding a student in Focusing, and the guide is established in Self-in-Presence, this "field" comes to be known by the client. In fact, upon occasion, when a student is going through a difficult process, if I guide them to also find the larger self that is always there, at rare times they report that they are not able to do this. A student might even say something like, "I don't think I can find that right now. Can you hold that for me?" They have an inner sense that if I hold it for them they will directly benefit. And in some mysterious way, this happens. In Trillium Awakening we hold that although we are each distinct, we are not truly separate from each other, and the field of pure consciousness underlies and supports each of us. And so when I am established in pure consciousness, even in the midst of activity, such as guiding someone in a Focusing session, that pure consciousness is made more lively and available to my clients.

In Trillium Awakening, we teach that our bodies hold an inner intelligence that perfectly complements the mind. In fact, the knowing of the mind is only partial knowledge that needs to be

completed by the body's knowing. This knowing of our bodies generally reveals itself at a slower pace than mental processes. IRF guides clients to allow the intelligence of the body to unfold.

Mutuality is the last key principle of the threefold path of Trillium Awakening. Mutuality includes honoring one's own true and total nature while also making room for others to do the same. To do this we need to learn to hold others without judgment, offering conscious listening and reflecting. We teach that each of us needs to be seen and met for who we are. This non-judgmental accompanying allows each of us to explore who we are on deeper levels. Again the tools of IRF greatly help with this process.

For example, one of the most effective ways to learn Focusing is through a series of lessons that include Focusing Partnerships. The students take turns being the Focuser and companion with each other. Companions are taught to allow the Focuser to be empowered, that is, to experience the session as he or she chooses. The Focuser, using methods described by Cornell, delves into an inner exploration that she follows with curiosity and non-judgment. The companion listens carefully to the Focuser and gives non-intrusive reflections and invitations. The companion completely honors what is true for the Focuser without questioning or judging it. At the same time, if the Focuser questions or judges herself, the companion simply keeps her company silently and thereby honors what is arising in her without making it wrong. In Focusing partnerships, mutuality is also maintained by the fact that partners honor both roles as essential to the partnership.

The key statement in Trillium Awakening about mutuality is that mutuality honors the true and total nature of both self and other. One of the most fascinating and challenging discoveries in this mutual exploration is that when we open to the "total" nature of ourselves and other, this opening takes us to a myriad of "partial selves" that hold limited perspectives. To make things more complex and challenging, the partial selves can be in conflict with each other. Add another person into the mix and the result can be a lot of conflicting points of view. In Trillium Awakening, we hold the perspective that each partial self needs to be seen and met without judgment. This, of course, can be challenging, especially when one inner part does not like the view of another.

With IRF we learn tools for acknowledging each partial self that arises and sit with them with interest and non-judgment. Having a Focusing companion helping us keep that orientation is extremely useful. As we develop the capacity to be "in mutuality" with our inner parts, allowing each to be honored and listened to, we simultaneously grow in the capacity to do this for others even outside of a formal Focusing exchange. Mutuality develops at a rapid pace when IRF is taught and used in partnership.

### **The Work of John Welwood**

Another way that I work with people to bring about awakening is based on the work of author and psychotherapist, John Welwood. One of Welwood's books, *Love and Awakening* expresses the heart of his teaching.

Welwood teaches that we each have an authentic urge "to awaken into a richer more vibrant connection with life. At its roots, this is a holy longing because its aim is the recovery of being. Its message is "I want to be who I really am." (100) Welwood acknowledges Gendlin as the therapist who first showed him how to open to the realm of his inner experience in an immediate, personal way.

Welwood reminds us that in early childhood most of us tried to live up to the expectations of our parents, teachers, and caregivers at the expense of developing the capacity to simply be as we are. As a result, we grew alienated from our own experience. He suggests that we need to develop unconditional self-acceptance and friendliness toward ourselves in order to rest in our own nature.

Welwood also emphasizes that being open to present moment feelings can be a gateway for deep personal growth. Starting with unconditional acceptance of feelings and opening to them, our focus can then move to include our state of presence with them. From there, we can then move from the realm of personality into the larger space of being, where we find access to a deeper source of energy and power in our lives.

How does Welwood guide his clients into this inquiry? Using an IRF orientation, his methods of inquiring into and acknowledging puts his clients "in touch with what . . . Gendlin calls a felt sense—a bodily-felt sensation, with its own particular feeling-tone and texture. When we gently explore a felt sense without putting a preconceived interpretation on it, it can reveal important information about what is going on inside us that is not otherwise available to the rational mind." (116)

We can see that Welwood's path of awakening is one that includes healing and growth via connecting to felt senses using a method of inquiry similar to that of Inner Relationship Focusing. He states that his path requires an active yet relaxed quality of presence to make friends with our experience and relax into the capacity to be authentically present. Welwood's requirement of an active yet relaxed quality of presence sounds similar to Cornell's "Self-in-Presence." Welwood states that the simple act of opening to a feeling always contains tremendous intelligence. He cautions that this opening into feelings is not a wallowing. As a result of the relaxed quality of presence that we use to accompany opening, we are able to experience the "cry of the soul, in response to having been trapped for so long in a mistaken identity." (119)

I agree with Welwood's interpretation of the word "soul." He believes that soul is not a mysterious metaphysical entity located in some corner of our bodies, but the unique way that our larger being manifests in us, through us, and as us. In addition, our soul allows us a living integration between the two sides of our nature: the individual and the universal; embodied personal experience along with the formless presence of pure being, pure spirit.

Welwood encourages clients to stay present to the current moment, even when they feel cut off, as a way of regaining access to the bridge between the individual and pure spirit. This connection of the individual and spirit is the Awakening that Welwood points to and facilitates through a Focusing orientation. It is easy to guide students to inquire into, acknowledge, allow, and fully open to their experience using the facilitative language and orientation of IRF. The insights, shifts, and openings brought about by Inner Relationship Focusing over time lead to the cultivation of the larger openness understood in many spiritual traditions as the core of consciousness. When we don't resist it, we discover what Welwood refers to as the deeper object of our longing, the Beloved we most long to join with. It is the mysterious power and wisdom of the universe flowing through us, animating and illuminating our soul.

In my work of assisting clients to spiritual awakening, I use Inner Relationship Focusing as the perfect tool for the cultivation Welwood describes.

### **Shamanic Energy Healing**

I have also been trained in shamanic energy healing, primarily through a school called The Four Winds Society. This school teaches energy medicine based on teachings from the Americas, particularly Peru, which was once the capital of the vast Inca Nation. The Inca Nation grew out of even older cultures and spanned a region much larger than Peru.

The Four Winds Society teaches that life processes get stopped due to experiences that are too intense to fully process. A single word that can be used to describe such experiences is "trauma." Trauma does not have to be a horrific experience, such as war, famine, rape, or abuse. It can also

result from seemingly small experiences that happened when we did not have the resources to fully process them. For example, let's suppose as a child there came a day when her mother was late to pick her up at school. Perhaps an important appointment the mother had to keep was delayed or maybe she got stuck in traffic. During that time of waiting, the child started to panic. She sat on the school steps alone, as all the other students had already been picked up. Perhaps the child believed she was simply not that important to her mom, or that she was not worthy of her mom's attention or care. Her fears began to mount. Even when mom arrived, the child may have hung on to the beliefs and feelings that emerged during her anxious wait. Most likely, those feelings went unprocessed. We would call this event "traumatic." Whereas Gendlin may say that a process got stopped, the Four Winds Society would say that an imprint was left in the subtle energy body. By the time we reach adulthood, if these imprints have not been cleared, we find ourselves in a state where energy does not flow. We feel stuck.

In my work as a shamanic healer, I assist clients in clearing these imprints. It is a collaborative method. I find that it works best when I employ a Focusing orientation to guide my clients to stay present to what they are noticing. As in most of my work with clients, the reflections and invitations I have learned as a focusing guide also come to my aid during energy healing sessions.

One difference between the shamanic energy healing process and Inner Relationship Focusing is that in shamanic healing, we hold the understanding that some of these imprints may have been carried by the soul from past lives. The focusing orientation helps me hold with non-judgment any experiences that a client might be sharing, whether they seem to come from this life or a prior life. I hold the same attitude of non-judgment, curiosity, and compassion, and I encourage my clients to do the same. At the end of the healing session, I invite my clients to take time to notice any larger spaciousness, light, sense of flow, or life energy that is there. I also let them know that the healing that was started in our session will continue over the next few days and that it will be of great value for them to continue to hold an attitude of curiosity and compassion as things continue to arise in their awareness. In other words, I recommend that they continue to be with their healing process by maintaining a focusing orientation.

A final way that my work with Inner Relationship Focusing has aided my shamanic energy healing practice parallels the unfoldment of inner knowledge that I not only find during a focusing session but also in day-to-day life. I experience this unfoldment as increased intuition. Although I hold the understanding that each person is a sealed mystery and that I will never really understand what is going on for anyone, at the same time, I find with greater frequency that when a client describes their inner knowing, their words match an inner sense I was having of what might be going on for them.

Examples of this include a client reporting a discomfort in a certain area of his body, and just before this report, my attention was attracted to a similar discomfort in my own body. At other times a client might be aware of something that is more like an image or visual memory. When a client searches for the best words to describe what he is "seeing" inside, I wait for him to speak. Sometimes I am already seeing the image before the client speaks. At such times, a part of me wants to offer a word, but I refrain and sit with that internal pressure. When the person finds the best description of his felt sense, we both relax as we feel how well it fits. I am not sure of the actual dynamics of how Inner Relationship Focusing is assisting in this specific intuition, but in general the focusing orientation gives me the tools for staying present and sensing inwardly, and I suppose that when my inner sense matches that of someone else, and I embrace that instead of fighting it, then this capacity grows.

## **Heart Math**

I have recently started looking into the research done by an organization called Heart Math. This organization is researching the innate and mysterious intelligence of the heart, using rigorous scientific investigation to substantiate their findings. They are also discovering the measurable energetic connection we have with others. They train people to be in a "heart space" that sounds very similar to Cornell's Self-in-Presence. When one person can hold that space, others in their vicinity quickly "entrain" to a similar measurable response. This research validates the value of my holding the Self-in-Presence state as a client Focuses.

Cornell reminds us that the qualities of distance yet connection--as opposed to enmeshment and dissociation--are valuable tools in facilitating self-transformation. When a client becomes enmeshed in her experience, identified with it, she does not have the distance to learn anything new from it.

On the other hand, when she dissociates, she also does not have the chance to learn from direct experience because she is not able to "have" the experience. And so, if my client loses her sense of Self-in-Presence, I hold it for both of us. I see that she "entrains" to my holding and returns to the experience with the requisite distance and connection needed to Focus. In this way, Heart Math deepens my understanding and application of IRF through validating the heart connection or mutuality that occurs when a student and I share a healing space and intention.

I have shared here how the tools I have learned through Inner Relationship Focusing are essential to the work I do assisting clients in their spiritual awakening. Facilitating my clients to finding Self-in-Presence is perhaps the most important tool I use. If a client gets lost in the story or enmeshed in the feelings, then holding myself in presence helps the client return to presence when he is ready. The reflections and invitations I give them in presence language help them stay in touch with what they are feeling in the moment. All of the IRF tools enable me to give both specific and field support to my clients and enhance my work appreciably.

My work with clients reflects the message of a favorite poem of mine. Although centuries old, it points poetically to the truth of the inner brilliance of the intelligence of our bodies and invites us to marvel at all that is wanting to be known within. Inner Relationship Focusing allows us to connect to the inner brilliance of our bodies.

This Clay Jug  
by Kabir

Inside this clay jug there are canyons  
and pine mountains, and the maker of  
canyons and pine mountains!  
All seven oceans are inside, and  
hundreds of millions of stars.  
The acid that tests gold is there, and  
the one who judges jewels.  
And the music from the strings  
no one touches, and the source of  
all water.  
If you want the truth, I will tell you  
the truth:  
Friend, listen:  
the God whom I love is inside.

(Kabir and Robert Bly, Kabir: Ecstatic Poems; Beacon Press, 1997)

## References

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## Suggested reading

Cornell, Ann Weiser and McGavin, Barbara. *The Focusing Student's and Companion's Manual Parts One and Two*; California: Calluna Press, 2002.

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