

# A Non-Official Report from The International Focusing Institute (TIFI): An Overview of the Gendlin Center and the Felt Sense Conference

By Ruth Hirsch, *Certifying Coordinator, Member International Leadership Council*

Published in the British Focusing Association Newsletter, July, 2019

For this edition of the news about what's been happening in the TIFI world I thought it might be interesting for readers to know something about the relatively new Gendlin Center and the Felt Sense conference: the history, goals and a few accomplishments of each.

To prepare for writing this article I consulted with Catherine Torpey, the Executive Director of TIFI who has been intimately involved in both endeavors.

## **The Gendlin Center**

The seed of the idea for the Gendlin Center originated prior to Gene's passing as the Board was concerned about the continuation of his legacy. Wishing to honor and move his work forward yielded a number of ideas. Eventually it was decided that what he and clinical psychotherapists would want most would be serious quantitative research proving that Focusing is an effective therapeutic modality.

It was thought that high level academic research would ensure that Focusing and Gendlin's work in philosophy and psychology would have a place in academia as well as in clinical work.

The steering committee is comprised of five representatives from academia: Kevin C Krycka, Chair (Professor of Psychology at Seattle University), Akira Ikemi (Professor of Psychotherapy, Kansai University, Japan), Mary Jeanne Larrabee (Professor of Philosophy, DePaul University), and Rob Parker (Private Practice, New York). Leslie Ellis, the liaison from the TIFI Board, is also connected to academia.

A Request for Proposals was issued for the first Gendlin grant for original research in psychotherapy, and has recently been awarded to Siebrecht Vanhooren of the University of Leuven in Belgium. Siebrecht's research will address how experiential openness is related to the meaning of life, the experience of existential givens, and depression.

Funding for the Center is solely by donations made directly to the Gendlin Center. Possible future endeavors include hosting a conference and/or the creation of a peer reviewed journal. Please see <http://focusing.org/gendlincenter.asp> for more information about The Gendlin Center.

## **The Felt Sense Conference**

Following the special Memorial service for Gendlin in May 2017 there was a sense of wanting to continue to gather in honor of Gene as well as to delve further into the philosophy. The conference's subtitle was 'Bridging Philosophy and Practice'. The intention of the conference was to highlight discussion of Gene's philosophy, along with a wide variety of ways in which it is applied. Another goal for this conference was to attract people who are new to Focusing, so it was marketed to them as well as to seasoned Focusers.

The idea was to hold these gatherings in the same place as the memorial in New York City. This setting and the gathering held a number of advantages. It served as an opportunity for those who'd not been able to attend the memorial to be able to meet. Further, costs could be kept down by having the conference be both non-residential and located in a relatively central location in terms of ease of access for those flying in from outside of NYC.

After the success of the first Felt Sense Conference in May 2018 it was decided to hold another such conference in 2019, with hopes of possibly making this an annual event if it continues to be so successful.

The theme of the 2019 Felt Sense Conference was Creativity. As an example of some of the presenters and their presentations in this conference the two plenary sessions included *Focusing, Creativity, and Being–Time* with Robert Parker and *In the Footsteps of Gendlin’s Thought-Ways* with Evelyn Fendler-Lee.

Readers are invited to be in touch with Ruth with ideas for future articles.

***Ruth Hirsch, MSW, MPH, CMT** has been enjoying teaching Focusing internationally for over 25 years. Based in Jerusalem, Ruth is a Therapist and Focusing Trainer who shares Focusing online with therapists, coaches, and others as a life-enhancing practice as well as to enhance and deepen their work with clients. Besides teaching all levels of Focusing, she offers Guided Focusing Sessions and Focusing-Oriented Therapy to individuals world-wide both in-person and online.*

[www.ruthhirsch.com](http://www.ruthhirsch.com)

