

## Presencing Serious Client Conditions-Using Touch and Focusing - Jack Blackburn LMP, MTS-SD

### I. Bridging Touch and Focusing Class III Part I:

This paper is the third in a series of Bridging classes by Jack and Anastasia Brenckick. Anastasia and I presented two sequential classes in Focusing for bodyworkers during the last year and a short version last summer at the Focusing International conference in Seattle. Our main proposition is that when we combine touch and Focusing together we can create a state of presencing awareness between practitioner and client. What are the implications of this sharing for clinical work?

We have introduced various concepts in these classes i.e. body NOW presencing (bNp).

We drew importance of sensory awareness accompanying mental activity in the Buddha's Satipatthana Sutra to discuss the underpinnings of this approach. We explored somatic awareness as a tool for client inner proprioceptive interaction. We have been using touch to engage with our clients inner sensory experiences. We are also teaching them methods to make use of their proprioception to interact with the practitioner's hands. This involves a combination of feeling awareness; combining practitioner's palpation and client's proprioception. We are enhancing the client-Focuser's ability to produce tissue change, lower pain, and reduce fear was enhanced. Clients and practitioners are able to share interactive feeling awareness: We also realized that pain can be a dependable channel for bringing the client-practitioner team together. The types of interactive sharing include: inner-outer body awareness, focusing with touch, practitioner touching-client touching, two way-sensory interaction, and two-way verbal interaction. Using touch a practitioner can stimulate client awareness directly into different parts of the body.

**Exercise I Exploring somatic awareness as a tool for inner proprioceptive engagement: inside-outside body awareness, focusing-touch, touch-touch, sensory, verbal.**

### II. **Touch can generate thought and/or feeling:** Many persons have great difficulty feeling into their bodies. I want to distinguish between emotions and feelings for this presentation

From a presencing perspective emotions are like preassembled thought-sensory capsules that create sensations in emotion-specific body parts. Like Gendlin's "core" our emotions seem to line up along the alimentary canal and chakras. When someone is experiencing an emotional felt-sense, the accompanying thoughts usually derive from memories. We can all become confused between the memories and felt-sense because emotions produce both. When we touch a place of emotional discomfort it's very hard to observe client felt-sense. There is a preassembled feeling when clients try to probe an emotional felt-sense.

Because of the preassembled nature, it is difficult for clients to distinguish the senses of now.

So if a client tells me that she is angry, I ask her where she feels it and what it feels like; often it is the solar plexus. Instead of coming to a felt-sense she is

sorting past memories, looking for a cause for her anger. I can bring her into presence by asking her to breathe into the feeling in her solar plexus. I can place my hands or her hands on the solar plexus as a target for her breath and feeling. She and I can feel changes happening under the hands; those changes can produce a felt-shift.

**Exercise II: Like Gendlin's "core" our emotions seem to line up along the alimentary canal and chakras**

**III. Our bodies are continually generating sensations that give us the feeling of being:**

Sensations accompany us every moment we are alive in bodies; and perhaps after we leave the body behind. Recent discoveries of many new body-state sensations; some may even connect to fascia. Are we changing our consciousness through apprehension of and interaction with senses? I strongly believe that the sensations of presence take us into our own sentience of Being. In my work with touch and sharing presence, I can affirm that clients can physically interact using their proprioceptive senses. When we are asleep, body and thought sensations are still occurring, even as our body is still functioning autonomically. When we are dreaming, no matter what the subject matter, we experience accompanying feeling sensations. That is why the dreams feel real to us, because sensations are the existential accompanists. Everything in life is accompanied by bodily sensations, creating a constant doorway to presence. Felt-sense is inclusive of all our actions: thinking, expressing, somatesthesia, and observing.

**Exercise III: In my work with touch and sharing presence, I can affirm that clients can interact using their proprioceptive senses.**

**IV. Working with healing, injuries, illness, end of life using Focusing and Touch:**

We define healing as a two-way process between practitioner and client in which fear is reduced and awareness is shared. We are not defining healing as symptomatic relief, nor mechanical repair, nor curing disease. As such a dying patient is very capable of experiencing healing while taking her last breath. We should recognize that the body itself is tremendous healing mechanism for most of our lives. We are also suspicious that certain mental states such as anxiety inhibit body-mind healing. It is very possible that inducing a state of presence quiets fear and enhances healing. In my experience combining Focusing and touch is an amazing tool for accompanying end-of-life and serious-illness clients

**Exercise IV: We are also suspicious that certain mental states such as anxiety inhibit body-mind healing.**

**V. Felt sense is mind-body experience:** Client interoception and felt-shifts can be apprehended tactilely by practitioners. This could be an important reason for adding touch to Focusing sessions. The touch accompaniment can confirm felt-sense both for the practitioner and the client. It is also possible that the client can be taught to palpate the effects of her own felt-sense which can be a very useful addition to self-Focusing. This could bring a new presencing and body-centered feeling awareness to Focusing. So much of our thought is centered on memory; bNp could reduce past-centered reasoning.

**Exercise V: The touch accompaniment can confirm felt-sense both for the practitioner and client.**

**VI. The body exists only in the present moment:** The body systems are alive and changing every moment. If we took a reading of the body systems every second we would realize that life is change. Most of the adjustments our body makes are not under our control; nor our awareness. On the one hand we can accurately say that the body's existence is predicated on now. And yet our mental awareness is a

collection of past experiences we overlay on now. Though the body state is always discernable now, we are usually not aware of that state.

**Exercise VI: Most of the adjustments our body makes are not under our control; nor our awareness. Fascia film**