

Inner Partnership: Using drawing and writing in the Focusing process
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by Judy Archer

When I talk about using drawing and writing while Focusing, the first thing people ask me is if I focus with my eyes open or closed. I usually start with my eyes closed and then open them to draw or write something. Or sometimes I just start writing about something and as I write I drop down inside, close my eyes, acknowledge what has come, and check out how it feels inside or what shape it is taking. I can then open my eyes and draw or write--describe the sensation or quality of what I experience. And so I go back and forth writing or drawing a line or shape and sensing where it's moving to or more about its qualities.

How this works: I may experience something on the left side of my belly--I draw a line in my visual journal. Then I go on sensing inside and drawing another line or shading an area. Each little step starts to show me a larger shape which I can sense into again inside. As I sit with something I may gradually resonate with or recognize some meaning or felt sense. I check in with the inner places until there is a dropping into something meaningful and something in me says "Oh yes" and there is some felt experience or sense.

Sometimes what I experience changes so much I may draw two or three small drawings. Other times there is only one drawing. I am led by the inner sensing of where my hand goes or to what I draw. This is important because often I don't have any idea what I'm going to draw. Sometimes what I draw may be different than what I would have sensed or expected. So I have learned to trust the unconscious movement of my hand writing (or even typing on the computer) to lead me towards the forward movement my body wants for me.

I divide my visual journal /sketchbook page into twelve squares, three inches by three inches. I keep each square small so I am not distracted by the process of drawing. Other times I may make small drawings within the text in my regular Focusing Journal which has mostly writing in it.

My writing practice was developed over thirty years ago when I was having trouble with my writing. Jim Leonidas, a Focusing colleague in graduate school, suggested that I write my dreams. It was obvious I couldn't edit my dreams. I simply wrote what came or what I remembered of what came. This practice of continuing to write my dreams helped me trust my writing and develop a more fluid writing process. I learned I could edit later and somehow I came into a different relationship with my inner critic.

I learned another writing practice from Linda Trichter Metcalf and Tobin Simon who wrote *Writing the Mind Alive: The Proprioceptive Method for Finding Your Authentic Voice* (Ballentine Books, 2002). I studied with them in the early nineties in Maine. This practice involves lighting a candle, listening to slow music, listening and writing one's thoughts, feeling them in one's body and asking the Proprioceptive Question '*What do I mean by_____?*'

In this method the product of our writing is called a “write.” We write what we hear inside and we learn to cultivate a “listening presence.” Until now I had not remembered how close this is to our Inner Relationship Focusing Process. Part of the process is to be willing and open to whatever comes in writing. By being willing to deepen into what is implied or unspoken I am more in touch with my inner authentic voice.

This attitude was also useful when I returned to college to learn Fine Arts. At age 48 I took studio classes in drawing, painting, printmaking and sculpture for several years. I soon learned to accept any idea that came for creating something. Then I could play with it, modify, adjust or build on whatever came. The important thing was that I trusted what came and did not judge it.

What I am underlining is how the drawing and writing inform the Focusing process. The sense of presence in the Focusing process as well as in daily life also informs the writing and the drawing/painting assemblage making processes. I am sensing these practices are a fertile ground for coming into presence with other areas of my inner life. These are only two of the many possible ways in that are suggested in *The Focusing Student's and Companion's Manual (Part One)* by Ann Weiser Cornell and Barbara McGavin.

Before I started Focusing again in the past two years, I was feeling different areas of my life were not as connected as I would like. As I focus daily, sometimes for only fifteen or twenty minutes, I am sensing an integrating effect. For example I was feeling an opposite pull between home and art work. Through my Focusing each area was informing the other. I started collecting household items and car parts that others would have thrown away. I started building assemblages that were informed by my Focusing.

One example is a base of a barbecue stand, an ironing board standing up on end sitting in it, with one of the ironing board legs bent to make an arm shape holding a tray at shoulder height as a waiter would.(see photo) All this came from having some of these items and collecting others and the play on words of wait, weight, waiter and waiting. This example is one of many, underneath which is a rich intricacy of values and interests that stretch way back in time. These values include recycling, working ecologically, having a sense of play and fun in my work, creating a sense of home. As I continue Focusing and begin learning *A Process Model* (with Rob Parker's phone Group), I am sensing deeper layers of integrating movement beneath the Focusing.

As I use drawing and writing within my Focusing as ways to tap into this inner knowing, I am sensing deeper layers something difficult to put into words--something liquid, fuzzy, diffuse, a sense of warmth and changing daily. In fact I'm noticing the analogy of heat is in most of my recent assemblages. There are toasters, irons, ironing boards, car and truck engine parts and barbecue stands. I am finding a rich evocative intricacy of sensing and understanding that feels like the heat is turning up. Yes, it feels like more is cooking, both figuratively and literally in many ways. I am experiencing the integrating process becoming richer and deeper.

I am also recognizing how there is an endless intricacy of values and interests that stretch way back in time. And I continue to be amazed and surprised by the intricacy of it all. I am deepening my appreciation for others exploring this path. There's a knitting together of values, needs, skills and interests to create a more authentic life. I would be interested in hearing from others about something in this territory that you do that is either similar or different.

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