

Summary Minutes from The Focusing Institute Board Meeting May 17, 2010

The Focusing Institute Board met via a telephone conference call on May 17, 2010 from 11:00 AM to 1:00 PM Eastern Daylight Time (USA).

1. Report-back from the International: Successes and Challenges. We began with some report-backs from the International from Astrid Schillings and Melinda Darer to complement e-mail reports. Highlights included a sense of authenticity in the communication that took place. TFI staff and Board shared information and responded to Coordinators' wanting to understand the present TFI situation. While there were some challenges present, with persistent effort a constructive atmosphere was generated. Another highlight was the sense of caring expressed by the Coordinators and the larger Focusing community for Gene Gendlin and Mary Hendricks. There is a sense of gratefulness for the inspiration they have provided, along with the desire that they have a good life. In the same manner, there were some significant steps forward with regard to healing some long-standing interpersonal rifts between people.

There was also a sense of support and openness to the two letters that had been sent out by the Board. There was a sense of this being something new: these kinds of letters have never been sent out before. They showed the intricacy and difficulties we are facing in a way that evoked a sense of caring. One new step in the Focusing world is that there was a first meeting of European Coordinators and trainers for the purpose of creating a European Association and developing a European certification. Part of the purpose of this is to be able to obtain subsidies for certain classes that can be offered.

In a larger context, one of the accomplishments was that there was a general sense of agreement on the value of having an international Institute. There was a sense of a "both/and": there being value in having regional subgroups of Coordinators AND an international organization. In this context, we need to explore: "How can these two levels (regional ways of organizing organizations and international organization) work hand in hand?" And, "How can this be done in a new way?" One suggestion is that, from an international perspective, it could be useful to have a United States Focusing Association so that TFI can be more clearly differentiated as an international organization. Clearly, we need to address concerns that the Institute was competing with Coordinators, as, for example, that the TFI summer school was competing against existing European summer schools.

It became clear at the Coordinator's meeting that there is a transition taking place at TFI, that the organization is evolving, and that we have a strong Board that is able to hold the Institute together during this transition. Melinda Darer's presentations were perceived as clear, eloquent, and inspiring. There was a sense from the Coordinators that they are standing with the Board during this transition period, which they understand may take time. A statement was made about a three-year period at which point we will need to re-evaluate how these changes are working.

2. Attending to Our Own Relationships as a Board. Astrid Schillings commented on an insight that as Board members we need to be more sensitive to our colleagues for whom English is a second language. We need to be aware of our English language use, particularly colloquial expressions and cultural cues in our discussions and meetings.

3. Responding to Coordinators Who Signed Up for Functional Committees. We talked about the importance of responding in a timely manner to the twenty-one people who signed up for the various functional committees: Financial (2), International (9), Coordinators (8), and Technical/Website (2). We need to thank them for having expressed an interest in a committee. As a first “next step,” we can send a thank you letter with an invitation to share something about their interest in and what drew them to volunteer for a committee. In that same letter, we can list the board members(s) who will be their committee liaison to the full board.

4. Website Design Project. Josiah Hincks declined our offer to be on the Technical/Website committee. However, Josiah did offer to help us review and think through our current website design efforts and help us think through how organizational changes will act to change those design efforts.

5. Focusing Partnership Program. Mary Hendricks would like the Board to revisit our earlier decision to close the Partnership Program in its present form. As a step to revisit our decision, we agreed that Mary Hendricks, Rosa Zubizarreta, and Rob Parker will meet with Lori Ketover to have a conversation about the program, and that notes from this conversation will be shared with the Board as a whole to inform our next step.

6. Planning for Continuity. We agreed that even though we would all want things to be different, it's likely that there may be periods of time when Mary Hendricks will not be available, whether for family or health reasons. We want to be ready for these transitions, and be proactive by having procedures in place. Harbert Rice presented three specific items that might be helpful: (a) having the Focusing Institute mail go to a P.O. box, so Melinda Darer has easier access to it; (b) having a copy of info@focusing.org go to Melinda so that she is aware of what requests are coming in; and (c) having Mary keep some kind of log of the items she is working on so that we know what we need to pick up when she is away. Mary felt that the first two suggestions were easily doable, and wanted more time to think about the third.

7. Wikipedia Entry. Rob Parker briefly reported that he and Ann Weiser Cornell had rewritten the Wikipedia entry on Focusing.

8. Items Carried to Next Meeting:

- A. Early report on the fundraising drive.
- B. Managing multiple fundraising efforts -- how to ensure that we are making sufficient distinctions between: a) TFI fundraising and b) Gene Gendlin's and Mary Hendrick's long-term retirement and immediate financial needs.
- C. Report on Lucinda Gray's proposal on Focusing in Schools.

9. Next Board Meeting. The next Board meeting will be via phone at 11:00 Eastern Daylight Time (EDT) on June 24, 2010.

Respectfully,

Harbert Rice