

Three Assertions About the Body

by Eugene T. Gendlin, Ph.D., University of Chicago

Introduction

How is Focusing theoretically possible? In this paper I will discuss how we can think about the living body in such a way that Focusing becomes understandable. I will discuss the body in relation to certain experiences that are more common than a felt sense.

A felt sense *comes*. It isn't just there waiting. We have to let it form and come. That takes at least a few moments, sometimes longer. So we understand that a felt sense is a certain development, a certain bit of *further* life-process. What does it stem from? How can we think about ordinary events and experience in such a way that we could understand what a felt sense is and how it forms?

A felt sense is distinctly something there, something with a life of its own, that we attend to directly. If we attend to our bodies, in the middle of the body it comes, and then it is in an odd sort of space of its own. It brings its own space. In that space the felt sense is a direct object, *that, there*.

Let me discuss some experiences that are like a felt sense except that they have not yet formed into such a distinct, direct object. Most people don't know to turn their attention to their bodies so that these experiences could form and come as a felt sense. Or, sometimes they do become a distinct felt sense, but not because the person deliberately lets it come. Such experiences are, therefore, spread out along a continuum from being hardly noticed all the way to coming as a felt sense.

That kind of experience is known by everyone in a way, yet hardly anyone knows it, as one simply knows other things. Everyone has at times had it, and yet— isn't this odd?—hardly anyone talks about it. Our language has no name for it.

I often use this example because everyone recognizes it: Waking in the morning, sometimes you know you had a dream, although you don't remember the dream. You know because the dream has left a certain odd feeling, a unique quality. If you try to verbalize it, you might say: "It feels, well, not exactly scary, not happy either, not guilty, not sad, uhm" It is a nameless feeling that belongs just to that dream. If you tap and touch and taste that nameless feeling, the whole dream may suddenly pop out of it. All those many events of the dream were somehow compressed into that small, nameless feeling. (See *Let Your Body Interpret Your Dreams*.)

Intuition

Another example is what we call a "hunch." A situation may look fine on the surface, yet it happens that it doesn't feel fine to you. You try to verbalize what's wrong, but all you can say is "It's, uhm," The objective facts would lead you to go along with [Page 22] the situation. The uneasy feeling says "don't." Most people know not to ignore a hunch like that. At least look into the situation further. A hunch may also come as a positive feeling in the face of seemingly unpromising facts.

In business the capacity for hunches is known as the "entrepreneurial instinct." It lets one get into a good situation, or out of a bad one, long before everyone else does. Sometimes this kind of experience is called "intuition." The word names a way in which important things come to some people, although they cannot say how.

Many people just accept the fact that this sort of experience can be true and valid, although they have no way to think about how and why. We won't leave it at that.

A hunch is only one small example of the kind of experience I mean. But let us examine a hunch more closely. If it says "don't," just what is it that says "don't"? It is not the words, but that uneasy, queasy, unaccountable discomfort, a *bodily sense*. Instead of feeling good about the good things that are visible, you feel *physically* uncomfortable about the situation.

Is It Really the Body?

I know that some people will say they get a hunch in their heads, not in their bodies. Some people also say that their feelings are all around them, rather than in their bodies.

To think further about how Focusing is possible, we have to think differently about the living body. So it is important to notice that when we talk about Focusing we use the word "body" in a certain way: We use it to talk about how we feel *our bodies from inside*.

#1. The Situational Body

We all know that *our bodies* can be comfortable or uncomfortable *about a situation*. But how is that actually possible? *The body knows the situation!* Usually we don't phrase it that way. We say that *we* know the situation and that our bodies only *react* to what we know. If we think it's a good situation, the body is supposed to feel comfortable. If we think that the situation is dangerous, the body is supposed to react with anger or fear. And of course our bodies do react to what we think, *but not only to that*. *Our bodies feel a situation directly*.

For example, you see someone you know on the street but you don't remember who it is. This is totally different than seeing a stranger. This person gives you a very familiar feeling. You cannot place the person, *but your body knows who it is*. What is more, your body knows how you feel about the person. Although you don't remember who it is, your *felt sense* of that person has a very distinct quality.

If you had to describe your felt sense of the person whom you cannot place, you might say, for example: "It is a sense of something messy, sort of unclear. I feel a little apprehensive, as if I'd rather not have much to do with that person, but there is also mixed in with it some odd curiosity that doesn't feel too sound, and uhm" If you went on further into it, you could find more and more, both about the person and about yourself. But the whole felt sense cannot be put into words. However well you express it, there is always more left in it than you said. Even to say some of it, you have to make up new [Page 23] phrases because it does not fit into the usual phrases and categories. It is uniquely your sense of just that person. Any other person would give you a different body-sense.

Let us say you suddenly remember who the person is. Now you might be surprised. You might say, "I didn't know that I feel this way about that person!"

But how can we understand all this? Does your body have its own opinion of the people you know? And if it has, why does it keep its opinions to itself instead of telling them to you right along?

The second question is easier to answer than the first. We do not usually have such a distinct bodily sense about people and events. It comes more easily when our usual words and thoughts are temporarily missing, when we are at a loss for words, or, as in my example, when we have forgotten something.

It is harder to explain how the body can know situations at all, and how it can sometimes know them better and more intricately than (as we say) "we" do. But here is what we can already establish just from the example of a hunch: *We have situational bodies*. That the body senses situations is my first main point here.

The kind of experience I mean is sometimes attributed to "the unconscious," although such a body-sense is, of course, conscious. We are aware of sensing it when it is there, yet it is true that much of the knowledge that can emerge from it was unconscious before. There is no such directly felt body-sense in the unconscious. When we invite it to come, we can feel it freshly forming. It is not already there, underneath. At most one could say that it forms itself *from* "the unconscious."

But calling it "unconscious" does not explain this kind of experience. It is only a mysterious name, just as "hunch," "intuition," and "instinct" are mysterious names for it.

We cannot explain this with the usual type of theory. To explain it, we must first change what "explain" means. We cannot only substitute concepts for it. Along with concepts, this kind of experience must itself play a role in a new kind of explaining, a way of thinking which *uses* this kind of experience.

Characteristics of this Kind of Experience:

What can we say about this kind of experience just from these two examples?

- The experience is *felt* rather than spoken or visual. It is not words or images, but a *bodily* sense.
- It *does not fit the common names* or categories of feelings. It is a *unique sense of this person or this situation*.

We must also notice one more characteristic of this kind of experience:

- Although such a body-sense comes as *one feeling*, we can sense that it *contains an intricacy*. Let me explain that.

Your body-sense of the person you know contains all your past history with that person and what you hope for with that person. It also contains what that person rouses in you and some of your own unresolved troubles. In there as well is the exact way in which you [Page 24] do and don't like the person, and much more. Let me roll *all that* together and call it "an intricacy." You might be able to think three or four of those things, but most of them remain implicit. Such a body-sense contains an *implicit intricacy*.

An *implicit intricacy* does not yet have separated strands or parts. Yet, later when those appear separately we say *they were* already there in the single sense we had at first.

We don't usually think of physical feelings as containing a whole complex mesh. Physical sensations are supposed to be simple. A pain or a sensation is just what it is. It is *opaque*. We don't expect a hidden complexity, for example, in the stabbing pain of a twisted ankle or in the sensation of red. A complex situation might have led to the twisted ankle, but we don't expect to find the intricacy of the situation inside the pain. What distinguishes the kind of physical sense I am discussing is that it does contain an implicit intricacy, "*all that*" about that person.

You can sense that it is implicitly complex, even if you don't find any of it out, even if you don't succeed in opening it and entering. I speak of "opening and entering." This kind of bodily experience is a door. If we open it and if we enter, we can go many steps into it.

Everything Is Really Like That

Every person and also every situation can give you a felt sense, for example, your job, or some task you have to do, or some specific little part of the task. Each time the felt sense will be an implicit complexity, not opaque like red.

An artist or a person sensitive to color might object to my calling the color red "opaque." "Doesn't each shade of red bring us a certain implicit complexity, a feeling-tone that contains many aspects of life, and could be described further and further?" I agree, but *all that* is not in the color. Rather, it is *our felt sense* of the color. A color can easily bring us a felt sense, but so can some oddly shaped tree, an old desk, or a new desk—really anything! *One can have a felt sense—of anything—large or small.*

Nothing is so simple and obvious that the felt sense it can give us would be simple and obvious. Everything and anything is lived by our bodies in an intricate way that we could open and enter.

If we take the world not as consisting of opaque things that exist as separate from us, but as they are in the situations in which we live with our bodies, everything changes. Things and circumstances are no longer obvious and largely unchangeable. Now each opens into an implicit intricacy which we can enter.

#2 We Have Plant Bodies

How can the body know our situations and know them more intricately than we do? And how can it project new ways of action and thought? To answer this properly will take a while. I will have to tell about complicated philosophical arguments and about psychotherapy research. Here I will sketch it briefly.

In physiology and current philosophy the body is—mistakenly—assumed to have information about the world only through the five senses. It cannot contain information [Page 25] that it has not seen, heard, smelled, tasted or touched. Some philosophers did say that our minds have "innate ideas," but that was always questionable. The most common ancient and modern *assumption has been that we cannot know anything that doesn't come through our senses.* How mind and body relate has always been a problem. But the body, at any rate, isn't supposed to have information other than through the five senses.

But what about all these instances of a bodily knowing of situations? They are all odd and unexplained if one holds to the usual assumption that we can know only through the five senses. How is it that we have situational bodies? How can we think about this bodily knowing?

A plant does not have our five senses. It does not see, hear, or smell. And yet, obviously the plant contains the information involved in its living. It lives from itself; it organizes the next steps of its own body-process, and enacts them if the environment cooperates to supply what it needs. So the plant has the information about its living in and with the soil, the air, the water, and the light. It *has* the information, or we could say it *is* the information, since the plant-body is made of soil, water, air, and light. It makes itself out of those and so, of course, it contains (it *is*) information about those. But it is not about soil and water just lying out there by themselves. Rather, it is much more complex information about the plant's living with those, making itself out of them. We notice that the plant doesn't need the five senses to be this kind of information.

Animal bodies also contain (are) this kind of information. They also make themselves out of the stuff they eat and the oxygen they breathe. This bodily information is elaborated by what they get from the five senses. The five senses are not bits out of which the world is put together. Rather, what comes through the five senses *comes into* the plant-body and elaborates and modifies that complex information. Animals live more complex lives than plants. Their bodies have (are) at least as much information as plants have. They organize and enact their complex living from their bodies. The five senses do not constitute the animal's world. They only elaborate the already intricate information of body-life, which the plant *is*.

Language and culture greatly elaborate the life-process and the information of our plant bodies. My second main point is: *We can think of our linguistic and situational knowledge not as separate and floating, but as elaborations of our already intricate plant-bodies.*

In this way we can think how the living body knows (feels, lives, is) *its situation from inside*. But what is a situation? *A situation is never just something external.*

For example, let's say it is an external fact that the door is locked. But that is not a situation. A situation is never just the external facts existing out there alone. The situation is that I am coming home and find I've lost the key. Or the situation is that I'm crouching behind that locked door, hoping it will hold while three guys are trying to break it down. Or perhaps I am locked in and trying to get out. *A situation always involves some living thing that is in the process of organizing its further living.*

[Page 26]

In a rough way we can say that the body knows the situations because it *is* our living in them. From the body come our next moves, not just inhaling and eating, but also our interaction with others and what we are about to say to them.

How was all this ignored for so long? It was ignored because none of it fits into a world constructed entirely of space, time, and the five senses. The world so constructed has long been considered fundamental to science. Although there has been much philosophical critique of it, we are only now developing a viable alternative.

How This Kind of Experience Functions in Psychotherapy

I began working on this experience in philosophy, but I will first tell you how it occurs in psychotherapy because there it is most easily observed.

In psychotherapy, at the start and throughout, when people talk about a problem they say what they can about it. Then they come to a stop. What can be said has been said, but the problem is not solved. One knows that there is much more to say, but one doesn't know what that is. It is

Silences make some people uncomfortable; they feel a need to keep talking so they find other things to say. But if they can stand the silence, they may keep their attention on the, on that edge where there is more, but no more can be said.

In a series of research studies of tape-recorded therapy sessions, we found that psychotherapy is successful when people work with this special kind of experience. It is now one of the most solidly corroborated findings in psychotherapy research.

Let me tell you what you hear on such a tape recording: You hear the person saying something, then pausing. After a silence, the person says: "No, what I said wasn't right; that's not quite it; it's hmm" and again a pause. After a while the person might say something like, "It's right there, but I don't know what it is." Then, after another silence, suddenly: "Oh, yes, one thing about it is" And after a few sentences, then again, "Let's see, is that right?" Another silence, then perhaps a big breath and "Yes, that's right, that much is right."

This silent checking is possible because something is *there* to check against. It is *something felt, but not yet known*. It is sensed as meaningful, but not immediately recognizable. It is the..... We now call it a "felt sense."

You can hear the person having a conversation with the, Although what it is is not known, the person is sure that what was first said is "*not it*." Sometimes a whole series of quite probable statements are proposed, and yet none of them "is it." How does one know that those are not right? It is because the unspoken *doesn't budge* in response to any of those good statements.

At last something comes up from this sense, some bit, some hint, some small part, some thought. That bit might not sound very special. In itself it might be less interesting than what one had proposed. But when the person says, "Let me see, is that right?" there is a directly felt effect. That thought is special because along with it the felt sense *moves*, stirs, or releases a little. So *that* little bit is special. It is precious. Its coming is a step on the way to more. There will be many such steps.

[Page 27]

So far I have made it sound as if the person only tries out things or listens to what comes from the, The person's side of the conversation involves more than that.

The process moves by *steps*. What comes in one step does not usually solve anything, but it does change the felt sense somewhat. From that changed sense another step can come.

At first, when one attends at such an edge, it seems that nothing much can happen there at all. It seems unpromising, just a stuck place. But when a felt sense comes, a sense of the whole problem, "all that," one feels better, even before any steps come from it. Most steps are also

quite small—a slight new energy, a bit of give where all was stiff before, some breath, a little stirring of life along with something that we now *can* say. Such small steps might not seem like much of an advance. If one is not familiar with these little steps, one might easily ignore them. But once used to this process, one values and pursues anything that brings a slight shift in the felt sense. Soon there is another step, and another. Eventually a big step comes, a big shift in how one's whole body feels the problem. Then one's understanding of the problem also shifts. Now the whole scene one was discussing changes. Very different things now seem relevant. But one big step is also not enough to solve a problem. That may take many steps. Months later one realizes that one doesn't have that problem anymore and that one hasn't had it for some time.

In my book, *Focusing*, I show how one can learn how to let a felt sense come, and how to attend to it so that steps come. We also teach it at The Focusing Institute in Chicago.

Sometimes it is the past that emerges from a felt sense. But people would not change in therapy if all they did was dig up the past. More importantly, *a lot that is quite new* can also come at that edge from a felt sense.

And even the past is much more intricate, more finely wrought than we had thought, when it emerges from a felt sense. We were not aware of these complex connections, these unique intricacies, when we just remembered these events, nor when we lived them originally. We say that what we now find was there all along. Actually, that isn't so, as I will explain. The coming of a felt sense and the ensuing steps are continuous with—but more than—simply what was.

One changes in therapy; one does not only come to know the past more fully. New ways of being are generated—obviously those don't follow logically from how one has been. Nor can one simply impose new ways on oneself from the top down. There is, indeed, a role for designing ourselves newly, but that *alone* does not usually change us much. We must let our wished-for design relate to the felt sense of how we are. Then new and much more intricate little steps of change arise which lead us not quite to what we designed, but rather to something much better and more finely wrought.

Whether past or present, my point here is that what emerges is very often more intricate than the common phrases can say. In therapy one must twist language, one must poetize in order to say some of it.

That brings me to my next example:

[Page 28]

The in Poetry

A poet is in the midst of writing a poem. Six or seven lines have been written and they seem quite good. Now what?

The poet may be just confused and stuck, or there may be a very definite felt sense of what the poem *needs further to say*. As the poet reads and re-reads the lines up to where they stop, something further *comes*. There where the lines stop, the poem *continues*, but not in words. The lines stop, but the poem

Many phrases suggest themselves but they do not say *that*. Some of those are good enough to consider. The poet *listens* to those suggested lines. Coming after the written part, what might those new lines say here, in this spot, this where the unfinished poem continues?

Most of those lines are rejected. Sometimes such a line tempts the poet: "Use the line, it's good—no one will know that it doesn't say what wants to come here." The poet tries to push the good line onto the But no. The will not have that line. It continues to do its own *implicit* saying and it keeps itself separate, from that good line. It insists on *remaining unsaid* by that line. There it is, just as *demandingly implying* as before, untouched by the good new line. Or worse, the is insulted by the line; it wilts, shrinks, and is about to disappear, threatening to leave the poet stranded. Quickly: Get that false line out of the way! Write it in the margin; save it for another day and another poem, perhaps. But quick, reread the written lines again and ah, yes—there it is again: the – the felt sense of how the poem goes on where it stops.

The demands, it urges, it hungers, it *insists* upon, it knows, foreshadows, *implies*, wants –something so exact it is almost as if it were already said, and yet—no words. The poet's hand is gesturing, rotating in the air. That is so demanding, so specific, *more precise* than all the common phrases. The is not pre-verbal. It understands the language, as we see from the fact that it responds to the suggested lines and knows that they won't do. The is not really without words, rather it is full of *implicit* words and also *implicit* situations. A lot of history and culture is implicit, too. But this, which wants to be said, has not been said before. The is full of words that are struggling to rearrange themselves into new phrases. The new phrases do not yet exist. And they may never come—the poem might be left unfinished.

How can such a *imply* what does not exist and has never existed? Yet, it implies just what it implies and won't take anything less. What the implies is more precise, more specific, more intricate than the common phrases. What the poem is about is thus revealed as having more complexity than our language has yet ever said. The poem implies something that is *more intricate, more exactly featured* than anything already known.

At last, a certain phrasing comes. This time the no longer hangs there, still *implying* something separate from that line. Nor does it wilt, shrink or vanish. It flows into this new line. The line *takes it along, carries it*. But the line also says *more* than the had implied. The poet says that this line now is what the *was*, but that isn't quite accurate. [Page 29] The line lets the poet discover more than was there before. The line reveals, opens, expands, develops the The line carries the *further*. It *carries* the *forward*.

More lines may now come smoothly for a while until there is again a stop. Again re-reading, a new comes, many lines are rejected, and with luck a line does *carry forward*.

There has not been a way to name this relation, a continuity which makes more. Now we call it "carrying forward."

Notice that *carrying forward* is definitely distinguishable from all those other times when the wouldn't budge. What that carries forward is noticeably different from all those suggestions that leave the still hanging there, as before. We also notice that the body *knows the language*—since it recognizes when phrases do not say what is implied.

And we see again that the body knows the situation, the aspect of life the poet is trying to phrase. Else it could not know so exactly that the suggested lines fall short.

The poet's "....." *acts just as if the lines had been forgotten and were being remembered*, only of course that isn't so! They are new. We see again that the body can imply *something new*. I already pointed this out in mentioning psychotherapy. Many theories hold that we can only find in experience what was first put into it from outside. Not so! Our bodies are more intricate than whatever we have experienced, whatever we were taught and the situations in which we lived. All that comes into our more intricate bodies is not just recorded there; it is *lived further!*

Past experiences become part of one's further living. And the coming of a felt sense is also a *further* living. Something new and more intricate than we have known can come from it.

Again: Everything is Like That

Every good poem brings us something that has never been said before, usually something *more intricate* than what is usually said. *But a poem can be about anything*, any aspect of life. We see that anything is really more than it usually seems to be. Anything is also an intricacy we can enter. We can know anything much further if we think from the it can give us.

THE IN THINKING:

Such a also happens at the edges whenever we think freshly about anything. Our further steps of thought are implied and led to by the felt sense of the edge of thinking, the

We think this and that and that other, but then we reach an edge where we sense more, but we cannot yet think that. But we know not to back away from that edge. We could pass by that edge and move on in familiar and true ways, but no, we stick at that edge; we *prefer* to stay stuck. We even glory in that edge—we have a lead! Something *new* will come there!

[Page 30]

#3 The Body Implies Its Right Next Step

In his autobiography, Einstein says that for fifteen years while working on the problem that led to the theory of relativity he was guided by "*a feeling*" of what the answer had to be. Certainly by "feeling" he didn't mean an emotional reaction; he had a that implied a further step that was hard to form. The body can imply something new, *after* it has absorbed language and humanly sophisticated knowledge. Einstein's body learned a lot of math and physics. But the new step came not just from the math and physics. No new theory followed from those. That is why it was a problem. *After absorbing all that, his body had gone on to imply a right next step.*

I have already said that sensations and learnings come into a living body that is already quite elaborate. When we think, we work with more than just what came in from outside. That is how Einstein could get more than followed from math and physics alone.

Now we see that the body implies not just more, but a *right* next step. This kind of "right" does relate to the ethical kind, but in a complicated way. The body can also become addicted which uses but subverts its right next-step implying. There is also a direct sense of error, of unsoundness. There are many other complications which are very much worth studying because knowing those lets us more effectively use the body's right next-step implying. Right now I want only to understand this next-step implying as such.

To grasp what "right" means here, we have to look at more obvious cases. Every living body implies the next steps of its life-process. The plant implies that the sun will come out, and it implies its photosynthesis with the sun.

Ethologists found that complex behaviors such as mating dances, nest building, and food search are inherited. The living body implies each next step of complex life processes. In a cat the plant body has taken on a whole set of additional complexities. Now when it is starved, its body implies sitting in front of a hole in the ground. It implies something that will come out of the hole, and it implies a complex series of jumps. The cat's body can also imply innovative next steps when its usual next step cannot happen because of circumstances new to cats. Its body can learn and total up new circumstances, and it can imply opening the window to get out of the house. Sometimes it can actually open the window, too.

Our own plant bodies have also taken on language, mathematics and physics. Now they can imply a right next step in situations that include those. When life is stopped—when we sense a problem—our bodies imply a next move (whether or not we can shape it and enact it.)

In driving a car or flying a plane, once the body has absorbed the details it can imply a right next step that is new and more intricate than what it learned.

Of course we miss a lot. Without all that math and physics, Einstein's body would not have implied a next step that worked; however, after having the knowledge, he *felt* the next step. His body implied the next step. This implying guided him in devising new specifics, new differentiations to enact the next step.

[Page 31]

The body totals up the circumstances it has and then implies the next step, whether it is relativity or inhaling. This has not been well understood. *The living body always implies its right next step.*

Bodily Coming

We cannot simply will an orgasm, or sleep, or tears. To bring tears we can review some sad event. Perhaps then the tears come. Perhaps not. We can invite sleep; we can lie down and try to stop thinking. We are used to the fact that it must come. Similarly with anger or tenderness, we can try to fake them, but to have them they must come.

So also with words. When all runs smoothly, we launch into speaking and the *right* words just come out. But if they don't, what can we do? We wait until they come.

New thoughts are also like that. We take credit for them afterwards, but we don't really make those. We dispose ourselves, we go over old ideas like the poet re-reads the already written lines. We attend there, where the old ideas stop, hoping for a, an implying of more than we have yet thought. If it doesn't come, we cannot manufacture it. Its coming is bodily, like my other examples here.

The in our Confusing Situations

Creativity has become essential in our lives. It is no longer a special skill for special professions.

Nowadays we could not get through the day if we went only by the rules, roles, and routines we were taught. Not that we can do without those old routines, but we have to modify and elaborate them. Many of our situations are now more complex and sometimes unique.

Every day at work and also with people close to us, there are situations in which we cannot just go ahead and do one of the ordinary things we know. We have to devise some new way through.

The society has become more complex than the routines and concepts that it teaches.

Most commentators on the current society do not see the increased complexity. They see only the breakdown of the old patterns and the pitfalls and losses that this now involves.

These critics think that without the social patterns there is only disorder in people. Therefore our current difficulties in living are just what they would expect. Socially defined work-identities no longer sustain people. Marriages are no longer sacred. Relationships between people do not last. People do not know what to do in many situations and in life. The old patterns supplied all that, and the critics think that only externally imposed patterns *can* ever supply it.

The breakdown of the old patterns is actually caused by a new development which has only begun. It is not just a loss and a breakdown. It is also an opening to a further development. I will show how the current stage came about and how it is now entering upon a further stage. The further stage may bring new pitfalls, but it does move past the current ones. It opens a whole new mode of living.

[Page 32]

The kind of experience to which I have been pointing has a central role to play in moving to the further stage.

It is true that the break-down of solid social routines can leave us in a void. When the old, official meanings of our social connections lose their power, we may find nothing to replace them for a while. We may fall into mere indulgence because the old disciplined ways of living now seem pointless. When the "higher" motivations fail us, we tend to fall into the lower ones. Or we lack genuine motivation altogether. Then we have *less* to go on than the old guides provided.

But consider. Isn't it true that we are at least sometimes *right* not to enact one of the old routines? Granted, sometimes we reject the old codes because it is easier. We measure up to less, attempt to measure up to *less*. But sometimes we cannot do what we were taught because we sense *more* in a situation than the old routines can meet.

In a difficult situation, if we cannot act in some easy and usual way, and if a new way does not quickly come to us, what do we have and feel? Confusion, frustration, perhaps. We may just be stuck. But what is it that tells us that the ordinary actions and phrases won't do or are not what is needed? If we ask ourselves that question, and if we pay direct attention to what it is that stops us, we may find that we have a, a sense of what *is* needed, what *would* work, if only we *could* devise it.

When we don't know what to do, we sense more than we can say. Once we pay direct attention to what we do sense, it is like a hunch: the knows more than we can say or do. Like Einstein, we have a "feeling," an unclear sense for the solution we are looking for. Our sense of it is sufficient to make us reject all the available ways, although the new move that would carry this *more* into action does not yet exist.

From the we may or may not be able to devise the action-step we need. It may not come for a long time—or ever. But we are more likely to find such a new way if we first have a bodily felt sense of what is needed, and if we attend to it. It implies and pre-figures new ways that have not yet formed.

For example, when I have to deal with something as a father, I may recall what my own father would have done in that kind of situation. Of course I want to be different from him in some ways, but I can't just do what he did that I liked either. It won't work. The kids these days are different than we were; is that it? But I like the way my kids are. I have myself encouraged them to be different than I was. The problem is that there is *more* in the situation that must be dealt with than I can think clearly about. If I pay attention to what stops me, I can sense this *more*.

What would I say if I were to speak from my? If someone would listen, I might talk for hours. I might say what I *can* say about it. I might say that I know the usual advice I would get. I might talk about what my kids are like. I might recite what I've already tried and just what happened. But after I said all that I can say, I would still have the quandary. After saying all those things, there would still be "....." —the sense of more than I can say, the sense of what *would* be right to do if I could shape it. The "....." is my sense of the *more* that a course of action needs to carry forward.

[Page 33]

New Concepts and a New Kind of Concept

Elsewhere (*A Process Model*, available from The Focusing Institute) I have built a new theoretical model of the body, its vegetative life-process, behavior, and the role it plays in language and culture.

The model has dual powers: It has *the power of logic, of precise interrelated concepts, but it also has a new power*. The concepts are *not only* ordinary logical ones. They are *also* a new kind. They are concepts that bring the experience I have been describing along with them. The concepts stem from and retain in them that kind of experience. One can move from these concepts in two ways: One can move from them in a logical way, but one *can also and differently move from the bodily-sensed which they bring*.

©Eugene T. Gendlin

Note to Readers:

- **How Do I Refer To This Document?** An example reference is at [the top of this page](#). Please include the Internet address in the reference, even if you cite the document in a printed article, so that others can find the Gendlin Online Library.
- **Can I Link Directly To This Document?** Yes. We encourage you to link directly to it from your own online documents. We have built "hooks" into this web page to make

it very easy to connect to individual pages and headings in the text. For examples, see: [How to Link to The Gendlin Online Library](#).

- **Biographic Note:** Eugene T. Gendlin is a seminal American philosopher and psychologist. He received his Ph.D. in philosophy from the University of Chicago and taught there from 1963 to 1995. His philosophical work is concerned especially with the relationship between logic and implicit intricacy. Philosophy books include *Experiencing and the Creation of Meaning*, *Language Beyond Post-Modernism: Saying and Thinking in Gendlin's Philosophy* edited by David Michael Levin, (fourteen commentaries and Gendlin's replies), and *A Process Model*. There is a world wide network of applications and practices (<http://previous.focusing.org>) stemming from this philosophy. Gendlin has been honored three times by the American Psychological Association for his development of Experiential Psychotherapy. He was a founder and editor for many years of the Association's Clinical Division Journal, *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research and Practice*. His book *Focusing* has sold over half a million copies and has appeared in seventeen languages. His psychology-related books are *Let Your Body Interpret Your Dreams* and *Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapy*.
- **If you see any faults in this document** [please send us an email](#).
- [Add a comment to the Gendlin Online Blog for this article](#).
- [See the reference for this document in the Gendlin primary bibliography](#).
- **More on** [Creative Process](#) **from the Focusing Institute website.**
- **More on** [Focusing-Oriented Psychotherapy](#) **from the Focusing Institute website.**
- **More on** [Philosophy of the Implicit](#) **from the Focusing Institute website.**

Document #2064 version 071003 build 071008

