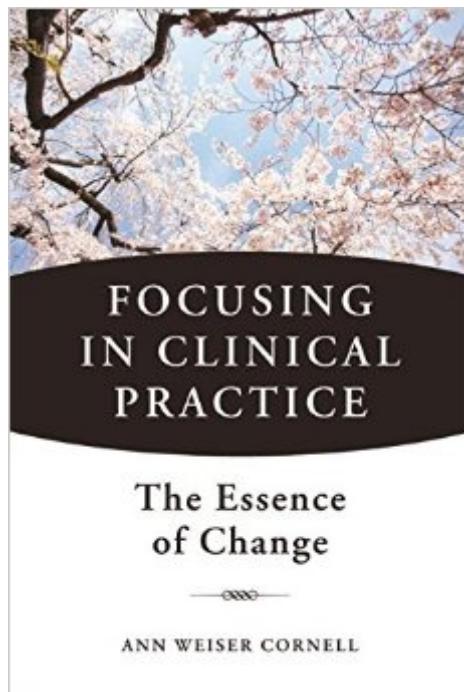


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Focusing In Clinical Practice: The Essence Of Change



Synopsis

A therapy technique for inner awareness and meaningful change. "Focusing" is a particular process of attention that supports therapeutic change, a process that has been linked in more than 50 research studies with successful outcomes in psychotherapy. First developed by pioneering philosopher and psychotherapist Eugene Gendlin, Focusing quietly inspired much of the somatically oriented, mindfulness-based work being done today. Yet what makes Focusing a truly revolutionary approach to therapeutic change has been little understood until now. Focusing is based on a radically different understanding of the body as inherently meaningful and implicitly wise. Mere intellectualizing or talking about problems can keep clients stuck in their old patterns of behavior. Focusing introduces the concept of the "felt sense," a moment in process when there is a potential to experience more than is already known and to break through old, frozen, stuck patterns. Clients who see real change during the course of their therapy work are often those who can contact and stay with a felt sense—but how to help them do so is not obvious. Ann Weiser Cornell, who has been teaching Focusing to clinicians for more than 30 years, shows how to help clients get felt senses and nurture them when they appear, how to work with clients who have difficulty feeling in the body, how to facilitate a "felt shift," how to support clients who experience dysregulating emotional states, and much more. Beginning with a clear explanation of what makes Focusing so potentially transformative, she goes on to show how to effectively incorporate Focusing with other treatment modalities and use it to treat a range of client issues, notably trauma, addiction, and depression. Designed to be immediately applicable for working clinicians and filled with practical strategies, clinical examples, and vignettes, this book shows step by step how to bring Focusing into any kind of clinical practice. Cornell expertly demonstrates the Focusing process unfolding, moment by moment, in the therapy room, and illuminates its powerful capacity to support a client's growth and change.

Book Information

Hardcover: 288 pages

Publisher: W. W. Norton & Company; 1 edition (August 5, 2013)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0393707601

ISBN-13: 978-0393707601

Product Dimensions: 6.5 x 1.1 x 9.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds ([View shipping rates and policies](#))

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (19 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #351,260 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #25 in Books > Textbooks > Medicine & Health Sciences > Medicine > Clinical > Surgery > Urology #58 in Books > Medical Books > Medicine > Internal Medicine > Urology #1072 in Books > Medical Books > Psychology > Counseling

Customer Reviews

I am delighted to be reading Ann Weiser Cornell's new book introducing the value of Focusing practice to therapists! Being in touch with the living edge of our own present-moment experience can be a fertile source of fresh meaning and whole-body insights, opening into authentic growth and transformation. A bit of self-disclosure here: I am not unbiased, as I have been a Focusing practitioner since 1998. Still, the research base for this contemporary, body-based awareness practice, originally developed by Eugene Gendlin in the 60's, has been growing slowly but steadily for the last 50 years, along with a world-wide network of practitioners, so there are many of us who find this work enormously helpful. Any therapist who wants to help clients connect more deeply with their own selves will find something of value here. In particular, clinicians who are already drawn to mindfulness practices will find great value in this Western approach that blends both mind and heart. Clinicians who are already practicing "inner relationship modalities" such as Voice Dialogue and Internal Family Systems therapy, will find that an awareness of the Focusing process supports and deepens their work with clients. Similarly for those already working with somatic approaches... Of course, we can most effectively share this with others, when we ourselves are engaging in this deeply renewing and life-enhancing practice. In addition to enhancing the work we are already doing with clients, Focusing (and Focusing-based peer supervision groups, and/or Focusing partnerships) can be a vital part of self-care as mental health practitioners. And so I am celebrating this extremely well-written, thorough, and clear book, designed to introduce clinicians to the world of Focusing... kudos to Ann Weiser Cornell, and a warm welcome to all!

Ann Weiser Cornell has achieved that rare synthesis of the mechanics of Focusing in psychotherapy and the inherent philosophy of the implicit which underlies the practice and is the life work of Gene Gendlin, her mentor. Her great strength as a linguist gives her a sensitivity to words and their implications. After all as a psychologist my material is words, not medications. Ann's deep experience and clarity in the use of words as simple as "hello" and "something" change the experience of the client. She points out the difference between saying, "I am angry." and

"Something in me is angry." In the first we are our anger. In the second we are aware of our anger but not overwhelmed by it. This awareness is key to Ann's work. She terms it the "self-in-presence," positing an aware self, observing the many levels of feelings and interactions between them, but not being the feelings themselves. When I first heard her use this phrase I was in one of her workshops at the Focusing Institute Summer School in Garrison, New York, about five years ago. I heard it initially as the "selfing presence," and I still like that "selfing," as it points to the active nature of this awareness of feeling. Most importantly, Ann provides a model for a healthy, present self which can allow awareness of whatever is experienced and in this way open a direction for growth in the individual, often blocked by the attempt to avoid suffering. This is only one of literally hundreds of skillful and carefully crafted rewordings, opening the possibility of the next step. It is also a great read, Ann writes lucidly and specifically while maintaining the underpinnings of Gene's philosophy with firm grounding, thus making this a rare book--deeply intelligent and very much of this world. Ricki Morse, Santa Barbara Deirdre P. Morse, Ph.D.

This well composed book is a great explanation of the Focusing approach, from its background history and philosophical underpinnings to its eloquent application by Ann Weiser Cornell and associates. Especially helpful are the various representative case examples used to illustrate the effective use of empathic language and attitude grounded in Self-in-Presence. Having worked with groups of men in the role of peer counselor for over 15 years, I have found that Cornell's Focusing approach is the most helpful in helping men liberate themselves from childhood trauma, past conditioning, and dysfunctional patterns.

Ann Weiser Cornell's latest book Focusing in Clinical Practice, is one of the most clearly articulated books about Focusing I have read; and I say this as a 35 year member of the Focusing community. She builds on her years of experience and teaching skills to make the Focusing process come alive. Her chapters flow from one to the other as she moves into what I think is the heart of her book: the felt sense as the key to successful therapy. It is here that I most appreciate the clear, empathetic instructions on teaching how a felt sense forms, how to be with it and allow our inner knowing to tell its story in its own time. While there are many modalities of therapy the heart of each is being able to access the felt sense and gradually learn to create the inner environment which then allows change to happen. Ann writes, key to this forward movement is fostering a strong witnessing self. It is from this self that disidentification versus identification happens, so that the client can eventually move from saying, 'I am afraid,' to 'something in me is afraid'. From here it doesn't take long for an

inner trust to develop which then enables one to begin to experience change that brings a new way of perceiving along with new possibilities. The ease with which Ann moves from one modality to another incorporating Focusing into each one is very instructive. An image I have as I write this review is of someone gently holding my hand as I'm lead in and through to the beginning of a journey of self awakening. For anyone interested in learning Focusing for the first time or becoming inspired once again by a practice that is already familiar, I can't think of another book on the subject that I'd recommend more highly.

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