

**The
therapeutic
change and
change within
self.**

Focusing

MA Humanistic Counselling
and Psychotherapy

Mx Tara Murphy

Week 8



Learning outcomes

- Define and Describe Therapeutic Change
- Explain the Transition Process in Therapeutic Change
- Look at Rogers Seven Stages of therapeutic change

- Define Focusing and its Role in Therapy
- Apply Techniques Used in Focusing Therapy
- Take part in a Counselling Carousel

What is therapeutic Change?

Therapeutic change refers to the process clients undergo in therapy to move toward personal growth, healing, and greater self-understanding.

This change is facilitated by a supportive therapeutic relationship, which encourages clients to explore and transform their feelings, thoughts, and behaviours.

Key components of therapeutic change:



Awareness as the Starting Point

Change begins with awareness. This initial self-recognition is vital for progress, as clients start to notice aspects of themselves, their lives, or their relationships that need attention. Awareness is particularly powerful at the beginning, as it's often fresh, poignant, and unbiased. This self-awareness allows clients to see patterns or issues clearly, laying the groundwork for the change process.



The Emotional Impact of Change

Change often brings about strong emotions—uncertainty, fear, excitement, or even grief. Therapy provides a safe space for clients to process these feelings, helping them navigate the transition from one "state" to another. Experiencing and expressing these emotions can be challenging but is necessary for meaningful transformation.



Transitioning from One State to Another

Change is essentially a transition, where clients move from a fixed, familiar state to a new, evolving one. This shift can be challenging because it disrupts established patterns and routines. In therapy, clients are guided to embrace the discomfort of transition and explore new ways of being, thinking, and feeling.

Therapist's Role in Supporting Change

Therapists play a crucial role in how clients deal with change.

The therapist's empathy, support, and encouragement help clients feel understood and safe, enabling them to confront difficult issues and trust the process. The therapist also models openness to change, providing an example of adaptability and resilience.



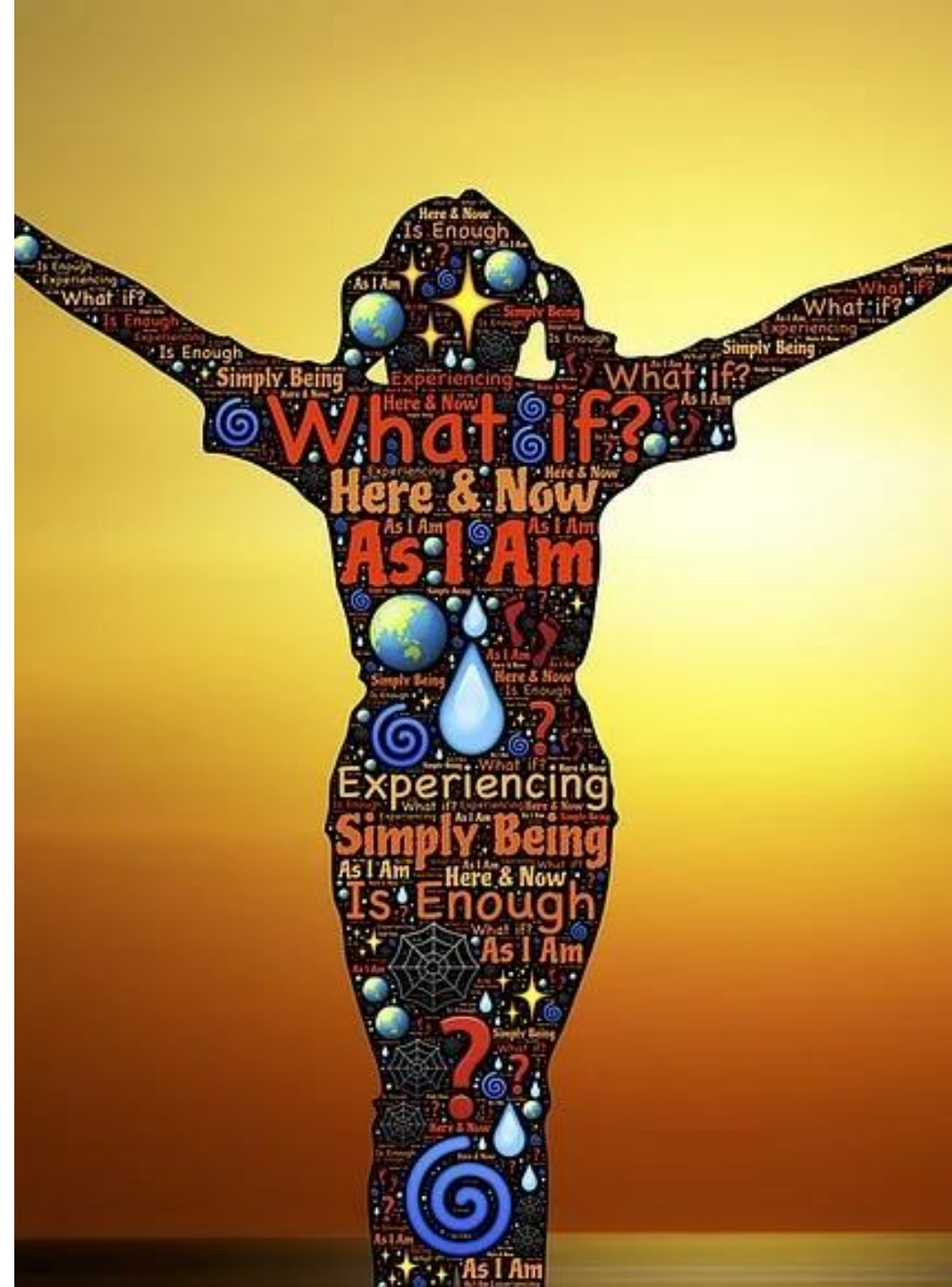
Developing Resilience and Self-Acceptance

As clients navigate therapeutic change, they build resilience by learning to accept themselves and face challenges with a constructive mindset. Therapy encourages clients to see themselves not as "broken" or flawed but as capable of growth and healing. This self-acceptance fosters a healthier relationship with oneself and others.



The Therapeutic Relationship as a Catalyst for Change

A strong therapeutic relationship creates an environment in which clients feel seen, heard, and valued. This relationship acts as a foundation, giving clients the confidence to explore vulnerable areas and attempt new ways of thinking or behaving. The therapist's consistency and authenticity encourage clients to open up and take emotional risks, which are essential for change.



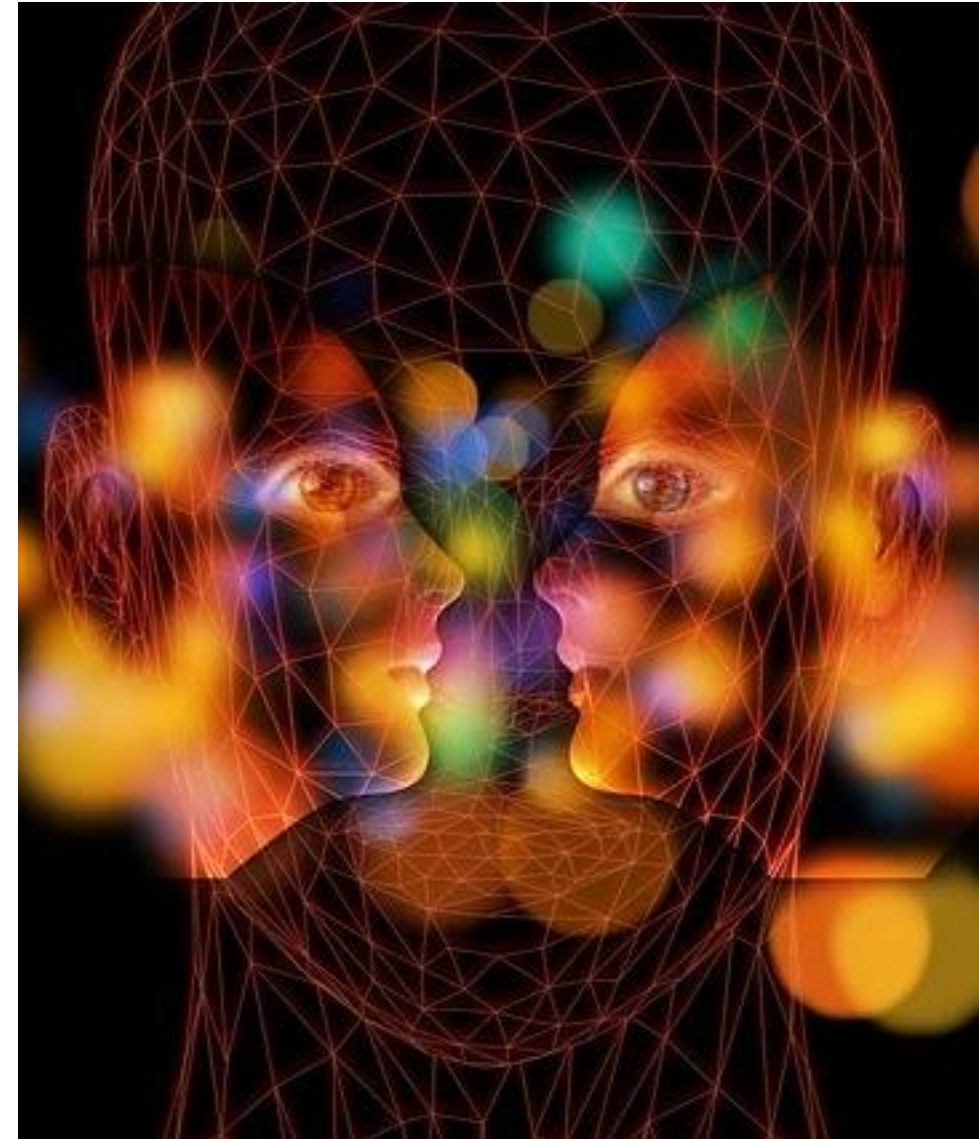
Rogers' Seven Stages of Psychological Change

Stage 1 - Fixity and Resistance

Clients are typically defensive and rigid, not open to self-exploration. They prefer to focus on external issues rather than internal feelings. Emotional experiences are generally suppressed or denied.

Stage 2 - Acknowledging Problems

Clients begin to acknowledge problems but are still largely defensive. They may start discussing their feelings but still keep them distanced or attribute issues to external factors. Ambiguity and complexity may feel uncomfortable.





Stage 3 - Exploring Feelings in Past Tense

Clients start speaking more openly about their emotions, often in past tense. They show more willingness to own personal responsibility and may begin using “I” language rather than generalizations, yet their expression remains somewhat guarded.

Stage 4 - Deeper Emotional Engagement

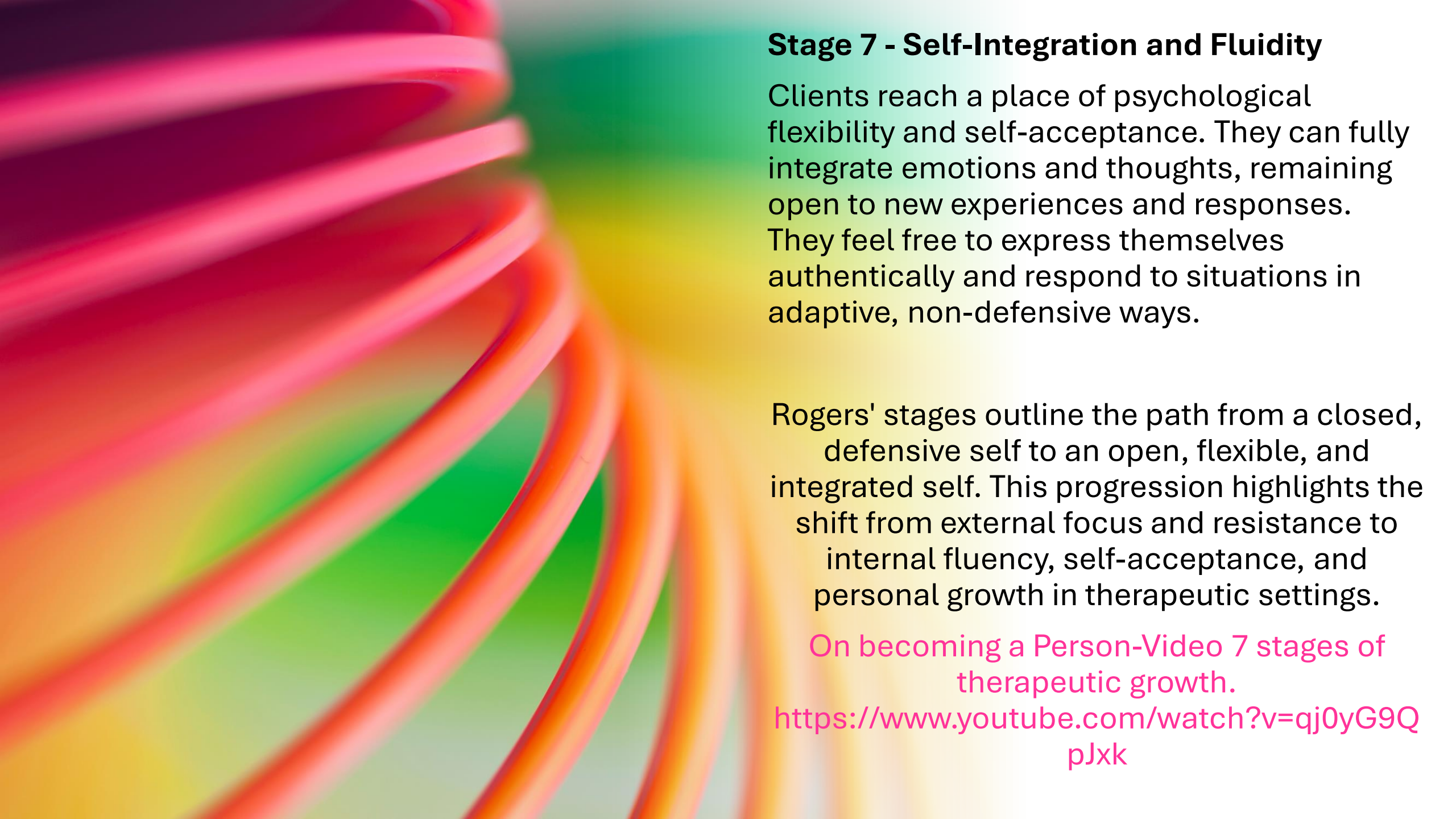
Clients feel safer exploring current emotions and inconsistencies in themselves. They may talk openly about intense or inconvenient feelings, becoming more willing to risk emotional vulnerability. Awareness of contradictions within themselves begins to grow.

Stage 5 - Embracing Complexity and Personal Responsibility

Clients feel more comfortable with ambiguity, owning their feelings and inner contradictions. They become more open to experiencing and expressing their emotions in real-time, developing a more accurate and nuanced self-understanding.

Stage 6 - Profound Emotional Release and Openness

Clients are able to fully experience and express emotions without restraint. They become immersed in their feelings, often experiencing transformative moments that feel freeing or cathartic. They understand and accept their deep motivations and values.



Stage 7 - Self-Integration and Fluidity

Clients reach a place of psychological flexibility and self-acceptance. They can fully integrate emotions and thoughts, remaining open to new experiences and responses. They feel free to express themselves authentically and respond to situations in adaptive, non-defensive ways.

Rogers' stages outline the path from a closed, defensive self to an open, flexible, and integrated self. This progression highlights the shift from external focus and resistance to internal fluency, self-acceptance, and personal growth in therapeutic settings.

On becoming a Person-Video 7 stages of therapeutic growth.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qj0yG9QpJxk>

Four Overarching Themes of Progress

1. Movement from **internal rigidity** (fixity) to **internal fluidity** (flowingness).
2. A deepening **sense of self** and internal fluency.
3. Growing **awareness, acknowledgment, and acceptance** of one's own feelings.
4. Realization of **complexity and ambiguity** within the world, others, and oneself.

Progression in Stages:

Fixity → Changingness

Rigid Structure → Flow

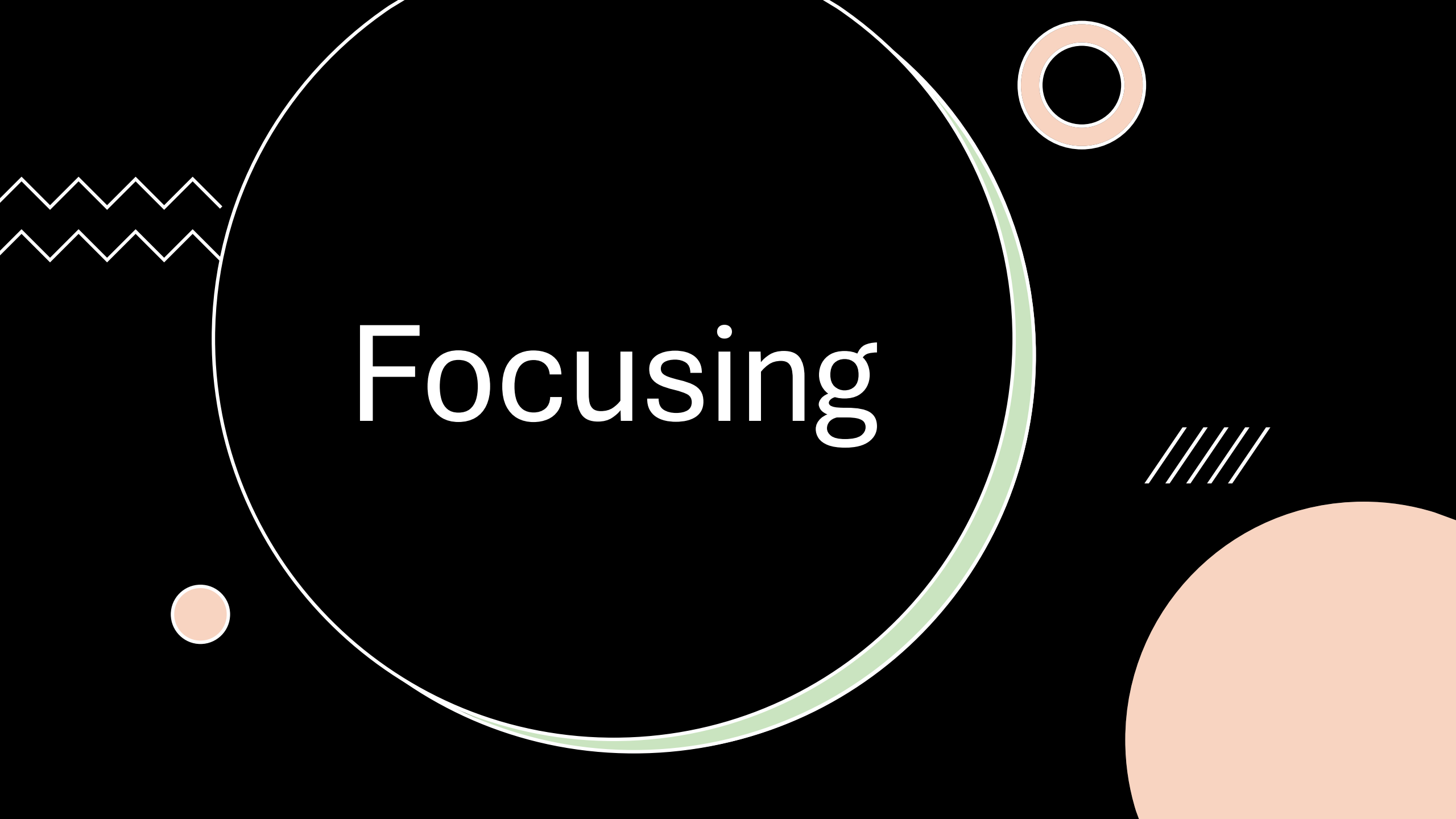
Stasis → Process

Therapeutic change is a dynamic, deeply personal process that requires the client's courage and the therapist's empathy and support. Beginning with awareness, clients gradually transition from rigid, defensive states to states of openness, acceptance, and self-integration. This journey is often marked by strong emotions, a willingness to explore ambiguity, and a deepening connection to one's true self.

The therapeutic relationship plays a central role in this transformation, providing a safe, supportive environment that allows clients to take risks, confront vulnerabilities, and foster resilience. As clients engage with their emotions and patterns, they build a foundation for continued growth, equipping them with the tools to face future challenges with self-acceptance and psychological flexibility.

In essence, therapeutic change not only transforms clients' internal worlds but also empowers them to lead more fulfilling, authentic lives. The process highlights the strength and agency clients possess and underscores the importance of a compassionate therapeutic partnership that honours their unique journey.





Focusing

What is Focusing?

- Focusing is the building block of change, personal growth and creativity (artistic and intellectual).
- Focusing is a non-linear interaction between thinking and feeling, self and experiencing.
- Focusing is a particular way of paying attention to your embodied experience of something.
- Focusing was developed by Eugene Gendlin at the University of Chicago. It comes out of client-centered therapy, existential philosophy and psychotherapy outcome research.
- Focusing has a high capacity for joining with other things.
- Focusing has many applications—to psychotherapy, bodywork, medicine, religion, creativity, movement, education, organizational development, to name a few.



History and Research

Eugene Gendlin, who worked alongside Carl Rogers, developed the practice of focusing after investigating why some individuals did not benefit from therapy. Through his studies, Gendlin and his students could often predict whether a person would succeed in therapy. He discovered that those who were successful in therapy were the individuals who took time to pause and revisit unclear, vague, or challenging aspects of their experiences. When people in therapy concentrated on these initially indescribable aspects, they often eventually gained clarity and could make meaningful changes.

Gendlin distilled the skills he observed in successful therapy sessions into a structured, step-by-step process, which he detailed in his 1981 book, *Focusing*.

(therapeutic session focusing with Gendlin himself)

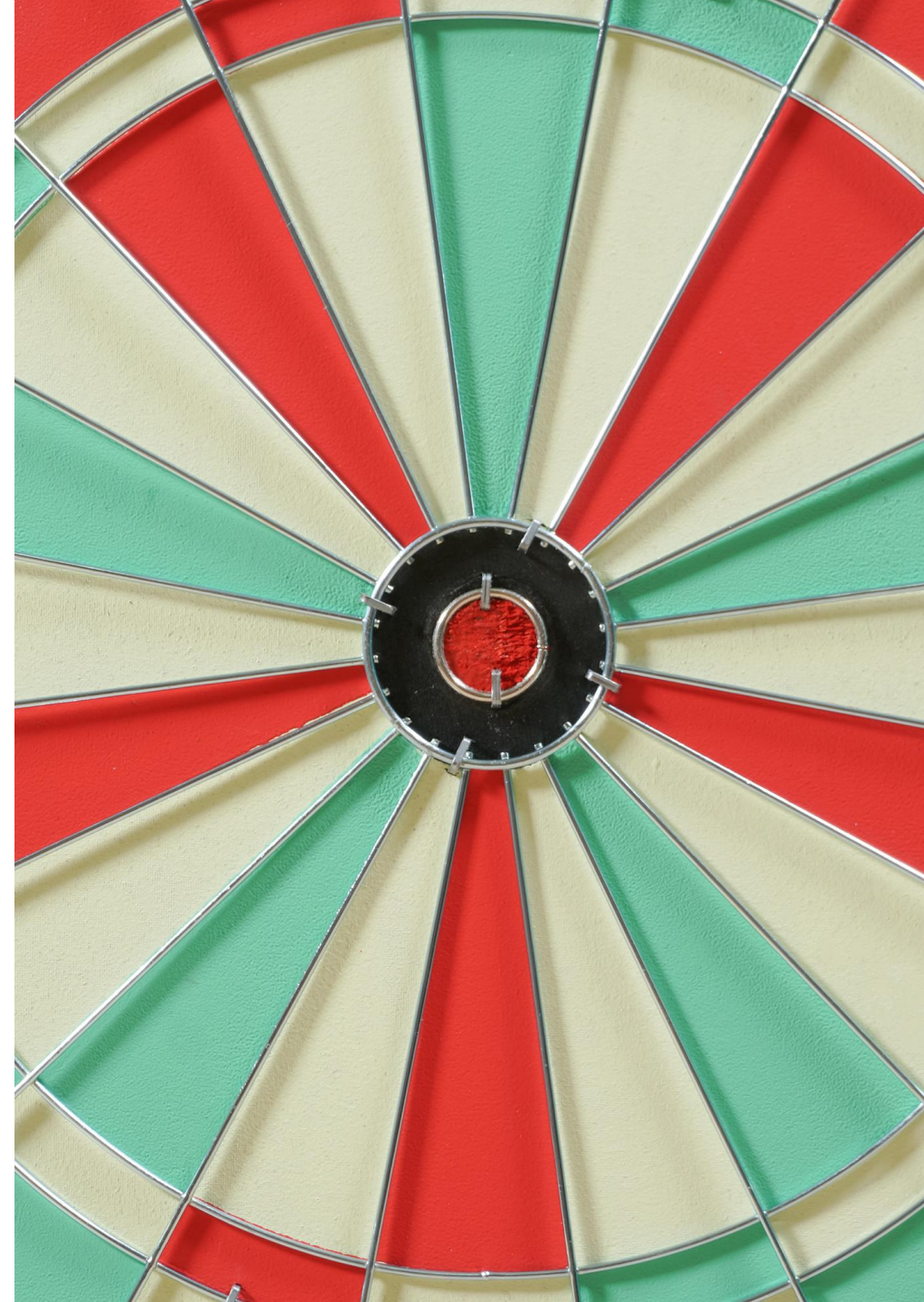
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=F5fb8Pf5gBs&t=3s>



In 1986, The Focusing Institute was established in New York. Today, the Institute, with its global network of certified professionals, offers conferences, a newsletter, and an online library with research and articles.

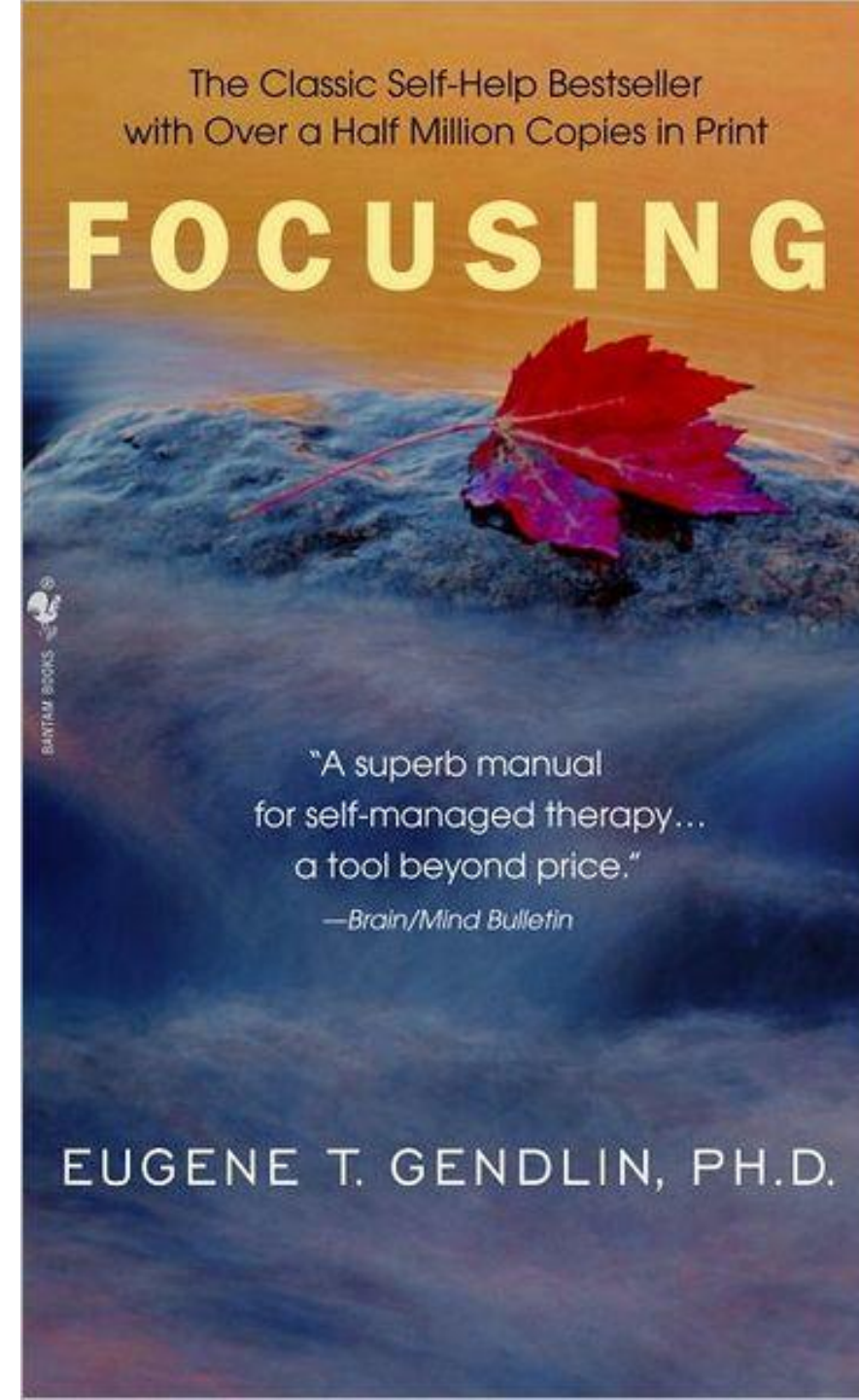
Teaching focusing led to the development of an egalitarian partnership practice designed to deepen one's connection with inner experiences (Gendlin, 1978). In this partnership, one person (the "focuser") uses body awareness to explore an issue and identify possible steps forward, while the other supports the process through experiential listening.

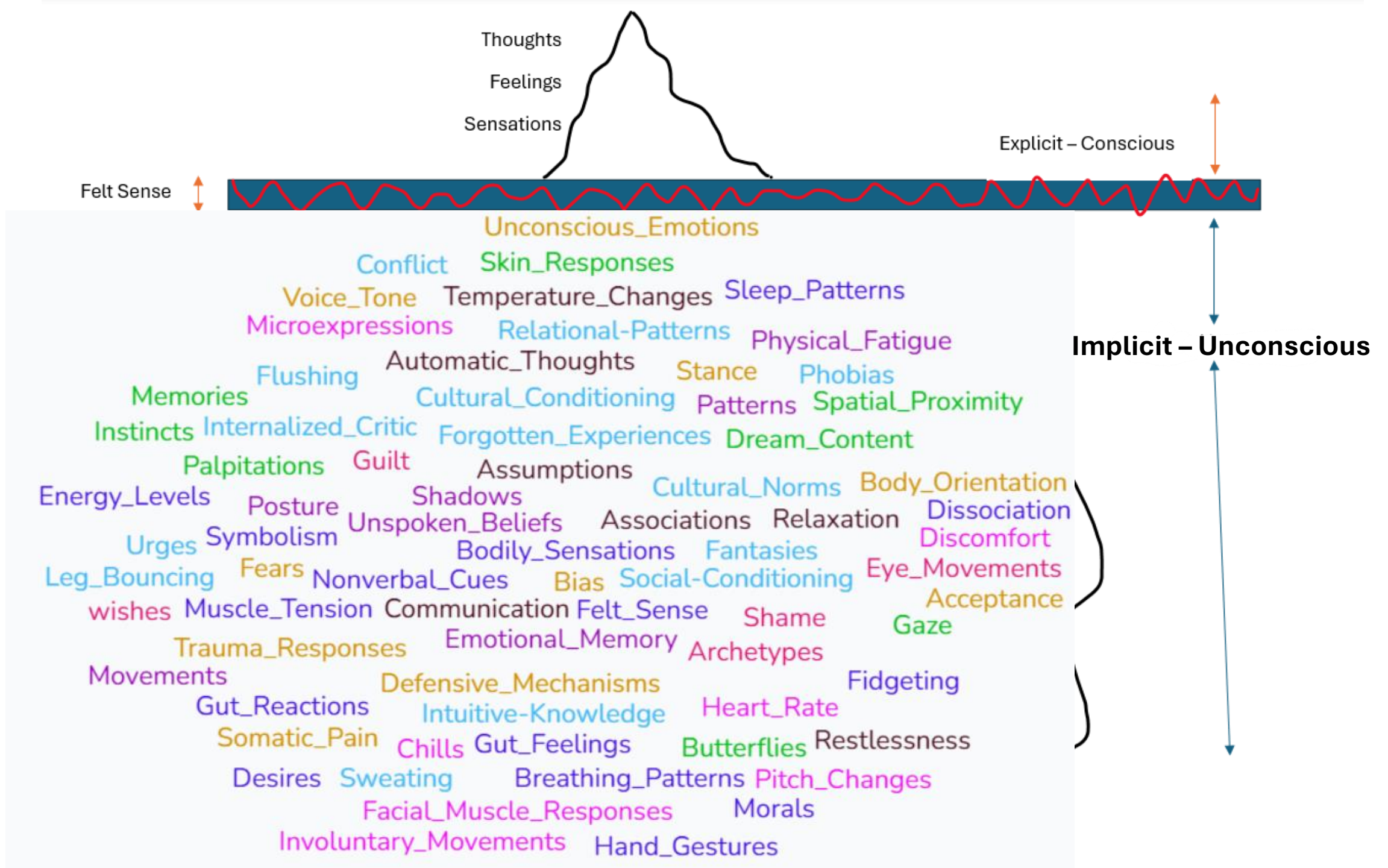
This type of listening, though inspired by Rogerian listening, is uniquely adapted to focusing. This dual process—listening to oneself carefully (as the focuser) and listening carefully to another's self-listening (as the partner)—became vital to mastering focusing and applying it across different contexts.



Focusing was developed to improve people's access to their inner world when research indicated that psychotherapy did not improve people's access to this experiencing. Since the research confirmed that high access to one's inner world did correlate with success in psychotherapy, it was important to develop another way that people could learn how to have that access.

Focusing became synonymous with both this learning to access the body felt sense in working on an issue, AND with the partnership practice which emerged as the primary way that people could sustain and extend this learning rather than forgetting it.





Techniques Used for in Focusing in Therapy

Dis-identification

This technique helps separate the person from unknown or confusing feelings within their body. For example, if someone expresses, “I just don’t know anymore,” the therapist encourages them to distinguish the “I” from what they are unsure about. This separation allows them to focus on their bodily response to the unclear feeling.

Joker Question

When a therapist feels uncertain about how to proceed, they may ask a “joker question” like, “What would feel right at this moment?” This question brings the individual back to their bodily sensations, allowing them to take the lead and reconnect with their felt sense.

Bodywork

This technique draws attention to a person’s physical gestures or posture. A therapist may ask how certain gestures feel or what sensations arise from specific body movements. Using the person’s own language, the therapist then facilitates further exploration of the bodily feelings, encouraging a deeper connection with their inner experience.



Clearing a Space

This technique involves helping the person set aside any overwhelming issues temporarily so they can focus more fully. The therapist may guide the person to "put aside" various thoughts or worries to create a mental and emotional "clearing" where they can approach one issue at a time.

Finding the Felt Sense

The therapist encourages the person to become aware of their felt sense—a subtle, holistic bodily sensation that holds meaning about the current issue. This felt sense is often vague at first, and the therapist supports the person in staying with it, even if it is unclear.

Waiting and Staying with the Felt Sense

The therapist encourages the person to stay with the felt sense patiently, even if it remains unclear for a while. This waiting allows the felt sense to evolve, gradually revealing insights or shifts in understanding.

Acknowledging Shifts and Changes

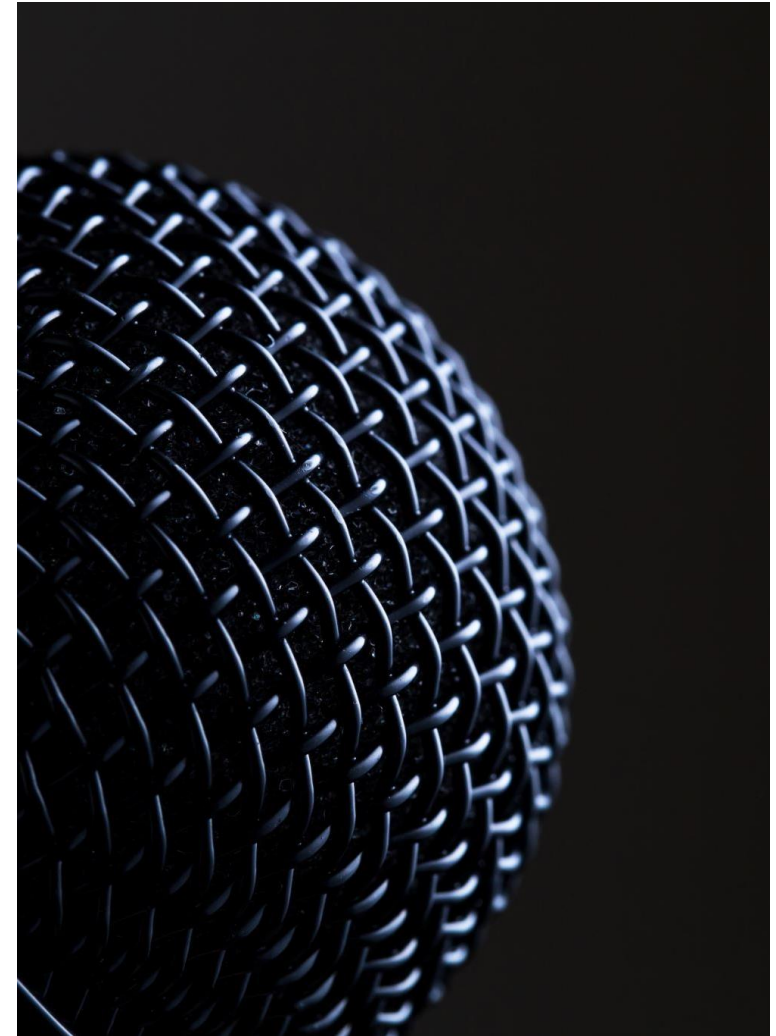
When the felt sense shifts or changes, the therapist helps the person acknowledge and notice the change. These shifts often bring new perspectives, emotions, or steps forward, and recognizing them strengthens the process.



Listening

Focusing is a listening carefully to your body felt sense of a situation or issue or challenge in your life. You learn to find the whole of a situation there in your experience very vaguely at first then more and more comes just in the noticing.

Remarkably this noticing, describing, being with, representing, entering... leads to an unfolding which is not in the least arbitrary as it may seem initially but rather opens up new possibilities in the situation. Literally as your body felt sense changes there are new possibilities for action which were not there for you before. Moreover, with this entering comes a new whole with its own new steps now possible to sense and do. This is because body (experiencing) and mind are not separate. Every thought and situation comes with some experiential dimension no matter how elusive. Finding this dimension opens doors and shows a way forward.



Double Listening

The practice of Focusing, that is, of listening carefully to your body felt sense of a situation, happens mostly in two contexts. One is with yourself which you can use any time formally or informally in a session of 5 seconds or 2 hours.

The other is a planned egalitarian partnership session where the listening carefully is doubled with exponential results. In this partnership you listen carefully to your body felt sense of a situation while your partner listens carefully to you, and then vice versa. The benefits of this “doubled listening” are extraordinary and wide-ranging yet there continues to be a humble ordinariness about the whole thing like of course this is the way human beings should be able to help each other.



How Can Focusing Therapy Help?

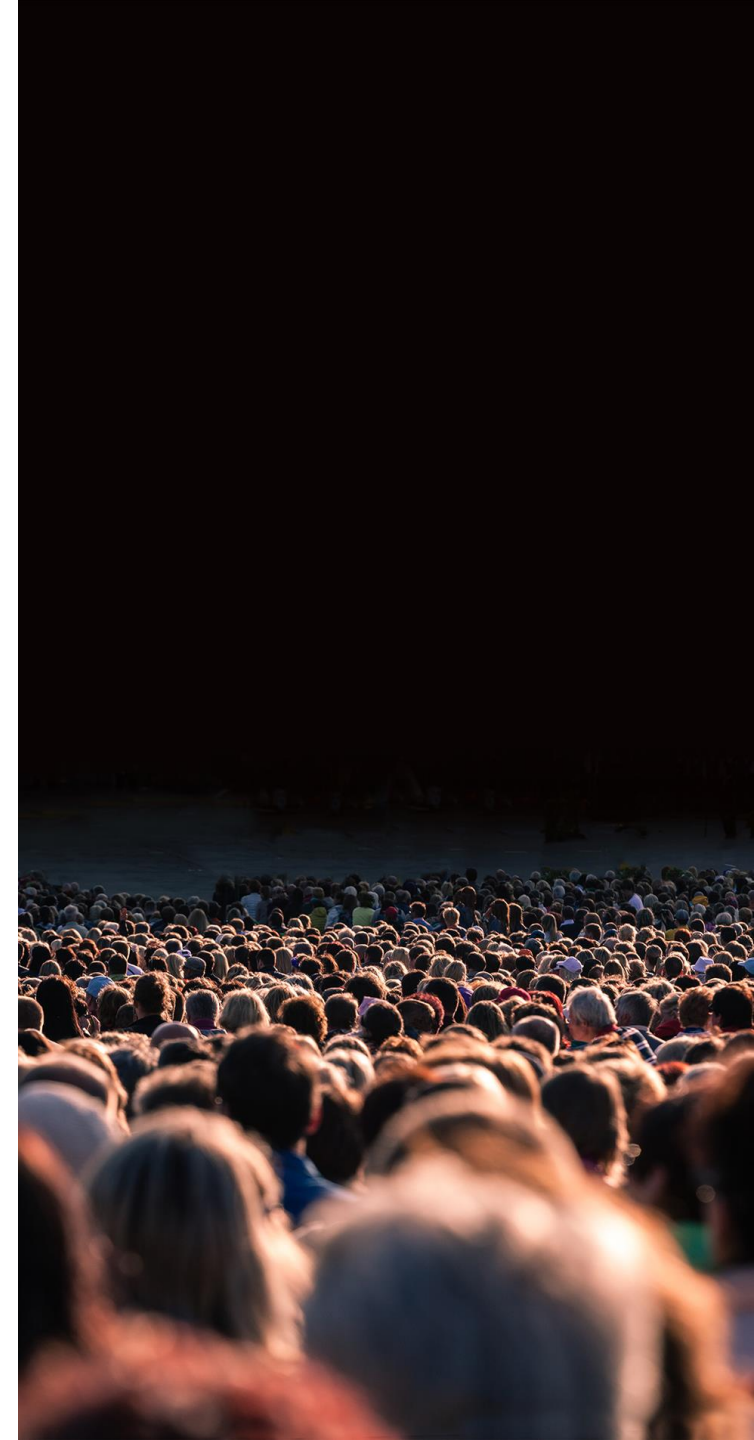
A person's thoughts and actions are often tied to society and culture, and at times the knowledge a person's body has can be lost to the person or otherwise confused. Focusing can help people become reacquainted with internal awareness of their emotions, helping them become better able to more readily address them. Many of those who pursue focusing therapy or incorporate it into other treatment approaches find they can better describe what they feel and/or desire, cultivate independence from belief systems they no longer subscribe to, and experience greater success in therapy. People also report greater attentiveness in their lives, decreased tension and chronic pain, and increased decision-making and problem-solving abilities. Relationships and life experiences or situations may also be positively impacted.



Changing the Way an Issue is Being Lived

Focusing is a mode of inward bodily attention that most people don't yet know about. It is more than being in touch with your feelings, greater than just thinking about a problem, and different from body sensations. Focusing occurs exactly at the interface of body-mind.

It consists of specific steps for getting a body sense of how you are in a particular life situation. The body sense is unclear and vague at first, but if you pay attention it will open up into words or images and you experience a felt shift in your body. In the process of Focusing, one experiences a physical change in the way that the issue is being lived in the body... The whole issue looks different and new solutions arise.





Counselling Carousel Focusing (30 minutes)

2 groups

Group one, plus one Client

Group two, plus one Client

5 minutes - 'Switch'

Unconscious_Emotions
Conflict Skin_Responses
Voice_Tone Temperature_Changes Sleep_Patterns
Microexpressions Relational-Patterns Physical_Fatigue
Automatic_Thoughts Stance Phobias
Flushing Memories Cultural_Conditioning Patterns Spatial_Proximity
Instincts Internalized_Critic Forgotten_Experiences Dream_Content
Palpitations Guilt Assumptions Cultural_Norms Body_Orientation
Energy_Levels Posture Shadows Associations Relaxation Dissociation
Urges Symbolism Unspoken_Beliefs Bodily_Sensations Fantasies Discomfort
Leg_Bouncing Fears Nonverbal_Cues Bias Social-Conditioning Eye_Movements
wishes Muscle_Tension Communication_Felt_Sense Shame Acceptance
Trauma_Responses Emotional_Memory Archetypes Gaze
Movements Defensive_Mechanisms Fidgeting
Gut_Reactions Intuitive-Knowledge Heart_Rate
Somatic_Pain Chills Gut_Feelings Butterflies Restlessness
Desires Sweating Breathing_Patterns Pitch_Changes
Facial_Muscle_Responses Morals
Involuntary_Movements Hand_Gestures



Group Reflection

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