

FOCUS-IN RECOVERY

**Suzanne L. Noel, CFT
Certifying Coordinator
The Focusing Institute**

Addiction is a process of disconnecting from ourselves and our feelings, from others, and from a spiritual experience of life. The core philosophy of the 12 Step pathway for Recovery from addiction is that establishing and maintaining “conscious contact” with a Higher Power, ourselves, and another human being is the key to a stress-free life. That is, as we continue to “trust God, clean house, and help others” (Steps One through Nine) by practicing Steps 10, 11, and 12, we continue to grow along spiritual lines and enjoy peace of mind.

This conscious contact can be made all the more meaningful through the process of Focusing (or Focusing IN) with another person or group. Focusing is a practice that can enable you to access your true self, which connects you to your Higher Self, which in turn can deepen your connection to your Higher Power (and other people). It's a practical way of enhancing Steps 10, 11, and 12 and thereby complements and supplements Recovery.

What is Focusing?

Focusing is an agreement between you and another person to exchange Felt Sensing and Felt Listening turns to process issues in your life that may be affecting your Recovery (see below).

It is a commitment to unblock whatever is in the way of your serenity by taking some time to be with how you are inside and sharing this with another person.

Focusing is basically about pausing to *sense* inside yourself about something. It means you are going to put all your known ideas aside for a while and wait for something new to come from inside you.

By pausing, attending inside in silence, and waiting for the “felt sense” (or inner experience) of a concept, issue, or situation to emerge, it comes into “focus” with a symbol.

This symbol can be a word/phrase, image, metaphor, body sensation (with texture, shape, color); or a gesture, memory, inner “part,” posture, song, etc.

It is important to not judge what comes up, but to simply keep it company, sort of like establishing a caring relationship with it. This symbol usually has meaning for you that helps you understand the issue or situation in a new way.

This insight is often accompanied with a felt release of tension in your body.

With Focusing, you “get” HOW you are experiencing the concept, issue, or situation. It now “makes sense.” You discover its inner feel, and it makes sense! Thus the term “*felt sense*.”

Felt sensing lets you have a new felt experience and perspective of whatever situation or issue needed your attention! Just a few minutes of Focusing helps you change how you are holding something, and so new steps forward can come more easily.

Having someone to listen to you while you do this pausing and sensing inside will help you hold your process and go deeper.

And listening to another person is like a meditation that will take you out of yourself and also bring you new understandings.

This is why Focusing usually happens within a Focusing Partnership.

Felt Sensing will allow you to discover your own felt meaning of the situations you are living. With the new perspective and sense of release, you will find hope of acting in new ways. It is illuminating and it feels good!

I like to remind myself of what Focusing is by using the acronym, P.A.U.S.E. To remind me to attend inside without judgment and find the symbol for how something is for me.

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**P.A.U.S.E. = Pause. Attend Unconditionally. Symbolize Experience.**

**For Addiction, P.A.U.S.E. = Pause. Attend Urgency. Symbolize experience with Empathy.**

In order to sustain this new practice, you may wish to find someone with whom you can do a ***“Focus-In Recovery Partnership”*** once a week by phone (or in person).

The agreement is that you will take turns Focusing and Listening, say, for about 25 minutes each. You can choose to meet every week or less, as often as works for both of you.

As the Focuser, you take time to P.A.U.S.E. to sense inside and describe whatever is emerging regarding your inner experience of an issue or situation. Your listener offers reflective, felt listening to you. This means your listener is mirroring back to you what you are saying. There is no offering of suggestions or guiding by the listener – just listening.

Being listened to in this way will not only help you feel heard (which is so important to healing), but will also help you hear yourself. You can then take your own words back inside. This helps bring more meaning.

This kind of listening also helps your listener feel how things are inside for you. It helps him/her “get” how it is for you by saying back to you what you said. Reflective, felt listening is more powerful than you can imagine.

### **THE H.O.W. WE HEAL MODEL FOR FELT SENSING**

Below is my model for Focusing. You can simplify it as you wish. If you remember the acronym **H.O.W.**, you will remember to **Honor** Yourself, **Open** what is stuck, and **Welcome** the new.

#### **HONORING:**

First, get comfortable and let yourself relax into your body, maybe being with your breathing for a

minute. Then, start your session by taking some time to Focus (P.A.U.S.E.) into something positive.

Here are some suggestions for starting with something positive:

- P.A.U.S.E. for the feel of something you did right this week or today. (Step 10, Honoring phase.)
- Self Empathy: Ask, “How do I need to be with myself right now? (Kind? Loving? Supportive? Encouraging? Compassionate? Patient? Etc.). Find your right self empathy and wait for the feel of it to form inside you.
- P.A.U.S.E. For the feel of
  - A gratitude list.
  - Your Higher Power
  - Serenity, or Courage, or Wisdom.
  - Qualities you like about yourself.
  - Your Recovery.
  - Something you love.
  - The positive aspect of your daily reading.

What you are doing is finding this something positive, then pausing, holding it, and waiting for the feel of it to form inside you and come into focus with a word/phrase, image, metaphor, gesture, song, etc. Then notice how your body feels as this symbol emerges. Describe this.

This is the felt experience of Honoring yourself.

Once you are in this positive space of appreciation, you can move into “Opening” something that needs your attention, be it a feeling, a situation, part of a Step, or an issue/dilemma.

### **OPENING:**

*Ask, “What is in the way of my serenity today? What issues, situations, or feelings are needing my attention?”*

As each thing comes up, do not go into it!

Just name the problem/feeling and gently put it aside until you have cleared an inner space.

After you have cleared a space, pick one of these issues, situations, or feelings to P.A.U.S.E. into it.

If you don't want to Clear a Space, you can also simply Focus on an issue or feeling that is very present for you by attending inside and just letting it come.

Or, as part of Step 10, ask, *“What did I think/feel/do that represents an old pattern that no longer works for me and that I regret doing?”*

Once you have picked what you want to work on, P.A.U.S.E. By asking:

*“How is this issue or feeling inside of me?”*

Attend inside and wait for something to emerge from inside you about this – an image, body feeling, emotional feeling tone, memory, song, gesture, posture, inner part (like your inner child or inner critic), etc.

Attend to this without judging it, just being with it and describing it until its meaning/message emerges.

Ask, *“What is the worst of this [felt sense]?”* Or, *“What makes it so....?”*

Ask, *“What does this [felt sense] need?”*

Receive all the new insights and physical releases that come from being inside and symbolizing your felt experience!

### **WELCOMING:**

Once you have “Opened” up whatever needs your attention and was blocking your serenity, you can let yourself shift into Recovery by welcoming a new way of thinking/feeling/behaving.

Let yourself imagine how this [issue/situation/feeling] would be if it got what it needed.

Or, let yourself imagine having this resentment, fear, block, etc. removed.

If an action step came from the new space, ask, *“How would it be to take this action step?”*

OR, ask, *“What recovery value/principle or behavior could replace this....? (Step 10).*

Let yourself imagine and feel the new way inside you by asking *“If I thought/acted in this new way, how would that be inside me?”* and wait. Let the feel/image/gesture/posture, etc. emerge. Stay with this.

Once it comes into Focus, ask, *“What is the best of this [felt sense]?”*

Enjoy the feel of this in your body!

If you don't have time to follow the whole H.O.W. Model, just Focus into any situation that is in the way of your serenity by holding it, attending inside, asking, *“How is this inside me?”* and waiting for a symbol to come that carries meaning. This is good enough!

The key to finding your inner wisdom is the P.A.U.S.E. while another person listens to you! You also need to pause to hear your listener while s/he offers back to you what you are saying. This will bring a lot more from inside you!

### **LISTENER:**

The Listener can also Honor the Focuser and be Open and Welcoming to all that is emerging in the Focuser, without judgment. Here are the important things to remember about Felt Listening:

- Say back to the Focuser what s/he is saying using reflective listening (mirroring).
- You can summarize the issue or situation, but say back the Felt Sensed words exactly as the

Focuser says them.

- Try to understand and resonate with the Focuser. Do not parrot back like a flat mirror, but attempt to offer things back with empathy and understanding.
- It's difficult to remember everything, so don't try. Just follow closely and reflect back the freshest thing the Focuser has said.
- Pause and be silent when you sense the Focuser is waiting inside for more to come.

### FOCUS-IN RECOVERY IN BRIEF

Just as you may remember that H.O.W. Recovery works is by being Honest, Open minded, and Willing; in Recovery Focusing, the H.O.W. We Heal model invites you to:

Honor yourself and your Recovery by P.A.U.S.E-ing to appreciate yourself.

Open up what needs your attention by P.A.U.S.E.-ing to sense how a situation is lived by your body.

Welcome the new Recovery principle by imagining and P.A.U.S.E-ing to sense that inside.

In your Focus-In Recovery Partnership, be willing to listen to your partner with care, trying to “get” how it is for him/her. Do not offer guiding or suggestions – simply reflect back what they are saying.

Set the amount of time you each want to Focus. Give a short notice of three minutes or so when the Focuser's time is almost up.

Keep the relationship egalitarian by honoring the time, without one person “giving” more time to the other. You can agree to meet for as long as you like: 50 minutes, one hour, an hour and a half. As you wish.

Just as there is no crosstalk during or after 12 Step meetings, do not comment on content nor offer suggestions during or after your Focusing/Listening exchange. Keep each session confidential.

To explore more about Focusing and Focusing Partnership, feel free to visit [www.focusing.org](http://www.focusing.org) or my website [www.recoveryfocusing.com](http://www.recoveryfocusing.com).

Focus-IN Recovery is a child of my Recovery Focusing work, which is the application of felt sensing and felt listening into the 12 Steps of Recovery. I have been facilitating Recovery Focusing groups since 2008 at Costa Rica Recovery Center. These groups use the H.O.W. We Heal process to work on each Step as a way to open inner doors to Recovery.

Recovery Focusing is not intended to replace the working of the Steps in fellowship with a 12 Step Program. Focus-IN Recovery Partnerships and Recovery Focusing groups are possible supplements or complements to 12 Step Recovery.

My Recovery Focusing Manual covers the application of the H.O.W. Model to each Step and offers ways you can integrate Focusing into your Program of Recovery.

When you are stressed or anxious, **P.A.U.S.E. = Pause. Attend Urgency. Symbolize experience with**

## **Empathy.**

Making time in your busy schedule to P.A.U.S.E. and sense into how things are inside for you (with another person) will enable you to live in a connected and enlivened way that helps you feel “happy, joyous, and free!”

Suzanne L. Noel  
[www.recoveryfocusing.com](http://www.recoveryfocusing.com)