

RECOVERY FOCUSING

The purpose of this paper is to explore the crossing of Focusing with 12 Step Programs of Recovery. I briefly explore some of the basic principles of 12 Step recovery, the core aspects of Focusing, similarities of each, then offer an example of how focusing may be applied to the working of the Steps and/or to the running of Focusing Oriented Recovery groups.

If the 12 Steps launch us into the "Fourth Dimension" as promised in the AA Big Book, Focusing launches us into the "Felt Dimension". This new life path promised by Recovery Focusing is the beginning of a paradigm shift into allowing one's inner creativity to be the groundwork upon which one builds a vibrant, joyous life. As great spiritual masters continually tell us: the answer does lie within. As we are finding in the power of 12 Step fellowship, *sharing* is the easiest way into this inner wisdom.

Recovery Focusing, then, is the perfect marriage of two, world-changing paradigm shifts.

Welcome.

What is Recovery ?

“**Recovery:** Healing, the process of recovering from an injury”. (Wikipedia)

“The **Recovery Model** is an approach to mental disorder or substance dependence that emphasizes and supports an individual's potential for recovery. Recovery can be seen within the model as a personal journey requiring hope, supportive relationships, empowerment, social inclusion, coping skills, and finding meaning.” (Wikipedia)

Twelve Step Fellowship

Twelve Step Programs emphasize both individual work and self responsibility for healing *and* connection with others within a safe community of individuals who “share a common problem”. They are peer-based programs which offer a solution to the “injury” we experience when caught in the grip of addictive, compulsive, or problem behaviors (Alcoholism, Co-Dependence, Overeating, Gambling, Sex/Love Addiction, etc.), which in many cases share the underlying experience of early trauma and family dysfunction. The primary purpose of 12 Step Programs and of “Recovery *Fellowship*” is to heal and help others heal (recover) from the demoralizing and humiliating experience of addiction and addictive patterns of behavior through the *sharing of experience, strength, and hope*.

This sharing of stories and feelings, identifying (rather than comparing) with each other, and working the Steps of Recovery, enable us to experience a change in our “outlook and attitude upon life” (The Promises, AA Big Book). This basic personality change and “spiritual awakening” occurs naturally as we journey through the 12 Steps of healing and self awareness, held within this context of connection and sharing.

In addition to the group sharing that occurs in meetings, 12 Step Programs encourage one-on-one mutual support through Sponsorship. This safe relationship is based on one “more experienced” person listening to the newcomer, identifying with the him or her, then offering suggestions on how to work the “Steps” of the Program. The Sponsor learns what s/he teaches and thereby reinforces his/her own recovery; and the Sponsee realizes that s/he is not alone and that there is indeed “hope” for recovery – that s/he can pick up a “spiritual kit of tools” that will enable him/her to handle life on life’s terms and to “know a new freedom and a new happiness”. The Sponsor’s primary role is to guide the newcomer through the Steps.

Focusing

Focusing is a practice of processing issues or situations (or feelings) through the grounded, embodied “**inner holding of and interaction with**” the **felt sense** of these issues or feelings. It is like *sensing into* the meaning of things by going inside yourself and noticing *what comes from this inside space*. This *embodied processing* is surprisingly empowering because the clarity and insights one gains are known and held inside oneself in a Whole Person Way: held with the body, the heart, the mind, and the soul (“Observer”/“Witness”/“Presence”). Focusing integrates our separate ways of experiencing into one whole knowing.

Focusing is therefore a very powerful process for healing those parts inside us which have suffered so deeply from early trauma and dysfunction and from the resulting fall into the powerlessness of a self-destructive, baffling and cunning addiction or addictive process. Focusing soothes and mends our “injury” by offering “spacious loving attention” to our inner experience and listening to what IT wants to tell us..

The welcoming attention that focusing offers our wounded parts *opens up their deeper felt meaning, thus releasing their innate healing process. The locked, blocked, knotted energy in the body is allowed to shift and release; emotional ease and mental clarity are attained; and a sense of gratitude and connectedness with something greater than ourselves infuses us (even if this be a simple connection to a greater sense of total well being)*. It is by being with our inner experience that its innate healing capacity is allowed to mend our broken selves and empower us into Whole Person Beingness.

Recovery Focusing enhances and supports 12 Step Recovery by offering us this *Whole Person Process* which moves us through the “heart” of addiction and woundedness to healing in a gentle but powerful way. We “recover” our truth, our sense of self, our aliveness. Simply put, we recover our “true self, gain access to our “Higher Self”, and eventually connect to our “Higher Power”.

Focusing Partnership and Community Changes meetings provide a safe “sacred sharing” space for this powerful processing, helping to heal our relationship with ourselves and our relationships with others. The supportive quality of Focusing exchanges in Focusing Partnership create an atmosphere of mutual and self respect. The unconditional positive

regard offered in this egalitarian relationship is like medicine to our vulnerable, damaged selves.

Focusing partnership helps mend our trust in honest communication and in our own ability to access truth. It also gives us a sense of “worthiness” by allowing us to provide meaningful listening to another, so that we feel we are giving as we receive. It thus complements the basic dynamics of recovery which include honest sharing and peer support.

Focusing Recovery works when you work it just like the Steps work if you work them. Each honor individual process (the working of one’s own Program in one’s own way); provide confidential, safe listening; uphold the “no crosstalk” rule around the content of sharing; are peer based; encourage people to “focus in”; and approach recovery in a holistic way.

Crossing these two powerful practices makes recovery all the more desirable and enjoyable. Both Focusing and the working of the Steps help people to “comprehend the word serenity...and know a new peace and a new happiness” (AA Promises, Big Book).

RECOVERY FOCUSING

Recovery Focusing for Newcomers:

Applying Focusing processing to the 12 Steps.

Honesty is the first principle of recovery and the first step toward recovery. Focusing breaks through denial, the primary block to change, so that honesty with ourselves and with another is attained. Focusing and “felt sensing” into the meaning of each Step provides an *embodied experience* and *clear knowing of its truth*. Focusing also provides firm yet gentle support to working it, thereby lending a meaningful hand to the “walk through” recovery, which can often be overwhelming and daunting.

The focusing guide or teacher, preferably working with a small group of individuals in recovery, teaches Focusing Partnership while inviting its application to each aspect of each Step, so that the Step’s meaning is integrated into each person’s unique experiential knowing. (See below.)

It is of utmost importance that the focusing guide begin with helping individuals establish body grounding and Presence. Newcomers to recovery are broken, fragile, unstable people. Their sense of self is tenuous. Their bodies are usually itching with withdrawal, their nerves raw and screaming, while their emotions spill over them mercilessly. Establishing “Presence”, perhaps through standing up at first and feeling the ground under one’s feet supporting our entire self within the context of our immediate environment, is therefore crucial. Each Recovery Focusing teacher can find their own steps into attaining grounded Presence as a way of “containing” the Focusing process.

After finding this grounded “Presence” or sense of self, invite them to remember a happy, sober time in their past and to “go within” to first find their body memory of that experience and then to get a present felt experience of it NOW. (Sometimes "Clearing a Space" helps gently set aside those situations or issues that may be in the way of experiencing this "happy time".) At this point, have them explore *several avenues of felt sensing*: the emotional tone of that time; how their body holds that inside their middle area (is there a texture or shape or color to it?); holding the images that come with it; and, most importantly, what body posture “holds” that happy time? This latter avenue involving body posture and gesture helps truly embody the positive felt experience.

Remember to allow for the fact that some may not be able to do this – there will probably be different levels of sobriety within the group unless the Focusing guide is working in a treatment center. We must prepare the group for the possibility of tears and we must allow each person to not participate if they are feeling too awkward and uncomfortable.

We ourselves must stay in touch with our Presence and be prepared to use distancing techniques to guide individuals back into the *now* and into their body grounding should they experience overwhelming feelings. The Focusing guide needs to have some tools handy in expectation of this. I do want to emphasize, however, that overwhelming feelings and cravings do pass if allowed to flow. We must learn to distinguish between re-traumatizing and a normal flooding of tears.

As in 12 Step meetings, each individual may “pass” or share as they wish.

Early on, the focusing guide may recommend working in a focusing way with the “obsession” and “craving” that may come with withdrawal. Writing it out, symbolizing it, relating to it, and asking it what it needs *behind* the desire to “use”, may help newcomers begin to process and own their early experience rather than simply drown in it. Using “Inner Relationship Focusing” language of “*something* in me” or “a part of me” will help create an awareness of a separate self that does want to get sober and that is *not* the addiction or compulsion.

Quick focusing while writing in the mornings or when overwhelmed will be a new tool for handling difficult moments in recovery. A morning “Gratitude List” combined with felt sensing into “gratitude” can help newcomers walk through self pity into a more positive state.

The Rollercoaster Ride of Stage One Recovery

Focusing, with its emphasis on “Presence” and on “Felt Sensing” provides a means of processing the many complex feelings that arrive as a result of dwelling inside each Step. The “owning up” and “facing in” aspects of recovery can often lead to overwhelming feelings. Without one’s “numbing” substance or behavior, one faces one’s present wreckage, suffering powerful feelings. These include bitter resentment, crippling shame, painful remorse, dis-empowering guilt, confusing anxiety, and flattening depression -- to

name but a few. Yet, “there is no way around, only through.” Focusing provides compassionate holding and *shines its light into each complex feeling, revealing the felt sense behind it, so that it can be symbolized and shifted into a lighter, more forgiving and accepting space of kind awareness and compassion.*

Domain Focusing, with its emphasis on Self Empathy, can greatly bring some soothing care to oneself in the early stages of recovery. Through Focused processing and the positive regard it offers, feelings can be processed and “let go”, shifted. The end result: Whole Person Wisdom. This helps begin establish a positive relationship to oneself. One begins to experience self esteem, if only due to the fact that one actually accessed inner wisdom rather than outer fixes.

Recovery Focusing can be especially helpful, therefore, in the initial practice of the first Nine Steps of Recovery, which require meaningful support and successful processing of complicated, tangled feelings. We wish to remind ourselves that most individuals who are “waking up” or “coming to” have a history of trauma and dysfunction. Handling what comes up to the surface is quite difficult for them, especially in the early stages of recovery when they have not yet “picked up” coping tools. Working in the “Self Empathy” realm of Focusing where one explores ways of being “kind, or patient, or compassionate”, etc. with oneself or with the felt experience is crucial to opening up a safe space inside where things can be gently processed.

Step Four in particular, where one does a “searching and fearless moral inventory” is a critical time in recovery. Individuals are often unable to walk through all the feelings which surface during this Step and “go back out”, back into the misery of their previous life. By the time Step Four is reached, therefore, individuals using Focusing Oriented Recovery need to have established some of the basic skills of Focusing Partnership.

Accessing a grounded sense of higher Presence is important during this difficult Step so that this stage of recovery can be held in a safe way. It is suggested that persons entering this Step regularly attend 12 Step meetings, have clearly worked the first three Steps, have a Sponsor whom they can call on a daily basis, and perhaps even consider seeing a therapist. Focusing Recovery can supplement, enhance, and embody the working of the steps, but the basic tools of recovery are picked up within the fellowships. Recovery literature is also recommended.

Though I could easily venture into each Step here in order to draw out how focusing can be used in it’s working, I prefer to leave this up to each Focusing guide and each individual entering Focusing Oriented Recovery, since this is such a unique process for each person.. I do, however, briefly explore how Focusing applies to the last three Steps, and explore Step One a bit further in my “How To?” section. Again, this is my sense of this “All of That” about Recovery Focusing. Others are welcome to explore their own felt knowing of this empowering crossing.

Focusing and The Maintenance Steps.

The last three Steps of 12 Step Programs address the maintenance of self care and self awareness by encouraging us to continue to take moral inventory, to develop a practice of “conscious” contact with our Higher Power as individually defined, to practice the Principles of Recovery in all our affairs, and to carry the message to others. The weekly practice of Focusing Partnership and daily Focusing fit in quite appropriately with these last three steps.

Step 10 (“Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it”) asks the following question: “Then comes the acid test: can we stay sober, keep in emotional balance, and live to good purpose under all conditions?” It recommends making peace with ourselves to avoid “emotional hangovers” by doing a “spot-check inventory taken in the midst of such disturbances.” Learning to pause and wait for a felt sense to form, to symbolize and relate to this felt sense, helps us to gain insight into the underlying cause of “the disturbance within”. Self restraint, which carries “a top priority rating” can be more easily accomplished once we have integrated the practice of focusing into our daily lives. Focusing is a proven process for maintaining “emotional balance”.

Step 11, “Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with [a Higher Power], asking only for knowledge of [our Higher Power’s] will for us and the power to carry that out.” Focusing helps us develop and maintain a relationship with our inner body wisdom. “The power to carry out” what needs to be done is often granted through focusing because it offers us emotional, physical, psychological, and spiritual clarity, again, experienced in a holistic, whole person way. This integrated experience of owning one’s truth empowers us to take action toward changing what needs to be changed. Indeed, those of us who practice focusing can see how aptly it helps one to more deeply comprehend The Serenity Prayer:

“God, grant me the serenity to accept the things I cannot change,
the courage to change the things I can,
and the wisdom to know the difference”.

Ah, yes. Serenity, courage, and wisdom: all gifts received through focusing.

Focusing be particularly helpful for those of us who have some difficulty with the concept of “prayer and meditation”. Holding meditative phrases to enjoy their felt sense can be a spiritual practice that is easy to do (e.g. Hold “I Am” for a few minutes each day and sense into its full meaning and body knowing.)

In my experience, focused, reflective, careful listening is a kind of meditation, since it takes us out of ourselves into the focusing process of the focuser. It is very relaxing in and of itself. It is also helpful in the sense that a listener will often “identify” with some of the things the focuser is processing; thus, focusing supports the basic 12 Step principle of sharing a common experience, which is so healing to individuals who have always felt so alone in the past. The insights gained by the Focuser can be enjoyed by his/her listener as well.

In addition, focusing itself can be considered “spiritual” in the sense that it helps us access our inner knowing and often creates a space where we are held in a consciousness and body-felt experience of gratitude and joy. Focusing can help us access our “True Self”, relate to our “Higher Self”, and, in time, perhaps lead us to a relationship with our “Higher Power”.

Step 12, “Having had a spiritual awakening as a result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to others, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.” An awakening occurs during each Focusing session as our holding of our felt sense shifts it into meaning and insight. The insights and deep felt meanings experienced in focusing are like small awakenings into a greater knowing. They are simply amazing.

Carrying the message and practicing the principles becomes much easier when we practice Focusing for it offers us a way to integrate the basic principles of recovery into our daily lives. (The principles are briefly described at the end of this paper.) Focusing carries the message of Recovery (“You are not alone and *there is a solution* to your dilemma”) by enabling us to apply focusing processing to our relationships and experiences.

To some degree, Focusing Changes Meetings and focusing partnership are focusing-styled service work, where we are sharing our experience, strength and hope with each other free of charge. Again, each person is invited to define their own “spiritual awakening”, their own way of “carrying the message”, and how the principles can be practiced in all affairs.

Recovery Focusing for Co-Sponsorship:

Once we have long-term “sobriety” from our problem behaviors or addictive process, we already have experience with the Steps and no longer need the type of guidance provided by Sponsorship. More appropriate to “elders” in the Program is the notion of Co-Sponsorship, where we both have an agreement of being honest with ourselves, with our Higher Power, and with another person. This relationship can be superbly improved by including within it the weekly practice of “Focusing Partnership” where each take turns Focusing and providing careful listening. This practice of exchanging focusing turns will make real the one Promise of the AA Big Book which states that “We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us”.

Once Focusing Partnership is learned, we may wish to progress into “Interactive Focusing” which connects with the basic principle of 12 Step Programs of “identifying *with* another, not comparing yourself *to* them”. This basic aspect of humanizing and normalizing the feelings we experience is one of the most powerful and life-changing aspects of recovery through fellowship. It transforms our sense of being “permanently unique”, different, and flawed (and therefore separate from others) to a compassionate understanding that we are perfectly human, connected to others who share a similar history and feelings.

We are not alone. Indeed, asking for help was the beginning of change. *Sharing* is the net of support which launches us into our innate “lightness of being”. *The sunken heaviness of powerlessness is replaced by the empowered aliveness of felt sensing and felt listening.*

Focusing Partnership and Interactive Focusing clearly deepen and fortify the healing power of sharing by providing a safe, precise way of exploring inner felt experience and insights which reveal common truths of recovery.

Integrating Focusing into 12 Step Recovery

This is the crux of the problem, the “How to?” cross Focusing with Recovery. Below, I offer some suggestions on how to run groups once you have an experiential understanding of both Focusing and Recovery.

Suggested Model for Recovery Focusing Groups:

Find a space where Focusing Oriented 12 Step Recovery meetings can be held. You must distinguish yourself as NOT being an AA meeting or a CoDa meeting or an Alanon meeting, etc., but rather, you are offering a new “Processing” practice that enables people to access their *felt experience of recovery* within “a safe community of like-minded souls”.

You can elaborate your own definition of Recovery Focusing. It is important, however, that you gain experience with the 12 Steps yourself and study the Traditions so that you share the basic concepts which make 12 Step meetings so successful throughout the planet and for so many “afflictions”. (I offer a year-long Focusing Recovery course wherein I guide you through both learning focusing and integrating this learning with the actual working of the Steps. This course is superb for individuals, therapists, counselors, etc. who wish to have an experiential understanding of *both Focusing and the 12 Steps.*)

Working the Steps:

Take each Step and work it in a focusing way. For example, “Step One: We admitted we were powerless over _____ (addiction, behavior, or others) and that our lives had become unmanageable”. Generally, a sponsor might recommend writing one’s history with the problem so that the newcomer gets a clear picture of its progression. Sponsors may also recommend doing research on the problem so that the person can see the problem as a disease or as a common behavioral problem that, left alone, always gets worse, never better. The key words here to explore in a focusing way, however, are “powerlessness” and “unmanageable”. Invite your group to explore this concept of powerlessness by first discussing it a bit, then holding the “whole of that powerlessness” and waiting for its felt experience to form. Explore how it feels to not be able to Stop.

You may invite your group to first *briefly* share “intellectually” within the group by giving examples of how they were controlled by an addictive process. Then, invite them to ask themselves “How is it inside me to have life be unmanageable?” “What comes inside when I hold this knowing that my addictive process is managing me, rather than me controlling it?” Of course, they already have a sense of powerlessness and loss of control, but focusing enables them to hold it, symbolize it, know it in a new, fresh, meaningful way, and thereby change their awareness and relationship to it.

The key to the first step is acceptance. By working this step in a focusing way, we get help with breaking through denial into a clear knowing that, yes, we have a problem, and, yes, we need help. The addict/alcoholic/codependent, etc., needs to accept that s/he *needs help* with this. *We cannot stop alone. Step One. We need help.* But we are not alone. Twelve Step Programs are “we” Programs. “WE” admitted we were powerless: *we cannot control our drinking; we cannot smoke just one cigarette; we cannot control others; we cannot set proper boundaries; we cannot stop overeating, etc.* But we can reach out for help, and others will take our hand to help us climb out of our hole.

We need to be honest with ourselves and with another human being about our powerlessness. Together, through Focusing Partnership and Focusing Oriented 12 Step meetings, we can walk through the fog of denial and early withdrawal onto the path of recovery. Using Focusing techniques, a Recovery Focusing group could “discuss” powerlessness in a 12 Step circle way, as mentioned above, then split off into focusing partnership to get the felt sense of “all of that” and shift things inside. They could then return to share their experience. Thus, focusing embraces the two primary elements of the first step: honesty and mutual support.

Exploring Feelings When Working the Steps.

Continuing with Step One, accepting that we have no control over the addiction/behavior leads to both great relief and depression. Recovering people must grieve the loss of what we once considered our best friend, or favorite “coping” tool. Usually, this loss also involves a loss of “playmates and playpens”. Our life must radically change or we will probably die, or at least continue with the unbearable humiliation and suffering of addiction (and all its consequences both to our health and our relationships). This grief needs to be processed. Focusing can help provide holding attention to this grief so that “hope” is experienced through inner processing.

Once we understand that we did not have a choice, however, and that we are powerless over this process, there also comes a sense of relief. We were “caught in the belly of the beast” so to speak. Phew. Guilt begins to diminish. When we achieve acceptance of our powerlessness, our focusing guide can invite us to sense into this acceptance, the whole of it. *This shifted state of awareness needs to be explored with felt sensing so that it can be embodied and supported in a whole body way.* This acceptance opens the door to all the other Steps. There may be a powerful feeling of gratitude for “being saved”, “the doors of hell have been opened and we have been let out”. This gratitude can also be held in a focusing way so that its full felt experience can be completely enjoyed and enhanced.

If Recovery does not feel good, if it does not offer a “light at the end of the tunnel”, we will be tempted to return to our old way of finding a “quick fix to soften the edge”. Early recovery is not easy. Fortunately, the pain of recovery is usually preferred to the pain of the past, which is why “hitting bottom” is such a gift in the long run. Focusing can hold and enhance the positive aspects of recovery so that the person will desire to continue to change. *Any new insights and positive feelings can be held and expanded through felt sensing, and therefore grounded in experience.* This needs to be up-most in the Focusing guides mind at all times so that their potential does not slip by.

Focusing can replace the sharp, jagged, nerve-racking edge of “irritability and discontent” with the soft, blurry edges of felt sensing, the “more than” implied meaning of life, so that a new tool that works and *feels good* in a deeper, more soul-satisfying way replaces the quick, passing, not-fulfilling “rush” of a fix , a drink, focusing out on another and trying to control them, acting out sexually, etc.

Focusing Recovery is indeed “the easier softer way”.

Furthering Recovery

Twelve Step circles often pick a “topic of the day”, such as anger, gratitude, a Step, or fear; then, each person shares (or not) their experience with this topic, usually including “how it was” and “how it is now”. Sharing the “solution” is essential to the process so that others hear something they need to hear from someone. Focusing Oriented Recovery would invite members to “focus in” on their felt experience of the “topic of the day” rather than just talk about it. Or, they could share in a circle as is usually done, then split off into partnerships to focus together on the topic. The group sharing is important and must not be discarded.

A “Longer Term Recovery Focusing Plan” can include the powerful “carrying forward” exercise found in Robert Lee’s “Changing the Unchangeable Workshop” (see: www.focusingnow.com). This involves holding several previously-focused-on “symbols” (from past focusing sessions) as one “New Whole” or one “All of That” and then processing this new whole in a focusing way, and thereby carrying forward new shifts and insights.

Integrating 12 Step Philosophy into Recovery Focusing.

We alone are responsible for taking the Steps that are suggested as a Program of recovery. Yes, it is a “we” Program, but we each have our own unique Program and our own particular way of working the Steps.. There are many published forms a person can use to work through the Steps, but ultimately we each walk the walk in our own way. A focusing guide/teacher can support this very individualized recovery by honoring each person’s path in a focusing way: through unconditional positive regard and a focusing willingness to follow rather than lead.

Like a sponsor, the focusing guide can suggest and offer guidelines, but ultimately, in a focusing way, honors the unfolding next “action steps” of each individual. If a Focusing guide is working one-on-one with someone, then focusing before each session and asking “What does this person need from me today?” will provide meaningful insight into just that.

Honoring the basic principle of 12 Step Recovery that “there are no rules, only suggestions”, the Focusing facilitator in a group setting may allow people to leave after the initial group sharing if they do not want to split off to do Focusing turns. A Focusing guide needs to really hold the idea of “allowing each soul to walk its path” the way we allow a felt sense to be as it is and unfold as it will. Welcoming and “being friendly to what is as it is” is a new paradigm shift that may take a while to be applied to feelings, but if the guide practices this basic philosophy, then people in recovery may begin enjoying the “serenity of accepting” the things one cannot change -- but that may change if left on their own, like felt senses! Recovery Focusing is not for those who “need it”, but for those who “want it”. Attraction to healing, not coercion into “getting better”, is what works.

The basic suggestion of “no crosstalk” found in 12 Step Circles needs to be maintained in Focusing Oriented Recovery meetings so that they remain safe. We go to meetings to hear what we need to hear, not to be told from another what we “should” or “should not” do. This suggestion remains true for Focusing Partnership as well, where the partner primarily keeps the focuser company with reflective, calm, felt listening.

A “primary purpose” can be established so that groups do not “engage in outside controversy”.

Confidentiality and anonymity need to be respected and maintained as well. In effect, the basic traditions and customs of 12 Step recovery should be investigated and implemented into Focusing Recovery groups.

Applying Recovery Focusing in treatment centers may be limited to teaching the basic skills of focusing while working the first three Steps only, since time is so limited. We who are in recovery know that it is a long process, moving from one stage to the next higher stage over a period of several years. Each stage addresses core life issues in a more profound way. Treatment centers can use Focusing and Focused Listening as a complement to regular 12 Step meetings, but, again, need to be distinguished as being different so they are not confused with 12 Step meetings.

Working Recovery Focusing Daily

I also want to mention that *we can also work any Step in any given situation and hold what comes from this work in a focusing way to sense if there is “more” to be known about it.* For example, If I am feeling somewhat “insane” due to an “emotional hangover” from a recent family upset, I can work Step Two (“Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity”) and invite a felt sense of

“sanity” to form. Or, I can sit down and write about “a power greater than myself” and hold that. On the other hand, I may wish to see what this “insane” feeling is all about and hold that in a focusing way, be friendly to it so that it reveals its “more”. Lastly, I can apply a Domain Focusing Self Empathy question and ask myself how I need to be with this situation and invite a felt sense of that to form.

Any Step will work and its inner wisdom be made all the more evident if we work it in an experiential focusing way.

The New Path and the New Paradigm.

We see that Focusing provides the basic requirements for the journey of recovery: hope (the felt shift implies forward movement); supportive relationships through Focusing Oriented 12 Step/Changes Meetings and Focusing Partnership; empowerment by providing a process that helps one easily access and trust one’s inner truth; social inclusion so we are not isolated and alone with our suffering and confusion; coping skills (being with what is inside rather than reacting, communicating with safe others, etc.); and finding meaning: one comes to know that one’s experience can benefit others and that recovery is possible through honest sharing.

Recovery Focusing offers solid support to recovery: the support of Whole Person Processing which is so crucial to healing the basic injury of any addictive process, our loss of self. Again, we move from the defeated, wilted feeling of powerlessness, to the relaxed, empowered aliveness of felt sensing. Crucial to holding our Recovery, is sharing our experience with another through Focusing Partnership, Sponsorship, and sharing in meetings.

The new paradigm replaces one-up/one-down relationships and addictive processes that seek to “fill the hole in the soul” with egalitarian *companionship* and safe sharing of our sacred, authentic selves. Vibrant aliveness and joy can be extended out so that our outer space can begin experiencing its own healing as well. Through Recovery Focusing, we enter the “felt dimension” of meaning and being. And life just never *felt so good!*

Thank you very much for allowing me to share my experience, strength, and hope with you.

I welcome you to your True Self. The best is yet to come.

Keep Falling Into Your Hearts.

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Below I list the Twelve Promises and the Twelve Steps, as presented in the Alcoholics Anonymous Big Book.

Quotes are primarily taken from the AA Big Book and the “Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions of Alcoholics Anonymous”.

THE TWELVE PROMISES AND TWELVE STEPS

The Twelve Promises from the AA Big Book (page 83):

We are going to know a new freedom and a new happiness. We will not regret the past

nor wish to shut the door on it. We will comprehend the word serenity.

We will know peace.

No matter how far down the scale we have gone, we will see how our experience can benefit others.

The feelings of uselessness and self-pity will disappear.

We will lose interest in selfish things and gain interest in our fellows.

Self-seeking will slip away.

Our whole attitude and outlook on life will change.

Fear of people and of economic insecurity will leave us.

We will intuitively know how to handle situations which used to baffle us

We will suddenly realize that [our Higher Power] is doing for us what we could not do for ourselves.

THE TWELVE STEPS

Step One: We admitted we were powerless over _____ (addiction, person, situation, compulsive pattern, etc) and that our lives had become unmanageable.

Step Two: We came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity.

Step Three: Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of [our Higher Power] as we understood [that Higher Power].

Step Four: Made a fearless and searching moral inventory of ourselves.

Step Five: Admitted to [our Higher Power], to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs.

Step Six: Were entirely ready to have [our Higher Power] remove these defects of character.

Step Seven: Humbly asked [our Higher Power] to remove our shortcomings.

Step Eight: Made a list of all persons we had harmed and become willing to make amends to them all.

Step Nine: Made direct amends wherever possible except when to do so would injure them or others.

Step Ten: Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong, promptly admitted it.

Step Eleven: Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with [our Higher Power] as we understood [Higher Power], praying only for knowledge of [our Higher Power's] will for us and the power to carry that out.

Step Twelve: Having had a spiritual awakening *as the result of these steps*, we tried to carry this message to other _____ (alcoholics, addicts, etc), and to practice these principles in all our affairs.

The Seven Slogans:

One day at a time.

Live and let live

Easy does it.

Let go and let God.

Pass it on.

Keep it simple.

First things first

Relevant Recommended Literature:

Gendlin, Eugene, "Focusing".

Anne Weiser Cornell, "The Power of Focusing" and "The Radical Acceptance of Everything".

McGuire, Kathleen, "Building Supportive Community: Mutual Self-Help Through Peer Counseling".

Campbell and McMahon, "Bio-Spirituality: Focusing as a Way to Grow".

Alcoholics Anonymous "Big Book" and "Twelve Steps and Twelve Traditions"

Al-Anon Family Groups, "Paths to Recovery: Al-Anon's Steps, Traditions, and Concepts".

Augustine Fellowship, "Sex and Love Addicts Anonymous"

Whitfield, Charles, "Co-Dependence, Healing the Human Condition"; "My Recovery: A Personal Plan For Healing"; "A Gift to Myself" Workbook.

Mellody, Pia, "Facing Codependence", "Facing Love Addiction"; "Breaking Free: A Recovery Workbook for Facing Co-Dependence".

Melody Beattie, "Codependent No More" and "Codependent's Guide to the 12 Steps".

