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## **The interweaving of Focusing and TRE-Tension/Trauma Releasing Exercises**

When I learned Focusing in the seventies I began a different relationship with my internal life. I began to notice the feelings underneath the story that either I or another person was sharing. I began to tune into the feeling layers and how feelings affect the whole body. When I learned TRE in 2010, it reminded me of the energy and aliveness that comes with the stretching in Bioenergetic exercises from the seventies. There is a kind of bodily sinking into, remembering, almost re-accessing the felt experience of skills I had previously left behind. As some point I realized that these two practices relate beautifully with each other, and in this article I'd like to show how.

### **TRE**

TRE is a set of seven exercises drawn from Yoga, Tai Chi and Bioenergetics. In the exercises we stretch the muscles of feet, ankles, legs and iliopsoas muscles, which evokes the naturally occurring tremoring response. The tremoring allows a grounding experience, which in turn allows a release of tension.

We do these gentle exercises standing except the last one, which is done lying on the floor. For example, we start with our feet shoulder width apart and knees soft, and our feet roll over on the outside of one foot and the inside of the other foot and breath. Then we roll our feet over in the other direction again remembering to breath and back and forth about five or six times. As we work our way up the legs with the exercises we gradually allow a softening and a blood flow. The goal is to tire out the muscles in the feet, leg and psoas muscles to a level of efforting of 7 out of 10. With practice and over time we can allow an experience of allowing movement- vibration, tremoring, or shaking.

The operative word here is “allowing” which was highlighted in Ann Weiser Cornell’s Focusing Tips #324, March 20, 2012. What is fascinating about tremoring is that we cannot make it happen. With practice, at some level the body begins to learn what it feels like to evoke a tremoring response by letting go. Once this experiential

allowing is practiced repeatedly it begins to be a positive habit on a cellular level. The more I practice and teach this work the more easily I notice when I am not grounded and return to being grounded. This means I learn to practice grounding the everyday tensions, rather than carry them around as baggage. What a huge relief!

It seems as though when I am practicing TRE regularly I am deepening my felt sense of my body's innate wisdom without necessarily having any emotional content connected to it. Something in me loosens up, softens and reconnects to the rest of me. I experience myself as lighter and fuller at the same time and more relaxed.

Somehow the process of being more grounded seems to tap into a cellular memory of creativity, and resources I once learned and am reintegrating into my life. I feel like I am sinking into more of me – physically, spiritually and emotionally. How surprising and delicious.

### **Focusing**

This feels similar to focusing when I sense into my core about an issue. When I experience a sensation, I sense into it, describe it until I get a felt sense that feels right. As I am being with it just as it is, it softens. I experience a physical and energetic melding into all of me and a sense of release or relief. This is another way I would describe how I experience the process of integration in focusing. There is also an energetic feel of being more inclusive or more accepting of all my experiencing as I release something and sense it as energy flowing through me as I do it in TRE and other energy work. It seems as though what I have released is the story, or judgment that I have made up in order to make sense of what happened at the time.

Then something about the focusing process helps me drop down further in, to trying on, exploring more of what this all means or feels like on the inside. It is kind of like tingling all over my skin that permeates right into the centre of me. There is a very subtle something that is percolating, moving thriving right at the centre of my core.

TRE deepens my practice of grounding which is a foundation for all my other work. And Focusing helps me deepen into more a subtle felt

sense of all that work. The two intertwine and amplify the value of each other. In some ways using language to differentiate the two practices is an artificial division of what I experience as one process.

In both TRE and Focusing we learn to embody a curiosity in how we work with people to support and follow the body knowing. The modeling of this in TRE is in sync with Focusing in two very distinct ways: First the curiosity that we bring to the body, and secondly following the body. No matter what our skills are these are two fundamental bases for the work.

## **1. Curiosity and presence**

First, implicit in embodying the curiosity is to be in presence – in the present moment. Presence is the skill we keep deepening into practice and through every Inner Relationship Focusing learning/teaching experience including Treasure Maps to the Soul. In parallel with both practices the more we embody presence with our clients the more safety we create both for our own inner experience and that of our clients.

Implicit in both TRE and Focusing is a deep respect and trusting that every area/emotion/situation that is initially experienced as difficult holds the seeds of its own recovery into something integrated and whole within each of us. We are evoking, releasing, or tapping into something more of who we are as we embody either practice. In my practice of both I am sensing a deeply felt experience of freedom, possibility and expansion that is difficult to put into words. And that includes the willingness to be with my own expansion/ contraction continuum as well as those of my clients.

## **2. Following the Body**

Secondly when we are teaching TRE we are following the body and honing our observation skills. We are noticing, and sensing before we intervene to support the client's recognition of what they are experiencing. We may sense into what is needed to facilitate the client discovering their movement. We might simply be inviting the

client to tell us where they are noticing movement and how they might describe it.

In Focusing this means we are willing to be with an unwanted or wanted feeling, image or sensation with curiosity, and presence. We are reflecting the client's words in a language that allows for forward movement. There is something about the interweaving of these skills that allows more potential of transformation for the practitioner as well as the client.

### **Interweaving**

What I am noticing is a greater experience of feeling more grounded—a more consistent experience of being in my legs and my core—almost like a foundation, a connection to the ground. Since I am doing the TRE grounding exercises regularly it is easier to access this as a more consistent positive habit.

My Focusing practice helps me be in touch or aware of the felt sense of my body as a more ongoing process. And being more grounded and in presence is an invitation or an opening to sink down further in my body, an experience of filling myself up from the inside, from the ground up and be more curious about the world around me including my clients' process. A trained observer might also notice that clients feel safe doing TRE when the TRE practitioner is more grounded and in presence

Both Eugene Gendlin PhD, founder of Focusing, and David Bercecli PhD, founder of TRE encourage their methods to be combined with other modalities. Inner Relationship Focusing developed by Ann Weiser Cornell PhD and Barbara McGavin, also encourages applying Focusing in our daily living. The effect for me of the interaction between the two is experiencing a deeper integration within me of all the work I have done previously. In fact I experience a sense of coming full circle with my work. There is something about the knitting or weaving together of these two practices that opens me up, creates a more porous receptivity, a bringing forward to embody and integrate more of past learning/teaching experiences.

In Focusing as in TRE practice is the key. My sense is that even as a beginner with 16 months of regular TRE practice that the two

practices are so in sync that there is a natural, progressive amplification and inter-twining of one and another.

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