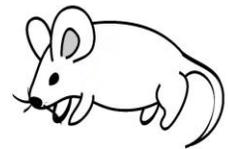


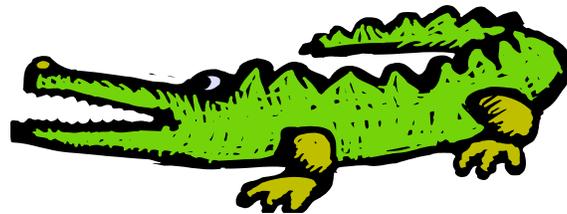
# Helping Children with



# Focusing



## Some Guidelines for Companions



Simon Kilner

“And will it be ok to .....?”      **How does your child say no?**

## **What is Focusing?**

**Focusing leads a child to trust their understanding of life experiences through awareness of, and connection with, body senses and thoughts.**

Focusing is a process of change which is different for everyone. It develops confidence, compassion, resiliency and allows each individual to sparkle!

## **Some Words and Phrases We Use in Focusing**

- ♥ **Felt sense** - the meaning of a body feeling – the sense of a feeling
- ♥ **Focusing attitude** – gentle openness to your sense of feelings
- ♥ **Symbolisation** – the ways in which a child expresses meaning through movement, art, sound and words
- ♥ **Companion** - whoever supports a child in Focusing
- ♥ **“Child” or “children”** refers to all ages: babies infants, toddlers, school-age-children, adolescents

## **Aims of the Guidelines**

To help Children Focusing Companions to find their own ways of supporting a child in Focusing.

To help children grow in wisdom and confidence appropriate to their age



**“Are you noticing how / where that is inside .....?”**

**How does your child say yes?**

**By Teaching Children to Focus we help them to ....**

Recognise and trust the meaning of what they sense bodily

Be kind to themselves

Listen to their body senses in everyday life

Understand that a felt sense carries a story

Allow difficult, sorrowful, scary or angry feelings as well as more pleasant ones such as joy and excitement

Concentrate better on what they are doing

Accept each other more

Build better relationships with themselves and with others

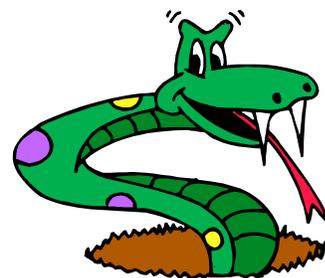
**Quick Focus**

Think of some one or some thing you care for  
and notice how you experience this in your head.

Next notice how you experience your sense of  
this in your body, perhaps chest or tummy.

Notice the difference.

**Hello special child!**



**“Oh that is where you sense .....?”**

How does your child show you where they sense something?

## **Being a Child Focusing Companion**

### **Some Things To Remember And Work Towards**

*Learning to be a Child Focusing Companion is a never ending process.*

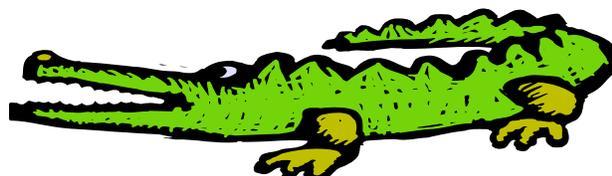
Child development is the journey from dependency to independence. Child Focusing seeks to support the growth of a child from being a baby with a very limited vocabulary of verbal and physical expression to a young adult with self understanding and the tools to express and explore their experiences. This is teaching skills and stepping back.

Let the child guide you to their own way of understanding. **Honour** and learn the ways a child can tell you **“Yes”** and **“No”** - like looking away or changing to another subject.

Listen to, trust and respect the child’s view and expression. Uncertainty, openness and patience are the tools of exploration..

Stay in connection with yourself. Acknowledge your own moods, reactions, and assumptions relating to the child’s experience. Be sensitive and value how this unique child is touching your senses and emotions.

Be able to say “sorry” and to be wrong



**“Hello wonderful child”**



“And will it be ok to .....”      **How does your child say yes...?**

## **Being a Child Focusing Companion**

### **More Considerations for Awareness and Sensitivity**

An adult has authority in their relationship with a child. Is the child hearing your words as an instruction? Wherever possible just reflect the child's words and movements.

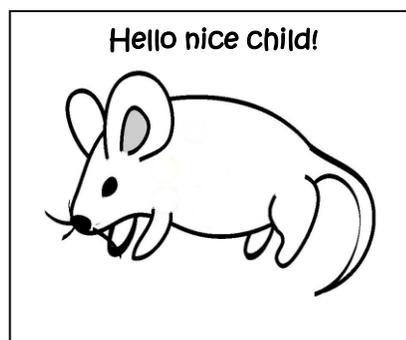
Be attentive. Your suggestions and questions are guesses as to what is the right direction for the child! Use words and a tone of voice that allows the child to keep following their sense of direction.

Your support is by agreement with the child. This contract is always being renewed.

Notice how the child is reacting. Be aware of the needs and feelings behind the words, attitude and behaviour of the child.

Be aware and comfortable with the tension in your role of giving structure and following. This helps the child to find and grow their own boundaries.

Trust the ‘implicit wisdom’ of the child.



**“And would your hand like to draw ...? ”**

**“Oh you know that is the right colour!”**

## **Reflecting a Child’s Experience**

A Focusing Companion is always learning. You may love the child, feel responsible, want to stop the pain or make everything alright. You may disapprove of the child’s views or emotions. Remember that advice, judgements, consoling and pity rarely grow the inner strength of the child. These reactions are more about your needs. Empathy, compassion and a certain distance help the child to stand strong and accept their own reactions.

Help the child to acknowledge all feelings, emotions and wishes. Be careful not to direct the child to reactions you feel are the most appropriate. Encourage and value the symbolisation they bring in sounds, gestures, looks, play, and other forms of expression. For many children, especially young children, words are a small part of expression. How you reflect a child’s actions, sounds and meaning will be very different according to their age and your Focusing relationship.

### **Things to Reflect**

- ♥ what the child says, especially something special
- ♥ what the child does and shows with his or her body
- ♥ what you are sensing behind words and behaviour
- ♥ symbolisation without your meaning or interpretation
- ♥ indications of bodily feeling and emotional qualities
- ♥ the positive rather than the negative
- ♥ a visual change or when something new comes



**“And would your body like to move ...? ”**

**“Oh your feet want to do that .....!”**

## **Some Techniques and Words**

Where ever possible use the child’s own words or actions to reflect in a natural conversational way.

The less words the child has the more you will be guessing their intention, feelings and sense of a situation.

You may summarise the steps you have noticed in the child’s process but remember you are guessing when you choose what to leave out. Use tentative language and questions like:

“It seems like...” “Sometimes there are children who...” “It seems something in you...”

Encourage the child to check if whatever you say to them feels right.

Encourage the child to say “no” when it does not fit. Beginning another subject is another way a child may do this.

Sensitive timing of what you say and do and tone of voice are very important.



**“And it wants to look like that ...?”**

**“Is there a story it wants to tell.... ?!”**

### **When speaking with yourself**

Ask inside: *“Am I where the child is...? Am I connected with the child?”*

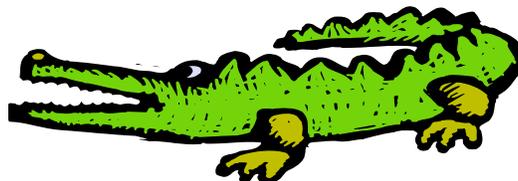
Ask yourself again and again: *“Is what I’m saying against...to...for...about...the child?”. “Am I giving the child sufficient distance and space?”*

### **When speaking with the child**

Do not say *“Can you tell me...?”* or *“I would like to know...”* Use open, sometimes unfinished, sentences so the child has the possibility to give his or her own significance and continue in their own way of searching, developing and changing.

*“Is there ‘some place’ ..... in your body ?... “Is there a feeling, ‘some thing’ .....in your tummy? ...your chest? .... “How might ‘it’ want to tell you something?” “Might it have something to say?”*

A Focusing Companion doesn’t ask for or expect an explicit answer.



**“Hello wonderful child”**



**“And is it OK for you to do that ...? ”**

**“I am sorry – you want to ..... ?”**

## **Symbolisation and Activities**

Children are able to symbolise from the Felt Sense at a young age but they may not easily find words.

Symbolisation in creative expression is easier for children . Drawing is an important way to express what comes from the Felt Sense, or what they experience in general.

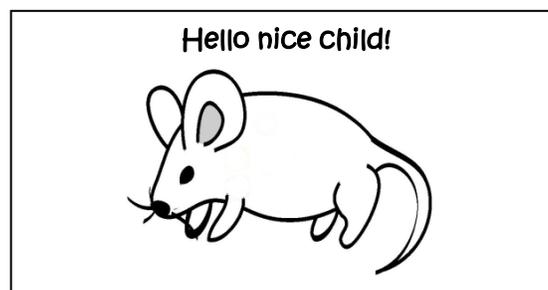
Don't ask for explanation. Reflect the facts you observe as the child develops the symbolisation.

A child may or may not talk during the symbolisation process. If not the companion can ask afterwards: “does the drawing have anything to tell?”

In symbolising everyone needs to be able to pick the resources of their choice and to change their minds. Have many ways available to children to choose for expression and symbolisation: including drawing, colouring, painting, sand, water, clay, imaginative play, dance, music, textured materials and story telling.

There is no wrong way to symbolise. Encourage the children to allow their own path to develop without fear or criticism from themselves or others.

The drawings and writings that the children make may be very special to them. Let each child have a folder or special place to keep their Focusing symbolisations.



## Further Information

*Simon Kilner is an International Children Focusing Coordinator for The Focusing Institute. TFI is a not for profit organization.*

This booklet is based on many original ideas from Marta Stapert.

It is designed to support more formal training in approaches to Children Focusing.

Many thanks to the participants of the “Sparkling Energy “International Children Focusing Conference in the Netherlands 2010 who contributed some wonderful ideas and thoughts. Any errors or inconsistencies are entirely the fault of the author.

### *Further Reading*

*“Focusing with Children: Communicating with children at home and at school” -  
Marta Stapert and Erik Verliefe*

The booklet is available to copy and adapt to the needs of different cultures and children. It is alright to reproduce the pictures for non commercial use. If you do use the Guidelines please notify Simon Kilner at [ChildrenFocusingInfo@focusing.org](mailto:ChildrenFocusingInfo@focusing.org) . Translations of these Guidelines are currently in process into a number of languages. If you wish to translate into your language you are welcome to do so as long as you notify Simon and allow your translation to be available to others on the TFI website.

Further, articles and information about Children Focusing training and contacts are available from that address or from [www.focusing.org/children](http://www.focusing.org/children).

## Good Luck!

**“And is there anything else that wants to happen ...? ”**

**“How does your child tell you that she or he is wants to do something else now..... ?!”**

