

## FOCUSING ENABLES CHILDREN TO LIVE WITH FEAR

---

*Lucy Bowers*

---

*“When the forms of an old culture are dying, the new culture is created by a few people who are not afraid to be insecure.”*

— East German dissident Rudolph Bahro

In these times of turbulent transformation it seems as if the ground under our feet is becoming more and more soft and uncertain. Our environment is drastically changing and due to the saturation of the media, we see and hear about those changes daily. The changes are not only environmental in nature, they are escalating in complexity and taking us into an unknown future of desperate scientific debates. Political upheaval, war, and pandemics are also adding to ecological issues and affecting how we view our world and how we try to live in it. Hopelessness and fear have become the companions that accompany us everywhere.

Children are particularly affected by this pervasive hopelessness. From their perspective, we need a new way to be in this world that is so rampant with fear. I suggest that using Focusing with children offers them what Rabbi Harold Kushner calls *“the gift of resilience”*. In fact, Focusing can give children the tools to move forward beyond resilience towards healthy growth and development, emotionally, physically, socially and intellectually.

As you read the following interviews with children dealing with their fears, I invite you to take them in gently and pay attention to your own *“felt sense”*. I hope to persuade you of the profound benefits of sharing what we have learned as Focusers whenever we are with children.

### AN ISRAELI GIRL LIVES WITH FEAR

The first story, about an Israeli girl named Danielle, 9, is excerpted from Canadian children’s writer Deborah Ellis’s book *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak*.

*“I celebrated my birthday the other day. I had a party with my family, and I had another party with my friends. At the party with my friends, we had pizza, which is my favourite food. We played a lot of games, like statues. Statues is when you move around to music, and when the music stops, you have to freeze in that position. It’s hard to do without laughing. It’s fun. I’m in grade three. My mom brought me to McDonald’s today as a treat.*

*Jerusalem is a good city to live in. There are a lot of nice places to see, like parks and museums. We go to places on school trips, and sometimes I go with my family. I know there is a war going on, but I don’t know why. I would rather*

*there was peace. I hear about bombs on television, about bombs going off in shops and on buses, and it makes me afraid. My parents get worried looks on their faces when they read the newspapers or listen to the radio.*

*I don't know why the Palestinians are so angry with us. We're nice people. I don't know any Palestinians. If I could meet a Palestinian girl my age, we could play together. That way she could see that I'm nice and friendly and she won't want to blow me up. Bombs scare me more than anything else. I don't know when they will explode. They could explode while I am shopping for shoes or riding on a bus. I wouldn't have to be doing anything wrong for a bomb to get me. A bomb won't get me in McDonald's, though. There are guards at the door, and they search everyone on their way in. They searched me and looked through my backpack. Most buildings have guards who search. You have to let them, or they will think you are going to blow something up, and be mad at you."\**

Writer Deborah Ellis summarizes the effect of conflict on kids: *“Even very young children feel the impact of the war, on both sides of the conflict. A study prepared by the University of Tel Aviv’s School of Social Work says all Palestinian and Israeli children have shown some signs of mental and emotional distress. Many have full-blown post-traumatic stress disorder. The emotional suffering of these children is bad enough to affect how they manage their daily lives.”*

No one wants children to be overwhelmed by fear. As parents, we want to shield our children from danger, even when it’s unrealistic or impossible. But we can’t protect them from fear, which is real and cannot be denied or taken away. As an emotion, fear is neither bad nor good and it comes in many forms and disguises. It does not need to be our enemy, but the usual way that we carry it in our bodies is a negative one that can limit how we lead our lives.

When fear is not processed it builds up and often leads to violence. Studies on TV and media violence and how it impacts children have been numerous over the past two decades. They often agree that watching screen violence does indeed desensitize us, raises our level of fear and anxiety, and fosters violent and aggressive behaviour towards others. Real-life experiences of fear and violence can only deepen and worsen these ill effects.

But imagine the paradigm shift that can occur if fear is not removed or denied but somehow allowed to exist in a way that is comfortable and fosters a deeper relationship with ourselves and others. This idea may seem challenging for those who have not experienced how Focusing operates. In my Focusing experience, fear can be a doorway into a vague, unsettled, inchoate place that allows forward momentum, helps the body shift into a more comfortable way of being and often offers insight about that next step.

---

\* Copyright © 2004 Deborah Ellis. Reprinted by permission of Greenwood Books.

## A PALESTINIAN GIRL DEALS WITH FEAR, VIOLENCE AND DESTRUCTION

The next excerpted interview from the same book, *Three Wishes*, illustrates compellingly why we need to address this challenge and help children deal with their fears more positively. I invite you to stay with your felt sense as you read this account. Salam, a Palestinian girl, is the 12-year-old sister of Aayat, who committed suicide and became a martyr at the age of 17, murdering two people and injuring twenty-eight others. Listen to Salam's words and hear how fear affects her world view.

*"I have six sisters and four brothers. I am in the sixth grade at school. When I grow up I want to be a lawyer.*

*I am tired right now because I only went to bed a short while ago. When soldiers come they usually come in the night, so I am too frightened to sleep then. I like to be awake at night so I am not surprised by them if they come. Being surprised by them makes it worse, makes me feel worse, more scared and ashamed. We are under curfew now, so it doesn't matter when I sleep. We can't leave the house, so I can sleep any time I want to. I don't mind when there is a curfew because I don't like school, and there is no school when there is curfew. I don't like to study or do school work. Why bother? The Israelis won't let us do anything with our education, so why bother to get one?*

*I do mind that I can't see my friends and be a normal kid when there is a curfew. But if we leave the house the soldiers will shoot at us. There have always been soldiers. They don't like us. I have seen the things they do. They are all around us. They throw gas bombs, shoot at children, destroy houses, arrest people and make them sit on the ground for a long time with blindfolds on. The soldiers stand over them laughing and making them feel bad. Of course I have been hurt by soldiers. Everybody I know has been. I know a lot of children smaller than me, who have been hurt or killed by them. I've even seen soldiers shoot at an ambulance. They don't care. They just want to kill us all. You don't have to be doing anything bad to be hurt by the soldiers. You could just be walking down the street. I was walking down the street with my friends, and there was no curfew, and there were some boys nearby, and the soldiers shot one of them. We all carried him to the side of the road. He didn't die. He was just shot. When I heard that my sister had died, I was in the kitchen baking. She was late for dinner. We were all waiting for her before we ate. My parents were watching television, and we heard it on the news. She didn't tell me she was going to do this. We shared a bedroom, but she didn't tell me. I cried and cried.*

*The army came to our house that night. They smashed things. They shouted. They destroyed our door. Sarah, one of the international people, was here with us. She screamed at the soldiers to stop, but they wouldn't. They hit her just as if she had been a Palestinian. They arrested my brother. He is still in jail. He didn't do anything, but that doesn't matter to them. We all had to go outside. They knocked us to the ground. They took my older brothers away. We had to*

*pay a lot of money to get some of them out. Aayat's picture is everywhere, on walls and in newspapers. She is very famous. She is a martyr and is now in paradise, where it is supposed to be very beautiful. I would like to join her there. I would have to become a martyr like her; to be able to be in paradise with her. I don't know if the girl she killed had a sister my age or not. What does it matter? I don't know any Israeli kids. Why would I want to?">\**

Most of us can only imagine the terror that Salam feels nightly as she waits for the army to come and destroy her family home. Sadly, she is one of countless children all around the world who live with conflict, dread and terror every day. We cannot be surprised when studies show how such fear has a negative impact on children's daily lives, on their hope for the future, on the way they view the outside world.

*"Are there unknown inner resources within the human species that, if brought to the surface, might make it possible for us not only to survive, but also grow beyond our destructive tendencies?"*

— French theologian, Teilhard de Chardin

I believe these "inner resources" can be synonymous with the felt senses as Gendlin has developed our understanding of them. Our fears are just one of many emotions with which the felt sense expresses itself when more needs to unfold. Each fear sits in the body and over time presents itself in a variety of ways. The two most familiar responses of the body to fear are fight and flight. But a third and very common response to fear is immobility, as Peter Levine points out in *Waking the Tiger*, where he calls the immobility response "one of the three primary responses available to reptiles and mammals when faced with an overwhelming threat."

Levine believes that there is a way to go into the immobility response and come out of it without what he calls the debilitating effects of trauma. His book describes at length the role that the felt sense (as developed by Eugene Gendlin) plays in alleviating many symptoms of trauma. We all know of adults whose childhood experiences, whether trauma, dread, or even anxiety in large or small doses, carry in their body a continued sense of helplessness, or constant anxiety, or being a victim, or aggressive behaviour, to name but a few.

It is my belief that by giving children permission to gently be with what their bodies are experiencing at any given time, by staying with that, listening to it and honouring it, these negative outcomes will not need to be manifested in adulthood. Edwin McMahon and Peter Campbell have been doing research in this area with children (see *Building Body-Links of Hope* at [www.biospiritual.org](http://www.biospiritual.org)) for some time in Mexico and I anticipate numerous other such studies in the future. We urgently need to show children the potential available to them, when they are able to take care of fearful feelings in a way that's empowering rather than debilitating.

---

\* Excerpt from *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak* by Deborah Ellis. Copyright © 2004 Deborah Ellis. Reprinted by permission of Groundwood Books.

## **TWO AMERICAN BOYS LEARN ABOUT TERRORISTS**

It is not just in war zones that we find children suffering from fear, trauma and anxiety. Television, films, newspapers and computers expose children to all of these. Nowadays there appear to be very few locations around this globe where children have the luxury of their own childhood. Feeling safe and secure while small is a challenge for parents to provide their children. Listen to this account of a family holiday in upper New York state in 2003.

Steven, 7, was on a driving holiday with his younger brother, Owen, 5, and their parents. Steven's new-found ability to read meant he could look at the maps, read the many signs along the highway and feel quite confident and grownup. When the family stopped to tank up, Steven saw signs that prompted him to ask, "What is a terrorist hotline?" Both boys listened intently as their mother explained that we always need to keep a watchful eye for strange people and report any suspicious behaviour. The two little boys, who had some notion of the meaning of the word terrorist and the word terror that lurks inside it had been immediately placed on alert: their sense of security was somewhat shaken. For the remainder of the trip the parents were asked repeated questions about terrorists, showing the parents that the boys were carrying their anxiety in a bodily felt way. The children's natural curiosity became narrowed to observing people and asking if they might be terrorists. The enthusiasm of being on the trip had been tarnished.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs shows that the need for safety and security both physical and emotional comes right after the primary human biological requirements for food and water. Maslow would instantly have recognized how Steven and Owen's essential need for safety was threatened by their conversation about terrorism. Maslow says that if this need in children for security is not met, their subsequent needs for love, belonging, self-esteem, acceptance, intellectual development and so on are severely compromised as they develop.

I believe that the little seeds of fear and doubt do not need to grow over time and cause arrested development. Even fears that seem minuscule, inconsequential and minor to an adult can be huge when carried in the small body and mind of a child. Regrettably, family settings are often a huge vacuum when it comes to helping children deal with fears and providing them with the sense of security they need.

## **A GIRL IS GRIPPED BY MOVIE VIOLENCE**

The key to using Focusing effectively with children is for the caregivers, whether parents, grandparents or teachers, to know, understand and practice Focusing in their own lives. Intimate knowledge of the Felt Sense and how it operates in the body, and of the "Focusing Attitude" and its importance in providing a gentle, compassionate presence, are all necessary for movement in the process. The following is a firsthand report from a grandmother whose longtime personal experience with Focusing helped her respond to her seven-year-old grandchild's fears, allowing for a dramatic change in the girl's behaviour. Notice how Gran reflects back the quality of what is happening and accompanies Amanda through this experience.

"At 7 a.m. on Easter morning, the telephone woke me and a very tiny, uncharacteristically timid, voice asked, "Gran, did the Easter Bunny come to your house?" Surprised by

the call, the hour and the tiny voice, I firmly told Amanda to go back to bed and call much later. At 7:30 a.m. the phone rang again and the conversation went the same. This time I suggested that Amanda, who sounded more scared than excited, awaken her mother Susan (a struggling single mom).

I was already feeling some discomfort in my chest with those two phone calls when Amanda called again at 8 a.m. and asked if she and her mom could come earlier than the time I'd invited everyone for lunch. Without hesitation I agreed. By 10 a.m. Amanda and her mom were at my house. After scouring my place for hidden Easter treats, Amanda confided in the same small voice that, she had seen Chuckie the night before. My discomfort began to grow. "Who is Chuckie and where did you see him?" I asked, wondering what that had to do with the Easter Bunny she would have been anticipating that night.

"He is a puppet and he was on TV last night," she answered. The discomfort in my chest amplified as I grasped instantly that Amanda had seen an adult horror film. I immediately understood her phone calls and the fear in her voice. "Where was Mommy?" I asked. Just then Susan came into the room to hear Amanda say that Mommy had gone out the previous evening, leaving her. Angrily and defensively, Susan explained at length that she needed to shop and realized she had not been able to get an appropriate babysitter. While Susan and I had a shouting match, Amanda crawled under a table in tears. Eventually Susan walked out of the house in fury, feeling blamed by her mother and inadequate. Amanda's fears triggered by the horror film were now compounded by insecurity as she experienced the two people she loved most shouting angrily at one another.

Realizing at once the horror of it all, I reached out and took Amanda on my lap. I was listening to my own felt sense about the next step: It certainly didn't feel right to say anything. I noticed my own chest which now had a big "empty space" kind of feeling. Gently I allowed myself to be with that feeling while I held Amanda on my lap. I noticed that she allowed me to take her out from under the table and hold her while neither of us spoke. I noticed my own tears and how Amanda, who had curled up on my lap like a child half her age, held me tightly and sobbed quietly. As we sat there holding each other, I was flooded with the awareness that in experiencing the fear together, we were moving toward a strong experience of love. My heart began to swell and fill that huge empty space inside my chest. My physical change was amazing as I realized that what I felt in a real way was a very powerful love for Amanda. My felt sense gave me permission to finally speak. "I want us to sit here for as long as it takes for you to notice all the love I have inside me going into your body," I said. "When you feel full inside from all that love moving into you, we can let go."

Amanda was still clinging tightly and tears were still sliding quietly down her cheeks, but her sobs gradually dissipated. My tears were no longer there as I stayed with the fullness of my love and how it felt inside me. In the end, Amanda held on for 20 minutes before I felt her clinging lessen. It seemed remarkably sudden when she slipped off my lap and asked in a surprisingly strong voice, "Can we do anything to get ready for the others who are all coming, Gran?"

We had both experienced major physical shifts: Amanda's voice was back to normal, and my chest no longer ached, but was bursting with love and possibly joy. For the rest of that

day it was clear that something big had happened. All the family and friends who came for lunch and dinner commented on how unusually happy, helpful, friendly and outgoing Amanda was. Because she experienced a big felt shift in her body, everything flowed from there.

*“Every bad feeling is potential energy toward a more right way of being if you give it space to move toward its rightness.”*

— E.T. Gendlin

The way in which the grandmother kept company with her granddaughter and at the same time paid attention to her own felt sense about the next step, allowed the Focusing process to shift for both adult and child. It is my experience working with children and Focusing that they instinctively absorb this process and learn it easily without any need to read books on the subject or discuss it. They are too young to have a critic who gets in the way and they have a fresh imagination allowing them to be with what is happening in a gentle caring way. Their innate curiosity is helpful for that forward movement to be acknowledged and to allow for the further unfolding. It is almost an unconscious process that only needs to feel safe and nurtured. Children who are still in touch with the truth of that place inside themselves have taught me how valuable the Focusing process really is.

### **A SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENT REVISITS THE FEAR OF A TRAUMA**

Let's study another example of the power of Focusing as told by a special-needs teacher named Ms. P. A Focusing practitioner in her personal life, Ms. P. uses “Elevator Rides” as a regular activity in her classroom since attending some of my workshops many years ago. (Elevator Rides are a tool I developed in the 1980s to work with children in the classroom: simply stated, I tell them that everyone has a story in their body and we are able to take an “Elevator Ride” to visit the story that's in your body. For more about Elevator Rides, see references.) Her pupils range in age from six to eight and enjoy Elevator Rides very much, often asking to do them when they come in from recess, or when they're resolving a conflict, or anticipating the stress of a test. The students enjoy the opportunity to be quiet and allow the “elevator” to take them to their “stories” by pushing the story button on their control panels. Their enjoyment continues after the exercise, as they use their felt sense to guide them in finding whichever activity feels right as a follow-up, whether writing in their journal, painting, using plasticine or crayoning. Here is Ms. P.'s report of an Elevator Ride that had a profound effect on a boy named Joshua.

On this particular day as all the children were stretched out on the floor of the classroom in various locations with their eyes closed you could have heard a pin drop. Suddenly the sound of tears becoming sobs came from Joshua. I was absolutely astonished that not one of the other children raised their heads to see who or what was happening. They all continued on their Elevator Rides and then slowly and quietly went off to do their follow-up activity. Ms. P. knew that it was important not to interrupt Joshua, touch him, or attempt to console him (she had to reassure the educational assistant and ask her not to interrupt

Joshua's process in any way.) Ms. P. stayed quietly close by and held a "safe space" while he cried for nearly five minutes, while all the other children were quietly and busily engaged with their follow up activities. Then his tears stopped and he got up to take out his journal. He wrote in a highly focused manner for nearly 10 minutes without asking for help. Writing more pages than he ever had before, Joshua invented his own spelling as he went along and concluded with a picture. It was his first experience to enjoy a successful writing task that year. I invited him to share his experience with the class.

The other children listened in quiet awe as he told about something that had happened when he was very little, he thought, maybe three years old. He told how he had been trapped under a boat and drowned, then taken to hospital and brought "back to life." He was surprised to revisit that place of fear under the boat.

Although he'd never before talked about the near-death experience, in the end he was very excited, happy and keen to tell about it. Joshua's felt shift had taken place without any doubt, and was visible in his smiling face. The shift continued however during his lengthy journal writing. Because his fear was nurtured and given time and space to express itself, Joshua no longer seemed to need to cry about that experience. His story and his picture won not only his teacher's admiration and respect, but also that of all his classmates.

Ms. P. adds that having Elevator Rides in place as a regular classroom activity provided many surprises throughout the year and diminished blocks to learning in both small and very large ways.

The two stories at the outset of this paper point out the urgent need to teach children how to live with fear and terror. The next two accounts illustrate the effective change when children are invited to notice and nurture what is happening inside them by Focusing. Even when they have no control over the events in their lives, and fears are overwhelming, there seems to be a right way to be in all of it.

Now I wish to share the two final stories to show how easy it is to make it possible.

### **A BOY DEALS WITH FEAR OF A PARENT'S DEATH**

The first comes from a grade three teacher named Mrs. R. who has taken many Focusing workshops and deeply trusts the process. She also uses Elevator Rides as a classroom activity.

On this particular Monday morning Mrs. R. receives terrible news from the office about one of her pupils, Kyle, 8, whose mother died of cancer when he was four. Mrs. R. learns that Kyle's father has just gone into the hospital on the weekend and is terminally ill with cancer. Kyle, an only child, is being cared for by an aunt.

At recess Mrs. R. invites Kyle to stay with her to talk. He quickly asks if he can do an Elevator Ride, saying that he wants to go "to a really sad place inside" because he is really scared that his dad will die just like his mom. With his eyes closed, Kyle tells Mrs. R. that he is "in the elevator and the sad place is all white." He sees himself and his dad playing baseball, then soccer together. "When I see my dad there is an orange light on the left and now



the white light is on the right.” After spending some quiet time there he suddenly announces he is finished being in his story and asks, “Can I go out to play now?”

After recess, the first thing Kyle does is draw a picture of himself and his dad playing baseball. His usual behavioural problems for example, hurting other children, withdrawing and not wanting to cooperate or finish assigned tasks are absent for the rest of that day.

Several days later Kyle asks again if he can stay in at recess. He tells Mrs. R. he is worried and scared, saying, “It is really hard to be a little boy who has his mom die when he is little and now that he is bigger his dad will die! If my dad dies my tears will come out of my eyes like an ocean.” Kyle tells Mrs. R. that he knows “deep inside me that my dad is not ever coming home again.” He takes the Elevator Ride to his heart because “it feels sick in there.” After a moment of quiet he tells her with astonishing strength of character, “If only I could be sick and not my dad.” Then he reports, “I feel scared, very scared and worried and lonely.” Next he says, “If I wasn’t sick and dad wasn’t sick we’d have a different kind of life”. Once again he tells Mrs. R. when he is finished being in his story for that day.

Mrs. R. points out that normally she would feel very helpless having a student undergoing such a traumatic life experience. However she feels strongly that she is enabling Kyle to deal with his fears and the result seems to be fewer behavioural problems from him than previously.

After a week or so Kyle asks Mrs. R. if he can stay in for recess for a third Elevator Ride. On this “ride”, he tells her that his tummy where he travels in the safety of his own Elevator feels very sick. In his tummy he gets out of the Elevator and sees his dad. “Now I feel really sad,” he says, because “we are watching Mommy die together.” As his tears flow freely Kyle tells her that he is remembering how it felt to go home with his dad from the hospital. Then, Mrs. R. sees Kyle’s tears turn to anger as he announces with a tight and angry face that he wants to “just pee on the ground.” He says he wants “to hit people and fight with everybody!”

After a time (perhaps 3 minutes) he says he is finished but wants to make a picture. The picture that follows is of himself and his dad on a camping trip, swimming and canoeing on the lake before his dad got sick. He is very proud and happy with his picture and asks if there is time to go out to play.

Who cannot empathize with this young child’s need to express violent anger at the tragic cards he was dealt? However, it was clear that the way in which Mrs. R. gently accompanied Kyle on his Elevator Ride, knowing that his situation could not be changed, allowed his felt sense to change from something hard to something soft. The physiological change is always noted in the shifts of these children. The behaviour that follows is generally calmer and more focused, tasks are completed and the intrinsic reward is evident.

## **A GIRL DEALS WITH FEARS AROUND A CUSTODY BATTLE**

Please note the role anger plays in this last story about a fourteen-year-old girl called Madeleine, whose divorced parents are battling for custody of her. Madeleine’s guidance teacher, Mr. B., who has been using Elevator Rides with students, was asked to work with

Madeleine because she had become a destructive bully and stopped doing any schoolwork. Madeleine feels loyalty for both her parents.” I don’t want to hurt my mom and I don’t want to hurt my dad,” she says, adding “I feel like I am being torn apart.” “I can’t even open the door to the Elevator. It feels stuck and I can’t get in. Nobody is here to help me. I feel all alone.”

After a moment Madeleine reports, “I hear someone say ‘I’ll help you if you let me.’”. She seems surprised, saying angrily, “It is hard to believe that someone would help me because... the two people who should understand don’t!”

When she does finally get the door open and enters the Elevator she finds a small box that she cannot get into. “[The box] It feels like my heart, it is shutting itself up with duct tape. I feel really scared in my heart.”

Mr. B. suggests her heart might want to tell her how she needs to be with it. Her heart tells her there will never be a happy ending. She reports that she feels “sad, depressed and doomed.”

Mr. B. invites Madeleine to stay with those feelings and after a bit she reports seeing black zigzags all over the box, shutting it up even more tightly than the duct tape. The box wants to go away, she says, because “I am not telling it how I feel inside.”

Madeleine begins to shiver and complains of being very cold.

“I try to please my mom and dad and now my body is all cold and hard.” She continues to shiver and with her tears come the sorrowful words: “I would do just about anything to get out of this. I’d rather go back to being a child again.”

She continues with her eyes closed.

“I know now what kind of weight I am carrying. This heavy thick blubber is sewn on to me. If I take it off it will hurt and take me a long time to get over it.”

Her hand is now over her heart.

“Now my heart is covered up in the box and it feels like I could fall down and go somewhere.” Madeleine has stopped shivering now but her back feels cold. She says, “There is a thick string holding on to me and it left scars on my back. Even God is telling me there is no help to make my decision. Now I feel sad and alone.”

Her face looks as though she may cry but there are no tears.

“Everything is becoming clear but my heart is too tired to do anything. I don’t have any hope or faith anymore, just hopelessness.”

Her hands now lie palms up on her lap.

After sitting with how all that feels for several minutes, she reports: “The string attached to my back is trying to pull me up .It feels bittersweet. It is trying to encourage myself to stay confident.”

She ends the Elevator Ride composed and states emphatically, “I will try!”

There is no solution for Madeleine, but she does feel some resolution; she’s now capable of finding fresh energy to try to make the best of a situation that she has no control over, and that is encouraging. When she moves from hopelessness to, “I will try”, I am reminded

of the words of the late Christian mystic Thomas Merton, who once wrote to a friend about hopelessness.

*“Do not depend on the hope of results you may have to face the fact that your work will be apparently worthless and even achieve no results at all, if not perhaps results opposite to what you expect. As you get used to this idea, you start more and more to concentrate not on the results, but on the value, the rightness, the truth of the work itself. You gradually struggle less and less for an idea and more and more for specific people. In the end, it is the reality of personal relationship that saves everything.”*

When we commit ourselves to helping children make these connections, and develop deeper personal relationships, both with self and others, they will be enabled and empowered to live in a healthy way with their fears. It is the presence of the very fear itself that offers the next step forward. In pursuing Focusing work both for ourselves and the children in our lives, we can live in hope, while simultaneously letting go of outcomes. It will be a journey of insecurity that takes us and the children for the future into this new way of being in a strange and foreign landscape. Focusing offers us no outcomes, only surprises! The task is at hand and lies waiting for those with the tools to trust and begin to risk introducing children to this great work. For the sake of the children in this difficult world, I encourage and challenge all who use Focusing to share it with a child. As Ed McMahon, author of *Beyond the Myth of Dominance* says, Focusing is “*a process of gifting our children with themselves.*” What a gift!

## REFERENCES

- Bowers, Lucy 2001. “Elevator Rides Help Children Learn Focusing” published in *Staying In Focus: The Focusing Institute Newsletter*, volume 1 number 3 September 2001)
- Campbell and McMahon. *Building Body-Links of Hope* at [www.biospiritual.org](http://www.biospiritual.org) 1985. *Bio-Spirituality Focusing As A Way To Grow* Chicago: Loyola University Press
- Ellis, Deborah. 2006. *Three Wishes Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak*. Toronto: Groundwood Books
- Gendlin, Eugene T. 1981. *Focusing*. New York: Bantam Books
- Kushner, Harold S. 1981. *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. Anchor Books
- Levine, Peter A. 1997. *Waking the Tiger* Berkeley: North Atlantic Books
- Loeb Rogat, Paul (editor) 2004. *The Impossible Will Take a Little While: A Citizen’s Guide to Hope in a Time of Fear* (Paperback) New York: Basic Books, pgs 348-351 *From Hope to Hopelessness* by Margaret Wheatley
- Maslow, A.H. 1970. *Motivation and Personality* (Second Edition) New York: Harper and Row
- McMahon, Edwin M. 1993. *Beyond the Myth of Dominance An Alternative to a Violent Society*. Chicago: Sheed & Ward