

Wholebody Focusing-oriented therapy:

Four avenues of Wholebody felt sensing for Transforming Symptoms of Trauma

Glenn Fleisch, Ph.D. & Karen Whalen, Ph.D. (2010)

We need to conceive of the living body in a new way, so as to be able to understand how it can contain (or be) information, and also be the implying of the next bit of living. It is not the usual use of the word "body." (E. Gendlin, 2003)

Introduction: Wholebody Focusing-oriented therapy for complex trauma

Wholebody Focusing (WBF) Oriented Therapy (WBFOT) (McEvenue and Fleisch, 2008; Whalen, 2009; Fleisch, 2009, 2010) is a recent development of Gendlin's experiential process method of Focusing Oriented Therapy (1981, 1996). WBFOT is an integration of Gendlin's seminal work on the centrality of accessing the wisdom of the living body through sustained attention (Focusing) to a bodily felt sense, with the work of Kevin McEvenue on awakening the outward flow of bodily wisdom (felt sensing) through inner-directed movement. McEvenue discovered through his work as an Alexander Teacher and Focusing practitioner that physical and emotional habit-patterns can be transformed from within the body's own intelligence by bringing a quality of conscious awareness to the whole body. Wholebody Focusing is a natural process of conscious awareness that connects to our living organism and environment in ways that activate an Inner Intelligence (body-wisdom). This inner wellspring of intelligence and vitality lies implicit beneath our conditioned and unconscious patterns of being, thinking, moving, and doing. Our Wholebody Intelligence remains intact in every human being regardless of severity of trauma. It knows how to unwind our stress and traumas and move forward our unfinished life situations.

The inward coming of life forward energy and movement is contained within the symptom of trauma itself, and knows its way back to membership within the Functioning Whole. Gendlin

(1996, p.149) describes it beautifully as "It is a healing that comes from underneath. With this kind of relational and inward attention the whole intricate mesh reorganizes itself... We do very little." Yet we will show that the little we do, bringing conscious awareness to the living body of feeling/experiencing makes all the difference in allowing trauma patterns to unwind from within.

As a core of Focusing-oriented therapy, Gendlin (1996, p. 181) has stated, "People live life with their whole bodies, not just with their nervous systems" so that "the body also provides an avenue of therapy." He thus advocates, "Letting something come in the body (p.190) asserting that "Much more therapeutic change can happen if the body participates." WBFOT expands on Gendlin's thinking by inclusion of the whole living body in the therapeutic process from the very outset of therapy. Of course many clients may need long periods of time before they seem ready to bring direct awareness and allow extended felt contact with their embodiment, especially in cases of complex trauma. Thus, it is me as therapist that attends to the whole body, and the various manifestations of bodily felt experiencing that can be both observed as well as inwardly sensed while in Co-Presence with clients. It opens us to a much wider and fuller consciousness of our whole embodied existence when both client and I stay in felt connection with our living body in Grounded Presence. This involves a shift of focus from the verbal content to the concrete bodily living process that is either connected with or, at times, even distinct from what is being verbalized. At this level of grounded wholebody awareness, we (client and I) can safely notice how trauma based patterns (parts/places) emerge and how we can *keep them company* so they can open to their own healing and reconnect with the wholeness of our being. We will present some specific avenues that help therapist and client gain awareness of and access to various ways that trauma-based patterns show themselves and move toward their own healing and integration.

Centrality of Grounded Presence: conscious awareness of embodied Wholeness

Grounded Presence is a very particular kind of wholebody awareness that is embodied by therapist and client for reasons of containment and safety. This is a quality of being that is neutral, connected to the support of the ground, to whole body awareness, and the support of the surrounding environment. We can observe the Functioning Whole of me because we are connected to the Here and Now in a very direct, embodied way. There prevails an inner attitude of openness, curiosity, gentleness, and respect for one's lived experience. Now there is space for the symptoms of trauma to emerge into awareness. They will do so because the symptoms themselves feel the safety and containment of Grounded Presence in a whole body way. Until Grounded Presence is established, the client's and therapist's nervous systems will be wired for the anticipation of the traumatic stress response. Until the client and therapist embody their own independent awareness of the Functional Whole, they will be swept away by the vortex of trauma which has no anchor to settle itself into, and no context of adult conscious awareness with which to unwind and understand itself. Moreover, we have found that the experience of Grounded Presence ("all-of-me-here" as a whole being) itself is transformative, offering to client and therapist a new awareness of ME, a SELF as a whole person, able to stand on one's own and open to a consciousness that is separate from and more than our traumas and problems.

We are suggesting here that when we tune into ourselves from Grounded Wholebody Presence, we embody our own good enough parent towards our inner states and thereby complete the healthy developmental attachment processes and structures in the brain. The human brain may not be the executive leader we posit it to be. Rather, it is a highly efficient regulator and coordinator of the human bio-system. When we align our higher reasoning centers, perceptual

system, information processing systems with our emotional, instinctual, and whole bodily felt experience, and contain this integration within Grounded Presence, we access a more integrated functioning of our bio-organism.

The Grounded Wholebody container of my field of awareness can reliably keep company with the parts of me that are suffering and still unconscious, and so are calling for my Grounded Wholebody Presence (= loving caring presence). With Wholebody Focusing from Grounded Presence I establish my connection inwardly towards myself via felt sensings. I also connect to the ground, the support of the earth, as well as the environment surrounding and supporting me. In this way, I tune into my internal wholebodily process, as well as tuning into how this process interfaces with its surrounding environment. From Grounded Wholebody Presence, we contain our life processes and connect with our self-aware aliveness directly. This containment and connection with self and other builds a trust in our bodies and our whole field of being as an ever-present support in the unwinding and clearing of stress and trauma from our body/mind.

Wholebody wisdom: consciousness of inner-directed movement through the living body

In WBFOT, there are two central elements: Grounded (Co-) Presence (Being) and Activating of Body-Wisdom (Becoming). We live embedded within the context of our living in our environment, the ground from which the whole implying of life forward movement arises, formed and nourished by our conscious awareness of our whole body experiencing, as well as by our relational connections with place, family, and community. Our bodily felt experiencing is not just something static (being-what-is-present-now) but is an opening and moving toward what our system is striving to become (to heal, resolve, release, actualize).

As Gendlin (1997) has explicated in his Process Model, the whole body's implying of creative new life-forward steps and solutions to our deepest wounds and situations can naturally and organically emerge when we generate a new space in which we interact with and relate to the arising of the body's inner Intelligence. WBFOT is a relational-somatic-experiential process that the clinician can use to harness the client's native inner resources of conscious whole body awareness. Grounded Presence provides the necessary safety and containment so that the client can connect with the Body Wisdom's solutions for her particular traumatic life situation(s). Rather than attempting to do something to alleviate or erase the troubling symptoms, or direct the client to do something with the symptoms, WBFOT applies the radical solution of Pure Being with the troubling symptoms. Two generations of Focusing Oriented Therapy has amply shown us that the experiential process of simply being with and relating to a difficulty changes the inherent nature of that difficulty.

WBFOT takes this approach a step further and deeper. Connecting with the inner space underlying the symptoms in a whole body way mobilizes a very precise depth and breadth of life forward movements within the client. These inner directed movements contain their own knowing, or Body Wisdom, the whole bodily implying of the situation of trauma. These subtle movements of the inner body direct a renewed flowing of the stopped life processes within the Functioning Whole of the client's personal Ground of being.

Our body out of which we orient and live is an active and interactive organism, not just acted-on but also acting and doing, as well as having its own self-sensing (felt sense) of every situation and pattern. The felt sentience of the living body (bodily experiencing) is always opening,

striving, pushing toward its next move(s) although this move or step is as-yet unformed. Gendlin (2003) calls this process of the living body, *implying*, "Living bodies have a holistic life-forward direction... ongoing bodily experiencing has its own inherent life-forwarding implying."

The vortex of trauma (Levine, 1997), those areas of the Body Mind where the symptoms of trauma spin in their own orbit outside of conscious awareness, are cut off from membership within the Functional Whole. In terms of Gendlin's Process Model (1997), we can describe complex trauma as a *severe and chronic stoppage* of one or more central aspects of the living body's ongoing life-forward direction. Even in cases of developmental/early life traumas, the living body not only carries the residues of what went wrong and how the organism had to respond to survive, but also contains an implicit knowing of what is right- what is needed for healing, releasing, transforming. The wholebody implying forward is the key to healing trauma.

Places of trauma tend to revolve in their own orbit, disconnected from the Whole of life and the resources of the body/ mind/ spirit in the current environment. Reconnecting the client's awareness of her personal Functioning Whole throughout a session of Wholebody Focusing Oriented Therapy unwinds the symptoms of complex trauma and allows them to relate anew to the Functioning Whole. The client's Grounded Presence and Wholebody Awareness is required for these life forward movements to emerge into the client's field of conscious awareness.

Grounded Presence provides safety and containment for the uncomfortable sensations and overwhelming terror that can arise from contacting symptoms of complex trauma. In short, the Grounded Presence of both therapist and client creates an energetically enlarged container (Co-Presencing) for the trauma based symptoms to inhabit conscious adult awareness. It is tolerable

for both to be with the client's suffering in a whole body way that is neutral, observing, and at the same time, felt sensing into this highly charged sensori-motor experience (Ogden, 2006).

As living beings we are constantly taking in new information through the peripheral, somatic, central, and autonomic nervous systems. In addition, our sensory organs (touch, taste, sight, smell, audition, proprioception, wholebody felt sensing, kinaesthetic and vestibular orienting) interface with the various branchings of the human nervous system so that we can immediately respond to this veritable ocean of information which presents itself to us mostly outside of our conscious awareness. Without a strong, steady, and flexible container for the contents of our awareness, the flow of information coming in cannot complete itself into an action response going back out to the environment of the body or the community. Symptoms of stress and trauma tend to pool inside their own restricted orbit of existence, mostly outside of the functioning whole living body's river of being (conscious awareness).

A session of Wholebody Focusing Oriented Therapy begins by connecting therapist and client to a certain quality of Wholebody awareness called Grounded Presence which accesses the Body Wisdom or Functional Whole human being. What perhaps distinguishes WBFOT from other body-centered, somatic approaches to trauma is that we have total trust in the Body Wisdom (Innate Intelligence) to naturally and effortlessly bring forward that which needs attention and in its own implicit order. The Functional Whole of Grounded Presence offers a solid, physical container that helps neutralize the "charge" of sympathetic arousal and trauma-based reactions.

The power of a Larger Consciousness (Wholebody Awareness) offers caring-feeling-accepting presence to observe and sense both subtle and gross sensory-energetic-motor pathways that naturally emerge. We notice and welcome the full range of bodily experiencing and potential life-forward movements- postural, gestural, movement, contractions, inner emotional feelings, thoughts, images, action potentials etc.- as they come into our field of shared awareness. As traumatized places are met with Wholebody Awareness from Grounded Presence, these places inside us can sense that it is safe to emerge. Our active consciousness interacts with these stuck patterns, enabling them to show and express more of themselves. We will offer some ways that we have observed and participated in this natural unfolding of the body wisdom to heal trauma.

Co-Presence: the interactive field of wholebody experiencing between therapist and client

Grounded Presence (GP) is the foundation of WBFOT. GP provides a sense of containment as well as a sense of spaciousness from the openness to the environment, the whole Field of Being. Co-Presence begins with both client and therapist taking time to establish a connection of solid grounding in the body and in the environment, and with each other. This sense of felt connection allows for trust as well as an attuned resonance to be established between us. We trust that whatever emerges will naturally arise out of this ongoing felt connection, by staying in GP with the multiple channels of felt sensing. Words might come, as well as felt sensations, movements, gestures, posture shifts, images, meanings, etc. through connection with each other, the body-space and the whole environmental field. We listen with our whole body, staying conscious of whatever comes into our field of awareness both from within and in connection with the client. Grounded Co-presence allows for an ongoing felt connection between client and therapist, maintaining an open awareness while trusting that the words will come directly out of that sense

of feeling connected. Establishing Grounded Presence provides both the physical support necessary to safely contain and hold what comes plus the caring-feeling-accepting Presence of Self and Listener, to be-with and welcome what comes just as it is. Often our body movements naturally mirror or complement those of the client, as well as mirroring or reflecting words, sounds, body shifts and new realizations.

When in a state of Grounded Co-Presence, there is a natural attunement and alignment of our living bodies with each other. The interpersonal and the intrapersonal are part of one larger process, so as we connect inwardly to our inner space and outwardly to the environment, there is a mutual interweaving, a flow of energy, information and vitality between Grounded Presence (Being) and parts of Self (symptom energy) that call our attention (Becoming). As therapist, we allow our bodily experiencing to attune and match that of the client. This shared experience as part of the larger Functional Wholeness of Life Energy and Being allows us to sense the whole of the client and their process, including what their body process might be implying, needing or missing. Our mirroring and inter-connection allows clients to access deeper levels of body-wisdom, as there develops an implicit trust that the shared field of Co-Presence enables us to explore and journey in ways we could do alone. We not only keep company in an accepting and caring way, but also can sense something in the field that clients might miss, thus helping to fill in and explore what their body wisdom might be doing, showing or experiencing right now.

The moment we bring our embodied feeling presence to the suffering we are experiencing, whether it be emotional imbalance, mental obsession, or physical pain and disease, space is immediately created in the tissue and energy body pathways. A lot of inner space is necessary

for the knots of tension in our energetic, emotional, mental, and physical body tissue to unwind, sort itself out, and move through the bodymind as integrated information and energy within the whole organism. The emotional pain we thought was going to kill us, softens and thanks us for coming home to it at long last with our presence and unconditional loving acceptance. When we contact the suffering with this kind of presence, we contact this source of wisdom that cannot be found outside of the body. So we take a soft, grounded, and humble approach to contacting the suffering we find inside our physical bodies- and in connection with environment.

We are continually making space inside ourselves to receive the multiple channels of whole body information as felt senses, energy, movement of the living body, imagery, etc. We encourage our clients to also make space in themselves to allow for more room to contain information and energy that flows through the living body. We observe and listen with the whole body, taking time to receive, resonate and attune to whatever comes into our consciousness in our interactions with clients. This allows us to experience maximal closeness and stay in felt contact with clients' bodily experiencing without intrusion or imposition of our own agenda or expectations. Then the space is clear and empty, yet full, and we await the coming forward of the body's inner-directed knowing. Our body not only carries our life history, as scars and wounds of our traumas, plus the defensive/protective reactions necessary for survival and coping, but also continually is emitting signals (urges/ impulses/ desires/ blocked energy) that imply what is needed for resolution of traumatic knots. The avenues we will be presenting are all variations on facilitating the coming forward of this inner-directed body-wisdom.

Four avenues for transmuting trauma in Wholebody Focusing-oriented therapy

We will present four different yet inherently interrelated pathways that we have found are helpful in healing trauma and transmuting blocked energy and repetitive trauma-based patterns. The core elements that unite all these avenues is: one, as previously discussed, we always strive to establish and maintain Grounded Co-Presence during each session, and two, we simultaneously stay open to what the body-wisdom presents to our active consciousness, the inward-arising of something that wants or calls our attention. All of these avenues utilize the power of conscious awareness from GP and attunement to the various ways that the living body expresses itself- the "language" of the body that includes: gestures; postures; physical movement; and enactments.

1) Gestural awareness- hands/arms as supporting and implying of life-forward steps

As I have written about elsewhere (Fleisch, 2008), gestures are an important avenue for sensing the body's implying of right next steps and life-forward movement. Hands play a vital role not only as an embodied form of communication, but also as harbingers of next steps, as comfort and support, as enacting a sequence or story, and facilitating the completion of unfinished situations. In WBFOT, we observe what clients' hands and gestures are doing, and when it feels right, we often bring hand/arm movements and positions to their attention for further reflection. Our hands carry their own embodied intelligence that arises of its own accord, often presenting to our consciousness just what is needed at any moment in a session or in the clients' healing journey.

Example #1: Hands/ arms as part of establishing Grounded Presence

One particular way that hands function is that they provide an avenue for grounding, support and additional containment. They seem to know that some vulnerable place inside us needs to feel contact and comfort. It is as if our hands fill in for what has been missing in our development,

such as supportive, warm, nurturing physical touch, which is the essence of grounding, feeling held in a way that allows the body-system to be able to let go of tension and trauma places feel protected and contained. Clients' self-touch is thus an important avenue in trauma therapy.

*With one client we will call "Alice," whenever she would talk or even think about situations or people who were aggressive, we noticed how her posture would slump, shoulders and neck would contract ("bracing position") and she felt strong pangs of anxiousness ("fluttery feelings") in her belly area. "This is like the child in me, always cringing with my mother, waiting for a slap, or some horrible put-down, degrading comment." **At the same time, I also observed that her hands would press down on her legs when his place appeared, sometimes also making a rubbing motion.** I invited that we notice what her arms and hands were doing in relation to her legs while also sensing her whole body, feet connected to floor, sitting bones on cushion, back against the pillow, and the fluttery place in the belly. "Wow, when I feel my arms and hands against my legs, it calms that place inside. I feel more grounded, feel more like an Adult. It's like the child in me feels safer when it feels comforted and supported by my hands."*

*Another client, "Jill" had suffered sexual and emotional traumas as a child. **What we both noticed at the outset of therapy is that when she sat, her body would very often move into a "closed" position, with arms folded across her chest area and legs crossed. It also seemed like her hands were pushing against places in her body cavity.** As we brought awareness to this position, I invited Jill to notice this position and explore how it feels. She closed her eyes, sensed into (focused on) her body position, and what came was, "It actually feels good to sit like this, like my inner sensitive places feel protected and enclosed. It feels way too exposed and vulnerable if I uncross my arms and legs." I validated and mirrored this, "Yes, it is very important that you honor and listen to just what your body is telling you, as it seems to feel much more comfortable and grounding to sit that way." She agreed and reported that she felt relieved.*

Example #2: Gestural sequence as enacting what is needed for healing and next steps

The spontaneous movement of hands and arms is another important aspect of how gestures provide an avenue for transmuting trauma. The sequencing of gestural movement often is telling a story or expressing something that allows clients' to safely process something painful and traumatic. Through awareness of what our gestures are doing, they seem to be expressing an embodied wisdom or enacting a story that shows what is needed for resolution.

A client is in the midst of a very stressful and painful life situation. While talking, we both noticed that her body felt more stressed and her energy became more agitated, stirred up and

she reported a strong sense of feeling impinged on. This was associated with a history of traumatic impingement. So I asked if she would like to stand (we had already done some standing work in previous sessions), and she said "Yes, I think that would be good." After standing, she agreed to a few minutes of guiding into grounding and Presence in her whole body, which seemed to bring some relief. Her shoulders loosened, face seemed to soften and body started to stretch and sway.

Then her arms started to move upwards, opening outward in a semi-circular motion, with her hands outstretched. I said, "Notice how your arms are moving and how your hands are stretching. You might stay with that movement, sensing what it feels like..." For a few minutes, she silently stays with the movement as it continues to unfold, and while so doing, there emerged a big smile, and a sigh. Her shoulders moved a little, and breathing seemed to expand. When finally she spoke, she said, **"I can sense that my hands and arms are creating this big space around me, like a large bubble, or plastic shield that is protecting me. It feels so right- like this is what I need to fend off all this stress and input."** After reflecting this shift, I invited us to stay with what all this feels like as the body process continues to unfold. She left with a smile, stating "I feel very empowered right now. I will keep that shield around me to protect that vulnerable part."

Another way that gestural movement functions is that each hand/arm can be enacting two parts of the self that have been split-off from each other and from our awareness. For instance, a male client ("Bill") was standing and **we observed how each arm/hand was doing something different. We invited our awareness to follow what they were each doing- so the right hand was moving up and down on his chest area, while the left hand/arm was making a strong shaking motion.** As we continued Focusing on the gestures, Bill reported that he could sense that each was expressing a part of himself- the right hand was generating energy in his center, that felt comforting, stroking a very wounded (abused) place inside him. The left hand/arm felt like it was shaking him up, trying to get him to express something extremely aggressive and violent. When we held both in awareness (and in connection with his whole body in Grounded Presence), Bill could sense how these places lived outside his consciousness much of the time, and never had been in contact with each other. As we followed the sequence, staying in close touch with felt sensations, and whatever else arose into awareness, the left hand stopped shaking and moved closer to his side, eventually covering and touching the right hand. We paused, and as he sensed into the two hands on his chest, a huge upwelling of tears and grief came out. "This is the first time I can feel how that little boy in me has lived so terrified and how it has needed that aggressive, warrior place to be there to protect it. Most of my life, they have lived disconnected, and I have always felt pulled into either one or the other. Now they are together."

2) Postural awareness as an entre' into embodied traumatic states

Postures contain an intricacy of implicit embodied information about a way of being (bearing), an attitude, stance or position toward the world, how parts of us align with each other etc. A postural stance often is a characteristic way our embodiment is bearing information or carrying

itself in the world, usually unconsciously and automatically. With repeated and severe early trauma, the unreleased emotional and physical energy can become frozen into fixed postures and other sedimented bodily stances. When brought into connection with Grounded Presence of our Wholebody awareness, we can sense the meaningfulness of postures, and allow them to come alive with energy, information and expression where the process had previously been stopped.

Example #3: Transforming trauma that has been embedded into fixed postural stances

*A male client ("Joe") had suffered chronic and prolonged early shaming experiences that tended to become embedded into emotional reactions and physical embodiment. In one session we were standing and observed how his posture tended to slump over, with his neck and head bent downward. He paused, and attended to the posture, and while so doing, **his head began to move slowly upward, from this downward position to straightening itself out.** This continued silently for a few minutes, during which time he was aware that this movement of his head and posture seemed to be happening on its own (i.e. he was not doing it deliberately or with conscious effort). He was encouraged to (and did) pause at the end of each movement to sense into the change in his whole body posture. What came to him was that the downward look was the embodied posture from childhood- holding a lifetime of shame, and a familiar sense of feeling small, inferior, inadequate. This posture also contained a passive response to severe humiliations and abuse he suffered as a child. When his head moved upward, his posture straightened and his eyes were looking forward. This felt like it was a new emerging sense of feeling equal, as good as anyone. When he allowed this awareness to ground in his whole body, he reported a sense of feeling more empowered, as if coming out of hiding into the world as an adult. He reports feeling more alive and whole with an increasing capacity to stay connected with himself.*

*A female client has a history of childhood trauma and chronic physical problems that impair her ability to walk and function. In a session, "Betty" was sensing how her body often feels trapped (with recurrent memories of being locked in a closet as a child). We became aware that this experience has become fixed into a physical posture of coiling into a ball, like fitting into as small a space as possible. We took time to bring compassionate awareness to this posture, showing empathy for the little girl who was trying to cope in a horrible situation. As she did so, **her upper body leaned backward, as if being pushed back or feeling cornered. She reported that this is a familiar stance in which she feels stuck and trapped. Suddenly, her arms moved into a "fighter's stance" and aggressively pushed out, and her whole posture shifted to a more upright position, with her upper body leaning forward.** When invited to Focus on this shift of posture, her whole demeanor transformed. She felt a renewed energy, her face brightened. She said, "This is showing me I still can stand up tall, that my fighting spirit is here and won't let anyone dominate me again!... I can stand up for myself." She also noticed that her neck area loosened, her shoulders felt freer to move and her chest expanded, giving her more room to breathe. The next day she called to say that her body carried an "undefined positive energy" that "kept me a little steadier" for a good part of the day.*

Example #4: Awareness of posture as facilitating healing of an early relational trauma

*A woman ("Tina") is at a phase of therapy when she felt ready to process some aspects of early relational trauma. After taking some time to bring into Grounded Presence, we observed that **her head kept wanting to lean downward**. She became curious about this position, as did I, and we invited our awareness to stay connected with the whole felt sense of what her head and neck were doing. I suddenly got a strong image of a flower whose stem slumps over when it has not been sufficiently watered or nourished. After a minute or so, I decided to share what came, and Tina said, "I also had an image of a plant, but what came to me is that the stem is broken- something ruptured it, broke it and it has never been repaired." Saying this, tears and sobs came, and she repeated, "It was broken...". I became worried inside that she might be falling into a part or state of overwhelm, so wondered aloud if she was ok with this, and if we could also hold an awareness of her whole body as it is connected to the couch, awareness of the room, each other.*

*Inviting to come back to Grounded Presence, she began to feel the rest of her body in contact with the space, and had a strong sense of the support of the couch, feet on the floor. We both held this consciousness for a few minutes in silence, at which point she felt like standing up. As we stood, she sensed that her neck (at the place where it had felt broken) was starting to feel sensations, tingling, and slight movements. **What came is that it felt like this place was sensing its connection with the rest of her body, and had the experience of energy and nourishment rising up from the ground through her feet, legs and into the spot on her neck.** "It is starting to heal!" she exclaimed with both joyous quality and more deep sobbing. "It is getting what it never had- support, nourishment, connection here with you and my own body. This is filling in that broken spot." With this, her neck began to slowly move in a tiny circular motion and her head started to raise itself in alignment with shoulders, and spine. She felt a sense of wholeness and healing she had never felt before. "This is the place that my father broke, took away from me. I've carried that rupture most of my life and thought it was always going to stay broken, like I was a broken person and spirit." There was a natural outpouring of gratitude as this part of her reconnected with her whole body and Being. Before ending, I suggested we take a little time to allow herself to feel more of how all of her feels now, including the place in her neck that was mending. While standing, her whole body swayed and her neck and head made gentle circles. "This is how my flower feels when healthy and swaying in the wind."*

3) Kinesthetic awareness- body movements as doorway to transforming trauma-patterns

In addition to the importance of attending to gestures and postures, WBFOT also invites consciousness of physical movement, or what we can call *kinesthetic awareness*. Often this takes the form of stirrings of inner movements, such as impulses, energy flow and shifting of inward felt senses. It also can be observed as whole body movements such as swaying, rocking motions, walking, etc. or urges or actual part-body movements, as in shoulders, feet, legs, arms, pelvis etc.

At some point in a Wholebody session, these movements take on a quality of feeling purposeful or *intentional*, as if they have a mind and consciousness of their own. Staying aware of this type of movement, and allowing it to keep doing whatever is happening, is a potent doorway to trauma-induced patterns as well as offering pathways to their own transformation.

Example # 5: A body movement that helped access and transform an early trauma

*A woman client "Sarah" was experiencing a difficult relational issue with her partner, including possible break-up of the relationship. **While exploring her feelings about the situation, Sarah's upper body began to sway side to side, then started to rock back and forth** . As we brought gentle attention to these movements, she reported that they seemed to be happening on their own. Sarah also noted that the two movements felt different, like they are showing two parts of her experience or herself. At one point, Sarah indicated a desire to stand (had done in previous sessions), and after spending a short time sensing her feet on floor, whole body, space, each other etc., **the side to side swaying motion returned even more pronounced. While this was happening, Sarah's arms and hands moved into a cradling position in front of her body and began their own rocking movement back and forth.** An image come to me like a baby being rocked, and a minute or so later, Sarah remarked, "I feel this baby inside me- right here (indicates in her abdominal region). There are sharp pains, like it is kicking, screaming, trapped inside." Tears came to her, along with an increase in the rocking motion of her arms and hands (body continued slower swaying motion). "I feel this baby that lives in me, very terrified, panicked, crying and all alone. She seems ugly, deformed... like she has never had human contact." (More tears came). "My body is also showing that it wants to hold and rock this baby, but it's hard to do alone." During this time, I have been reflecting back her words, while my body is mirroring and experiencing the whole felt sense of the unfolding process. I had noticed that my hands had been moving closer to hers and as she opened her eyes (her eyes had been closed), I said that I am willing to offer whatever support she might need. She said, "Yes, thank you. Can you put your arms and hands underneath mine and leave them there?" I did so, inviting that she felt sense into just how she would like me to do so (this is a crucial step- that the client's inner felt sense guides me on how to be with her).*

We both rocked "the baby" together, while the whole body was also swaying, and staying aware of the feelings/sensations that emerged. Sarah said (with many tears), "I can feel her calm now inside. (big smile) She now seems beautiful to me.... You can let go now- I can hold her myself." She wanted to sit down and just held her arms and hands close to her belly. "Its ok. Mommy is here now," she said lovingly as her body moved into a cocoon position. Afterwards, we shared what had happened- and she felt like she had begun to work through a very early trauma of abandonment and aloneness, a felt sense she had carried inside most of her life. She also accessed a nurturing mother place, that could comfort and parent this baby, Finally, she shared that asking for help and what she needed from me was also a big step in her healing.

4. "Theatre of the living body": expressive dramatizations of bodily experiencing

The final avenue we will present is the newest avenue we have been exploring in WBFOT with trauma. All the avenues we have presented seem to have a common element in that the living body, when allowed to awaken to itself and come alive in its own way, is telling or enacting a story. Not only are these avenues a physical or embodied enactment of a piece of unconscious history, they also can express and complete a sequence of something that has wanted or needs to happen. This avenue of the theatre of the living body has elements of psychodrama, and other forms of expressive methods in more actively playing out a part of oneself that shows itself through wholebody awareness. We will present two examples of how this works in WBFOT.

Example #6: Pantomime as letting the body express and enact a split-off part of the self

One way that this "theatre" (or "soma-drama", Fleisch, 2008, 2010) can happen is in that the client is invited to sense into a particular experience or aspect of self that has emerged into awareness. Often in complex trauma, the perpetrator(s) are carried as either a harsh inner critic ("super-ego") or through relationships in which someone else becomes the abuser, etc. It can be quite empowering and transformational if a client is able to safely and playfully embody the energy from that side. What we call *pantomime* is a process of inviting clients to first, inhabit in their whole body a particular emotional experience (or character-role), then allow the impulses, urges and energy to open outward on its own.

For example, a woman client (who always felt terrified of anger and aggression due to early life violent abuse) was experiencing anger, which usually is suppressed, inhibited, rationalized etc. In a particular session, while standing, I wondered if she might enjoy allowing this angry place in her to come outward. I mentioned that this is not a performance, but a fun and creative way to explore this place. So we took some time to move into Grounded Presence, and to then invite her whole body to feel into this anger as a "being" of its own. After a short time of inward felt sensing, it emerged in her as "The Hulk." Playing out this "creature" in a playful and active manner enabled her to feel and embody its aggressive power and strength for the first time. She

allowed herself to stomp around the room (while also staying present with what was happening), had images of smashing cars, knocking down buildings and bullying past anyone who stood in her way. Afterwards, she reported that she felt great, that her body actually felt stronger and very empowered. It was a first time she had permitted herself to embody and express outwardly this type of aggressive energy. We took some time to integrate the "Hulk" into her whole body self.

Example #7: Interactive dramatization ("embodied role play") of trauma

The enacting embodied selves can be extended to include role play or psycho-soma drama of some aspects of relational trauma. We have done this with complex trauma by bringing our Adult selves into a scene of early childhood abuse, so the scenario can be not just reexperienced which has and can cause re-traumatization, but to re-work the scene "as it should have happened" thus allowing for a different outcome and release of stress, pain, terror, helplessness etc. Here we will present another possibility- when the client expresses a curiosity about an embodied state and either initiates or (more usually at least at first) the therapist suggests that we can play it out. This type of process must be done with the utmost sensitivity and caution, when there has been a significant therapeutic trust established, when clients in Grounded Presence know that they can stop a process anytime, and that they set up and direct the scene, including what roles we play.

A male client "Abe" had experienced severe relational trauma as a child. His mother had been both physically and verbally abusive, as well as being sexually provocative with him from a young age. We spent much time in therapy exploring this relationship. In a particular session, Abe reported experiencing a sense that his upper body felt like it could collapse, like it was too weak to hold itself up, a sense of being like a limp noodle. "It's like it has no backbone." When I reflected this back, Abe immediately said, "When you said no backbone, I immediately thought of my father. That was always how I thought of him, like he had no spine or will to stand up to my mother or for me. He knew what was going on and was so passive, so weak." Abe could also recognize this as a part of himself, and wanted to explore it further. I offered some suggestions, and the one he selected was to play out a scenario with his father and himself as young boy. He selected the age of the boy (around 11) and the scene, a weekend right after mother had exploded with violence, hit Abe in the face in front of his father who did or said nothing. In the scene, mother left the house in a fit, and Abe was there with father. He said he wanted to play the

father so I (Glenn) could play him. We both took some time to feel into and embody the "part" and then allowed whatever words or actions to emerge from this inside place.

We did play out the scene for several minutes. It was quite powerful for both of us. Afterwards, as we shared what we experienced during process, Abe said that "I never had experienced my father from his viewpoint. I just had despised him, and that part of myself that I blamed him for putting into me. Now I could feel something for him- like how he was a part of the conditioning of men of his time, not able to express himself, very stoic and non-emotional. I felt in my body his own despair, resignation to an unhappy life and fearful of my mother." This was quite moving for Abe to experience. I shared that I felt much more empathically connected to the boy in him who wanted so much to have a "real" father he could turn to and rely on for support and guidance. Abe said that feeling me playing him as a boy also allowed him to have more empathy for the boy's trauma of being exposed to a vicious mother and passive father. Mostly, Abe had felt ashamed of himself as a boy and certainly as a teenager, and hated that passive side of him. The dramatic enactment enabled him to "own" that side of him and experience it more deeply with compassion rather than dissociate and act-out the mother side. We took some time to integrate what came. He reported that he could feel his whole self now for the first time as larger than either of these roles ("I am the whole theatre- holding all the characters on my stage.").

Conclusion: Brief discussion of the elements of Wholebody Focusing-oriented therapy

In the Focusing-oriented experiential method, any and all procedures can be incorporated into therapy because the whole person includes all of these aspects- i.e. imagery, feelings, thoughts, movement, physical sensations, actions, dreams, interpersonal interaction, energy, meaning etc.

"We would well to remember that *these avenues are already together in every person.*" (Gendlin, 1996, p. 174). What is important is that the particular avenue help clients engage with and carry further some aspect of their current experiencing in relation to whatever issue or situation is being explored or creating difficulty. Thus, the experiential method of Focusing enables us to incorporate many seemingly different types of procedures not in an "eclectic" manner, but as something that arises from and unfolds some aspect of what clients are experiencing. It is our awareness of the felt effect of an particular avenue that determines its efficacy- i.e. if it engenders a bodily shift or release (easing, breath, loosening, new freer energy) and carries forward the felt sense of the issue or problem.

An avenue in Focusing-oriented therapy is based on the therapist's felt sense of what might be needed or helpful with a client in any given moment and is incorporated as an invitation to try something. Clients are then invited to first check inwardly to sense if whatever is said, done or suggested feels right or ok to explore. We never direct clients to do anything without this inward checking (except in the case when someone is caught up in an extreme state of overwhelm or at times in instances of severe dissociation). Even here however, my sense of the need for an intervention or interruption comes from staying in felt connection with the whole person of the client and what their body signals are implying as needed to restore Grounded Presence.

The avenues we have presented demonstrate ways that WBFOT works directly with awareness of gesture, posture, movement and expressiveness as they spontaneously arise from a place of Grounded Presence in unwinding and transforming symptoms of complex trauma. What these avenues have in common is that they are various manifestations of the living body that emerge into awareness when accompanied with active consciousness (Focusing) and physical support and containment of grounding. As the body is a living organism, it is always becoming, moving toward its next bit of life process. When we bring our accepting awareness to connect with the living body of wholeness (Grounded Presence), frozen or stuck places/parts seem to come alive, as if they sense it is safe to come out and show themselves. The energy and resources from body-wisdom, environment, each other in the present, enables some aspect to open to its own experiences in real time. We make and hold more and more space for this coming into being to explore itself and unfold its own inner knowing. This can emerge from inside out and also from outside in- as in gestures, physical movement, etc. all in relation to carrying forward of a felt sense (the something that wants our attention).

The body wisdom has its own implicit order and knowing so that we follow its own inner direction as it unfolds in each session. So WBF in therapy for complex trauma does not follow a formula but stays in close contact with what emerges from a place of not-knowing, always inviting clients to actively give (or withdraw) consent to what is unfolding in each moment and session. It is a highly relational and interactive process- two living bodies experiencing each other and being together in as authentic and caring way as possible. This brief summation of the elements of WBFOT as described below are thus always in relation to the whole person and living body of wisdom that is in front of us and that we accompany on their journey of healing.

1) Establishing Grounded Presence: formation/awareness of Functional Whole We start by becoming conscious of our whole self, with an expanded sense of awareness that connects with our physical body (all-of-me-here from head to toe), with the environment (chair, couch, floor, outer space) and with our inner space (inward felt sensing). We let form a wholebody sense of self (“Me Here”) as separate from and more than any issues or problems. We allow ourselves to become more fully Present as a whole person, opening awareness to direct sensing of the Living Body and Living Environment. Grounded WB Presence enables the body to develop as a Functional Whole, where all the interconnected systems align in an optimal way. The whole body connected to the present environment serves as a safe, secure, well-balanced container for whatever emerges into our field of awareness. When Grounded Presence (Functional Whole/Adult self) senses my conscious awareness of what emerges, they become aware of and more alive to themselves in a wholebody way, allowing information and energy from the body-wisdom to stir and move in their own way and time.

2) Consciousness of Inner-directed Movements: awakening of body-wisdom

From this wholebody sense of Ground/Presence, we gently bring awareness to our body. I often start with the outer body, sensing any places that feel tight, tense, wound up, etc. and invite the body to loosen, move, unwind any way that it wants. This tends to let the body feel more uncramped and help open to whatever energy, feeling or issue that may be present. Often the body tends to naturally sway and movements start to happen. In Wholebody Focusing, we pay particular attention to any spontaneous or inner-directed movements that start to happen. When we notice these inner stirrings of the living body (swaying, muscular motions, felt sensations, postural realignments, gestures, sounds, etc.), this indicates that the body process has awakened and come alive to itself. We become aware of these body-moves, however slight, and give permission to allow them to express themselves in their own way. Inner-directed movements of the living body are an important way that felt sensing starts to open, and feel very different than deliberate movements that we consciously make. As the living body stays in contact with the Ground of Being (Grounded Presence), providing solid support and containment for all-of-me-here from head to toe, the nervous system tends to calm, so energy held in places of tension on the surface of the body can flow naturally in a downward direction. More space opens for Just Being, for more Presence and WB awareness with expanded inner space and consciousness of outer space, more life can come. We continue to offer our consent to this process.

3) Letting come of WB Felt Sensing: something emerging into living body

By staying in contact with the expanding spaciousness and aliveness that is opening, we may now sense or notice something that wants to or starts to emerge from the living wisdom of the wholebody. We may sense a particular felt sensation in the body, or an energy that comes or we

may observe a certain movement or posture that calls our attention. We welcome what comes just as it begins to show itself, maintaining Grounded Presence, with an attitude of curiosity, acknowledgment, interest, caring whatever is emerging into our field of awareness. As the body moves and opens, we can notice how it feels inside. We begin to listen from GWBP to what is emerging and what the body-wisdom is bringing forward and take time to more fully receive whatever information opens from this place. A particular word, phrase, image, meaning, or other symbol for the felt sense of the body movements and energy may come to awareness. In letting come, we are opening consciousness to some specific aspect of our whole Being that is showing itself. Sensitive and caring listening allows the part that comes to feel welcomed and willing to open up to more of itself.

4) Relating what emerges with GP: Holding Both with equal positive regard

When the emerging part or place feels the presence, support and caring from larger context of holding and containing (GP), it becomes more aware of and alive to itself and open to its own healing. We stay aware of our Grounded Presence, the whole of me here from head to toe, well-grounded, and connected to the environment. This consciousness of our Functional Whole (Adult embodied self) relates to the part/aspect that is emerging and the part opens its own consciousness to relate with the Whole. Our "job" is to hold both with equal positive regard, with full acceptance of all that is emerging and unfolding. The dynamic of holding both allows us to stay centered and grounded while also allowing the feeling/ movement/pattern to further open and shift or resolve from within itself. The more we maintain awareness of the Functional Whole and the whole field of environment as they interact with what is emerging, the more life energy and information opens to our consciousness in its own right way and time. This step is akin to

communion, in that we establishing a communication link between the larger, wholebody Self and the part of you that is needing, wanting attention. There is an interdependence between the Whole and this part that is forming and this part as it comes Home to the Whole. By trusting in Not-Knowing and Not-Doing, the body-wisdom is free to awaken and come alive, so that more information and greater space opens, and the felt sense of what is coming into consciousness unfolds more of itself.

By continuing to hold awareness of both Functional Whole and the part, the body can reassess habitual ways of moving, holding and feeling. Grounding in the safety of our wholebody in the present moment allows the body to continue to unfold and unwind itself in whatever ways it needs for its own healing and resolution. This process of unfolding and reworking painful and traumatized places usually occurs gradually over a period of time and many, many sessions. Each session allows a little more of the story and the physical unwinding and releasing to happen, freeing up energy for the body to re-work and realign itself as it was always meant to be- how it should have been all along. We are providing the conditions for blocked, stuck and traumatized places as well as automatic protective reactive patterns to reassess their ways of being and explore new possibilities for living. The newly emerging places sense their connection to our Grounded Presence, and in this place of contact, their consciousness interfaces with the body-wisdom that knows how to transform traumas and heal wounds.

5) Integrating/embodying life-forward movements into the Whole Self

It is important that we allow the body wisdom to find its own resting or stopping point. We may consult with the body to sense if anything else wants attention before ending, and how the body

would want to come to a natural stopping place. We may want to take a little time to receive what has come, acknowledge any shifts, changes or new awareness that has emerged. If so, you can take a little time to notice and nurture these steps, maybe find a way to mark or hold what has come. There also is often a natural appreciation for the body and gratitude for the part that was willing to come forward today. So the ending is as important as the beginning- coming back to awareness of Grounded WB Presence and the whole sense of how your body feels now- knowing that the end of the session is part of a larger process of unfolding, moving forward toward integration and wholeness. If something is new and unfamiliar, it can help to take some time to more fully embody and incorporate the changes into the Functional Whole. We might invite the whole of ourselves to take time and make room to allow what has come to be felt and integrated into the whole embodied sense of self. One can invite a new posture, or gesture, or movement to be experienced a little more deeply, including walking, moving, standing and/or expressing in this new way. Possible actions or other next steps sometimes naturally arise as a way of carrying forward the new development or possibility. Spending a little time talking about what has come and how it might feel different from a more usual way of being as well as a sense that the old habitual pattern might still need more time to explore and transform itself can bring more understanding, compassion and relief as a way of concluding a WBF session.

6) Co-Presencing: The Inter-relational field of WB shared presence

Our embodied living is always in continual interaction and inter-connection with the environment. The body attunes to the space sensing the Presence of itself and the Presence of whatever else is in the field of awareness. There is a natural flow of energy, information and felt experiencing from Grounded Presence and the parts of the Self that emerge into our field of

awareness. Being consciously aware of this flow allows what enters to register, be acknowledged and its impact be felt. When we are open to this larger field of Being, we pick up much more information and sensory experiencing, as it emerges into consciousness. In WBF, we call this Co-Presence, an interactive and inter-relational field of shared experiencing. With Co-Presence, the field of awareness and embodied information is expanded by the shared space of both Focuser and Companion. Being in a state of Co-Presence with another involves maintaining awareness of all-of-me being here, solidly grounded, neutral, flexible, alive, and connected to the environment. We allow our embodied consciousness to open to the whole space and stay in felt connection with the whole field of Being and the Focuser.

In this space of Co-Presencing, we become informed by the natural emergence of "something" that arises from the support of GWBP. The Presence of the Companion becomes organically attuned to the Presence and embodiment of the Focuser, who is supported to invite and await whatever emerges from the body-wisdom. We both wait, observe, and feel from Co-Presencing, allowing as much time and room as needed for the full-bodied felt sensing to awaken and unfold in whatever ways present and express themselves to our shared field of awareness. We first invite the body to find its own way into grounding and settling in, perhaps noticing tensions, tightness, stress, pains, etc. and allowing the nervous system to calm, energy to move down toward ground. In WBF, we like and encourage the body to come naturally alive, awaken to itself and the space between us, so that a natural attunement and connection starts to happen. We don't have to know how to be-with or listen to what is coming. This is often a good place to begin, letting the body move and being as comfortable and open as possible with the sense of not knowing how to be with each other. Then something fresh and genuine can unfold between us.

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