

## Exercises for Advanced Listening in Domain Focusing

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### **Key words: What is the key phrase to reflect?**

- A. A very advanced focusing teacher gives a fairly robust and complex segment of their own focusing session. 5-8 people then prepare a reflection and make notes on that. Each person then reflects. The teacher listens carefully to each reflection and then makes notes on how it worked and did not work. At the end, the teacher shares from those notes with each person. This exercise turns out to be quite profound for the teacher as well. Getting many different reflections to the same segment is a very powerful event. It shows the wide rich variation in listening.
- B. Reflecting work in the Issue Domain. The focuser intentionally stays in the issue domain and lays out the complexity of one of their issues or situations. The listener tries to enter the cognitive style, the way of thinking of the focuser. If you as the listener don't understand something, you might ask for a clarification or you might decide that it is better not to intrude. The listener reflects the segment in the style of the focuser and with as much detail as they can without becoming a tape recorder. The listener may also experiment with summarizing and paraphrasing at certain points.
- C. Reflecting work in the Felt Sensing Domain. The listener recognizes the entry into the FS domain. They know the "more" of the FS, that it is much more than the words. They pause before reflecting. *They reflect slowly so the words help a FS form in them while the saying back is happening. They are as oriented toward the whole felt meaning as they are toward remembering the words. Their goal is to resonate with the focuser when reflecting the felt sense.*
- D. Reflecting work with Self-Empathy. In reflecting the focuser's exploration of self-empathy, the listener is trying to have the empathy for the focuser which the focuser is trying to have for him or herself. If the focuser says, "Can I be gentle with myself in that situation with my boss and my friend?" The listener is trying to feel gentle toward the focuser as they say it back.
- E. Guessing the other domain. The teacher gives a segment in the issue domain and then silently writes down a description of their FS. The students reflect as in C but in addition they give a description of their felt sense of the teacher's felt sense, their guess. At the end, the teacher shares their felt sense. The students reflect trying to sense the FS as they reflect. This teaches the student about the hazards and benefits of guessing a felt sense, and shows them how much more is understood by having the felt sense described explicitly. Then the teacher does an issue segment, followed by a segment describing the FS of the issue, and then looks for the just right self empathy but does that silently and writes it down. Again the listener guesses the "just right" self empathy

and the teacher shares what they wrote down. Again the listener should end up appreciate having the “just right” self-empathy explored explicitly by the focuser. The listener will see the limits of guessing. The whole exercise highlights the 3 domains as a whole worth filling out. It shows how much we are lacking when the functions are not filled out.

- F. **Domain Linking.** The focuser holds an Issue and waits for the felt sense to form. The listener says the holding question back. When the felt sense forms and has a handle, the listener reflects the issue (briefly) and the felt sense together. Practice all the other 5 Domain Linkings (I->SE; FS->I; FS->SE; SE->I; SE->FS—see Domain Focusing Form) saying the linking question back exactly and then when the new domain does come saying both the thing being held and then the thing that came.
- G. **The Shifting Phase Listening.** As the listener, you need to slow down as a shift starts to come. Often it is not obvious that shifting has started. It only becomes clear after a few minutes or more. Often you need to have a guarding, protective attitude when a shift is emerging. You cannot be directive but you can keep reflecting the shift back if someone starts to criticize themselves. In effect you are protecting the shift that way but be tentative.

Recognizing the insight that comes after a shift leads to a special appreciation in your listening which is tangible to the focuser. Noticing the NEW POSSIBILITIES which then emerge and appreciating them, saying them back slowly also helps. Sometimes you can even tentatively use the word “insight” or “new possibilities” to show that you are seeing that. Of course you need to be willing to be mistaken and be corrected.

- H. **Following an Unexpected Turn.** When the listener goes in an unexpected direction can you fluidly follow like following a dancer who makes an unexpected move but sustain the listening.

*Focuser: I’m trying to find something to focus on, but the only thing which keeps coming up and I keep pushing away, is how much I like you.*

*Listener: You’re trying to find something to focus on but only one thing keeps coming up even though you push it away and that is how much you like me.*

- I. **Staying with Difficult Issues** (for you the Listener) When a focuser gets an atypical or threatening insight, can you be with that person without inserting your value.

*Focuser: Maybe “marriage” as an institution is just off. Maybe Laing (R.D. Laing) was right and “family” is THE problem. Maybe I just need to get out of my marriage any way I can and as quickly as I can and don’t look back. . . . whew that’s kind of liberating to say that out loud. . . .expansive*

*Listener (was left by his wife suddenly and was desperately wounded and feels threatened by this exploration): Maybe “marriage” as an institution is just off. Maybe you just need to get out quickly and don’t look back . . .a liberating . . . expansive feeling comes.*

J. **Not going too far for you.** Can you avoid going too far for you in listening to something that is not tolerable, that is not ok for you to give empathy to. For example:

*Focuser: Pedofilia is really the way to go and it is just misunderstood.*

*Listener (whose sister was abused by a Pedophile): You are wanting to explore Pedofilia as a good thing but I really can't listen to you there because I think it is sooo wrong. I need to stop the session."*

I.E. there are certain things we can stretch to follow. Other things we really cannot stretch to nor should we. I chose examples in I. and J. which are easy to understand but the actual times when you can stretch and when you cannot stretch are not so simple. Sometimes something is really far out and weird but in fact you can listen to it empathically. Other times, something is quite benign and mundane but you know you cannot listen to it, empathically.

### **K. Reflecting earlier pieces from within a session to support self-empathy, felt sensing, or strong thinking**

While I prohibit blatant adding or intervening, I do not prohibit reflecting an earlier phrase for a purpose. So if someone named the issue succinctly and has been exploring felt sensing for 10 minutes since then, you can reflect the current felt sense descriptor and then add, "and earlier you named the issue as \_\_\_\_\_".

Or if the person is having difficulty ever touching a felt sense, and when they do, they quickly go back to telling a story, you could reflect a short phrase from the story and add, "and earlier you were describing the felt sense as \_\_\_\_\_".

Or if the focuser worked on self-empathy about a situation that can be very overwhelming, and they found they could be careful with themselves (careful as a kind of self-empathy) and you see them possibly starting to get overwhelmed, you can reflect the current thing they are saying briefly and add, "and earlier you were working on being careful with this issue because it is easy to get overwhelmed by it".

The key in all of these is the attitude with which you reflect the earlier piece. If you are tentative and saying it to see if it is helpful, things work well. If you are certain you are right and invested in being right, things tend to work poorly. If you try this "earlier reflection" and the person indicates they don't want that, and you start doing the "earlier reflection" more frequently, that would could create problems. You want to always be acknowledging the authority of the focuser in leading their own process.