

## **“I really need some support!”**

### **How a Focusing approach allows a child’s inner voice to emerge.**

**by René Veugelers**

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#### **Introduction**

Anyone living close to the energy of a child knows there are profound life skills that adult carers can nurture in children that empower them to grow up, more open to the guidance of their felt senses. As more adults come to understand the advantages this can bring to themselves and the children in their lives, this 'self-empowerment' of children will spread. By supporting each other worldwide, we can help children have the intrinsic motivation and support they need to bring something new into the world.

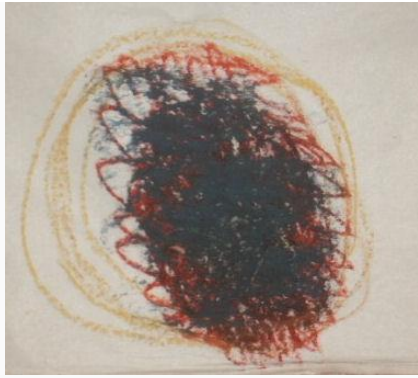
Here is an illustration of how to guide a child to use their own inner responses, rather than substituting “adult” experience or reactions.

#### **Children Focusing**

“I really need some support!” said Rex - with a huge sigh. This came during my third session with a 13 year old boy. So . . . what would you do with such a personal question when you see a boy before you asking for help? His parents are divorced, he has a low opinion of himself and he experiences difficulties with learning. First, I just mirrored his words, and also his sigh. “There is something in you, that really needs support, and there is even a sigh coming with your words...” He answered with an even deeper sigh. “Yes!” And I saw that he was touched by this mirroring, so I mirrored this as well. “There is also something touched inside...” He nodded. Then I suggested that he sense inside, to see if he could notice something about all this. I saw him checking in, and after around 10 to 15 seconds he said “No, I cannot feel it.”

So we sat there . . . each of us being with the other, being with his question of support and noticing nothing yet in his body. This was an important moment in the process. So despite my inner “Oh God ~ what do I do?”, I simply reflected this back to him, that he noticed that there wasn’t a bodily reaction yet, and that my intervention may have come too soon.

“Sometimes words, feelings or questions can have colors or movements—and you can invite your attention to check this inside yourself.” I paused, and immediately he said: “It’s red!” “Yes Red!” I said, using the same energetic tone of this word. “Maybe these Red wants to express itself on a piece of paper. Just invite your hands to make the choice, they know how it feels inside...”



Rex grabbed a red crayon, pushed hard, making small circles. "It is turning in circles, over and over," he said. While he was drawing, I invited him to check inside to see if there is more that wanted to be expressed. He paused, then used different crayons to draw dark blue lines across the circles, some yellow curls at the top, and a black line around it. "It is captured between these black lines," he said with surprise. I mirrored this exactly, with the invitation to check inside his body. He said immediately it was in his chest, and his hand went to that specific place. Then I mirrored the important aspects of the whole process: "So there is something that needs support, it has several colors and specific movements, it feels like it is captured between lines, and you can sense it in the area of your chest..." "Yes," he said with a sigh. (*see the picture*)

"It's going up and down ... like a ball ... no, it's more like a boomerang . . . bumping against my ribs...they are holding this in that place...like a prison cell." I saw that this also touched him. I reflected his words and non-verbal expressions, and just paused... as he was really connected with this part of himself. Because our time was almost finished, I invited him to check inside if this needed something more, and how would it be for him and for that part in his chest to end the session...His hand was still on his chest. At the end I invited his attention inward, to sense the first issue he had brought forward (*I really need support!*) and to notice how it is right now. And he said, with a huge smile on his face, "This is really sooooo nice." With one hand still on his chest, he said goodbye with a firm handshake. (This whole session lasted around 30 minutes).

## **Background & Theory**

This example carries much of the essence of *Children Focusing*. The child can make and hold connections with their implicit knowing, self-governing, with what can be sensed in the body and with their Felt Sense of life experiences. Sometimes this is implicit, just waiting for the right moment of attention and sometimes it needs a bit more exploration. The aspect of the reflection ~ the mirroring and pausing ~ is for me essential and is my own basic attitude. It is a never-ending process of development where the guide stays in close connection with her/himself through their Felt Sense.

In essence, as a guide I am mostly with my own Felt Sensing, checking how and when to respond and when *not* to intervene. I am careful with process questions, listening to what may be behind words, attitudes, and behavior, as a way of quietly intensifying and deepening my empathic capability. I must stay with the 'tension-field' between structuring and following, always returning freshly to ask

inside: "In this moment . . . am I contributing to the developmental process of the child's personality ?" and/or "Am I where the child is...am I connected with the child?"

As a guide, I am asking myself again and again: "Is my saying or doing against...to ...for...about...the child?" This attitude helps us to be **near** and be **with** a child, in other words: "Is this from 'the outside to the inside' of the child, or is this from 'the inside to the outside'?" Trusting and being connected with the implicit wisdom of the child before me ~ allows me to guide them.

I would like to describe the multiple aspects of mirroring. It builds connection, deepening trust, courage and safety in the child as they carry their inner process forward. The mirroring/ reflecting allows for new and surprising possibilities, as the child takes in the saying and telling, something special and new arises expressed through their body. The specific mirroring/reflecting of the guide makes space for sensing behind words and behavior, perhaps for a subtle emotional quality, for a new symbolization that comes without meaning yet to what is symbolized. Mirroring can lead to felt shifts, to a visual change or a discovery when something new comes and is greeted without judgment.

Regardless of the age of the child, when a parent, teacher, or therapist has the basic attitude, making space for children's felt sensing is simple and direct. Children will learn to trust their deep inner sense of rightness, to trust their bodily feeling with its truth and meaning in itself. They will come to involve their bodily felt sensing in their life by listening to it, to know that this feeling implicitly carries a meaning, a story that can help them relate to and deal with their problems. Rather than deny their problems, sorrows, and troubles, or drown in them, they can allow themselves to feel the difficult, sorrowful, scary or angry feelings. They can clear space inside by putting problems outside themselves, through drawing, painting or sculpting the problem or their bodily felt sense of it. The child itself is then the center of understanding of their feelings ~ in the situation they experience ~ and can learn to better concentrate, listen to other children in an empathic way, and also resolve conflicts.

### **The benefits of Focusing for a child's development:**

Children have a better sense of who they are and manage to communicate better with other children and adults about their feelings, choices and underlying needs. They are better able to protect themselves against the influences of the outside world and also develop a kind of inner **radar** for what is right/good/supported or wrong/bad/ for their own development. They are calmer and more able to stay in contact with their boundaries. And they create, new possibilities and choices. They are able to express their feelings, not only in words, but also in many other ways. They can develop greater inner safety and a strengthened identity, giving them a grounded presence in many different situations.



**About René Veugelers:** As a Coordinator specialising in Children's Focusing, with an emphasis on the non-verbal world, René teaches parents, therapists, teachers and others how to be with children in a Focusing way, how to (re)connect to their own inner child experiences and how to integrate creativity and flexibility into their life and work. His work and experiences as a psychiatric nurse and as an art therapist with children, of any age, embraces an expanded richness of creative elements and support a natural unfolding of creative process. René lives and works in the Netherlands, teaching Children Focusing for more than 15 years and promoting these practical skills also to daycares centre and hospices. Specializing in working with children with ADHD, ADD, trauma and attachment disorder. He teaches internationally: Israel, Russia, Germany, England, NY, Seattle, Gaza, Ireland and France. He is an inspiring teacher who brings considerable experience, subtlety and joy to every person attending his workshops or training. [www.ftcz.nl](http://www.ftcz.nl)

If you want to know more about Children Focusing, please visit the special Children's Corner web page of the Focusing Institute home page. <https://focusing.org/felt-sense/children-and-focusing>

**International Children Focusing training!**  
**“Being Seriously Playful”, A unique possibility to experience**  
**‘Dynamic Focusing’ in the Netherlands in July 2024!**

An international intensive 5 day Focusing training in experiential Listening and Children Focusing! Invite yourself to explore your flexibility, your vitality, your creativity, your inner child experience and your presence in a Seriously Playful way; with and without words.

It will be Module A from Wednesday the 17<sup>th</sup> (18pm) till the Monday the 22<sup>nd</sup> of July (13 pm) in Friesland. Module B will be hold July 2025. Do you need more information: send an email to René Veugelers: [rene@ftcz.nl](mailto:rene@ftcz.nl) or look at <https://www.childrenfocusing.org/being-seriously-playful-symposium/>

**This training is not only for professionals working with children.**

It is also just for you and intended to support the personal process of anyone wanting to practice a great way of being more playful, responsive and sensitive to others and to those elements in ourselves that respond well to non-verbal contact. It is also intended for: parents, grandparents, teachers, therapists, counselors, psychologist, day-care workers and anyone working in a professional capacity with children or young people or participants who have been to this training before, can get a new depth!

This training is a part of the whole 60-hour Children Focusing training, accredited by TIFI. When you book before the 1<sup>st</sup> of February 2024, you will benefit from the early bird registration! AND for this training we have TWO scholarships available!

And we are also offering an online Children Focusing introduction on Friday and Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> of November 2023 ( from 14 till 21 pm) : See for details: <https://www.childrenfocusing.org/introductory-course/>