



by Ann Weiser Cornell
<http://focusingresources.com>

When I first learned Focusing, I only did it at special times during the week. When I would sit down with my Focusing partner and it was my turn to be the Focuser, I would bring my attention inside and sense what wanted my attention at that moment.

Often what wanted my attention was a feeling about something that had happened to me earlier. I might find, for example, a tightness in my chest that was connected to an argument with my roommate three days before. It wasn't until my Focusing session that I realized how hurt something in me had felt, from that argument. That hurt part of me still needed attention, and that was fine, I could do that in the Focusing.

Wouldn't it have been great to know sooner?

But wouldn't it have been great, I thought, to know about my reaction sooner...right after the argument perhaps, or even, heaven help us, during!

I can't tell you the moment or the day that I realized I was starting to use Focusing in the midst of life, rather than just in those special Focusing times. But it happened, and now I feel I'm really "living a Focusing life." Oh yes, of course there are times when I lose touch with that inner knowing that Focusing brings. But they are fewer and farther between.

*Here are **ten ways** that people can use Focusing in daily life.*

Some are my own experiences, others are stories that friends and colleagues have told me. I am sure there are more than ten ways, and with this start, you will probably find many more. Do let me know...



1. Ouch that hurts!

Before Focusing, I didn't notice what hurt me – but it still hurt. A friend didn't invite me to her party, a teacher praised another student's work, my dad commented that I had gained weight. In my family it was: don't notice, don't tell, don't rock the boat. By my early 20s, I wasn't aware of my own feelings unless they were pleasant and "nice."

As I began to do Focusing, I began to discover hurts from the past, places in me that carried bruises from bumps I hadn't noticed when they happened.

But when Focusing really came into my daily life was the day I actually noticed one of these bumps when it happened. "Ouch, that hurts!" Whether or not I said it out loud didn't matter as much as the fact that I knew, and acknowledged, how I felt... and I had more of my self back again.

*Knowing and acknowledging how
you feel can make a big difference.*





2. *Something is wrong.*

Sometimes a felt sense can tell us that something is wrong.

A friend told me about a time he was in his woodworking studio, about to start work on a cabinet. The wood was all purchased and he was about to make the first cut. But he hesitated. He had a felt sense: "Something is wrong." His logical mind said, "Oh go ahead, you already measured twice." But the felt sense persisted. Sure enough, when he checked one more time, the lengths were wrong, and cutting would have ruined the project.

Once when I was leaving a room where I'd been staying in the Netherlands, I had a strong feeling that I needed to make the bed. My logical mind said, "Why? They'll have to change the sheets anyway." But every time I passed the bed, I felt drawn to make it. So I did - and found my private journal which I had left under the pillow and would have forgotten.

*Pay attention to your **felt senses**
...they have much to share!*





3. Let me check...

Let me check if that feels like something I can do... In the old days, I would say Yes to every request. Take care of your plants while you're on vacation? Be on another committee? Write up the notes of the meeting? Bring cookies? Sure, of course, be glad to. Before Focusing, I didn't know about a place inside me where I could check if the request really fit for me. So I would be "nice" and always say Yes.

It took many hours of Focusing with the part of me that felt it wasn't OK to say no to people. I came to understand that honoring my own needs also honored the person who was asking for the favor. It became second nature to pause when asked and sense what was really right for me. Now when I do say Yes, I do it with my whole heart.

*Sometimes **saying No** is
important for your well-being...*





4. I need some time.

Before Focusing, I thought that I had to stay in an emotional interaction, like an argument with a boyfriend, no matter what. I would become upset, and say things I wish I hadn't said, partly out of a feeling of being trapped in the discussion. After learning and practicing Focusing for a while, I discovered that I had the right to say, "I need some time to take in what you're saying and sort out how I feel." Because I was honoring my own right to do that, I still felt connected to the other person, and they could feel that...so my request didn't feel scary to them.

Sometimes the time requested was literally a minute, closing my eyes and sensing right there in the room. And sometimes I would take a walk, or go to my own room, for a longer time. Once both of us were back in the discussion, it always benefitted from the time taken to get in touch with our selves.

*Honor your right to **Pause** so you can
feel connected to yourself and others...*





5. I changed my mind.

I told someone that she could live with me. Then things changed. I tried to make it all right, but the body sense kept saying “no.”

Explaining this to the other person was a hard conversation in which I did a lot of listening. Then we both took a break (see #4). The next day, my friend was radiant. She had found a wonderful place of her own. My being in touch with my needs had helped her take a big step for her.

*It is okay to **change course**
trust your sense of what's right for you.*





6. What feels right...

What feels right to do next?

Organizing experts often say it's best to plan your day the night before, and identify the most important items to do. But with Focusing in the midst of life, sensing what's most important can happen moment by moment.

It's a great idea to combine planning and sensing for what feels right. The night before, sense what's the most important task for the next morning. Then in the morning, start on that one, and then sense what feels right to do next. This way you're both disciplined and flexible, the best of both worlds.

*Yes, you can **sense** what feels right
moment by moment throughout your day.*





7. What shall I get...

What shall I get my friend for a present?

Choosing and buying (or making) gifts for people is so much more fun, and more satisfying, now that I use Focusing. I get a whole felt sense of the person, and walk around with it for a few days, checking in with it from time to time. When an idea comes, I will offer it to the felt sense. Often what happens is that, rather than seeing a specific gift, I will feel drawn to a certain store, with a sense that I will find something there. It's amazing how often this turns out to be true.

*Offer your idea, **check to see**
if it fits your felt sense of what's right.*





8. What does this need?

What does this creative project need?

Other than in my work, my creativity expresses itself these days in designing and knitting sweaters for my numerous nephews and nieces. But this tip works for any kind of creativity: writing, painting, sculpture, jewelry design, landscape gardening... It's this: It feels so much better to sense what's next than to try to think about it logically. Like all uses of Focusing, this requires a pause, stopping to sense rather than just rushing in.

"Hmmm... conventionally we'd use a knit-purl ribbing here... but it feels like that shape isn't right for this yarn and this person... maybe reverse stockinette... no that would make the edge roll up... how about garter stitch... Yes, that feels good, let's try it." Once I try my new idea, I pause again, to check if it actually works the way I felt it. I may go on, or I may need to adjust what I'm doing.

This rhythm of pausing, sensing, doing, and then pausing and sensing again is like what happens in a Focusing session when we find a word or symbol to describe what we're feeling... and then check again if that word is right.

*There is a rhythm to all this - **pause,**
sense, do then pause and sense again...*





9. Let's not move on yet

Let's not move on yet - it doesn't feel complete.

Before Focusing, I didn't know how to sit in a meeting and track my own felt senses about the discussions and the decisions being made. By the time I joined a nonprofit board, in the 90s, I had learned how to trust my own inner process. So I would find myself saying, in a decision-making meeting: "Let's not move on yet - something about this doesn't feel complete." I discovered that once I had said this, there was always at least one other person nodding their head, having sensed something similar. We were able to stay with the felt sense of what felt "off" or "incomplete" about the decision, and the final outcome would be more solid, more thorough - altogether a better decision.

*Allow yourself to **notice & state**
what feels incomplete for you.*





*10. I'm not really
hungry for this...*

I'm not really hungry for this right now.

We couldn't list the ways of using Focusing in daily life and not mention this one. Sensing that I'm hungry, and what I'm hungry for, is a great use of Focusing awareness. I might find that what I'm hungry for isn't food. Perhaps it's for emotional comfort or excitement. Or maybe it's not really for *this* food, but for something else. Once I pause, I have learned to really tell the difference.

*Take time to **become aware** of what you're
really wanting so you can give yourself what you need.*



Now that we've listed *Ten Ways of Using Focusing in Daily Life*, I'm sure you can sense that there are many more. What all of them have in common is that we pause in the midst of life, even for a moment, to sense the whole of the situation we're in. It's that pause which is the key. Once you pause, you can sense. And once you sense, you have more choices.

That's what I love about Focusing in daily life: the sense of empowerment and choice I have now - and the sense that I am more fully here, in my life.

