

'Focusing and Listening' for activists

We know that fundamentally new strategies are needed to address the challenges facing our world.

Focusing - a simple and natural way to listen to our embodied wisdom - offers one such strategy. Focusing and Listening offers gentle and respectful access to any person's direct experience. It can help us process individual feelings and address social challenges in novel ways. It offers a simple way to heal conflicts, develop self-confidence, and manage stress.

Focusing and Listening can help to strengthen and empower grassroots social movements. These skills were taught to Vietnam War protestors in the 1970's and have been used around the world ever since, most recently in the difficult environments that exist in Afghanistan, El Salvador, and Palestine.

What is Focusing?

Focusing is based on research into successful personal change. Since the 1960s many studies have shown that people who could be in touch with their bodily experience were more likely to get positive change.

Focusing is simple, natural, and easy to learn. It has been used in psychotherapy but it has many applications in ordinary living. It can reduce collective and individual psychological suffering and facilitates community building. It does this by teaching people how to:

- find small steps of positive action as individuals and as groups;
- make decisions that 'sit right' for them, rather than simply obeying leaders;
- resolve personal and collective trauma;
- speak from a deep place inside that undercuts ethnic and cultural divisions and mediates diversity;
- safely process strong feelings.

Experiential Listening

Experiential Listening is a closely related skill that allows us to set aside stereotypes and prejudices and truly meet another human being. Experiential Listening is a way of bridging the gaps in understanding that lie at the base of polarized and seemingly irresolvable conflicts.

Learning the skills

If you would like to find out more, please contact Adrian@gn.apc.org