

Being Seriously Playful– A training in The Netherlands July, 2021 with Rene Veugelers and Harriet Teeuw

By
Ruth Hirsch

After participating in Rene Veugelers' workshop on Children Focusing at the 2015 International Focusing Conference in Seattle, I knew I wanted to join the five day summer training that he and Harriet Teeuw lead in a small rural village in the Netherlands each summer. The training, 'Being Seriously Playful', is half of a 60 hour training that results in certification for those who complete both part one and part two, offered in alternating years.

It took me four years to get there, but in 2019 I joined a group of about 20 participants, two Children Focusing Trainers in Training, and Rene and Harriet for the five day training. I loved it so much that I knew I wanted to participate the following summer as well to be able to experience the other part of the training.

Of course, the next year was 2020 when Covid-19 was running rampant and a vaccine wasn't yet available, so the training was postponed to 2021. Even with the many unknowns inherent in international travel this year, I knew that if the workshop were to be held this year, I very much wanted to be there.

It was only on the last day of May that I heard that the training would be taking place – live! Still, with changing regulations in The Netherlands and Israel where I live, plus the threat of airport closure in Israel, it was not clear that I'd be able to travel until less than a week before I actually left for Holland. This was my first trip out of the country (and my first trip anywhere really) in over two years, and I definitely had some nervousness about traveling—especially since at that time The Netherlands had the grim distinction of being the only "red" country in the EU. However, since Israel hadn't banned travel there, I was on my way, armed with masks and optimism.

'Being Seriously Playful' is described as a training in experiential listening and Children Focusing. Rene and Harriet call their approach 'Dynamic Focusing' and write that the training is "designed for anyone working in a professional capacity with children or young people, for parents, grandparents ~ and just for yourself too!"

The training was held at a lovely retreat and conference center with beautiful surroundings, great meals and friendly and hospitable hosts in Nijholtepede, in the north of The Netherlands. We felt warmly welcomed as soon as we arrived. It seemed to be the perfect environment for a training that included learning about Children Focusing, and for those participants who wished, the opportunity to also do some deep healing work. Given that the training was held while Covid was still a reality outside of our nurturing space, it feels important to mention that besides having plenty of room to spread out on the grounds as

well as in our large main meeting room, we decided to keep the meeting room door open to the outside to allow additional ventilation.

Both of the trainers are certified Children Focusing Trainers and Art Therapists, with many years experience teaching and working with children of all ages. The workshop included a wide variety of exercises in which to taste various ways one might work with children as well as the child parts within each of us. These ranged from work with imagination, clay, drawing, painting, collage – from small to full body-sized pieces of art on an array of different subjects. It also included individual and group work – all of it grounded in Focusing.

Participants came from Romania, Germany, The Netherlands, Belgium, and Israel. In addition to the two trainers, there were eight participants and one Children Focusing Trainer-in-Training to help to support us. I also enjoyed the wide range of ages in those present – from mid-20's to mid-60's.

A lovely advantage to having a small group was that we were able to sit together at the same large table for meals, so we were able to extend the conversation to outside of the training. The schedule was extremely user-friendly, not starting too early in the morning, so allowing for a relaxed breakfast, plus having a long break at noon for those who wanted to take walks, nap, go to town, or work on a project from the training during that time. While evenings were free, participants were offered a special activity each evening ranging from a movie the night it was raining too hard to be out and about, a visit to a local attraction combined with a hike through the woods, and a final bonfire. In Focusing style, we were encouraged to listen inside and know that nothing was required. Nevertheless, everyone was present for nearly every lecture and exercise.

For more information about this training, which will be held Friday, 15 July 2022 at 18h until after lunch on Wednesday 20 July 2022, you can have a look at the webpage for the 2011 training: <https://www.childrenfocusing.org/being-seriously-playful-symposium/>

BIO

Ruth Hirsch, MSW, MPH, CMT has been teaching Focusing internationally for 28 years. Based in Jerusalem, Ruth is a Focusing Oriented Therapist, Trainer, and Certifying Coordinator who shares Focusing with therapists, coaches and others as a life-enhancing practice as well as to enhance and deepen work with clients. Besides teaching all levels of Focusing and a specialized workshop on Healing the Inner Critic, she offers Guided Focusing Sessions and Focusing Oriented Therapy world-wide in-person and online. For more info visit www.ruthhirsch.com or be in touch with her at ruth@ruthhirsch.com.

This article was published in The British Focusing Association Newsletter, November 2021