

Receptive-Expressive Arts Focusing © Freda Blob

Trauma-informed Receptive-Expressive Arts Focusing (REAF) is the primary program within the Creative Arts and Culture Focusing (CACF) approach.

REAF uses Felt Sense-Based Studio Art and fine art references from museum collections and other global sources to solve problems and improve well-being. One special form of this program is Creative Compassion for Peacebuilding (CCP). CCP draws inspiration from the artwork of persecuted artists and Maureen O'Hara's Relational Empathy paradigm.

REAF uses Focusing toolsets and creative and expressive arts toolsets to help you get the most out of your engagement with the receptive and expressive arts.

Receptive-Expressive Arts Focusing REAF follows the ethics of the person-centered and experiential approach. This means that your needs are at the center of everything your therapist or facilitator does.

To begin a CACF session or workshop, please bring artwork from museums or other cultural institutions to the studio. These can be physical or virtual pieces.

You can use flyers or photos taken during visits as visual references. Alternatively, you can access museum art on your smartphone or select art from books, catalogs, or postcards in the studio, or from your therapist's digital devices.

You will alternate between receptive activities, such as observing the artwork through Slow-Looking, and expressive activities, such as drawing, writing, and movement. This combination allows you to develop a deeper, more personal connection to art and to yourself.

You do not have to verbalize any traumatic experiences. Additionally, you are not required to undergo classical Focusing processing, which may evoke overwhelming imagery.

You are not required to express yourself artistically firsthand. Moreover, the chosen museum artwork serves as a holding container for anything bothering you.

Once you feel ready, you can transition from implicit to explicit meaning-making by creating your own artwork based on your Art Sense (aesthetic-oriented) or Felt Sense (body-oriented).

You may reflect on your own artwork through telling about your process or dialoging with the art. You can reflect on your artwork by describing your process or engaging in dialogue with the art. If it feels right, you can express your artwork through movement or dance, or explore its meaning through sound.

Because the program encourages you to bring your interpretations of art from museums and other sources to the studio from the beginning, the program reduces the hierarchical power dynamics usually found in traditional psychotherapy.

REAF History

The Foundation of Receptive-Expressive Arts Focusing REAF is based on European Focusing. The Receptive-Expressive Arts Focusing (REAF) program was developed from a person-centered and experiential standpoint. Originally called Expressive Arts Focusing (EXAF), the program evolved over five years to become what it is today.

The origins of REAF lie in the innovative Focusing training programs developed by European Focusing pioneers [Christiane Geiser](#), [Hejo Feuerstein](#), and the late [Ernst Juchli](#). They were and are renowned person-centered and experiential psychotherapists, TIFI Certifying Coordinators and the co-founders of the German-Swiss Focusing Network (FN) and the German Focusing Association (DFG), respectively. Their work had a lasting influence on our Focusing style.

Since 1981, Ernst Juchli (FN) has taught cyclic processing in intermodal Focusing. His wife Christiane Geiser (FN) introduced us to the concept of structure-boundness and the use of museum art representatives in Focusing in 2003. In 2014, we learned about guided Focusing exercises related to imaginative art-making and imaginative museum visits from Hejo Feuerstein (DFG).

Additionally, the work of [René Maas](#), a renowned Dutch PCE psychotherapist and Certifying Coordinator, is incorporated into the REAF program. In 1997, he introduced us to his trauma-informed "Clearing a Space" method, which uses physical distancing to address the issue at hand. His specific, person-centered approach to designing intermodal Focusing sessions also influenced our Focusing style, shaping it toward equal-status interaction.

We applied the teachings of these European Focusing pioneers ever since.