

Expressive Arts Focusing © Freda Blob

Expressive Arts Focusing (EXAF) is a program within the Creative Arts and Culture Focusing (CACF) framework.

EXAF is an integrative, process-oriented program that promotes trauma-informed safety and well-being through art and body. EXAF art activities allow for sensual and kinaesthetic experiences that provide a safe container.

EXAF draws from Focusing with the Whole Body (FWB) and the European Focusing *Plus* approach. It also uses tools from renewed expressive arts therapy approaches.

EXAF involves using all the senses to express oneself through movement, dance, theater, sound exploration, visual art, and writing. EXAF incorporates the Pina Bausch's dialogue method into the expressive arts process to help you engage with all modalities.

The outcome of EXAF-oriented art evolves throughout the process. The process may change within one session or during a sequence of sessions.

The program 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 an EXAF session or workshop, you will have time to explore your surroundings from your Felt Sense with your whole body, whether online or in person. You will choose where to position yourself in the room at the start of each session. The same goes for art materials: You will choose what to work with based on what speaks to you the most at that moment. Sometimes, art materials don't speak to you at all, but your body wants to express itself fully and throughout the process. This freedom to choose from Felt Sense makes each process unique.

You do not have to verbalize any traumatic experiences. More so, you express your emotions through your body or with materials related to the modalities you are expressing. The body-focused art-making process is a container for anything bothering you, regardless of the way your body wants to move or express itself with or without art supplies.

The EXAF process may or may not use references of the visual and performing arts, such as music, dance, and theater. It involves guided processing, with or without imagery.

Once the art-making process is complete, you can engage in a dialogue with your artwork, transitioning from implicit to explicit meaning-making. This part of the process involves describing your dialogue and experiences, or expressing them through new art forms that you have not yet tried. During dialoging, you can follow your Art Sense (aesthetic-oriented) or Felt Sense (body-oriented).

Because the program engages all possible senses and modalities from a Wholebody Focusing perspective, it will help you explore yourself beyond structural limitations and cultural sensitivities or limitations.

EXAF History

The Expressive Arts Focusing (EXAF) program was developed from a person-centered, experiential standpoint. It is based on Focusing with the Whole Body (FWB) by German Focusing Coordinator Astrid Schillings, founder and director of the Focusing Institute Cologne, and European Focusing *Plus*.

Focusing *Plus* is a specific style of Focusing developed by the [German-Swiss Focusing Network FN](#) for exploring and processing structure-bound patterns. It draws on a variety of modalities and incorporates energetic bodywork and person-centred body psychotherapy approaches.

Focusing *Plus* is rooted in the work of the early pioneers of the Focusing Network (FN), formerly the International Focusing Network (IFN), which Eugene Gendlin founded in 1980. The organization had a German-speaking branch in Munich. Focusing coordinators from Germany, Switzerland, and Austria published their Focusing Journal as early as 1981. Their ideas and practices have been expanded and revised numerous times through various collaborative efforts, including those with the [GfK Institute for Person-centered Psychotherapy, Body Therapy and Focusing Zurich CH](#).

Publications by IFN and GfK founder [Ernst Juchli](#), GfK co-founder [Christiane Geiser](#), [Hans-Ulrich Schlünder](#) (FN) and other FN/GfK co-writers have been produced continuously since the early days. Their articles, essays and creative writing projects have resulted in two books, which were published by the GfK Institute Zurich and the Swiss Association for Psychotherapy SGfK in 2017.

Rooted in more than 45 years of European Focusing tradition, Focusing *Plus* is the essential training guideline for Focusing, which we have been practicing and teaching since 1995 and using in Expressive Arts Focusing

Expressive Arts Focusing was launched on our previous website, <https://expressive-arts-focusing.jimdosite.com>, on August 7, 2019. At that time, EXAF was designed from a Focusing *Plus* perspective only

Unlike other uses of the term 'Expressive Arts Focusing' (Rappaport, 2022), Expressive Arts Focusing (EXAF) is an intentional process that incorporates Focusing. The process begins with setting an intention and involves slowing down, grounding oneself, and becoming present through FWB guidance before creating art.

Since launching, we have continuously refined our EXAF exercises, tools, and applications in order to share this CACF best-practice program with different audiences