

Fully Connected Focus - Interview with Terry Orlick

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“Every meaningful action, interaction, and personal accomplishment begins with a fully connected focus” (Orlick, 2011, p. 101)

To engage in our everyday experiences and fully connect with the present moment, it is vital to examine the phenomena that may be involved in higher quality living for children, teens, and adults. It is especially important to gain a better understanding of the phenomena that are difficult to describe, yet attainable for anyone wanting to awaken and connect with his or her life. One such phenomenon is learning the skill of Focus. According to Orlick (2008, 2011), focus is the central driving force for positive living and directly influences the quality of people’s learning, performing, and overall living. Teaching the skill of Focus has been central to Orlick’s Positive Living Skills Programs for children and teens, yet this skill is attainable to anyone seeking to live a higher quality life and perform to his or her potential.

Although Focus has been acknowledged as a vital skill in domains such as education, sport psychology, and positive psychology, discrepancies exist in defining the term “focus” and what it means to focus in relation to quality living and achieving high performance outcomes. Webster’s dictionary defines focus as both a noun and a verb and accounts for the wide variations of the term with definitions such as “a point of convergence of a beam of particles (as electrons)”, “a center of activity, attraction,

or attention”, or “directed attention” (Soukhanov, 2004, p. 718). Within these definitions, focus is viewed in the realm of hard sciences, yet it also alludes to a directing of attention to a particular object. Both definitions illustrate an action of attending to one particular item. Similarly, within the sport psychology and performance enhancement literature, focus is revered as one of the most critical elements of successful performances (Abernethy, 2001; Cox, 2007) and unsuccessful performances are often attributed to a lapse in focus. However, there is still no clear definition of what it means to focus in terms of accessing an internal skill that can be readily used to enhance performances and ultimately improve quality living.

The lack of clarity in defining focus becomes more complex when similar terms (i.e., concentration and attention) are used in reference to focus, specifically where “concentration means focusing, not forcing, one’s attention on a task” (Wilson, Peper, & Schmid, 2006, p. 405) or when focus is understood as a subcategory of concentration, such that effective concentration entails focusing on relevant information (i.e., performance cues), maintaining attentional focus, and the ability to refocus during distractions (Weinberg &

Gould, 2003). Even research in developmental psychology does not provide a clear definition of focus and attempts to include focus as the ability to sustain attention. For example, Bjorklund (2000) states, “One aspect of attention involves sustaining one’s focus on a particular task – that is, paying attention” (p. 140).

Research on Positive Living Skills programs and other focus enhancement research support this complexity in defining focus. Patterson (2008) acknowledged this lack of clarity in defining focus as a single all-encompassing term. In her research implementing a focus enhancement intervention with university students, Patterson accounted for the multiple layers within focus by reporting its essential elements, as described by her participants. These essential elements of focus were not defined as single units, rather they were multi-layered and included: exclusivity (i.e., identifying specific aspects to focus on within the environment), being in the present moment, and connection with the moment or task. These components illustrated that focus in this context was not a solitary act that had a definite beginning and end. Instead, the students described focus as an ongoing cycle. Furthermore, Patterson allowed the participants to define focus for themselves, as opposed to telling the participants what it means to focus or assuming the participants shared a common definition. The participants’ overall definition of focus “included having exclusive thoughts and a sense of connection with a subject in the present moment” (p. 82).

One way to deal with the challenge of defining focus comes from Orlick (2011), who offers a holistic perspective that may be more applicable to quality living and positive living skills than the other

definitions. Orlick goes beyond simply defining the term focus to describing an approach called Fully Connected Focus (FCF). He states:

A fully connected focus is a complete, positive connection with an experience, learning opportunity, performance, action, or interaction. There is a feeling of being totally absorbed in the experience, or inseparable from it” (Orlick, 2011, p. 101).

He describes the goal in FCF as becoming one with your experience – to connect fully, and positively, with your environment and ultimately become more fully connected and more fully alive. Unlike other explanations of focus, FCF is not solely paying attention to a particular object or subject, rather it involves an ongoing connection that has no distinct end. He describes FCF as a “moving forward” phenomenon, similar to the metaphor of a flowing stream continuously flowing from experience to experience (p. 103). This multi-layered approach to focus is also demonstrated in Orlick’s description of his eight pillars of focus (i.e., Focused Listening, Focused Seeing, Focused Learning, Focused Reading, Focused Playing/Performing, Focused Feeling, Focused Love and Joy, and Focused Reflection) which may be used as a guided framework in teaching FCF. The pillars of focus create a broader picture of how focus carries into all aspects of experience. Furthermore, FCF is a key element in producing higher quality living, such that “those of us who learn to live our lives with a positive and fully connected focus are more connected, more grounded, and feel more fully alive” (Orlick, 2011, p. 105).

Orlick’s explanation of Fully Connected Focus offers a new, holistic approach to understanding focus in relation to quality living. Thus, the following interview

excerpts between Dr. Terry Orlick and doctoral student Brittany Glynn aims to clarify the dimensions of Fully Connected Focus and what it means to fully connect to our experiences. Furthermore, this interview highlights personal accounts of fully connected experiences, while also offering guidance on how to teach and live with a Fully Connected Focus for higher quality living.

Interview: March 23, 2010

Brittany: *So why is Fully Connected Focus important and why does it matter?*

Terry: *Well, I think a connected focus makes all the difference in all parts of your life. If you're connected you learn more. You experience more. You perform better. You feel better. You feel more connected in your overall being. So for everything - for learning, living, performing, relationships, interactions, consulting - every single thing in life is enhanced and more complete with a connected focus. And on the flip side of that, a disconnected focus doesn't allow you to learn what you can learn. It doesn't allow you to perform your best or it interferes with your best performances. A disconnected focus interferes with interpersonal relationships, like when you are there physically but you're not mentally there or emotionally there. If you're just skimming through life on the surface you are not embracing life's opportunities. So it's a huge factor. I think Connected Focusing is the most important factor in the key parts of life- living, learning, loving, relationships, performing, in any context. Connecting fully, what I would call pure focused connection, gives you the best chance of getting everything you can get out of yourself and that situation. It allows you to contribute your best to other people as well. A negative, disconnected focus or non focus,*

does just the opposite. It creates barriers to learning, barriers within performances and barriers within relationships...a negative or disconnected focus takes you down a path that's nothing close to your true potential. So I don't think there's anything more important as a life skill or positive living skill than the capacity to connect purely and fully with your experiences, with people and with everything.

Brittany: *Do you think anyone can learn to fully connect?*

Terry: *I think everyone can learn to fully connect. One clear example is with children. If you watch kids early on they are fully connected with their play. There's nothing that gets in the way of their connected play. You can yell, call their name, or drop things – yet they remain so connected to what they're doing. They are or become part of that performance. In their pretend play they are fully there. They are in that reality that they are creating. I think some of that pure connection drifts away when other people start to evaluate or comment on what you're doing, or what you're not doing, or what you should be doing. "You're not doing well enough." This gets people thinking about evaluation, or outcomes stuff that can distract people from what I call a pure connection. But I believe anyone is capable of developing and nurturing this pure focused connection...If you help them understand what it is, talk with them about it, challenge or encourage them in certain contexts to try to "be there" and "connect" with the performance or really be with you when they are with you...I've seen big positive changes even over the course of six weeks. When you talk about focus or pure connection and what brings out your most pure connection with people or performances or learning or creativity, dancing, or whatever it is you're doing, you*

begin to understand what you connect to and how you create that connection...You can then discuss how you can sustain that connection for a longer period of time or in different contexts where you might not be so connected.

Brittany: *So Fully Connected Focus is a skill?*

Terry: *I think it is absolutely a skill.*

Brittany: *And you can learn it and practice it?*

Terry: *Absolutely.*

Brittany: *You mentioned that with connected focus, you feel that the more you practice it the easier it is to reach that state of connection...*

Terry: *Yes it is. I think the more you understand what it is you're trying to do or where you're trying to get...the easier it is to free it to happen. Because connected focus is a freedom thing. Even with top athletes and other high level performers I'm reminding them to "just free yourself to do what you're capable of doing." It is never a forced thing. If you try to force the performance or force the pure connection you lose it. So it's...freeing yourself to be fully there - wherever you are. And sometimes distractions do come in. So if I'm working with people on this we're trying to figure out ways to do this effectively...okay so can we either prevent the distraction from coming in because you are so focused or so connected that you don't even notice the distraction. Or you might need a refocusing plan and say, "Okay, you lost it (the connection) - now you're into an outcome focus or something negative that happened yesterday. You're not where you want to be with your focus so you need a way back in to*

a fully connected focus in the present. So try to come up with a way back in - by breathing or focusing on connected feelings or experiencing what you prefer to be experiencing. For me...it's not trying to consciously pay attention to something - it's connecting with something or someone in a way that frees you to be yourself or perform freely.

Brittany: *Sure.*

Terry: *A fully connected focus can happen in any context. Say I'm working with someone or talking with someone or consulting with someone. I'm connected with not only what they are saying but what I'm feeling from them. It's another level of connection...sometimes people aren't saying anything but you're feeling a lot of things.*

Brittany: *You can feel something.*

Terry: *Yes. Sometimes they're talking – and their words and what you're feeling are not the same. My goal is just connecting with the experience or becoming the experience. It's like you're inseparable from the experience in a pure focused connection. You are the experience and that experience could be a physical experience. It could be interacting with someone. It could be anything. It could be nature. You feel that there's no separation between you and what you're experiencing. It's not just listening or looking or saying, "Oh that's nice." It's something beyond that. It's pure. It's not just a surface connection....it's another level of connection.*

Brittany: *You have mentioned that you've had certain experiences where you've felt this purely connected focus. You mentioned a couple times your experiences with nature. So to understand fully connected focus can you describe to me one of your instances in*

nature, or maybe one of your skating experiences, and how you were able to experience all of these moments of connected focus? What did you see? What did you hear? What did you feel? What was your body doing? Was your body part of the movement or experience?

Terry: *Yep. Well I would say it happens every day. It's not like a sometimes thing for me.*

Brittany: *You're an expert! (Laughs)*

Terry: *Yeah...especially in nature and physical activities. It also happens in interacting with people. Not all the time, but often. One recent nature example was what we call skate skiing on cross country skis on a lake. I live on a lake and I do a lot on and around that lake in the summer, fall, winter or whenever. So the conditions...it was a beautiful day. The sun was out and when the conditions are right with skate skiing the skates are like huge long skates, and you're pushing and you're gliding far on one push like you're pushing on a skate. It's very rhythmical ...you're so connected with the experience that you're just feeling the breeze, feeling the sun, feeling the pushing and gliding forward. It's...it's just like I've been talking about - becoming the experience, becoming inseparable from the experience and nature. For those connected moments, you're part of nature. You're not just looking at it but you're part of it. You're experiencing it in every way possible. You're feeling it physically, emotionally, you're breathing it in. It's a fully connected, great experience.*

These kinds of fully connected experiences - which is exactly what they are, make you feel so alive and so good and you get so much positive energy from them even though...you're going to be going pretty

hard. Your body is working and you might be out for an hour or two. But you're not feeling fatigue. You're feeling the energy that you're getting from the connection with what you're doing. In some of these recent experiences like that, or running on trails or beaches, the environment helps.

I talk a lot about highlights and special little experiences in your day and the importance of becoming aware of things that are lifting you so you can do more of them and less things that drag you down or drain your energy from your life. I've been realizing that in a lot of these fully connected experiences it's not one highlight like I went skiing on the lake or I went for a run in the woods or had a connected interaction with a family member or friend. It's like every second that you're out there is a highlight - every stride, every step, everything that you look at or breathe in - whether it's running along an ocean or running on trails or skiing on lakes or paddling on lakes or rivers or oceans. Every second is a highlight. So literally, if I were to count highlights, I can have a thousand highlights in an hour because every second I am completely, absolutely connected and embracing the magic moments one after the other. This is the power of a fully connected focus.

Brittany: *And Fully Connecting is something that you've become better at?*

Terry: *Yes, Absolutely. Because I think there were stages where...it wasn't my goal to be fully connected with experiences or simple joys. You're just going out and doing it. For example, I was thinking "Oh I'll go for a run and get my run done"...but, over time, because I talk to people about enjoying things - speak about embracing magic moments - so I began trying to integrate that more into my own life. The more I tried to*

bring that perspective into my own life, the more I experienced moments of pure connection and joy in my own life. There are so many opportunities to connect in pure and positive ways within our lives. When you connect with an experience, activity, person or learning opportunity in a pure and positive way it lifts you. It gives you energy. You feel good or more fully alive, if you set this goal of simple healthy connectedness as a way of being in different contexts... you can free it within yourself and others.

Brittany: *So if you have an experience where you feel fully connected it seems to be a deep inner feeling state – almost a way of being. When trying to teach people how to fully connect are you trying to help them reconnect to this feeling state?*

Terry: *The ideal goal is to be fully connected with what you are doing so that you experience everything more fully, especially things that are positive, can be positive or lead to something positive. Otherwise, people just walk through their day or life without fully connecting or finding much joy or value in anything. They're in a class and they're there physically but they're not really there. You live a life but you skip through it on the surface, unless, you choose to really connect in meaningful ways with all parts of your life. There are so many ways that you can be more connected than you are...whether it's physical, emotional or intellectual.*

Brittany: *So how do you introduce someone to Fully Connected Focus, especially if someone is trying to learn this skill, which you describe as being seemingly “effortless?”*

Terry: *The first thing I try to do is ask people, can you give me some examples of*

times when you felt really connected to something or some experience? I mean when you were really, really experiencing that experience. Or you're with someone and...you feel like there is no separation between you and the person or you and the experience because you're really there. Everything else in the world just disappears. It's just you experiencing that experience fully or you becoming that performance, or that light going on when you learn something or have a new idea or...a seamless connection with nature or in any part of your life. Most people can give you an example of this kind of pure connection, like yeah, yeah, okay, well this one time I was doing this. There are times when probably everybody experiences something like that so I would try to go there and explore that connection. So what was going on then? How did that happen? Once someone has a connected experience like that, they know it's possible to have it again.

Then I think at some point, you just have to decide or decide to be where you are, or to be fully engaged with the experience or with this person. You come in, you sit down, you talk with someone or someone is talking to you and you say or think, let's really try to connect to what this person is doing or feeling, or what it feels like when I do this movement well, or when my feet are in the sand on the beach, or the waves or rolling up over my ankles...try to really hear what you are hearing or really feel what you are feeling. Feel the energy, feel the connection or feel whatever this experience can free you to feel.

Brittany: *Can you talk a little more about helping people learn to connect more fully?*

Terry: *I think in the beginning you probably have to talk to people about focus and connection and what it is - when are they*

focused, when are they not focused, can they regain their focus after losing focus, and how can they do that. Perhaps most important of all is to make a decision to live a more focused or fully connected life. If you want to live your life more fully or if you want to not waste your life or parts of it or waste experiences by being there but not being there...you can do it. It's a choice. It is just, like people sitting in a classroom. Their bodies are there in the room but many of them are not there mentally, so why bother to be there? Why be there if you are not really there? That's my view. If you are going to be there then be there fully and if you're not going to be there fully then be somewhere else.

Talk about the importance of connection and help people gain some appreciation for the importance of being connected for themselves, for others, for learning, for performing and finding joy in everyday life. If you are talking to someone, and they are not listening or you're on the phone or you're with them and they are not listening, they have no idea of what you said. They may be nodding their head but they're not there. Or you may not be there. Disconnected interactions do not feel very good and are a complete waste of everybody's energy.

If someone is trying to explain to you how to do something and you don't listen, then how are you going to do it? If you're not focused on getting the lesson or connecting in a performance it's not going to be anywhere near as good as it could be.

So first we need to talk about simple ways to connect with listening, or engaging in something for short periods of time. Can you connect fully with listening for two seconds? Like right now, can you connect for two seconds? Do you feel a full connection? Can

you do it for 5 or 10 seconds? Can you read 3 three words or 3 sentences and be connected and remember then? Can you expand on the time you are fully connected?

Brittany: *Can you expand on that?*

Terry: *Yes, let's use nature as example. Go into a nature setting. Can you look around and find one beautiful little thing to focus on – it could be a little leaf, stone, flower or stick or actually, feeling the earth or air, or listening to the sound of a stream - watch it and see how it flows. You live life closer to the core when you connect more fully with nature, activities, experiences and people versus disconnect with nature, activities, experiences and people. To make this happen more often or more readily, think and talk about focused connection and what it is for you, discuss how you get better at connecting - why it's important and encourage other people to feel and understand what it is. Then encourage people learn to sustain the depth and duration of a connected focus in different contexts of their life.*

Connected focus is very important in my life. I value it and see clearly through my work that great performers, great learners and people who really enjoy their lives have really developed their capacity to focus fully in contexts that are important to them. I clearly want to nurture that connection in my own life and want to help others learn to nurture these essential skills for positive living in their own lives!

Brittany: *After you experience the feeling of connected focus what are the feelings that resonate within you personally?*

Terry: *Well let's say I went for a run this morning...it's not always completely connected because sometimes I might drift*

from one connection to another like from my body to the feel of the ground or the snow, or hearing a stream. Or sometimes there might be a thought flashing in about...being aware of what I am connected to so I know what frees me to do this and I know when I'm there - I'm just feeling great - fully alive. I'm in tune with everything going on with my body and nothing is hurting. I'm feeling free. Nobody is getting into my space or trying to get at me. When I'm done, like when I get back home, I just feel...radiant. I just gain a lot of positive energy from that experience which can sustain me for the whole rest of the day for whatever I'm doing next. I can work better and interact with others better. I'm just in an overall better state of being as a result of that experience. I think in the beginning when I did some of those activities, like when I first started running, I felt good for having done the exercise. My body felt good, strong, and alive but not at the level that I experience that now. It's because I'm really experiencing the experience. I'm not just saying, oh I've got to go do my run and get it done. What I enjoy most is the process of engaging fully with the experience of doing and enjoying the process of doing.

Brittany: *So you're beyond just going through the motions...*

Terry: *Yeah, so it's not just getting it done and thinking "Whew! Now that's done I'm going to go and do something else." It's more just being fully where I am. Sometimes even if I don't really want to be somewhere or doing something...I will still connect once I'm there. Because if I'm there I might as well be fully there and make the best of it! The only way to do that is to find something of value or something worthy of connecting with in that context. You can always learn something or feel something or connect in some way or listen to someone who may*

make a comment that might be relevant - just listen and learn from what they're doing or not doing. The more you're living in the moment, the more you live your life. The more "present" you are in every single part of your life, the more quality you can bring into your life because you're living your life more fully. A lot of people are never fully where they are - they are here but they are not really here. You can see it in so many people.

Brittany: *Is a connected focus specific to the task you are doing or is it more broad and connecting fully to your surroundings?*

Terry: *It can be both. If I'm speaking or consulting with someone and we are having a connected conversation about something relevant, especially related to performance debriefs or preparing for something important I am totally engaged in that task. I am not connected to anything besides that person and trying to feel that shared connection because if I'm in that state I am in a better position to ask good questions and to draw out important issues or feelings and maybe to make some comments that might be of value to that person.*

When I am in a nature setting I think it's a mix. Part of my focus or connection is out there in nature – connecting to what I am seeing and feeling. And usually when I'm out in nature there's movement involved - physical activity. I'm walking or running or paddling or swimming or skiing. So in that context my connected focus can go back and forth from my body to connecting to what is going on in nature around me. Or it can be a combination of both - feeling the wind on my body or the sun on my face and my body moving freely. It's kind of back and forth focus but I'm always feeling connected with something good. I might shift focus back and forth quickly or I might be feeling connected

with several things at once. I'm feeling my breathing is in sync and feeling fluid and feeling the breeze or the sun. I'm connected to feeling all kinds of things that get me grounded in the experience. And I am definitely not thinking about what's going on in any other context.

Brittany: *Somewhere where you're not.*

Terry: *Exactly. The only place I want to be when I am doing this is right here and nowhere else. So I am not thinking about negative things or spending time worrying about anything because if I did that then I wouldn't be fully connected with what I'm doing. I wouldn't gain from the freedom that I get or experience in those contexts. But sometimes I look at a lot of things too. I mean when I'm running through trails in the woods, I'm looking...I've got to make sure that my visual focus is far enough ahead so that I'm not going to be tripping over rocks or fallen tree trunks or something. But I still really look closely and connect fully with nature. If I'm walking I always slow down or stop to look really closely at streams and the way the water flows. When I look closely at streams or completely calm stretches of water, I feel like I'm a part of it because I see and feel how the water flows and I feel the peace and tranquility of a still lake or quiet ocean. I hear the sounds - how the water finds a way through obstacles - over rocks, under rocks, around branches or fallen trees. There are always analogies for me in nature for living your life more fully or more fluidly - like flowing through obstacles or finding a new or better path and not getting all stressed out about things that in the end don't make a really big difference in your life. Something as simple as a calm lake in the morning has a special feel with the mist slowly rising up. It's very tranquil and very peaceful - very quiet. It's another kind of fully connected focus that*

touches you on a deeper level of feelings. I love watching the mist rising off the water or paddling through it because moving through it is also very rhythmical and peaceful. It's very connected, you're very much a part of it - you feel like you're part of that lake or part of that complete silence. You're part of it. It feels like it's radiating through all of you. For me those are pure connections - totally pure connections where nothing is distracting me or trying to break that connection. There's nothing I don't like about that experience. In some of those contexts not only do I finish my run or paddle or adventure but I come home feeling great energy because there is an abundance of positive energy in nature.

There are also a lot of good energy gains that come from connecting with good people or other positive experiences. But nature...nature also has the lessons of tranquility - just being calm. Being calm and being silent. That's another thing that is missing in a lot of lives... just finding and embracing moments of silence - moments of silence where you don't have radios or TV's on or electronic devices or people talking at you. You are removed from all kinds of distracting noises. You're just silent. You can have pure connection with silence - silence you feel inside of you and outside of you. That makes me feel more grounded, more peaceful, more at ease. That's one reason I like doing things in nature. When I am running on trails on a beach I am actually touching the ground. I am grounded and I'm part of the earth...

Brittany: *You feel connected to the earth?*

Terry: *Yes, I feel grounded to the natural energy of the earth. There's a lot of energy in nature. There's energy from water, rivers, lakes, streams, the ocean, trees, the wind, the sun, the earth - so if you open yourself to*

connect with those feelings there is energy. There's energy in people. There's energy in creative ideas. There's positive energy in lots of places if you open yourself to connect with it - but if you don't connect with that energy you don't get it.

Brittany: *So if you're not connected you miss the opportunity?*

Terry: *Absolutely. If you don't connect with something it is as if it that something or that potential opportunity does not exist.*

Brittany: *So you mentioned that you are still able to connect during situations even when you do not want to be there...so is a connected focus possible in all situations? For example, if you're working with a child and the child doesn't want to be in a situation, can they still learn to connect, somehow? Or is learning to fully connect easier for things that we love to do?*

Terry: *Well it's easier to connect with things that you're passionate about or things you like, for sure! But it is possible to connect and find something of value in those situations where you have never done it before or maybe don't feel like doing it or you don't feel like being in a class. It is still possible to focus and gain something from the experience – even it is just a lesson about your capacity to focus when you choose to focus. Someone may ask you to do something and you don't really feel like doing it but you end up doing it and enjoy doing it or parts of it. For me, once I am there I might as well be there fully. Because to be there and be negative or to think, there is absolutely no value in this - usually just makes things worse. I think you can find value, or a lesson, or something positive in almost any situation if you decide you're going to focus on making the best of it. It's just a question of remaining open to connect*

with simple opportunities because sometimes you do something you don't want to do but some really good opportunities come out of it. But if you're not open to that simple opportunity and you don't connect with it - that opportunity doesn't exist for you. That happens in a lot of contexts. One person can have many positive experiences (or highlights) in a day and another person could walk the same path and have none because one person is connected with simple opportunities and one person is not.

Or one person could be carrying negative baggage from something else in to other contexts. So, there is a component of being open to connect and find value or to find things worthy of connecting to. Just the experience of connecting with anything positive is of value because at least you're fully there and you can gain something from that experience. Kids can also learn to connect more fully - to listen more, to connect more, to be there more fully, to let certain distractions go, to connect in more positive ways, to look for the positives rather than dwelling on the negatives. I've seen some pretty huge turn around in kids where they think everything is negative. Nothing is positive and nothing good in life - no highlights. And then you start to point out little things - what about that? What about that beautiful little bird? Or having kids go out on treasure hunts for highlights to connect more fully with positive little things and enjoy them. If we never open people to these possibilities of connecting and how to connect it may never happen or they may live their whole lives with little or no positive connection to people or anything else and that certainly doesn't lead to a joyful life.

Brittany: *Yeah, I agree. So, tell me about some of the things that take away from positive connected focus?*

Terry: *Well one thing is people who dwell on the negative. They dwell on the negatives, think about the negatives, look for the negatives, talk about negatives and that tends to close a lot of doors to living your positive potential.*

Brittany: *Okay.*

Terry: *Sometimes stress can block people from connecting in positive ways. They are dwelling so much on the stress or the worry or why they can't do something or why somebody won't like them or why this won't work - that they are not giving themselves a chance to connect in positive or fully connected ways. You can turn that around by talking with people about seeing things that maybe they have not seen before, like positive things in themselves, good things, good feelings or good things in other people or in their own experiences. Maybe they can't find anything good and you can point out - well what about this or what about that? I think you can nurture people to see the positives or connect with the positives at any age. You can help them gain a more positive perspective or at least get them focused on trying to connect with anything positive in their day - one simple thing! Just one thing! If they say there is nothing positive then maybe you can go with them through part of their day and help them see some simple positives - "Okay, see this – this is a positive...and this is a positive." Sometimes it helps to get people sharing in groups, sharing highlights, sharing experiences where they were really connected, things that they find uplifting, really simple things. I have observed children learning about new highlights in*

these groups and actually saying, "Oh, I never thought of that (as a highlight)." Or "I never looked at that in that way" or "I never realized that when somebody gives you a hug it can be a highlight or that you can feel good about such simple things or feel happier because of those things." You can help people understand or see more value in living in more positive and connected ways, ways in which they are more connected with people and their own experiences and not shutting doors before they even look inside.

Brittany: *One more question for you. If someone were to approach you and say, "I want to live a more fully connected life. How do I do that?" How would you respond?*

Terry: *If they can read, I would tell them to read the book, "Positive Living Skills: Joy and Focus for Everyone" because that book has everything you need to live a more joyful and fully connected life. If they can't read I would teach them some of the activities in that book.*

Brittany: *Good answer! (Laughs) Any final thoughts?*

Terry: *When you control what your focus on and what you do not focus on, you begin to control your own life and your own destiny (barring unforeseen random acts of chance).*

This is the power of focus.

Bottom Line – Continue to learn and help others learn to focus in more positive and fully connected ways.

References

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