

FROM CHILDHOOD DREAMS TO MASTERY

BREATHING

IN A PROFESSIONALIZED WORLD

Let's bring a bit of space
into our professionalized contexts
and breath more freely.

I invite you to connect with your inhale and exhale.
Let them set the pace.

It can be an indicator how your process is going.
It reconnects you with your „here and now“.
You can always slow down by paying attention
to your breathing.



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Gaining a profession at a predefined pace and subsequently following a structured career path often defines the adult world. Regardless of one's stage of life or career, staying connected to personal vitality and taking one's dreams seriously remains essential. This connection is not merely enriching; it is widely seen as a prerequisite for genuine mastery.

This Highlight invites participants to explore the dynamics of excellence through carefully selected, playful exercises. These are inspired by Experiential-Concept-Coaching (ECC), rooted in the work of Eugene Gendlin and based on Focusing and Thinking-at the-Edge (TAE). ECC supports individuals and groups in their development and creative processes by integrating bodily knowing and experiential learning, enabling them to think and act from a Felt Sense.

Look forward to a conversation with Heinke Deloch at the end of the session, one of the developers of ECC.

PRACTICE

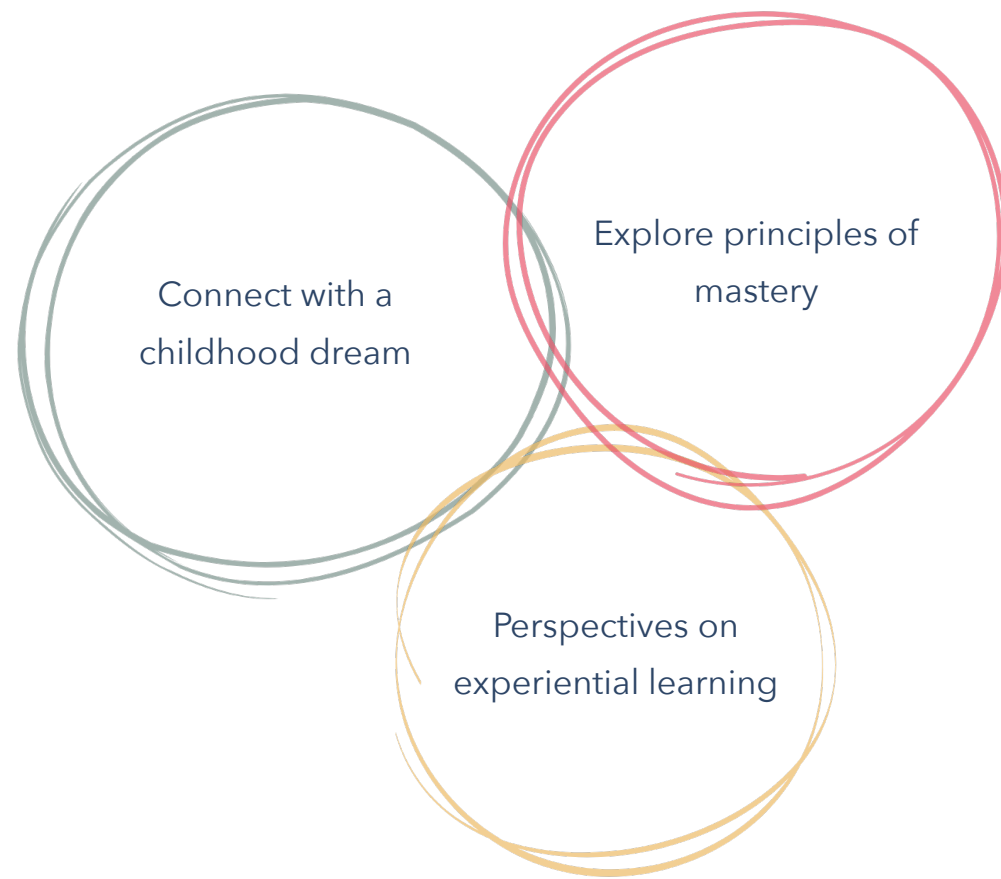
Join the practices via the online recording. You can book the highlight here: <https://focusing.org/focusing-highlights/focusing-highlights-login>

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- One-to-One sessions for project development
- Training in all of the 5 ECC modules
- Monthly TAE practice group (Spanish, English, German)
- Training as Focusing/TAE trainer based on ECC modules

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LET'S BECOME MASTERS
OF OUR CHILDHOOD
DREAMS.

THE POSSIBILITY OF
BECOMING A MASTER IS
WITHIN US ALL.

EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING
CAN SUPPORT YOU.

How can you be yourself in a world of adults that is focused on qualifications, performance, lifelong learning and professional development, and where our worth is measured by our expertise and usefulness to the labour market – and, more recently, in competition with artificial intelligence?

The challenge of our time may lie in regaining a sense of ourselves, hearing our own voices and creating new, more harmonious structures in a (working) world that isolates us socially and is rigid and inflexible and somehow "squared".

For many years I worked in adult education, primarily with people who, due to migration, had to reorient themselves language-wise, culturally and professionally, and in doing so often seemed to have to start from scratch. Whether by choice or not, one finds oneself in a situation where the familiar no longer holds true and the new has not yet fully taken shape. It is not just a matter of mastering a new language and the 'more' that comes with it – along with the associated implicit cultural knowledge – but also of reorienting one's own aspirations and opportunities for development. It can be both a challenge and an invitation to reconnect with one's own deep-seated (professional) dreams as well as one's own childlike capacity for development.

It sparked my curiosity as an Experiential Concept Coach and researcher to see how established masters and experts speak about the development of mastery, repeatedly referring to what allows us to live in the world with vitality, curiosity and hope: the energies of childhood dreams. Experiential learning, in which we connect with our felt sense and develop from there, shares a surprisingly large common ground and many points of connection with all of this.



How does this space resonate
within you right now?

Draw with your non-dominant
hand, let your hand “dance”
or write in your secret
language.

My surname comes from a Linden tree. That is why I love offering it as a gathering place. Listen to my guided meditation, which invites you to sit beneath a linden tree (or another tree, or your favourite place with which you feel a deep connection). Lindens were traditionally planted in the centre of communities, where people would gather, sing, dance, share stories and build a sense of belonging.

Experiential learning often begins with a moment of creating space to find one's centre self and invite the potential of one's own creativity. You set aside for a moment whatever is keeping you occupied, in order to connect with yourself and on what is seeking to reveal itself in a very subtle and wordless way, beyond the familiar concepts and categories. Discover how the qualities of a tree can support and inspire you in this process.

Experiential Concept Coaching invites you to connect with a deep rooted interest. Creative attitudes create conditions to develop something new at a fuzzy and promising edge, 'where words are still missing'. Where something vaguely known finds a fresh, coherent way of expression. Developing mastery also requires dealing with ambiguity whilst following one's own inner voice, with disciplined practice of the tasks in the chosen field. The cultivation of certain attitudes plays a key role in developing a “dimensional mind” capable of creating something new rather than merely consuming it, by combining structured, conventional thinking with a childlike sense of playfulness and openness.

Attitudes for mastery

- Stay connected to your uniqueness and its purpose.
- Have an intense focus to a particular field.
- Direct your creative energy by connecting it with a deep rooted interest.
- Practice with discipline.
- Let go of conscious control and allow the process to unfold.
- Seek for a dimensional mind that utilises experience and knowledge in a creative and open-minded way to create something new.
- Care for a strong inner guiding system and high level of self-awareness.
- Cultivate the ability to feel doubt and uncertainty.

Attitudes for experiential learning

- Create and be for yourself a safe space - as much as possible.
- Connect with a bodily knowing and curiosity (Felt Sense) where you have some (lived) experience.
- Trust the unfolding process.
- Connect logical and „more than logical” intuitive thinking.
- Be aware of „edges”, where words are still missing.
- Be aware of (critical) voices and emotions.
- Welcome stuttering, pauses, felt qualities of meaning.

CONNECT WITH A CHILDHOOD DREAM

“Childhood dreams” represent the connection to an individual life purpose with which we are born and which, when followed, brings us deep fulfillment. It stands for the levity of an “original mind” that holds everything to be possible and follows its own visions with a light heart. It connects us with memories of moments of carefree ease and intense immersion in a joyful activity. It is a reminder to take time again and again to connect with experiences of deepest love, in giving and in receiving. Connecting with one’s dreams and the qualities of playful enchantment are essential roots upon which the development of mastery is founded, according to masters.

Experiential Concept Coaching is founded on the humanistic worldview of the person-centered approach, which regards the individual as a being capable of dialogue, free to make decisions, responsible, and striving for personal fulfillment. We are born with dignity and can shape and develop this throughout our lives by exercising our freedom to create a meaningful life based on our deepest desire to experience our own vitality.

In the Highlight, you can follow a guided practice to connect with a childhood dream.

There is a mystery resonating within every person

Anyone seeking a fulfilled life has no choice but to ask what is meant to be fulfilled through them. This is surely the essence of happiness, and in this respect it mirrors the way a violin maker works with wood. The sound of life is realised within the grain of the human heart – and cannot be bypassed.”

Martin Schleske, The sound of Life’s unspeakable beauty

What is currently noticeable of
your childlike carefreeness?

What has shown up in relation to
your childhood dream?

How is it to be in contact with it?

**Find your own way to capture it:
draw, write in a secret language, ...**

PRACTICE

HOW WE KNOW AND HOW WE CONNECT WITH OUR KNOWING

Masters are „seeing more“

Mastery lies in the ability to face complexity and to connect with the whole, in an intuitive capacity to 'see more' in a situation.

- Openess to complexity and the ability to allow fluidity in overwhelming situations.
- Reasoning is guided by intuition which springs from intense rational focus.
- Interrelatedness of life instead of focus on distinctions.
- Sense of how everything interacts organically and how living force operates within that.
- No self-centeredness but „serving aspect“ to reach new levels.
- Primary instruments are senses. Sense the unity of mind and body.

“A felt sense is not a mental experience but a physical one. *Physical*. A bodily awareness of a situation or person or event. An internal aura that encompasses everything you feel and know about the given subject at a given time - encompasses it and communicates it to you all at once rather than detail by detail. Think of it as a taste, if you like, or a great musical chord that makes you feel a powerful impact, a big round unclear feeling.”

Gendlin, Focusing 1978/1981/2007, p. 37

Connect to „the more“

We always know more than we can say. In experiential learning, access to knowledge goes beyond the senses. It lies in the attention paid to situational complexity through the experiencing of one's own body, which, as it were, 'is' the situation. By sensing ourselves and tuning into this 'more', as Focusing guides us to do, a felt sense can take form which contains a direction for development. Like a seed that sprouts and carries within it the possibilities and knowledge of its own growth process.

An interplay emerges between sensing this abundance of „the more“ and symbolising what can be expressed 'from there' - an organic dance of logical and 'more than logical' thinking.

There is a continuous opening up to that which might prove meaningful in words, concepts and structures. This significance, in turn, becomes apparent in a perceivable depth. In this profound engagement with the relevance arising from vitality, one can experience a deep connection to life itself.

ON THE MEANING OF EXPERIENCE AND BECOMING A PATTERN MAKER

Master integrate experience

Mastery is fundamentally built upon the productive and goal-oriented processing and integration of experiences.

- Key is the intensity of attention on meaningful experiences.
- Practice and discipline. Embody skills and knowledge.
- Cultivation of a greater memory capacity.
- Creation of patterns and pattern networks.
- Nurturing of high-level intuition that is driven by memory.
- Mechanical intelligence: test and use yourself what you create. Know about its functionality.

Experience is a myriad richness that exceeds any number of separated facets. There is vastly more than our conceptual structures can encompass.

And experiencing moves – we cannot think all that just was. We feel more than we can think, and we live more than we can feel. And if we enter into what we feel in certain genuine steps, we feel more than before. And there is much more still.

T. Gendlin, unpublished draft 1971

Become a pattern maker

Experiential learning draws on the wealth of lived situations. 'Experience capsules' open up when a Felt Sense is invited in to from freshly, revealing both the complexity and the individual significance of a particular theme and its development. At the same time, this holds an invitation, in the spirit of childhood, to allow oneself to be surprised by what may emerge as a relevant memory.

If one takes the time to delve deeper into the subject matter, relevant patterns can be identified which, by virtue of their precise and tangibly relevant phrasing alone, can have a significant impact. In the movement of 'crossing', experiences and patterns interact in a way, insights and wisdom emerge as new patterns with more relevant details, bearing witness to the interwoven nature of living thought.

In my Highlight guiding, I invite you to derive straightforward actions or attitudes from the new patterns and to practise them for a while in the spirit of mastery. New experiences will emerge, which in turn can be looked at more closely as instances.

PRACTICE

You are invited to make yourself comfortable once again beneath your linden tree.

Reconnect with your childhood dream, and allow meaningful experiences to surface as memories - each is an instance.

Be curious about what emerges, take notes, and describe in details how you see it right now: where are you, what is happening right now, who is there, ...?

Example: Collecting berries with my parents in the forest ...

Connect with the essence of this experience and its significance for you and the mastery you aspire to - what is the wisdom you are learning from it - describe it in one sentence as a meaningful pattern.

One instance can reveal several patterns.

Example: If I care, it cares for me.

How can this wisdom support your path to mastery? What would you like to do differently or in a new way? What is a small attitude or action that makes you feel curious and joyful?

Example: I pick (at least) three things/ human leftovers/waste and leave nothing else than gratitude whenever I walk in a forest/park/beach/...

INSTANCE

Invite a memory to come back
Where was it? When? Who was there? What happened first?
What next?
How did it end?

PATTERN

What wisdom can you get from this instance?

SEED

What is an attitude/
practice/action/basic
move/new experience you
want to generate?

PRACTICE - NEW EXPERIENCES

Invite yourself to have new experiences.
Keep doing what you seeded for the next 3 days, then for another 9 days.

ON LANGUAGE AS CRAFT TOOL AND THE ROLE OF CHANGE

With "Close talking" Donata Schoeller (2019) introduced a new conceptualization of a speech act that takes into account the occurring of speech into an embodied context of a situation. Past situations are inherently connected to the speaker as her own embodied backgrounds, alive and participating in every speech act. When it takes place, 'close talking' can be recognized by the person who is formulating the utterance by its immediate, yet subtle effects such as deepening and clarifying the situation, while also transforming the involved meanings. What can be said in this way is a fresh formulation and a result of a tentative speech act that had no clearly identified referent at the beginning. Even though the transformation taking place in the embodied contexts may at first seem highly personal, its relevance can be communicated to others due to vast and wide backgrounds participating in the meaning-making (Schoeller, 2019, p. 282f quoted in Lindner, 2021).

As might be imagined, "material consciousness" is a phrase that causes philosophers to salivate. Is our consciousness of things independent of the things themselves? Are we aware of words in the way we feel an intestine by touch? Rather than get lost in this philosophical forest, it might be better to focus on what makes an object interesting. This is the craftsman's prior conscious domain; all his or her efforts to do good quality work depend on curiosity about the material at hand.

I want to make a simple proposal about this engaged material consciousness: we become particularly interested in the things we can change.

Richard Sennett, *The Craftsman*, p. 119f

PRACTICE

In this Highlight, I present the example of someone who is in the midst of a career change within the education sector. This person was driven by a desire to explore the concept of 'restructuring'.

It becomes clear how 'close talking' is supported by an attentive, experiential way of listening and creating space. By staying with the process – including enduring the process of searching within the unknown and the uncomfortable – the concept opens up, revealing contributing details. The meaning shifts, as it were, and changes in a way that allows the person to be present within it, causing them to breathe a palpable sigh of relief and enabling them to engage differently with the (still unresolved decision-making situation).

What is a key word from your childhood dream – one that you sense has a special meaning?

What does it mean for you?
What does it no longer mean?

Mastery is not merely a professional requirement for the labour market, what unites recognised masters is their insistence that mastery is not a privilege reserved for a select few talented individuals. Rather, it is something that fills our hearts when we immerse ourselves in depth, richness and precision. This immersion fulfills us and gives meaning to our lives.

Experiential Concept Coaching (ECC), rooted in the philosophical practices of 'Focusing' and 'Thinking at the Edge' (TAE), supports individual development by guiding us back to our own source of vitality and towards what wants to emerge: when everything is welcomed in, what reveals itself as truly relevant?

This Highlight brings together key aspects of mastery and experiential learning: playful openness and direct experience, fostered through creative attitudes; connection to what makes us unique and gives life meaning, often reflected in childhood dreams; the ability to "see more" through focused attention and disciplined practice, while also letting go to create an inner space where a precise "felt sense" of a situation can emerge; learning from both 'positive' and 'negative' experiences as meaningful patterns reveal the next step in development; and the importance of non-verbal symbolism and language as tools for creating meaningful and relevant change.

In doing so, we touch the surface and set it in motion. Further promising connections include, for example:

- Dealing with frustration, e.g. with „critical voices“.
- Staying on the edge of development, embracing uncertainty.
- Formulating one's own approach/theories that are both viable and open to being questioned.
- Social purpose and connectedness.

PRACTICE

Take another moment to settle under your linden tree and become aware of your breath. How is it flowing now?

Recall all the practices and aspects that were important to you. Invite what is most relevant to come to the fore.

With every breath in, you can invite another notion, insight or new quality to present itself.

With every breath out, you can choose to let go of anything you no longer need.

Write the very last sentence (or chapter) of your story of following your childhood dream and becoming a master.

MASTER EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING WITH ECC

Experiential

New ideas are developed by repeatedly “experiencing” into a topic or issue.

Concept

Here, ‘concepts’ are understood as the conceptual frameworks we need in order to communicate and find our bearings in the world. In the ECC, participants develop concepts that make sense to them by connecting to their „felt sense“ and assigning individual meaning to them.

Coaching

Supporting individuals, groups and teams through the process of developing new initiatives.

Experiential Concept Coaching (ECC) introduces you to experiential thinking and learning how to support individuals and groups in their personal growth and project development.

ECC is based on the person-centered approach developed by Carl Rogers (1902-1987). Eugen T. ovio Gendlin (1926-2017) continued his research on success factors in counseling and therapy conversations and drew attention on the interaction between experience and language. ECC is grounded in the philosophical practices “Focusing” and “Thinking at the Edge” (TAE). Both guide a language-sensitive process of meaning-making that always refers to a “Felt Sense”, a felt meaningfulness in relation to a topic. Change comes about when the meaning we live by is recognised and expressed in a way that feels authentic.

ECC was developed by Prof. Hejo Feuerstein (1945-2025) and Heinke Deloch. It introduces experiential learning through a 5-part continuing education course certified by the Society for Person-Centered Psychotherapy and Counseling (GwG) and by The International Focusing Institute (TIFI).

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- ECC1** Development of innovative (project) ideas.
 - ECC2** Coaching to support internal exploration and orientation processes
 - ECC3** Effective support for overcoming mental and work-related blocks
 - ECC4** Coaching teams and groups in the development of ideas and concepts
 - ECC5** Building a communication culture that fosters innovation



RESSOURCES

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