



Identifying the predictors of a Focusing attitude: The effect of interoception, alexithymia, and visual imagery

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Introduction

- **Focusing** is a six-step method of inward-directed attention to an unarticulated bodily felt sense, which promotes insight and cultivates a positive relationship to self (Gendlin, 1982).
- In the present study, we examined the role of interoception, alexithymia, and visual imagery in predicting people's capacity to Focus effectively and maintain a Focusing attitude.
- **Focusing attitude** was defined as the capacity to attend to bodily sensations, sustain an accepting attitude during focused exploration, and maintain a comfortable distance from the felt sense.

Methodology

- **63 participants** (Age: 24-85; 68.2% Female) with previous Focusing experience ($M = 10.34$ years, $SD = 10.5$, Range = 0.16 to 40 years) completed questionnaires assessing interoceptive awareness (MAIA; Mehling et al., 2018), Alexithymia (TAS-20; Bagby et al., 1994), visual imagery (VVIQ; Mark, 1973), and Focusing Attitude (FMS.A-E; Aoki & Ikemi, 2014).
- **38 participated** in one 15-minute Focusing session in addition to completing questionnaires.
- Focusing engagement was measured using the **Post-Image Focusing Checklist** (PIFC; Olsen, 1975) and **The Experiencing Scale** (EXP; Klein et al., 1969). Sessions were rated by two trained raters using the EXP process measure ($ICC = .91$).

Quantitative Results

Correlation analysis indicated that higher interoception, lower alexithymia and higher visual imagery symbolization capacities positively correlated with greater Focusing engagement.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	0.12	0.35												
2. Gender	0.10	0.30	.10											
3. Focusing attitude	0.10	0.44	.60*	-.09										
4. Interoception	0.12	0.42	.57*	-.10	.96**									
5. Emotion experiencing	-0.01	0.35	.12	-.26	.55*	.50								
6. Alexithymia	-0.00	0.40	-.50	.29	-.84**	-.82**	-.59*							
7. Difficulty Fantasizing	0.07	0.37	-.19	.41	-.62*	-.71**	-.44	.67*						
8. Vividness of visual imagery	0.02	0.44	.57*	-.04	.75**	.75**	.40	-.59*	-.69**					
9. PIFC	0.10	0.49	-.67*	-.02	-.65*	-.61*	-.48	.43	.45	-.86**				
10. PIC	0.05	0.48	-.73**	-.05	-.78**	-.75**	-.52	.63*	.50	-.90**	.93**			
11. PFC	0.11	0.40	-.52	.00	-.42	-.38	-.36	.15	.33	-.68*	.93**	.73**		
12. EXP Peak	0.06	0.35	.29	-.36	-.00	.06	-.25	-.21	-.34	.12	-.21	-.14	-.25	
13. EXP Mode	0.11	0.34	.43	-.35	.23	.24	-.02	-.35	-.43	.47	-.47	-.48	-.39	.80**

Linear regression models revealed that higher vividness of visual imagery, interoception, and lower alexithymia predicted greater Focusing Attitude.

Models	β	S.E.	t	R ²	F _(df)	p
Interoception Predicting Focusing Attitude						
Interoception (n = 45)	0.38	0.05	6.48	0.49	42 _(1, 43)	0.00***
Alexithymia Predicting Focusing Attitude						
Alexithymia (n = 46)	-0.02	0.01	-4.06	0.27	16.48 _(1, 44)	0.00***
Visual Vividness Predicting Focusing Attitude						
Vividness of visual imagery (n = 47)	1.22	0.05	2.40	0.12	5.74 _(1, 44)	= .02*

Note. * indicates $p < .05$; ** indicates $p < .01$; *** indicates $p < .001$.

Qualitative Themes

Thematic analysis of participants' perceived motivations and benefits of Focusing practice was conducted.

FOUR THEMES EMERGED:

- 1 **Increased sense of attunement to self and greater awareness of bodily and emotional experience.**
"It's a helpful tool for being more present in my bodily experience and becoming more aware of my emotional needs."
- 2 **Focusing as a method for carrying forward stuck processes and allowing fresh processes to emerge.**
"[Focusing] shows me new unexpected perspectives and new steps to be taken".
- 3 **Improved relationship with self and others.**
"It helps me process my experiences; it also gives me a meaningful community (and human contact), and purpose."
- 4 **A method for healing, personal growth, and wellbeing.**
"I focus to understand and heal myself, to reawaken latent life force energies, to tap into my body's wisdom."

Discussion

- Focusing attitude is associated with and predicted by higher interoception, vividness of visual imagery, and lower alexithymia scores.
- There are implications for enhancing procedures for teaching this valuable skill in general and clinical populations.
- **This study highlights the significance of body awareness and imagery in emotional processing, suggesting that clinicians should encourage attunement to physiological states and visual imagery to enhance well-being and meaning-making.**

References

