

Working with Anxiety: From Symptom to Self
10th Conference of the World Association for
Person-Centered and Experiential
Psychotherapy and Counseling

Anxiety Reduction with Clearing a Space: Working with Self or No-Self

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Note: This version includes minor revisions in wordings made during the presentation.

Outline of this workshop

- A little about my therapy...
- On Clearing a Space (CAS) and its therapeutic uses
- Demonstration of CAS as I do *in therapy*
- Discussion on Demonstration
- Demonstration and experiential work in pairs on CAS as I do *in meditation*
- Discussion of CAS and PCE theory: From anxiety to self or to no-self ?

On Clearing a Space (CAS)

- CAS is the first movement in Focusing Short-Form
- CAS consists of the following experiential procedures:
 - (1) Bringing attention to the body
 - (2) Sensing how you are inside, what feelings or issues are in the way of feeling all fine
 - (3) Acknowledging these feelings/issues one at a time
 - (4) Identifying the felt sense that comes with each feelings/issues
 - (5) Distancing each of these felt senses/feelings/issues [Inviting each of these felt senses/feelings/issues to where it wants to go]
 - (6) Staying with the “cleared space” once the felt senses/feelings/issues distance themselves

CAS in psychotherapy

- Although CAS was introduced as the first step of Focusing Short Form, CAS has been used by itself in therapy. Many case reports, articles and books appeared on this subject in Japan (a couple of them are shown here)
- However, the theoretical bases of CAS is not clearly articulated.

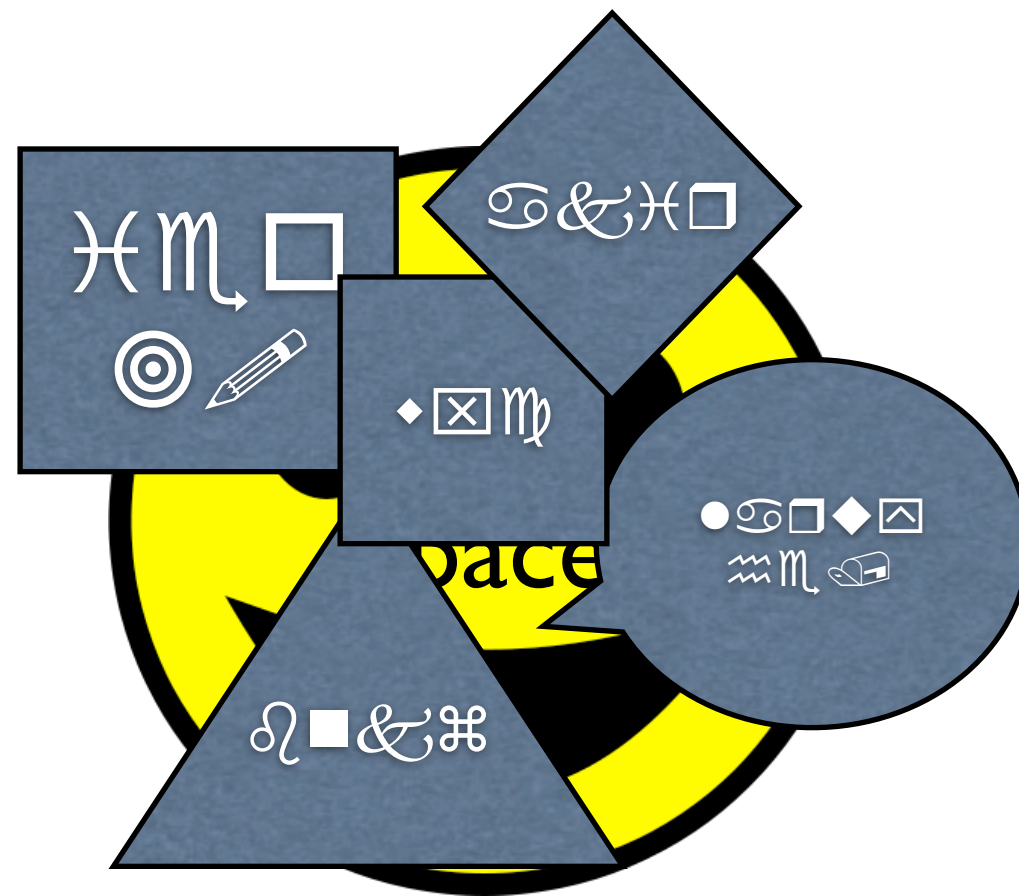


Professor Takeshi Masui



Professor Kanji Tokuda

CAS image - I



CAS image -2



CAS image -3




CAS Demonstration (as in therapy)

- The client (focuser) does not need to talk in detail about the feeling/issue. It can be as minimal as “I have an issue here”
- (1) Bringing attention to the body
- (2) Sensing how you are inside, what feelings or issues are in the way of feeling all fine
- (3) Acknowledging these feelings/issues one at a time
- (4) Identifying the felt sense that comes with each feelings/issues
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Discussion on Demonstration



***“The first thing to do when you seek
enlightenment
is to clean up your room
When you make a space in your room
You make a space in your self”***

---a Shingon Esoteric Buddhist monk at Koyasan, Japan

Clearing a Space Meditation (in pairs)

Some hints from Buddhism

- Imagery comes and goes. They are not necessarily “mine”
- Suffering (felt senses/feelings/issues) can be “contained”
- “Letting go” (non-attachment)
- When you look for issues/feelings that are in the way of feeling good, you are already assuming that issues exist, and so you disturb the space. Wait until something comes, and if nothing comes, just stayed in the clear space.

Clearing a Space Meditation (in pairs)

- Sit in pairs (not directly facing each other).
- Each person meditates in his/her own way. Bring your attention to each breath.
- When “something comes” (felt senses/issues/feelings) it can “go away” with your exhaling breath.
- When “something” does not go away with the breath, tell your partner: “Something’s here”.
- The partner asks: “What’s the felt sense of that?”; “Where does it want to go?”; “OK?” [If the “something” does not distance itself, ask “can you imagine a different place for it?”] The partner can remain in meditative position.
- You do not have to alternate with each other in saying that “something’s here”. The role of meditator and guide is not designated.
- 8-minutes and 2 more minutes for silent meditation (total 10 min)

DISCUSSION*

How does all this fit with Person-Centered Theory?

- CAS is demonstrated to be effective for anxiety. Yet the experience of CAS leads us not “from symptom to self” but “from symptom to no-self”.
- Somehow, “self” or “no-self” seems like a superficial argument. For example, Rogers (1961) wrote that: “the good life is a *process*, not a state of being.” He also gave three characteristics (or *paths*, as it seems to me) to this process; (1) openness to experience, (2) increasing existential living; (3) an increasing trust in his organism. Although not explicit at this time, I am *sensing* some general agreement between these and CAS.

Thank you for participating
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