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Our Internal Weather: A Way of Symbolizing our experiencing

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1. What is Our Internal weather?

In Japanese language, we use weather terms to express our feelings. For example, we say, "Kimochi ga Hareta." This literally means, "My feeling has become blue sky," meaning, "Now I am relieved," when something relieves our stress or when a felt shift is achieved. There are expressions like, "Kokoro ga samui (My heart is cold = feel cold inside)" "Kokoro ga atatakai (My heart is warm)" "Kokoro ni Kaze ga huku (Wind is blowing in my heart = feeling lonely or vain). We say, "He is in a low pressure," when someone is in a bad mood. When scolded by strict Father or a boss, we say, "Struck by a thunderbolt." I do not have much knowledge about the languages, but I suspect there might be many expressions of feelings in weather terms.

In Focusing sessions, we hear expressions like "Black clouds are spreading in the chest," or "I can not see anything as we are in deep fog."

I had a memorable Focusing session ten years ago. It was when I lived a quiet life teaching Yoga and just met my Focusing teacher. Whenever I focused with him, I always felt "slightly cloudy." There were nothing specially burdensome, but it was not clear. The particular Focusing session started in the same way, but at a moment I felt the strong flash of light and energy at my abdomen. Then the clouds were getting thinner and thinner, and finally the sky became totally clear and I felt refreshed. After that experience, this refreshed feeling keeps coming back to my daily meditation. I came to think that Focusing is crucial to my meditation practice. The meditation for me is being with my essential self. Focusing showed me how to do it.

"Our internal weather," a way of introducing and facilitating Focusing, was born from my own experience. I know that any human being has a Sun inside his or her body. When the power of sun is strong, the experiencing process is carried forward through felt shifts. When the power is down, you can get and feel the felt senses but it hardly changes spontaneously. The power of sun in a depressed person might be so weak that their internal sky was dark with thick clouds and would not change easily.

The weather is very familiar to us. As the weather is surrounding us outside, there is an internal weather inside us. The weathers might be even interacting with each other.

Around the time when I came to know Focusing and my internal weather is clearing away, one of my Focusing partners who was a school nurse told me a story. A boy in the third grade came to her school infirmary. She asked him, "What's the matter?" but he did not reply and remained silent. She asked him "Do you have a stomachache? Or, do you feel feverish?" He just shook his head. Trying to understand his situation, she finally managed to ask a question "KOKORO NO TENKI WA DO-U? How is your internal weather?" The boy

answered, "It is pouring down." So she offered the bed saying, "How about taking a little rest in the bed till the rain subsides?" But the boy said, "I am OK now," with smile, and went back to his classroom.

Hearing this story, I noticed that the weather metaphor is a good way to get in touch with our felt sense. Being asked about our internal weather, we can easily be aware of our experiencing. Also I noticed that children have a strong power inside which bring a felt shift just by noticing their experiencing.

Then, I found that drawing a picture of our internal weather could be a good way of focusing alone. As you may have experienced when you focus alone, you tend to lose the felt sense on the way or suffer from the attacks of inner critics. But having a sheet of paper, which I gave you, it becomes easier to focus alone. It makes a good enough listener.

Methods to make a collage or draw a picture of felt sense are widely known. But what is unique here is that trying to express our felt sense in a "weather" metaphor. The advantages of the weather metaphor are: 1) it is easy even for small children to express, 2) it is such a fun that even children can concentrate, 3) it is a sure way to get in touch with the experiencing process, 4) there are freedom and flexibility which allow you to expand your images from the weather and to include the scenery, specific items and even to make a story, 5) it is convenient and easy to practice in a group, 6) there seem to be a therapeutic effect to be aware of the Sun.

In Japan, we have a short verse, HAIKU. It has the restrictions, as it has only 17 syllables, divided into 5,7,5 and there should be seasonal words. Those restrictions give the poem depth. The shortness eliminates the excess of explanation. And we express our feelings with seasonal words that are the crystallization of the natural phenomenon and human life. My Focusing teacher actually is also a teacher of HAIKU too. He always says, "Making HAIKU and Focusing is the same thing." It means that Making HAIKU requires Focusing way of process. Here is an example of English HAIKU, which will give you an idea of what HAIKU is like.


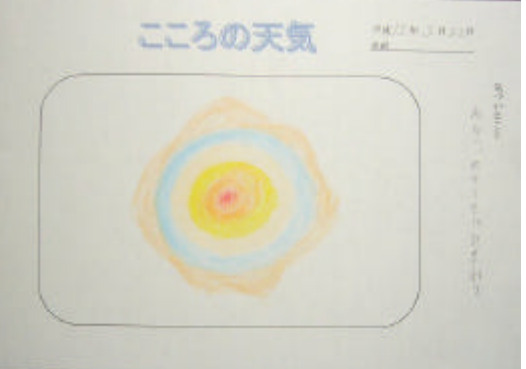
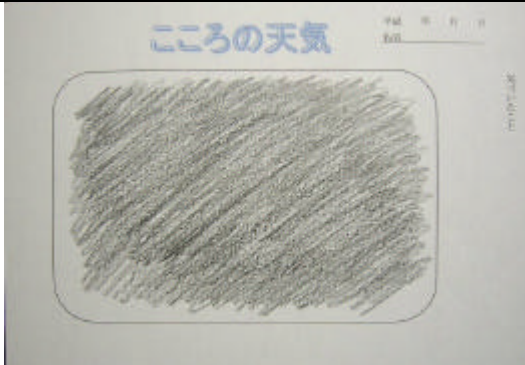

The old pond;
A frog jumps in, -
The sound of the water.

In Japanese, "Furuikeya kawazutobikomizu mizunowoto" by Matsuo Basyou

Drawing of our internal weather on this small sheet of paper gives our expression the depth. As with HAIKU, the restriction and stimulation of this small flame and the metaphor of weather bring our expression simplified and depth.

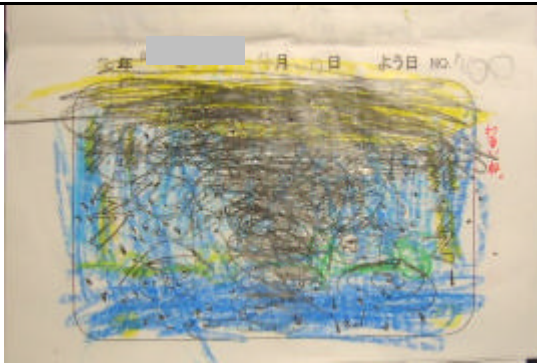
Now we are going to show the examples of the pictures of our internal weather.

2 Examples

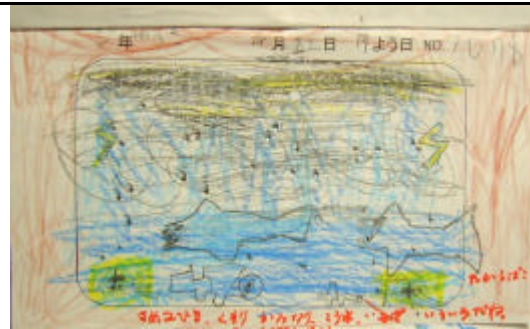
	
<p>1) The first one is my own drawing which was from one peaceful Sunday. It was sunny and the ray is soft and warm.</p>	<p>2) The second is the one I draw just before I went to bed. I felt just like this.</p>
	
<p>3) This is the picture of one of my clients who suffered from depression. It is pitch dark.</p>	<p>4) This is the same person's drawing two months later. I advised her to do some volunteer work in a nursing home as preparatory activity before going back to her usual work. As her worked as a listening companion to the elderly people living in the home, the sun started to show through clouds.</p>

One of my Focusing partners who is a teacher in an elementary school, Ms. Dateyama, gave an opportunity to the 20 second grades in her class to draw internal weather almost every day. Here are changes of the drawing of two of them.

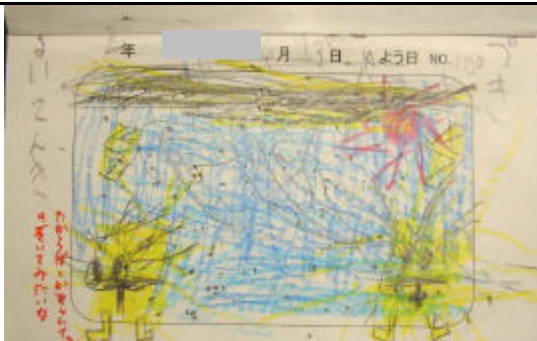
A boy A is shy and hesitate to talk in front of people. Also when he is anxious he secludes into himself and won't come out. He stutters and sometimes does wrong or naughty things to attract attentions.



5) This picture is one from the earlier stage of his internal weather practice. There are lightening, tornado and shower.



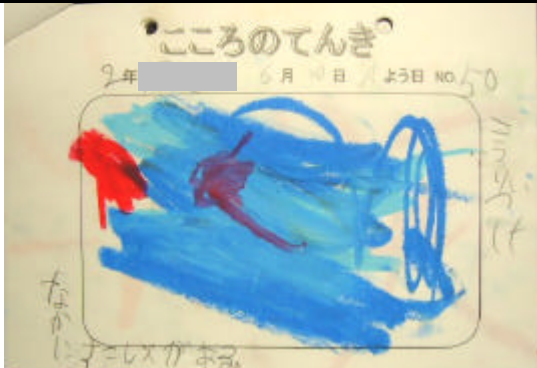
6) Five days later, he drew this one. The weather is still bad, but there are two treasure boxes on the bottom of the sea where sharks are swimming around.



7) The next day, a face and legs attached to the treasure box and you see the Sun.



8) The next day, he drew jewelry and wrote "fine weather."



9) This is a drawing from two months later. He wrote, "iced, there is fire inside."



10) Just after the previous drawing, he drew this one. There are two suns. It is all sunny

His changes could be summarized as the following. He drew several pictures of his internal weather, and it finally became a fine weather. He had not spoken up in the public but came to raise his hand and speak up. Also at home he changed to greet and welcome family guests at the door. The resistance to draw pictures decreased, and he came to express his feelings into the pictures, as in writings. In a questionnaire, he answered that drawing our internal weather practice makes friends. The story develops in his sequence of internal weather pictures.

Now we are going to see pictures by a girl B. B is a sensitive girl and has good friends. She is also moralistic and assertive. But she worries even a subtle things and frequently asked some advice from her teacher Ms. Dateyama when she was in her first grade.



11) In this picture she drew her best friend C and her house.



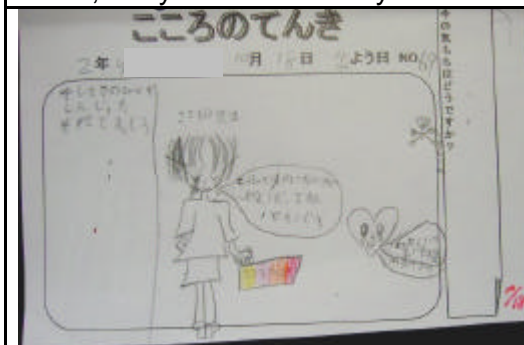
12) In this picture she play with C. They are in a very good mood.



13) Next day, a boy appeared instead of C. He is said to be an imaginary friend, They seem to be very close.



14) In a few days later, two of them got married.



15) But one week later, the imaginary friend disappeared due to somebody's wrong doing. Instead of him, a teacher of heart appeared and consoles her saying, "Now you are alone but you can do it. Good bye!" B seems to learn to be stronger and less dependent to a friend.

B stopped to come to talk to the teacher for help. Drawing her internal weather becomes a time to resolve her problem by herself. Here we show the story of getting married. There were other stories such as a sprout of heart appeared and grows under her care. She sometimes wrote her internal weather in sentences. She came to like "Our internal weather practice" and draw or write also at home.

We asked the children to write their comment on the "our internal weather" practice. They answered, "I feel refreshed after I draw bad things in my heart," "My heart gets cleared. I would like to keep it everyday," "When I see the previous drawings, I get energized," "I do not have to lie to my heart," "I learn to use words which fits to the situation," "The drawing of my internal weather sometimes shows up in my dream," "I go to school looking forward to


drawing my internal weather," "Drawing our internal weather make me get closer to friends."

Their classroom teacher Ms. Dateyama also drew her internal weather. She told that it made her to be kind and warm to the children. Recently, she started letting the children make a pair and show and tell their drawings each other and listen to each other's feelings.

A child who could not write essays said, "I could write only one sentence and nothing came after that before, but when I tried to feel in a way of our internal weather practice, sentences came one after another, and I wrote an essay."

As the changes of class, Ms. Dateyama says that student's concentration, expressive, and introspection ability have increased, discipline problems have decreased, and the resistance to composition have decreased. Once I visited her class, and saw children painting their internal weather. I was surprised that they confronted very quietly and concentrated.

Next I show another pictures drawn by sixth grade boy.

	
<p>16) An armed shark is swimming. He said that the ship is himself. The ship is anchored and the smoke from the funnel makes clouds which brings rain. He seems to have a strong self. I ask the children to write an explanation about the drawing of their internal weather. I think the verbalization of the symbolized images prompts more self-understanding.</p>	<p>17) Here is another picture of the same boy. The theme is "different shapes." In his explanation, he wrote that the ones under the surface have not had clear shapes yet. He seems to know that there are things that he is not aware of yet. It is him who taught me that it is a good idea to have a title of the drawing. I would like to do so from now on.</p>
	<p>OUR INTERNAL WEATHER Date _____ Name _____</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; width: 100%; height: 100%; margin: 10px 0;"></div> <p>Title: _____ Explanation: _____</p> <p>19) A seat for English. The size is A5.</p>

Akiko Doi, who teaches at the school for nurses, tried this method once in her psychology class in her school. Here are the student's comments. "After the class, we shared the

pictures and comments. It was interesting that each one was different," "It seems to be a good idea to keep this everyday practice of my own," "I did it carelessly, but the drawing fit to my feeling. I found it great," "I was surprised that just expressing my internal weather on the paper made me feel relieved," "I found that this might be very helpful when I cannot figure out my own feelings," "Putting it onto a picture made my vague feelings clearer and I felt better and relieved."

3 Exercise or Experiential work.

I am going to read a manual of our internal weather (see below). Hearing this you draw a picture of your internal weather using seats (see figure 19) and colored pencils (they must include gray pencil to paint cloud).

After finish the work, you make pairs and show your pictures each other. First, one of the pair speaks about one's picture and another listens. Second, changing the parts.

If listener wants to say something about picture, he/she should say like this (for example seeing picture 16)"There is a family of fish isn't it." Painter might say something or not, but it not matters. The listener can close the painter by saying this.

4 The method of drawing internal weather

<First instruction>

"Although we cannot see the heart, it feels many things. We want to express how it feels, and to have someone hear it. However, since we cannot express well how the heart feels or do not have someone to hear it, we have often given up trying to express the heart. Then, in the end, we do not understand anymore how we feel, and we grow unsure about ourselves.

"Now I will show you how to express your internal weather. You compare your heart to weather, and this will help you to express how you feel in a way that is easy to understand.

"When you feel fine, your internal weather is very nice. When you are worried about things, your internal weather is cloudy. If you are sad, it may be raining. When you are very angry, you can say that there is thunder inside.

"Internal weather changes often, just like the weather outside. A clear sky may suddenly cloud up, or a cloudy sky may become sunny. Clear skies are not always good. Sometimes rain and wind feel good to you. It is important that you understand exactly how your heart feels right now, OK, let's begin."

<Instruction for each session>

"Please sit up straight in a chair and relax your head and shoulders. Close your eyes, and calm breathing will help your body relax.

(Wait about 30 seconds) "How do you feel? Do your body and heart feel relaxes? *1 OK, now pay attention to your chest and belly. And please ask yourself, "Is my heart clear now, or cloudy?"

(Wait for 10 seconds) "How it is? Can you see your internal weather? What you see may not only be weather but also a view, a color, or an image. Please draw what you see on the paper I gave you with a crayon or colored pencil, an image. A regular pencil or a pen is also okay, if you don't have anything else. If you cannot see an image, looking at the paper can also help.

(After a few minutes) "When you finish drawing, please look at what you drew once again. Then compare the picture to how you feel now. If it seems different, please adjust your picture.

(After about 1 minute) "If you are finished, please write some comments in the unfilled section of your paper. If you understand why the weather looks the way it dose, please write that as well." *2

*1 You may perform clearing a space here.

*2 Sharing among neighbors and group members is also good.

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