Practice

Angela 2 — Week 1, Day 2, Session 4 — 60 minutes

Summary: News of a rear-end collision opens the session. Russell guides Barbara in welcoming fear, sadness, and an old injury in her back, including a childhood car crash and a later blow at a water park. He then speaks of turning that care inward, placing the I in awareness rather than habit, and being the space in which life occurs.

News from the road

[Participant:] Well, first, I just heard about Barbara and — Barbara and Myra.

[Participant:] What is Myra?

[Participant:] They were just in a car and got rear-ended.

[Russell:] So —

[Participant:] No, the three of them were in a car, coming back from Whole Foods, and someone came into them. So there's a little shake-up. It's not terrible, right? But a little shake-up, and a request for any Feldenkrais people who might be willing to do some hands-on work, maybe at dinner times.

[Russell:] Great. And Sisi — Sisi, is there a third that's wanted?

[Participant:] Great.

[Russell:] Thank you, Carl.

Welcome, Myra. We were just saying about your excitement over Whole Foods.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] How are you doing?

[Participant:] So if you want, we just got three to five volunteers. And if you would like, we can figure that out at a break — who, when, if.

[Russell:] How are you doing?

[Participant:] Good. Yeah.

[Russell:] The person who hit you — right, right. Sure.

So, are any of you needing anything right now that you know of?

[Participant:] Yeah, well, that's welcome.

[Russell:] Would you like some company with that? In other words, would you like to take a few minutes to be guided, or would you rather just kind of be with yourself?

[Participant:] I think it's a big thing, so maybe not on the first day.

[Russell:] Okay, so absolutely fine, not on the first day. And I'm absolutely fine with you, on the first day, looking at whatever you want to look at.

This is living

[Russell:] Okay, so take a moment. Let's take a moment.

And let's just see. This is living. We're learning about living, and everyone in this room's life now includes this incredibly huge vehicle running into three women in a really small, cheap rental car.

I believe you. I believe you.

So — I congratulate your capacity to create cartoons.

Okay, so here you are. Really, what I'm saying — and when I make that joke, there's no disrespect. What I'm saying is that this is real, this is true, but it's all of our life right now, in different ways.

Every one of us has probably been in some kind of accident. And now it's here. Maybe it's good to spend a few minutes with it, and maybe it finishes in a few minutes, maybe it's longer. We'll see, okay?

So I invite you to close your eyes.

Anybody can join in however they want.

And just first of all feel that you're here in this room, that you can feel the seat underneath you.

You literally feel your bottom.

Take your time. Really let your bottom, and your connection to that support, be really conscious.

Settle down.

Really feel your arms resting on your legs. There's weight and contact there.

Your hands are touching each other. You can feel that.

And your feet are on the floor. You can sense your right foot there, in contact with the ground. And your left foot.

Let all of this that's here supporting you, that you can sense — let that be here for a moment.

And as you're with that, then also welcome the sounds that are around you, so that you're not only in your body, you're also in this space here.

And the breath comes and goes, and you can sense you're here in this chair, the sounds around you, and the breath is here. Coming and going.

As you're welcoming all of that, just bring your attention into your inner life, to places you tend to feel things inside — chest and belly, lower belly, all in there.

Just kind of a gentle invitation. How is it in there? Anything wanting some company, some attention?

And see if anything comes. What comes.

When you're in touch with something, you might let me know what calls you. And there's no right way to do it, no wrong way. You can just see what.

A big bag of stuff

[Participant:] Well, there's kind of a big bag of stuff.

Oh my god, I can't believe you got rear-ended again. It's like the twentieth time in my life that this has happened.

And then there's, oh, you're a terrible driver, and now you've injured two other people who were in the car with you. Not a good driver.

And then there's sort of anger at the other driver, like, oh my god, how could you plow into the back of me?

[Russell:] Yeah. Maybe just pause there and just feel that big bag of stuff.

There's a big bag. One part of that bag is all, oh my god, it's so many times this has happened. Twenty times or more. And just feel. Let that place that's sensing all that know that you know that's there. That thing is sitting in that bag.

And then, next to that in the bag, is this other place of, oh, these other people. I'm such a bad driver, and I injured other people, and oh, kind of blamey or bad feeling.

[Participant:] Yeah. There's a lot of energy that comes with that. It's a sad place.

[Russell:] Right. So there's a real sad. A regret kind of feeling maybe, but at least sad.

And again, the place in that bag that you sense, that has all that sad about the other people — just let your inner life know you're with that, that you know it's there.

And so you're not ignoring it, and you're not just inside of it, but you're sensing it.

Can you feel it in your body at all, how that's there?

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] What's that like there, Barbara?

[Participant:] Well, my body's really tense. Just shielding, guarding. Like the musculature and bones and stuff. But my feelings are just — it's just a big blob of sad.

[Russell:] Yeah, a big blob of sad.

[Participant:] And there's kind of, underneath the words — I'm always good at describing things, but there's something like a really afraid feeling. Really scary. Like really scared.

[Russell:] Yeah. Really scared.

Let's go really slow here. Go slow, and feel there's this blob of sad, and go under that, and there's this really scared feeling.

Sense that, how that's living in your body right now. Really scared place.

[Participant:] Right, right. It brings up all of that. There's a whole lot of fear around cars and car accidents, and it brings up I'm not a good driver, and all those memories.

[Russell:] Just with that. That fearful place, about all that with cars.

And let that place inside know that you know it's there.

And see if it has more it wants you to hear about what makes that so hard.

[Silence 36 seconds]

Yeah, right there. Be right with that place right there that you're feeling. Right there. It's got all that in it.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Really be with that place, like you're with a good friend. That is all of that feeling with the cars. Be right with that.

Very, very gently check if that place is needing anything from you right now. Anything that would help it to feel not alone in its scariness.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] It's showing you all that. It's got a kind of complexity to it. It's got a past element and a future element. Let it know you hear all that. You see just how big and complex it is in there.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Keep welcoming what it has to show you. It's a past and a future aspect. What else does it want you to see?

A little girl in the car

[Participant:] Well, I don't actually know what to do about it. What's there.

[Russell:] Okay, so see if it would feel alright to say this. Something inside would really like to know what to do about it.

[Participant:] It has to do — it's about my father, the whole thing.

When we were very little, my dad stopped and was in a hardware store, and we waited in the car for him, and it seemed like forever. And there were five of us little kids, and my mom's trying to keep us all quiet. He was in there a long time, and then right next to our car, there was a head-on collision.

And people screaming and all this stuff. I'd forgotten about it until a few years ago, but of course my dad came running out to see what was wrong, and there wasn't anything wrong with us, except really scary.

So that's the past. I think that's the really scary.

[Russell:] Yeah, let's go slow here. Let's go slow, Barbara, so you really let that little girl know you're with her. The place in your body that felt that fear.

And just let it know you're here. It's not alone.

And see if you sense it bodily, if it might like a hand on it. Just let it know that you know just how scary that was.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] What's that feel like, to just be with it?

Keep feeling. Your body is feeling something. It's letting something happen. Is that? That moves through you.

[Participant:] They're older, and they're in great health, and doing great. But he just turned ninety, and they still drive. And he drives, and he's not a bad driver. They drive all the way from Florida to Michigan by themselves, seriously.

And I'm just really worried that they won't stop driving. They're not senile or sick or anything. They have the right to make their own decisions, but I'm really worried that we will get in a car accident.

[Russell:] Right, right. So when you just really be with that place, that place that's really carrying all that about cars, and it connects to a worry, thinking about your dad.

And again, to be with that, and let that inner place know you're with it. That you are present with all of that that's coming about the cars.

[Participant:] Still, I just don't know how to protect them. I don't know how to help them.

[Russell:] Right, right.

[Participant:] They're stubborn.

[Russell:] Right. Yeah.

Okay, and you're sensing that place that really wishes it could protect, and take care of, and control, right? And recognizes that you just can't.

Feeling into that reality. Again, noticing — can that be welcomed here?

[Participant:] Yeah, that's true.

[Russell:] You can't determine that, and some way right now in your body, you're sensing both the fear and the fact that you can't control that. And that's living here in you. Can you sense that?

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Yeah, so really let that be there. It's very important. This is what welcoming is.

This is all here.

And I'm going to suggest, and throw it out if it's not helpful or accurate. I may be completely off.

Maybe there's something about your own driving. A theory about not being able to predict what's going to happen. Some part of you in there that carries concern about that.

If that's true, feel how that's living in a bodily way.

[Participant:] I have a teenage son who's now starting to drive.

[Russell:] Oh, yeah. Right. Oh, yeah, couldn't get any better. We've got a son, teenage driver. We've got a dad. You've got twenty rear-ends. Oh, yeah.

Okay, go slow here. Can you say that again? Go slow with this.

Not a bad driver

[Participant:] I don't feel like I'm a bad driver. I've just been run into a lot.

[Russell:] Okay, go slow. Really let your body have this, and notice anything that objects, or if there's a good sense — if one can say, in a way that feels whole, I really am not a bad driver.

Just be with that part for a moment.

[Participant:] Well, what comes up is, well, you must not be a very good driver, because you've been in so many cars.

[Russell:] Right? You have that thought. You have that thought.

Okay, you can acknowledge that thought is there.

And we don't, at this point, know where all these rear-ends are coming from, right? Who knows? It could be connected to a little girl sitting in a car. We don't know.

But what we know is that bringing the light of your consciousness to all of this, how it's been living in your body, is very helpful.

And so really let yourself have the bodily sense of, I'm really — I'm a good enough driver.

I'm a good enough driver.

And you're checking to see if that feels right. See what comes with that.

[Participant:] Well, there's feelings. There's pushback.

[Russell:] Right.

Okay, so there's something inside that says, well, wait a second, we've got too many examples of things not going well. And that part really wants you to listen.

So turn towards the place that is really questioning your capacity. Let's welcome that place.

And can you feel that in a bodily way? The place that is questioning Barbara's driving.

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] How's that alive in there? What's the bodily sense of that?

[Participant:] Well, it's sort of — oh, it feels like being hit. Feels like being hit hard in the back.

[Russell:] So really, let's go slow here.

It's a place inside that's been hit hard in the back, that maybe wants to remind you, wants you to really hear, really wants to protect you. Say, whoa, I'm worried about you.

Is it something like that? Does that energy feel right?

Check into it, the place that gets hit in the back. What's it wanting you to hear?

[Silence 49 seconds]

[Russell:] Yeah. Right, yeah. Yes.

Yeah, well, keep doing that. That's what we want. Yeah, keep going. Actually do that motion if it helps. Let the scarves come out. Really.

Feel. That's right. Let it go through your body, even though it feels to some part of you like it's endless. The scarves have an end, I promise.

But really keep allowing them, and feel that. Something comes towards your back, and —

Go for the next scarf here. Yep, reach for that one.

Hit in the back

[Participant:] Well, okay. I was really badly injured. I was hit in the back, not in a car.

My husband and my kids and I had gone to a water park, and everybody wanted to go down this one slide that was covered. And so we all go up there, and Hannah goes, and then Mark and I are standing there, and I felt like I heard a voice say, let him go first.

And I just was like, no, I'm not gonna let him go first. So I get in the slide, and I go down, and I'm getting ready to stand up in the pool. It was like chest deep, I guess. And there was a person at the top, supposedly spacing people, and so just as I was getting up out of the water, Mark came rocketing down the slide, and of course he can't see anything.

So he hit me in the back from behind, and it was like someone had hit me with a log. I literally thought I saw my sternum fly out here, seriously, and I just thought, okay, blood's gonna come spurting out of somewhere, and I'm just gonna die. This is it.

But I have a husband and two kids who are now screaming, and somehow I walked over to the edge of the pool. I'm a swimmer, so I'm comfortable in water. And he's freaking out, and the kids are freaking out, and meanwhile I'm like, okay, I think I'm not gonna die. I haven't fainted yet. But anyway.

[Russell:] Let's pause here. Let's just pause here, Barbara, and let how that's living here now.

Feel what your body wants you to get about this at this moment. You've been through the old story many times, okay? We know that's an old story.

And right now, how does this want to move forward, this energy that's been living in that back?

Just, you're not trying to push on it. You're just gonna settle in your chair. Let that place know you know how much it's been through.

And you're here with it, not from the old place, but right now, in this chair, right here.

And you'll find a welcoming of this place. Say, I know this has been living in here. I'm with you.

Just surround it with your care. See what it's needing. As if this place is one of your children that you're taking care of.

Let it keep knowing, I'm with you. And you're listening for what it needs from you right now.

[Participant:] I think my body just wants to be acknowledged, that it was really badly hurt.

[Russell:] Yeah, yeah.

[Participant:] And I never really could grieve about it, because every time I would talk about it, my heart would be so — I felt so bad. I just couldn't.

[Russell:] Right, it was hard.

Right, it was nobody's fault. Just like it wasn't this woman's fault. It's nobody's fault, but it really hurts.

And this really hurt. And maybe — is there a way that you can touch your chest, or let your hands communicate something? I don't know if it would feel good.

I really get how hard it's been, and maybe even how lonely it's been in there, because you were protecting all these other people from your pain.

However it's living in there, let that place know it's not alone right now. You're with it, and you know how challenging it's been.

Very gently, you're listening for anything it might want or need from you right now.

[Silence 52 seconds]

[Participant:] I guess I just never really acknowledged how sad that was — how badly it felt.

[Russell:] Yeah. Right.

Yeah, it's so important that that place in your body really know that you are with it, and you know just how hard it's been, and just how painful it's been.

See? What's it feel like when it hears that?

[Participant:] Sort of — I've worked really hard to get mobility back. Those places. And there's still a lot that's needed, but. I'm not always that gentle.

[Russell:] You think?

And really, really, really. Let that place receive this kind of care. The kind of care you'd give to someone you really cared about, who you knew had that kind of pain, that kind of struggle.

And really, we're gonna stay here until that place inside feels really cared for.

Yeah, is it receiving that? Is it feeling that care from you right now?

[Participant:] Yeah.

[Russell:] Yeah.

[Participant:] You only care about me so that you can do what you want to do.

[Russell:] So it's not quite trusting that it's a pure caring, right.

[Participant:] Right. Just so you can do what you want.

[Russell:] Let it know you really hear that. That's really important.

Let it know, because there is that place inside of you that does try to push everything and control everything. And let it know you know that that's also in here, and that it's worried about that place. The pushy Barbara. It's worried about that place.

Let it know that you hear it, and that you know this other place is in there also.

It's very important that this place know that you, in your receptive, caring place, know how it is in there.

And if it's true, Barbara, let it know that you really want a different relationship to the painful parts, and the parts that are trying to mobilize as much as possible. That you're not going to get rid of any of them. They all are a part of you. But a different way of being with them.

See if that feels true.

Let that place, the hurt place, know. You understand if it doesn't trust you yet. And that you're gonna do your best to earn its trust, by checking in with it, by listening to it also.

How does it respond to that?

[Participant:] We'll see.

[Russell:] We'll see, right. That's right, it's being honest with you.

Feel it in your body. Feel what it's like in your chest and back right now. What's the feeling in there?

[Participant:] Well, there's a deep realization, and it's just so clear to me. I'm always — get it done.

[Russell:] Right.

Let's take one more minute here and just feel the bodily sense of just being with this tender part of Barbara.

And I very much want to encourage you not to get rid of the part that pushes. It has a place in you, but a different place than it's had in the past.

And you are not the pushy one. You are the one who can be with the pushy one, and with the hurt one.

Feel what that's like in your body, to be that spacious being that can welcome these different parts of you, that each have a role in your life.

How's that feeling right now?

[Participant:] Thank you.

[Russell:] Well, it was a beautiful cascade of silks coming out of your pocket.

Cosmic brilliance

[Russell:] So I just want to congratulate you. You really wanted to study welcoming. So you went right to one of the central places in your life, right?

From the car accidents to getting hit from behind — I mean, I'm not joking. That is cosmic brilliance.

Do you see cosmic brilliance functioning?

Brilliance. Function. Bringing forth, through life itself — I mean, we can learn to do it in more gentle ways. But some of us are dynamic folks. And that's one of the things you're learning.

Right now, do you see the meta-learning there? Are you actually following me here?

This goes layer upon layer. We just added a third layer.

The third layer that we're adding now is that you do things in dynamic ways. You've got a big energy, and you are learning, right now on this spot, to honor the more subtle, quieter places that need care.

And I can almost guarantee — I don't have a crystal ball — but as your caregiving to those inner places comes forward, you will see a difference in your relationship to the physical universe.

Right? As of right now, as of today, you tend to do things in these big, big dynamic ways, right?

And we got this opportunity to explore this life pattern, and it connects to a little kid, and it connects to past and future, it connects to many, many things, right?

But what we got to — what your body, in its wisdom, brought forward was, oh, there's this place that really needs taking care of. Not just pushed through, but really taken care of.

And you know how to take care of other beings, and that energy needs to be turned around.

And it's just so beautiful that your body speaks so directly.

[Participant:] Thank you.

[Russell:] Thank you.

Yeah, but literally, the manifestation in the physical universe is, we could say, we manifest things more concretely when we're not bringing our attention in a subtle enough way.

As your attention is coming forward, you're caring, then we don't need as big objects of attention.

Do you get what I'm saying? That there's a relationship between the quality of attention and the size of the object of attention that's needed for our seeing.

So as we get more subtle, things actually go deeper and bigger, but they move from predominantly earth elements, where we're banging into things, to more air, and also more fire. Where actually the consciousness and the physical world are not separate.

Thought and matter are not separate. Thinking and body are not separate.

These are different manifestations of phenomena vibrating at denser levels, meaning slower levels, so they're more graphic. Get more into thought, they get more subtle.

We want to cultivate this capacity of awareness, so we actually become less destructive beings. We demand less in the physical world. Our bodies soften. The joints get more flexible, because the solidifications that we've created can unwind.

What the others saw

[Russell:] Well, hello. Wow. Go ahead, yeah.

[Participant:] Barbara was so exemplary with this woman, and assuring her this is not going to be a million-dollar suit. And the woman's crying. And Barbara was just so kind and loving to this woman, and embraced her.

[Russell:] Oh, yeah.

[Participant:] The woman's crying, because of stress with her father. I just admired that, as an observer.

And the fact that she hasn't had a car accident for ten years, due to a beautiful crystal.

And I thought, driving away, the power of intention. She's been driving with that crystal for ten years without having an accident. So then we talked, kind of debriefed, on the way back about that.

I just felt that she was so caring and accepting of the situation.

[Russell:] Yeah.

Well, that's an example of the kind of energy that Barbara's being invited to turn toward. Towards that one inside, towards the little girl, towards the place that got hit in the back.

That's our work. And most of us have stories that say, I can do that for others, but it's somehow not right to do it for myself, or it's somehow self-indulgent, or I just don't know how.

Well, for me, that's the epitome of arrogance. It looks like humility. It's actually arrogance, because if we can't take care of the life force that we've been blessed with — that is the place where, by taking care of that, we liberate the energies for truly caring for others.

So it's an invitation. Turn the light around.

And you notice what we keep looking at, and this will get clearer as we go along. And again, this is way, way further than I would normally do on a first day, but I want to bring it now, and we'll just keep coming back to it.

Where we place the I

[Russell:] I'm very, very cautious about where I place the I. The I, whenever I am this or I am that.

And most of us place the I in our strongest habits. I am very aggressive, or I am a pushy person, or I am a kind of mild person. We place the I in our strongest habit of manifestation.

One of the things that you saw in our interaction is, what I kept reminding Barbara of was that she could be with this place inside — whether it was the little girl, whether it was the back place — that she was the presence that could be with these. Which is a completely different relationship to one's inner life.

And when you can remember that you are the space in which all of this is occurring — you are the space, just like this room is the space in which this class is occurring — there's this vast field, sometimes called consciousness, sometimes called mind, sometimes even called self.

There's this vast field, and there's the capacity for noticing what occurs in this field. And what occurs are things like bells, and sounds, and thoughts, and feelings, and sensations.

And when we can remember that we are the space in which life is occurring, and we are the capacity for noticing, for being with it, even for taking care of it, then however life is manifesting, we can learn how to allow its energy to move forward.

And when we have patterns that are repeating, it's an energy that's wanting to move forward that hasn't found its forward way yet.

So how do we do it? Well, we learn how to welcome it, and how to be with it, and let it unfold, unfurl, unwind out of our bodily experience.

There'll be a lot more about this as we go on.

[Participant:] Yeah, a question. Using the word it — it, object — seems to take it out of the personal. Instead of saying, I am caring for me, or I'm caring for the place inside me that holds this experience, by saying I'm caring for it — is there a reason for that?

[Russell:] Reason for that? Yeah.

Okay, so it's wonderful to speak about the place inside. I like to use that quite a bit. This part of me is beautiful.

When I'm sensing someone needs a little bit more space, then an it language can make it a little bit further. If it seems like, by saying this part of me, that that part's gonna take over very quickly, we need a little bit more distance.

So if we don't need that, then yeah, use the more personal.

It can go either way. It can be a distancer in an unhelpful way, or it can give you space in a helpful way.

Okay. Next. Anything you want or need about all of that? That was a pretty big jump we took.

Anything that you're wanting or needing, to feel complete in that, in your body?

[Participant:] Is a smoke or water needed?

[Participant:] I just want to think. It was very changing for me, and connected with things in my experience.

[Russell:] Good. Good.

Okay, so what I'd like to do is go into some movement together. Sitting for a while. I want to do some movement, and then hopefully there's another process I'd like to do before we end.

So take a few minutes. Get a quick drink, go to the bathroom, but then come back. It's not a long break. Just quick enough for you to do that, set up the room, and —