Discussion

Angela 2 — Week 1, Day 2, Session 7 — 38 minutes

Summary: Russell guides a backward look through the day for small moments of being touched, and asks whether gratitude is already in them. After a short sit and a lying review of the day's teachings, the group shares what resonated. Russell then speaks on cultivating the field of gratitude as a source of inner nourishment.

Moments of being touched

[Silence 4 minutes]

[Russell:] Two hands rest and your eyes close. Stay seated.

And just begin to reflect backward through your day, starting now, and inviting moments, even very small moments, where you felt touched by life in some way — touched in some way that moved you.

It could have been, as some examples, just you tasted a food and something inside went, nice, or yes. Or somebody smiled, and it's not a big thing, it's just something inside you went, yes.

You might not even have noticed it at the time, but your body responded in a positive way to something that occurred. Could have been the sound of the bell. Could have been warm water going down your throat. Could have been something bigger.

The idea is to go backwards, but if your mind jumps to the morning, that's not a problem. You don't fight that. But then return to going backwards through the day. It's a mental practice.

And when you have the moment, or a moment, let your body really have it. So it might take five or ten seconds to recall that moment and really let it resonate in your body. Then go on to another moment.

[Silence 2 minutes]

As you experience these moments of what we can call being touched — or, to invent a word, touchedness — these moments of touchedness, just notice if, right inside those moments, there's a feeling of gratitude.

Not that you're thankful afterwards, but actually in the moment of being touched, is it true that already there's a feeling of, oh, thank you. I appreciate it.

So we're investigating small moments or big moments of being touched throughout the day, and the question — is gratitude implicit in the moments of being touched? And we're letting all of that resonate in your body.

Being touched very little is just as good as being touched a lot. It means something resonated inside. Let that be conscious. Let yourself experience how your body received that moment.

[Silence 37 seconds]

And come back to holding your mudra, to opening your eyes, and just for a few minutes we'll sit.

Sensing how all that's alive in you, and dropping down into the breathing.

[Silence 4 minutes]

Reviewing the day

[Russell:] And I'd like to invite you to just lie down in front of your cushion. You don't have to put out your mat. Just lie down for a few moments.

Any comfortable position.

Sense yourself here on the floor.

Sense your breath.

And I'd like to take a few moments to look, to recall some of the practices and teachings that we've experienced today.

So we just ended with something around recalling moments of being touched. A question about the connection of that to gratitude, and how that feels in your body.

Just notice if there was anything that resonated for you, that seemed important about that. Of course, we'll explore it much further later. Just for now.

Maybe it made no sense. Maybe you easily connected to that.

There were the sitting practices and walking practices tonight. The image of the boat, the resting, the scenery of your life. How that might have, or might not have, influenced your sitting.

Then going back into the afternoon practice, where we ended the afternoon with a more detailed walking practice, sensing the ground and the height that grew out of the movement lesson we did, where we were painting the back on the floor.

And then exploring rather unusual movement, lifting the pelvis and lifting the head, and mobilizing the back in those ways.

Before that, we had the opportunity to be with a participant and be with her process.

Just notice what resonated, what seemed important for you in any of these moments. See what is alive now from all that.

And then going back to the morning, where we finished the morning with a movement lesson where we spoke about the living relationship to the earth, the elephant, the pet elephant, and this movement up and down.

And we looked together at the three jewels. That was just this morning. We had the three jewels, and a different kind of teacher-student relationship. And look at that.

How our experience is always a whole, and we can work with parts of it. And many other things.

Just letting your recall come. Maybe none of that resonates right now. Maybe you're just ready to sleep. It's fine too.

But just seeing, from all of that and more of what occurred today, where does your body go? There's something in that for me. There's something important about that.

We just want to acknowledge when the inner life is resonant with something. That's often an indicator of a readiness for learning in a certain direction.

And then, please, just roll your head a little bit. Or if you're on your front, let your head turn a little bit, just to free the movement of your neck, your head, and bring yourself up towards sitting once again.

Sitting in a comfortable way. You don't have to sit in a formal way, but in a comfortable way. You can lean back against the wall if you like.

You can sit anywhere. You can sit right in the middle of the floor. You don't have to be in our usual positions.

Sharing what resonated

[Russell:] I'd like to just take a few minutes for the group mind to reflect. And so I invite you to go back, looking at your day, looking at moments where something resonated in your learning, in the teachings that we were doing.

It could have been in a movement lesson. It could have been in a talk, in a practice, sitting. And it could have been some image that particularly resonated.

And I invite you, if something like that is alive for you, to put it into the air. And we'll — the rest of us will listen. And when you're listening, you notice where it lands in you. Does it have resonance? Does it seem like something gets touched, or it lands kind of flat? Some of them will land flat for you.

And so when someone says something, let's allow at least ten seconds before something else is said, so we can resonate with it.

And it's good, when you have something, to find language for it, because that actually helps that stream of learning to get more instantiated in your brain, more settled. When we find words, when we go through the motor pattern of using our tongue, all of that is part of your inner life having more access to this as a doorway.

So, when something comes for you, just put it out.

[Participant 1:] I was listening this morning. Russell was talking about meditation and being present, and thinking about how I do that every morning, and how I've been practicing it, and often I was wondering, why am I doing this? But doing it anyway.

And then he said something about when you come to that moment when you realize that you're lost somewhere and you come back, and that — there was this connection of, oh, I don't just need to do that in my practice, I need to do that in my life.

And I sort of jumped — oh, that's why I've been doing this. And I just thought I'll make it a little bit easier to remember to do it during my day.

[Russell:] We need to give a bow after we receive a teaching.

Say it again.

[Participant 2:] Witnessing the interaction between a participant's courage and Russell's skill, and feeling inspired by both of them.

[Participant 3:] I never saw the pet elephant before like I did today. I'd heard that before, and I felt a different connection to the elephant and the symbolism of that, and a different connection in my body, and something shifted.

[Participant 4:] I was inspired today when I heard your articulation of the need for communities of autonomous individuals.

I noticed a real difference in my experience of the space in the room, following the interaction with Russell, a participant, and all of us. It just felt like everything got closer. Like suddenly, we hadn't just been together for a day.

[Participant 5:] For me, starting the day, we were innocent. Your son — he's just such a big teacher for innocence. He's this lovely, delightful wonder. All I can see is wonder in his eyes, and his parents. So there was that sense that it lives within me, but it's buried a lot. I feel like I can connect to it through him. It wasn't in this room, but it was in my —

[Silence 32 seconds]

[Participant 6:] I really felt myself. I really loved the other, and how different it was to walk in my body — a feeling of relating to another being, rather than just alone in my experience.

[Participant 7:] Following on that, I was walking barefoot outside on the grass and really able to feel the life of the earth. So wonderful.

[Participant 8:] I've had several moments in meditation of suddenly having awareness of everyone's presence. So lovely.

[Participant 9:] After the floor sequence, coming to stand anew. A new moment.

[Participant 10:] This morning I was walking down the hall, and someone in this room, without any words, just reached out their hand, passing by, and clasped, and kept going. And that made me feel really comforted, made me feel very acknowledged. And contemplating that makes me really touched to know how many moments like that happen today.

The field of gratitude

[Russell:] I want to just say, in connection to what Participant 10 was just saying, we'll have a few teachings I call cultivating the field of gratitude, which is a very important, essential teaching in the Embodied Life work.

I don't want to try to give a whole teaching right now, but what I want to say, from what Participant 10 said, is an invitation for you to begin to notice.

Reflecting back on a previous hour, for example — any hour, any time during the day — and recalling little moments where something touched.

And it'll take something like ten seconds to pause, recreate the moment — where you're standing, who's there — they'll come like that, and let your body have what goes on in that moment of being touched.

Even — this is the very cool part that I'll talk about more later — even if at the time you were completely spaced out and not really there for it. I'm suggesting something in you took it in.

And that the place that took it in can be nourished and contacted, and be a source of nourishment later. That you can actually grow from these moments that were missed the first time around.

So I'm not asking you to believe that, but before I go into the whole teaching of it, just to begin experimenting. When you get in bed tonight, reflect back on the previous fifteen minutes. See if it can be as simple as, wow, the taste of the toothpaste. I wasn't actually there for it, but reflecting, something inside went, for a moment, oh, nice, I like peppermint.

Or the way the water felt on your face. Something inside might have gone — or the way it felt when you really have to pee, and you're — whatever it is, that something goes, yes.

And I'm suggesting there's incredible, unbelievable, in my experience, value in cultivating that ground. That this is the healthiest vitamin for your immune system. That this is one of the least understood and most accessible sources of inner nourishment.

That we actually live in a shower of blessings, always.

So I'm starting to give a teaching, which is not my intention.

[Participant 11:] No. Well, because when I was first introduced to your teaching, and I didn't have any of your DVDs or anything, I went to YouTube, and I would play that over and over. And something about that shower of blessings would bring tears to my eyes, because it's so profound.

Yeah, I feel so grateful for that, and that it is so accessible. And I have found, even with people in extremely difficult circumstances, it's accessible. So this is a gift. That our inner life can resonate with them.

And literally people in intense pain, literally people dying, literally can find a liberation through them. And it's like this inner goal that we just haven't learned how to live into.

And thank you so much for all the reflections tonight that brings it forth, in a way that allows it to live into my dream life and into my living.

Closing

[Russell:] That happens before we get together at seven tomorrow, or five to seven tomorrow morning. Let's come up and do some prostrations together.

[Silence 34 seconds]

I'm still very grateful for this time, and it really seems unusual that it's our first day.

When Participant 4 said that, it really resonated with the place inside —

When I mentioned the three jewels, I thought that was about three days ago.

And I'm very grateful for our coming together in this way. Very, very grateful for this opportunity, for the beings who are working, cooking for us and supporting us.

May our learning radiate from us for the benefit of all.

So, which is good.